



# About Idols

Activity 1 Answer the questions below carefully.

- *What do I most want, desire, seek, or wish for?*
  
- *What do I want to preserve/protect most?*
  
- *What do I most fear or worry about?*
  
- *What do I desire to retain or acquire, even if it means transgressing moral principles?*
  
- *When I sin, what am I trying to accomplish?*
  
- *What desires result in frustration, anxiety, resentment, bitterness, anger, or depression when are they not fulfilled?*

Activity 2 Meditate upon these verses

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Exodus 20:3-6       | Isaiah 2:8             |
| Jonah 2:8           | Romans 1:22-23         |
| 1 Corinthians 10:14 | Galatians 4:8, 5:19-21 |
| Colossians 3:5      | 1 John 5:21            |

Activity 3 Circle the numbers of the statements below that apply to you.

*"Life is good and worth living if....."*

1. I have power and influence over others."
2. I am loved and respected by \_\_\_\_."
3. I have a comfortable enjoyable life."
4. people are dependent on / need me."
5. someone/something is there to protect me and keep me safe."
6. I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities."
7. I am highly productive and getting a lot done."
8. I am recognized for my accomplishments, and I am excelling in my work."
9. I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."
10. I am adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplished in its activities."
11. (specific person) is in my life, happy, and happy with me."
12. a particular social, professional, or other group lets me in."
13. Mr. or Ms. "Right" is in love with me."
14. I am hurting or in a crisis.
15. my political, social, or religious cause is ascending in influence or power."
16. I have a particular kind of look or body image."

What does this activity reveal to you about your idols?

## Facts about Idols and Idolatry

- An idol is anything we use to replace God as the source of our basic human needs. The things from which we try to suck life. An idol is a "counterfeit god." (Keller)
- The Old Testament frequently illustrates the concept of sin as *idolatry* and *adultery*.
- Idolatry can be described as "mis-ordered loves." (Augustine)
- When a good thing becomes an ultimate thing (idol) it becomes a bad thing.
- Idolatry is a universal problem affecting each human. Every human puts faith in something or someone.
- Idols
  - demand a high cost with weak payoff
  - produce destructive/disappointing results
  - cheat us from a better / abundant life.
  - harm our relationships with other people
  - distract us from the Lord

Common Idols		
people	comfort	health
relational peace	music	internet
family	reputation	money
religion/ministry	success	job/career
approval	significance	friends
vacations	sports	control
appearance	causes	hobbies

*"Under every behavioral sin is the sin of idolatry and under every idol is disbelief in the Gospel."*

~ Martin Luther

*"Every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, a master craftsman of idols." - John Calvin*

## How do we identify our idols?

Our idols are not usually discovered directly. It is usually more helpful to identify your idols through our emotions or behaviors.

- The JOY/COMFORT test: *To what am I going for hope, comfort, relief, or joy?*
- The SOURCE test: *What, if taken from me, would make life not worth living? What makes my life meaningful or successful?*
- The RIGHT test: *What makes me "right" in the eyes of others? (morality, political beliefs, causes, denomination, or doctrinal beliefs...)*
- The NIGHTMARE test: *What do I worry about? What am I afraid of losing?*
- The DAYDREAM test: *When my mind wanders or has nothing else to focus on, what ideal situations do I tend to think about?*
- The ADDITION test: *(What) + Jesus = Life?*
- The SIN test: *What is the reason/motive behind your frequent sins? What are you trying to accomplish or protect?*
- The EMOTION test: *What stirs up the most emotions in me? What is the thing that makes me mad, worried, passionate?*
- The LOYALTY test: *What "thing" has your greatest loyalty or ultimate commitment?*
- The GOOD test: *What is the greatest good on this earth?*

### 3 ways to break free from idols.

#### 1. Consider the false claims of your idols.

- What do your idols promise you?
- Are they keeping their promise?
- What do they demand from you?
- Make a list of the ways your idol is harming you.
- What do your idols cost you?
- What does it prevent you from enjoying? (empty calories)
- What other sins are encouraged by this idol?
- How does your relationship with your idol hurt others?
- How does your relationship with your idol hurt your relationship with God?

GOAL: become disgusted by the idol. Become frustrated with the temptation.

#### 2. Gospel Repentance and Faith

- Admit to God that your broken soul craves the wrong things.
- Confess that your idolatry is your own fault. Your choices have brought this upon yourself.
- Admit that you are unable to solve the problem of idolatry alone. Cry for help. Pray for better desires, better perspectives, transforming power.
- Accept the solutions that the Lord offers and seek to live in sync with them.

GOAL: Cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work in transforming your soul.

#### 3. Replace the idol with God's better gift

- What need or desire does the idol address?
- How does God satisfy better?
- Meditate on Scripture verses, song lyrics
- Create pictures or videos in your mind of what the life God offers you. Vision
- Meditate on God's gift of Abundant life.
- Meditate on God's specific solution for your desires, wants and needs.

GOAL: to enjoy God and His gifts more fully.

*"Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs." Jonah 2:8*

For a variety of reasons, breaking the habit of idolatry is very difficult. It is not merely a change in thinking or behavior. The source of idolatry is the human soul. Real change must occur in the spiritual heart/soul of a person. This is accomplished by the hand of the Holy Spirit applying the Gospel to our souls.

Ask the Lord to help you see and turn from the idols in your life. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 daily. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Books/Videos

YouTube - [What is an Idol? – Desiring God](#)

YouTube - [Tim Keller: Gospel Ministry Challenges Idolatry](#)

Book - Tim Keller [Counterfeit gods](#)

YouTube - Tim Keller -[Counterfeit gods](#)