

## Drawing Out Idols of the Heart

### I. Introduction

#### A. **There will be a lifelong battle over faith in Jesus vs. faith in idols.**

1. Idolatry is of paramount importance as it violates the first and greatest commandments.

“You shall have no other gods before Me” Ex 20:3

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . .” Mt 22:36

2. Life’s pressures should be expected to expose the idols. Ex 32:1

#### B. **The time spent counseling involves developing a relationship, encouraging, information gathering, teaching, and giving counsel.**

1. Simultaneously, the counselor is also seeking to identify idols of the heart.
2. Counselees should be viewed as worshipers. As a counselor, you are always considering, “What are they worshipping?”

### II. What is an idol of the heart?

#### A. **An idol of the heart can also be referred to as an idol, ruling idol, spiritual idolatry, spiritual adultery, sinful inner desire, or functional god.**

#### B. **Idolatry begins with unbelief—actively suppressing the truth of God in the conscience, creation, and His word.** Rom 1:18, 25

1. And in place of the truth, believing the lie of idols. Isa 44:20
2. “The lie” is that there is greater satisfaction to be found apart from God.

“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” Rom 1:25

#### C. **Anything that functions in the life of a person in the place of God.**

1. Whatever the heart turns to for ultimate satisfaction or security.
2. Worship is misplaced when anything is loved, trusted, or feared more than God and His word.
  - a. “Love, trust, and fear” are worship words. Pss 56:3, 4, 103:11, 13, 118:8, 9; Prv 3:5; Jer 2:2, 19, 37, 17:5-8; Hb 1:11; Mt 22:36-38
  - b. People can love or trust things such as money (or fear not having it) in a way that should be reserved only for God. Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13; Col 3:5

3. Any source of a person's primary identity, worth, or righteousness other than Christ. Gal 3:26; Eph 1:1-14; Phil 3:7, 8
4. The source of hope is an idol if it is not "the God of hope." Rom 15:4, 13
5. Even a good desire becomes idolatrous when it is the *ultimate* desire of the heart. A person wants something that is good too much:
  - a. For example: money is good, but the love of money is idolatrous. Mt 6:24, 1 Tm 6:9, 10
  - b. Another example: well-behaved children are good but this can really be self-serving; a desire to feel worthwhile or admired can drive the parenting.
6. An early edition of the *Webster's Dictionary* (1828) defines "idol" and "idolize."
  - a. An "idol" is "that to which we indulge an excessive and sinful attachment," and "anything which usurps the place of God in the hearts of his rational creatures."
  - b. To "idolize" is "to love to excess . . . to idolize wealth . . . to idolize children."
7. Examples of common idols of the heart seen in counseling are a quest for money, security, romance or sexual pleasure, an ideal/godly spouse or children, respect, control, performance, and approval of others.

**D. There will be unique or predominate idols of the heart.**

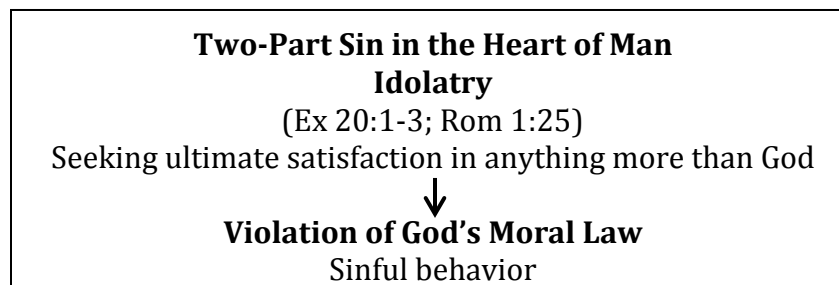
"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own [peculiar] lust." Jam 1:14

1. Idols of the heart are also dynamic as they are numerous, evolve, and interplay with each other.
2. Idols of the heart can also contradict each other (e.g., this can be seen in a person angrily wanting *respect* from family members and at other times excessively longing for *acceptance* and *peace* with the family).

