

## OVERCOMING IDOLATRY

God warns his people over and over again in the Old Testament, that if they didn't resist false gods of the nation's surrounding them they would be snared, and He would ultimately allow them to be taken captive. They didn't and He did. Over and over again in the book of Isaiah you hear this thought "Why in the world would you worship idols when you have been chosen by the sovereign God of the universe to be His own?"

We probably don't know anyone who kneels before golden statues or bows before carved images in our day. Yet idolatry is the number one issue in the Bible and that should get our attention.

Kyle Idleman, in his book *Gods at War* says "What if it's not about statues? What if the gods of here and now are not cosmic deities with strange names? What if they take identities that are so ordinary that we don't recognize them as gods at all? What if we do our "kneeling" and our "bowing" with our imaginations, our checkbooks, our search engines, our calendars?"

Idleman makes the point that it all comes down to what is happening in your heart. In Mt. 15:8 Jesus said of the religious leaders, "*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*" Later in the chapter Jesus says "*Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart and these defile them. From out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimonies, slander.*" You see we want to focus on the outside, but Jesus makes the point that it's all about what's inside. The heart is the battleground for the gods because everything flows from it.

Spend some time and think on these questions:

1. ***What disappoints you?*** When we feel *overwhelmed* by disappointment, it's a good sign that something has become far more than it should be. We've placed intense hope and longing in something other than God.
2. ***What do you complain about the most?*** Ask someone close to you about your typical complaints. If you are constantly complaining about your financial situation, maybe money has become too important. If you constantly complain about a lack of respect in the office maybe what other people think about you matters more than it should.  
*What we complain about reveals what really matters to us.*
3. ***Where do you make financial sacrifices?*** Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is.
4. ***What worries you?*** Is the idea of losing someone significant, losing your job, losing your house, or talent? It could be the fear of being ridiculed. Maybe it is the fear of

being alone. *Whatever it is that wakes you up at night – or for that matter keeps you up – has the potential to be an idol.*

5. ***Where is your sanctuary?*** Where do you go when you are hurting? To the refrigerator, to the phone to vent, do you seek escapes in magazines, books, television, video games, pornography? *Where do you look for emotional rescue?*
6. ***What infuriates you?*** Are you so competitive that you can't stand for your team to lose a pickup game at the gym? Could it be that being the best is your idol? How do you respond sitting in traffic? What about when someone embarrasses you or doesn't treat you with respect? What's the real issue? *Maybe your quick temper reveals the oldest idol of them all – the god of me.*
7. ***What are your dreams?*** What fantasy has a grip on you and puts a twinkle in your eye? Aspirations are fine, but the question is why you aspire to those things. *Is your motivation to give God glory or is your motivation your own glory, fame and fortune?*

God is jealous for your heart, not because he is petty or insecure, but because He loves you. The reason why God has such a huge problem with idolatry is that His love for you is all-consuming. He loves you too much to share you.

Here are some gods that Idleman lists in his book (you may think of others):

The god of food  
The god of sex  
The god of entertainment  
The god of success  
The god of money  
The god of achievement  
The god of romance  
The god of family  
The god of me

Spend some time this next week and think about this, pray about it, ask God to reveal the areas of your life that have taken first place. Think about sharing this area with one other believer and agree to pray for one another. Touch base with one another after several weeks to see what God is teaching you.