

THE IDOL FACTORY – Part 3

OVERVIEW:

In this 3rd session of a 4-part series, your group will engage the personal idols you uncovered in the last session, paying close attention to workplace idols. As the group leader, strive to avoid moralistic solutions (i.e. relying on self-effort to weaken an idol – “just try harder”). Rather, turn to the gospel and help your group find practical ways to apply the gospel’s truth to their lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The call to “have no gods before me” (Exodus 20:1-6) and to believe in Jesus alone for our salvation are, in essence, the same thing. As St. Augustine describes it, idolatry is a “disorder of love”.

Idols show us our hearts’ unique ways of failing to believe the gospel. The remedy to idolatry’s influence is not to “try harder” to push it out of our lives, but to reorder our hearts and minds to place God at the center.

Engaging Personal Idols

“Anything we look to more than we look to Christ for our sense of acceptability, joy, significance, hope and security is by definition our god—something we adore, serve and rely on with our whole life and heart. In general, idols can be good things (family, achievement, work and career, romance, talent, etc.—even gospel ministry) that we turn into ultimate things to give us the significance and joy we need. Then they drive us into the ground because we must have them. A sure sign of the presence of idolatry is inordinate anxiety, anger, or discouragement when our idols are thwarted. So if we lose a good thing, it makes us sad, but if we lose an idol, it devastates us.”

– Tim Kellerⁱ

- Idolatry reflects where we place our **TRUST** and **DEVOTION**. How have you seen this to be true in your own life?
- What attempts have you made to dislodge an idol in your life? What’s worked—and what hasn’t?

“We will never change unless we come to grips with the particular, characteristic ways our hearts resist the gospel and continue their self-salvation project through idolatry.”

- Tim Kellerⁱⁱ

Displacing Your Idols

In his Bible study series *The Gospel in Real Life*, Tim Keller identifies 3 approaches to dealing with idols.

Moralizing approach – Your problem is that you’re **DOING** wrong. Repent and change your behavior! This approach is ineffective because it doesn’t address the deeper belief that fuels idolatry—the thing you treasure that leads you away from God.

- Describe a time you attempted to weaken an idol through your own efforts. How’d that work for you?

Psychologizing approach – Your problem is that you don’t **BELIEVE** that God loves you as you are. This method is ineffective because the false beliefs or treasures still remain.

- Flesh this out a bit—why doesn’t believing in your own worth displace an idol?

Gospel approach - Your problem is that you’re looking to something besides Christ to satisfy your desire or ease a fear. Turn to God and rely on his love and strength to change your heart.

As a group, spend a few minutes displacing your idols:

- 1. Name your idols**
- 2. Repent of the idols** – Isaiah 30:15, Acts 3:19, I John 1:9
- 3. Rejoice in Christ** – Psalm 33:21, Romans 5:1-2

- Think of ways you can incorporate a gospel-based approach to dealing with idols into your daily life.
 - What triggers do you need to be aware of?
 - What signs (attitudes or behaviors) indicate an idol is influencing your life?
 - What would it look like to practice the steps above in the context of your job?

ⁱ Tim Keller. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.