**III. What are the effects of an idol?**

**A. Idolatry is the root sin of the two-part sin in the heart of man.**

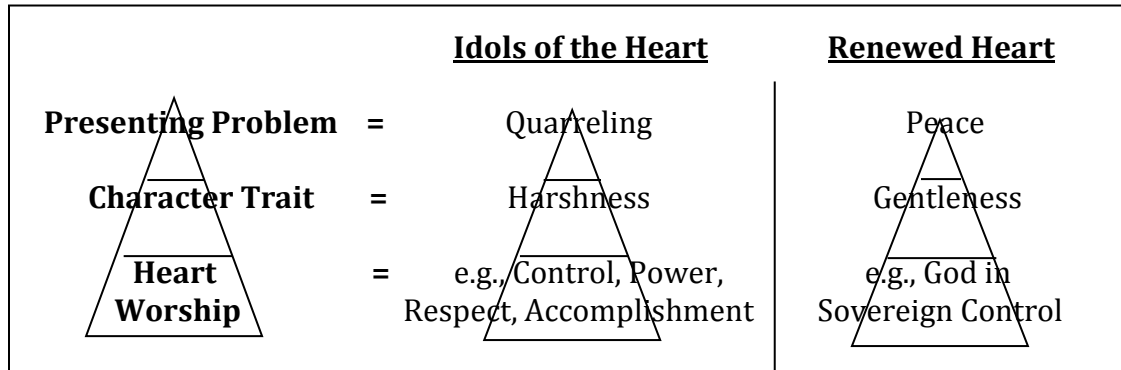
1. The sin of idolatry produces the violation of God's moral law (sinful behavior).
2. The idolatry answers the question as to "Why?" someone has sinned.



**B. Bad fruit in the counselee's life comes from the root of idolatry.**

One idolatrous desire can produce countless bad results. Dt 30:15-20; Rom 1:24; Jam 1:14, 15

1. Idols detrimentally affect our relationship with God. Ex 20:1-3; Dt 6:14, 15; Ez 14:1-11; Rv 2:4 Idolatry separates believers from God; He intervenes for His children in one or more ways:
  - a. God may discipline His own, for growth in holiness and their ultimate happiness. Ez 14:10, 11; Heb 12:4-11
  - b. One means of discipline is to may allow the error of the idolatry to be experienced. 2 Sm 22:28, 42; Pss 81:11, 12, 106:13-15; Prv 1:30, 31; Acts 14:16; Rom 1:24, 26, 28
  - c. God may withhold or remove the idol (even good desires that are inordinate).
  - d. For the purpose of repentance, God can make His child aware of the idol. Rv 2:4, 5
  
2. Idols detrimentally affect our human relationships. Misplaced heart worship leads to sinful character traits which damage relationships. There will be character trait fruit from the Holy Spirit or fruit from the idol. Gal 5:19-23



3. Idols detrimentally affect all of life.
  - a. People will reflect the image of the world instead of the image of Jesus.
  - b. Ruling desires in the New Testament (Grk. *epithumia*, lust, desire for what is forbidden) is consistently connected to disobedience or a lack of personal change. Gal 5:16-18; Eph 4:20-22; Jam 1:14, 15; 1 Pet 2:11, 4:1, 2
  - c. Idols blind people to their sin resulting in stumbling over the sin. Ez 14:2, 3
  - d. Makes life wearisome and heavy-laden; the Christian life is tainted with lesser and unfulfilled desires. Mt 11:28-30
  - e. An idol causes death (harm) (e.g., death of peace, joy, hope, reputation, clear conscience, and ministry, as well as physical death). Gn 30:1; Jam 1:15

**IV. What does the First Commandment forbid?** *“You shall have no other gods before Me”*  
Ex 20:3, 23:13; Jb 31:26-28; Ps 44:20, 21

**A. There are two aspects to the violations of the First Commandment—narrow and broad.**

1. Narrow—violation of the narrow aspect of the First Commandment is worshiping another god such as:
  - a. Pagan deities—e.g., Baals of O.T. Israel.
  - b. False religions—non-Christian religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.
  - c. Cults—non-Trinitarian beliefs such as Jehovah Witness, Christian Science, Christadelphian, and Mormon.
  - d. Occultism—searching for a spiritual reality without Jesus and the Scriptures.
    - For example, divination, witchcraft, medium, palm and tarot card readers. Dt 18:9-14, 29:29
    - The occult practices are opposed to seeking a true prophet or today as opposed to seeking Scripture. Dt 18:15; 1 Thes 2:13
  - e. Secret societies—e.g., groups such as Freemasonry that have a religious dimension where eternal life is apart from faith in Christ. Jn 14:6
2. Broad—violation of the broad aspect of the First Commandment is worshiping anything along with the true God—or an idol of the heart.

**B. What is the biblical warrant for the concept of an idol of the heart?**

How do we biblically get from the First Commandment narrow view of literally not having another god to the broad view of not having an idol in the heart?

1. Compare summaries of the Law.
  - a. The First Commandment, *“You shall have no other gods before Me”* Ex 20:3, is the summary of the whole Law. Looking at other summaries of the Law can give understanding to the meaning of the First Commandment. Josh 22:5; Eccl 12:13; Mic 6:8; Mt 22:36-38
  - b. In Matthew 22:36-38, a summary of the Law is given: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . .”* Whatever is loved more than God is another god put before Him.
2. Scripture uses the terminology—“idols in the heart.”
  - a. The concept begins to be revealed in the Old Testament.
  - b. *“Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity . . .”* Ez 14:3 The prophet Ezekiel rebukes the men for *“idols in his heart”* because this *“separates”* the men from God. Ez 14:7

3. Scripture uses the concept.
  - a. God answers the prophet Habakkuk's prayer regarding the Babylonians stating: "*They whose strength is their god."* Hb 1:11 Habakkuk ends his prayer: "*The Lord God is my strength.*" Hb 3:19
  - b. The prophet Jeremiah judged Judah for failing to "*love,*" "*trust,*" and "*dread*" (fear) God. Jer 2:2, 19, 37
  - c. "*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*" 1 Cor 10:14
  - d. "*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures [sinful inner desires] . . .*" Jam 4:1
4. Historical interpretation of Scripture.
  - a. For example, the Puritans coined the terms "soul idolatry" and "inordinate desire."
  - b. The Westminster Larger Catechism (Answer 105) states that the First Commandment is violated when there is an "inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things."
  - c. *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on Exodus 20:3 states, "whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or dependent on, more than God, that (whatever it is) we do in effect make a god of."

**V. How does the counselor draw out (identify) the counselee's idol of the heart?**

"A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out." Prv 20:5

**A. Pray for the counselee and encourage the counselee to pray.** Ps 139:23, 24; Col 1:9-12; Jam 4:2c

1. Ask God to reveal more of the ugliness of the idolatrous heart and more of the beauty of Jesus.
2. Remind the counselee that he is praying because only God can cause the change required which is change at the heart level.
3. Pray that the gospel will be the center of how daily life is viewed.
4. There are spiritual forces in play, and so counseling is a ministry of prayer. Eph 6:10-20; Jam 3:15, 4:7

**B. Listen carefully for clues as to the idols of the heart.**

1. Questions—are the primary means to uncover idols and are asked throughout counseling such as:
  - a. When the counselee has sinned ask, "What did you really *want* so badly?" Jam 4:1, 2
  - b. Other questions can be asked such as, "What was it that you felt you *needed* in this situation?"

- c. Or “What were you *longing* for?” when you committed this sin.  
Counseling case: A married female (professing believer) developed a friendship and eventually kissed another man. She was asked to think back to what she longed for so badly that she was willing to be unfaithful. She shared a longing for conversation and relationship (or an ideal marriage). A husband that is a good communicator and relational is a good desire, but this became an idolatrous desire in that she was willing to sin to get it.
  - d. Ask the counselee how he would complete the following sentences:
    - The counselee makes a statement like, “I cannot go on like this anymore.” The counselor asks for the sentence to be completed: “I must have \_\_\_\_\_.”
    - The counselee makes a statement like, “I am so unhappy.” The counselor asks for the sentence to be completed: “I could be happy if only \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. Words chosen—by the counselee may be indicators of an idol (e.g., “I feel like I’m losing *control*,” “What I need is for him to be a more *godly husband*,” “I’m entitled to come home after work and get some *peace*,” “This is not what I thought *marriage* would be,” “*Soccer* is my *passion*.”).
  3. Sinful behavior—flows from an underlying idol (e.g., “I’ve always had a problem with flirting with *women*,” misuse of *alcohol*, use of *pornography*, sinful fear or worry about \_\_\_\_\_, malicious speech about \_\_\_\_\_). If something is so important that a person is willing to sin to get it (or sin if he does not get it), there is an underlying idol.
  4. Patterns—are sought for habitual sins and recurring relationship problems. What is driving the pattern? Counseling case: A man getting angry in multiple settings (with his wife and kids, extended family, and at work); and the common denominator is revealed to be that he is not feeling “respected” in each case.
  5. Sinful or negative reaction—to the counselor’s or spouse’s corrections can be an indicator that an idol has been touched upon.
    - a. When sin or unyielding emotions characterizes the response, a desire has probably morphed into an idol.
    - b. Anger is a common sinful reaction and a red flag to the counselor that an idol is being protected.
    - c. When an idol is threatened to be exposed or taken away, people can become sinfully angry, overly emotional, panic, blame others, justify behavior, attempt to manipulate, change the subject, and even change from consistently cooperative in counseling to adversarial.
  6. While teaching unrelated topics—idols can be uncovered. For example, teaching the biblical priorities for a husband and wife can be discussed, (God, spouse, children, work). Gn 2:24, 25; Ex 20:3; Col 3:18-2 Any wrong priority identified is potentially an idol of the heart (e.g., God, *sports*, wife, children, work).

7. Bad fruit—in one's life in the form of continual negative circumstances is an indicator that there may be idolatry beneath (especially seen in demanding, judging, blaming others, justifying sin, punishing others, and chaos).

**C. Teach the counselee the concept of idols of the heart.**

It is common for believers to not understand idolatry or the idols in their own heart.

1. Expound passages of Scripture such as:
  - a. Isaiah 55:1, 2. Teach the counselee that he is buying what will never really satisfy when God is offering at no cost real satisfaction and in “abundance.”
  - b. James 4:1-12. Go back through verses 4:1-4 to help the counselee understand the source of “quarrels and conflicts” (small and large conflicts) is the idol of the heart. v. 1 “pleasures” = sinful inner desires; v. 2 “lust”; v. 3 “wrong motives,” “pleasures” = sinful inner desires; v. 4 (spiritual) “adulteresses.”
  - c. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 14; Colossians 3:5. Teach the command to flee from the root of sinful behavior (idolatry).
2. Biblical case studies—can be reviewed to help the counselee become familiar with idols of the heart from Scripture.  
For example: Genesis 30:1-8, 24, 35:16-19—Rachel (Jacob's wife)  
Sinful behavior—anger, jealousy of sister Leah, conflict with husband, advised husband to sin with her maid (Bilhah), presumed on God's approval of her actions, discontentment (vv. 30:1-8, 24).  
Idols—children, respect as a child bearer (vv. 30:1, 8).
3. Relate personal idols of the counselor as an example and testimony, when appropriate, in which God has provided deliverance.

**D. Homework assignments.**

1. Prayer—should be assigned as a part of all homework as well as assigning the counselee to read and pray about specific passages of Scripture.
2. “Common idols or gods” handout—can be assigned to identify idols.  
(See attachment.) The assignment includes:
  - a. Passages from the Old and New Testaments on the topic of idolatry.
  - b. Multiple questions to get the counselee thinking about specific personal idols.
  - c. A checklist of common idols with approximately ninety potential idols.
    - The counselee places a check mark next to any area in which there is an inordinate desire for or dependence on something more than God, especially those areas that are causing some type of harm or bad fruit.
    - The counselee's spouse can also complete the same checklist to provide invaluable additional perspective.

3. “Questions for the Heart” handout—should be regularly assigned, especially when the idols are not otherwise readily apparent.<sup>1</sup> (See attachment.)
  - a. The counselor looks for clues and repeated themes in the answers as to possible inordinate desires. The questions are at times purposefully redundant to attempt to identify idols from a variety of directions.
  - b. Examples of “Questions for the Heart” answers written by a counselee give a sense of what to look for (underlines added below indicate a possible idol).
    - Q 2. What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for?  
A. “Family of my own to prove I am meant for something greater than what I’ve done so far.”
    - Q 4. Where do you bank your hopes?  
A. “In family.”
    - Q 13. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection?  
A. “Husband. Friends. Family. Anyone.”
    - Q 15. On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?  
A. “To be a positive role model for my kids and grandkids.”
    - Q 35. Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?  
A. “In my kids.”

Jesus said everyone is to “hate his own” family by comparison to one’s love for Him. Lk 14:25, 26
4. Journaling—the counselee can be assigned to journal of all the events associated with bad fruit (i.e., when angry, in relational conflict, fearful). Patterns should be looked for by the counselor to identify the underlying sinful desire.

**E. Anticipate certain idols within cultures and genders as well as those common to particular types of sin.**

1. Culture—e.g., people in a financial industry can be tempted to inordinately trust in money or being successful; Western culture often overvalues comfort and leisure time; and Asian culture can overvalue performance.
2. Gender—e.g., a young married Christian woman can be anticipated to put too much hope in a godly husband; or a mother often has too high a view of her children (functionally more important than her husband).
3. Common to particular sins—specific sins can be anticipated to have similar idols.
  - a. For example, with homosexuality the counselor can suspect from the start particular idols such as:
    - Same-sex affirmation, admiration, acceptance, and/or affection
    - Sexuality (identity based on feelings and behavior)
    - Same-sex physical pleasure

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing Company, 2003).



- b. With pornography, the idols anticipated are:
- Physical pleasure
  - Fantasy sex (extra-biblical thinking about sex)
  - Escape (momentarily from life’s responsibilities and pressures)
  - Control (including of women)
  - Being king for a few moments (affirmation, applauded, appreciated).

**F. Mutual review by counselor and counselee can be done and agreement reached.** (See attachment.)

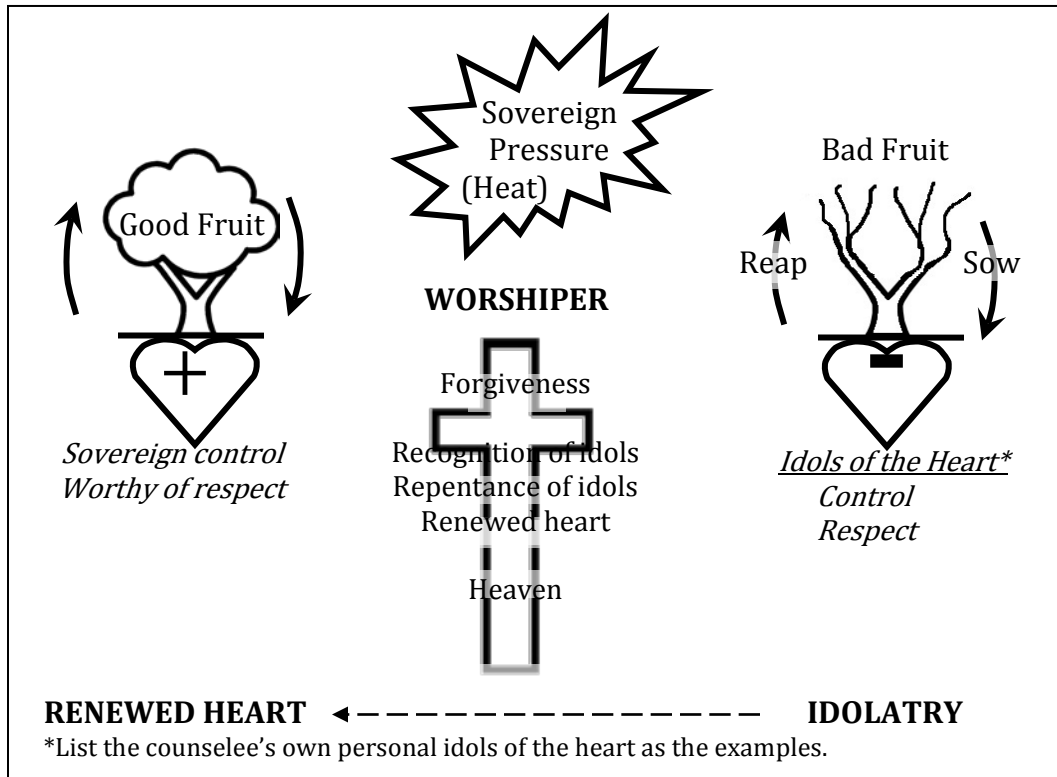
1. This is effectively done by writing down the idols of the heart (as well as associated sins and harm done) as they are being identified.
2. The counselee can make additions and deletions to the list. The idol(s) causing the most sin and harm can be prioritized and placed at the top of the list.
3. A writing tablet (or pre-prepared form) can be laid out as follows:

<b>LOG LIST</b>		
“Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Jam 1:15		
	<b>Husband’s name</b>	<b>Wife’s name</b>
<b>IDOLS OF THE HEART</b> (lies believed and misplaced worship)	<b>Control</b> <b>Respect</b>  Comfort	<b>Godly husband</b>  Perfect family Admiration of others
<b>OTHER SINS</b> (behavior resulting from lies believed and misplaced worship)	Anger (yelling, tearing down words) Misuse of authority	Disrespect of husband Bitterness (at God and husband) Tempted husband to unrighteousness
<b>HARM DONE</b> (outcome due to idols of the heart and other sins)	Grieved God Lack of marital harmony Caused family to be afraid of you Bad example for family Lack of peace and joy	Grieved God Lack of marital harmony Bad example for the children Lack of peace and joy

## VI. Conclusion

### A. Counselees will come to recognize that they have not been trusting God.

1. The counselee responds to the grace of God in repentance of the idol (including confession) and faith in God. It is the believer's privilege to recognize idols, repent, and have their minds renewed. Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23
2. Counselees will now see in passages like Jeremiah 17:5-8 where their confidence has been placed and where it should be placed:
  - a. "Thus says the LORD, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.
  - b. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.'"
3. The "Three Trees" diagram<sup>2</sup> depicts Jeremiah 17:5-8 as to how a cycle of idolatry (with bad fruit) can change to a cycle of the worship of God (with good fruit). The idolatrous heart is renewed with the recognition and repentance of idols.



<sup>2</sup> Adapted from David Powlison, (Pennsylvania).

## **B. The turning point in counseling.**

1. When even a good desire becomes recognized by the counselee as something separate from that desire ruling the heart. For example, a godly spouse is a good desire; but if this desire rules a person, there will be sin and harm to the relationship.
2. When the counselee turns to Jesus Christ in faith.
  - a. Counselors do not leave people at the place of identifying idols of the heart, but must point them to the real satisfaction found in a closer relationship with God.
  - b. Misplaced worship must be replaced with the worship of Jesus.
  - c. Only the love of God understood in the gospel is strong enough to replace the love of other gods.

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.” Is 55:1, 2

## **C. The deliverance from an idol of the heart is a work of God for the counselor and counselee to witness.**

1. The idol can be identified by the counselor to adequately to help the counselee.
2. However, the counselor’s identification and prioritizing of an idol will not be a scientific discovery process where the idol and interplay of idols can be completely understood or removed by one’s willpower.

## **D. Remember to view your counsees as worshipers.**

1. What is ruling their heart—Jesus or an idol?
2. As a counselor, always consider, “What are they worshiping?”

## **Reading for further study**

1. *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel With Hidden Idols*, Brad Bigney
2. *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* (chp. 2), Ken Sande
3. *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (chps. 4, 5), Paul Tripp
4. *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters*, Timothy Keller
5. *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone*, Elyse Fitzpatrick

## Common idols or gods

The idols of our heart are the motivation behind sinful behavior. They are what we love, trust, serve, depend on, delight in, or fear (worship words) more than God. They can be the basis of our identity, worth, or righteousness other than Jesus. Even good desires become idolatrous when they are the foremost desire of the heart. There is bad fruit or harm to relationships associated with an idol of the heart. It is the grace of God for believers as they identify and repent of idols, and their mind is renewed with a greater desire for Christ and holiness.

Idolatry is a theme of the Old and New Testaments because it is a theme of our lives:

- “*You shall have no other gods before Me*” (Ex 20:3).
- “. . . how I [God] have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols . . .” (Ez 6:9).
- “*And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity’*” (Ez 14:2, 3).
- “. . . you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1 Thes 1:9).
- “*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen*” (Rom 1:25).

Also read Isaiah 55:1-2 and Jeremiah 2:13, 17:5-8.

“Idols are self-deceiving, self-serving, and self-destroying. Our desire and focus can become inordinate and our trust can be misplaced (Luke 14:25-33). God may withhold the idol or allow us to experience the futility of our idols and refuges (Ps 106:13-15). God may administer loving discipline for His own that are not being convicted (Heb 12:5-11).”<sup>1</sup>

Pray and ask God to reveal the idols of your heart before continuing.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 2002, 93.

Below are questions to help draw out (identify) what you desire more than God.

What have I been willing to commit sin for, in order to get it?

What have I been willing to sin over, if I do not get it?

What must I have to be happy?

• What is really driving me?	• What is really depressing me?
• What goal(s) must I obtain?	• What is my chief joy?
• What do I demand?	• What do I fear or tend to worry about?
• What do I manipulate others over?	• What do I functionally trust in daily life?
• What do I crave or long for?	• What controls or rules me?
• What do I see as my right?	• What do I dwell on or what consumes me?
• What makes my emotions the most uncontrollable?	• What is the foremost desire of my heart?
• What is my underlying motive?	• What do I try so hard for to create a righteousness of my own?
• Where do I seek happiness, peace, and contentment?	• What is more important than personal holiness?
• Why did this anger me?	• What do I want more than to be a reflection of Christ?
• Why did this bother/frustrate me so much?	• What must I have for life to be meaningful?
• What do my thoughts drift to? What private thoughts give me comfort?	• What do I spend too much money on?
• What unanswered prayers make me angry or hopeless?	• What do I have to resist not spending too much money on?

What areas below are inordinate in your desire or dependence?  
Place a check mark (✓) in the box next to any area that applies.

<input type="checkbox"/> acceptance/not being rejected	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainers/celebrities
<input type="checkbox"/> affection/physical affection/attention	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/recreation/fun/ excitement/danger
<input type="checkbox"/> alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> environment/planet earth
<input type="checkbox"/> appearance (beauty, face, body, thinness, fitness, clothing, spouse's appearance)	<input type="checkbox"/> exercise
<input type="checkbox"/> appreciation	<input type="checkbox"/> fairness/equal treatment
<input type="checkbox"/> approval of man/fear of man/opinion of others/ pleasing people/peer pressure (spouse, parents, co-workers, friends, others)	<input type="checkbox"/> family (extended)
<input type="checkbox"/> books/novels (reading)	<input type="checkbox"/> family (immediate)
<input type="checkbox"/> child/children	<input type="checkbox"/> fantasies
<input type="checkbox"/> children's success/reputation/ obedience/pleasing/admiration/ submission/respect	<input type="checkbox"/> father (admired as a father/godly father)
<input type="checkbox"/> comfort/ease/convenience	<input type="checkbox"/> food
<input type="checkbox"/> control/certainty/order/controlling the life of others/ control of the present or the future/control of circumstances/wanting guarantees	<input type="checkbox"/> friends
<input type="checkbox"/> country	<input type="checkbox"/> gambling
<input type="checkbox"/> drugs	<input type="checkbox"/> god of own making (without Scripture, distorted view of God)
<input type="checkbox"/> education (academics)	<input type="checkbox"/> goodness
<input type="checkbox"/> encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/> happiness
	<input type="checkbox"/> health (good, pain-free life, extended life)
	<input type="checkbox"/> helping (being needed, rescuing)
	<input type="checkbox"/> hobbies

<input type="checkbox"/> humanity <input type="checkbox"/> husband (admired as a husband/being a godly husband) <input type="checkbox"/> ideologies (doctrinal rightness, social or political cause/economics, goodness of human nature) <input type="checkbox"/> independence (from God, His word, parent, spouse, authority) <input type="checkbox"/> individualism <input type="checkbox"/> inner ring of people (friends, religious, co-workers) <input type="checkbox"/> internet/video games/electronic devices <input type="checkbox"/> irreligion (making own rules/being own authority) <input type="checkbox"/> knowledge/human reason/intellect/wisdom <input type="checkbox"/> law-rule keeping/moral record/legalism/piety <input type="checkbox"/> love <input type="checkbox"/> marriage (to be married, good marriage, romantic spouse, best friends) <input type="checkbox"/> material things/lifestyle (residence/possessions/automobile/best tickets) <input type="checkbox"/> medical treatment/holistic treatment <input type="checkbox"/> medication/psychotropic medication <input type="checkbox"/> ministry/spiritual gifts/religious activities	<input type="checkbox"/> money/wealth/financial security <input type="checkbox"/> mother (admired as a mother/godly mother) <input type="checkbox"/> music/musicians <input type="checkbox"/> parents/father/mother/grandparent <input type="checkbox"/> peace <input type="checkbox"/> performance of others (must do or will judge and withhold love) <input type="checkbox"/> performance of self (perform to own standard/perfectionism/accomplishment/tasks/goals/doing right/effects feeling good or bad) <input type="checkbox"/> person/leaders/specific leader/pastor <input type="checkbox"/> pleasure/luxury <input type="checkbox"/> pornography (sexual pleasure, fantasy sex, escape from life's responsibilities and problems, control including of women, being king for a few moments, seeking affirmation, applause, and/or appreciation, demand to be married) <input type="checkbox"/> position (title) <input type="checkbox"/> possessions <input type="checkbox"/> power <input type="checkbox"/> privacy <input type="checkbox"/> programs <input type="checkbox"/> psychotherapy/psychotherapist
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<input type="checkbox"/> race/culture <input type="checkbox"/> recognition//being noticed/affirmation/ glory <input type="checkbox"/> relationships (men, women, same sex, boyfriend, girlfriend) <input type="checkbox"/> religion/rituals <input type="checkbox"/> reputation/image <input type="checkbox"/> respect/spouse's respect/good opinion of others/admired/social standing/ popularity/fame/importance <input type="checkbox"/> retirement <input type="checkbox"/> romantic love/romantic spouse <input type="checkbox"/> satisfaction <input type="checkbox"/> science/technology <input type="checkbox"/> security/safety (financial, provision, from calamity) <input type="checkbox"/> self-sufficient/self-protection <input type="checkbox"/> self-worth/"self-esteem" <input type="checkbox"/> sex/pleasure (dwelling on or demanding sex, pornography, fornication, self-gratification, fetishism of object or body part) <input type="checkbox"/> significance <input type="checkbox"/> sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> spending money/shopping <input type="checkbox"/> sports/athletes/athletic ability <input type="checkbox"/> spouse <input type="checkbox"/> spouse's reputation/godly spouse (prayer, devotions, obedience, serving)/responsible/good communicator/relational <input type="checkbox"/> submissive wife <input type="checkbox"/> success <input type="checkbox"/> suffering <input type="checkbox"/> supplements/vitamins <input type="checkbox"/> talent/skill/competence <input type="checkbox"/> television/movies <input type="checkbox"/> travel <input type="checkbox"/> trouble-free life (hurt-free/suffering- free/disappointment-free) <input type="checkbox"/> victim (past trials, negative experience) <input type="checkbox"/> wife (admired as a wife/being a godly wife) <input type="checkbox"/> winning/competition/being right <input type="checkbox"/> work/career (respected, paid well, challenged, secure)/"workaholic" <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
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## Freedom from Idols

### 1. Recognize the Idol(s).

Name the idol so it is clear (e.g., security, money, control).

Take time to consider how the idol applies to the sin, bad results, and harm done in your life; and especially how it has usurped the place of God in your heart.

### 2. Take it to the Cross.

Do not despair because you are spiritually alive and God is working in you when there is a desire to change in this way. Remember that Jesus died to give you freedom from the old sinful desires. No idol died for your sins!

Repent by hating the idolatry and disloyalty to God (not just the consequences).

Pray to seek God's forgiveness and help as well as to express gratitude for what He has done for you. Because of Jesus, the idolatry has been paid for and there is the power to be set free.

Pray because only God can cause heart-level change.

## Questions for the Heart<sup>1</sup>

Please answer the following questions for your counselor's review. You do not have to answer every question if you feel some may be redundant in your case, but please be thorough. Pray and think carefully as heart issues are the root cause of the problems (sin, bad fruit or harm done) in a person's life. The questions aim to uncover functional gods in your life.

**1. What do you love? Hate?**

**2. What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?**

**3. What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?**

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (P & R Publishing, 2003) is the author of the questions.

**4. Where do you bank your hopes?**

**5. What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?**

**6. What do you feel like doing?**

**7. What do you think you need? What are your 'felt needs'?**

**8. What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?**

**9. What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? What do you organize your life around?**

**10. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, and security?**

**11. What or whom do you trust?**

**12. Whose performance matters? On whose shoulders does the well being of your world rest? Who can make it better, make it work, make it safe, make it successful?**

**13. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living? Whose love and approval do you need?**

**14. Who are your role models? What kind of person do you think you ought to be or want to be?**

**15. On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?**

**16. How do you define and weigh success and failure, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, in any particular situation?**

**17. What would make you feel rich, secure, prosperous? What must you get to make life sing?**

**18. What would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight? The greatest pain or misery?**

**19. Whose coming into political power would make everything better?**

**20. Whose victory or success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?**

**21. What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?**

**22. In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? Confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What are your escapes? What do you escape from?**

**23. What do you want to get out of life? What payoff do you seek out of the things you do?**

**24. What do you pray for?**

**25. What do you think about most often? What preoccupies or obsesses you? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively?**

**26. What do you talk about? What is important to you? What attitudes do you communicate?**

**27. How do you spend your time? What are your priorities?**



**28. What are your characteristic fantasies, either pleasurable or fearful? Daydreams? What do your night dreams revolve around?**

**29. What are the functional beliefs that control how you interpret your life and determine how you act?**

**30. What are your idols and false gods? In what do you place your trust, or set your hopes? What do you turn to or seek? Where do you take refuge?**

**31. How do you live for yourself?**

**32. How do you live as a slave of the devil?**

**33. How do you implicitly say, “If only...” (to get what you want, avoid what you don't want, keep what you have)?**

**34. What instinctively seems and feels right to you? What are your opinions, the things you feel true?**

**35. Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?**

## LOG LIST

*“Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin;  
and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (Jam 1:15).*

	Husband	Wife
<b>LUST - IDOLS OF THE HEART</b> (lies believed and misplaced worship)  <b>*POTENTIAL*</b>		
<b>SIN</b> (sinful behavior resulting from lies believed and misplaced worship)		
<b>DEATH - HARM DONE</b> (outcome from idols of the heart and other sins)		
<b>CONFESSION</b> (All involved)		