



THE HEART OF CHANGE: IDOLS VS. THE LIVING GOD¹

I. WHAT ARE IDOLS? → Whatever controls you from the inside (other than Christ)

I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. But those who trust in idols, who say to images, "You are our gods," will be turned back in utter shame. Isaiah 42:8,16,17

The big issue: Are you serving the **ONE TRUE GOD**, or are you serving FALSE ONES?

a. OUTWARD FORM—making images of created things for the purpose of WORSHIP (heart affections and service) Exodus 20:4; Romans 1:21,22

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Romans 1:25-26

b. INTERNAL REALITY—a sinful nature that rejects God's RULE in the HEART, and puts the affections of the heart upon false "gods." It is called "spiritual adultery." In the New Testament is related to the "works of the sinful nature." Ezek. 14:4; 23:37; 1 Cor. 6:9; 10:6-10; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When any Israelite sets up idols in his heart and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face and then goes to a prophet, I the LORD will answer him myself in keeping with his great idolatry. I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols. Ezekiel 14:4-5

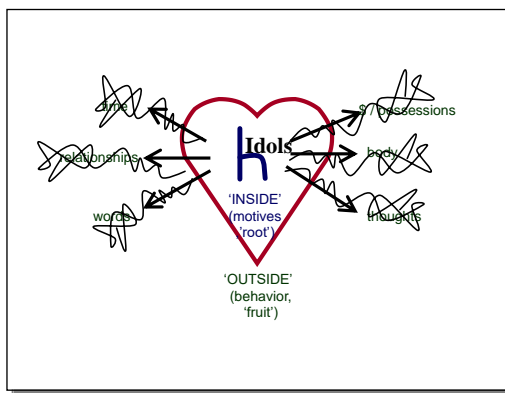
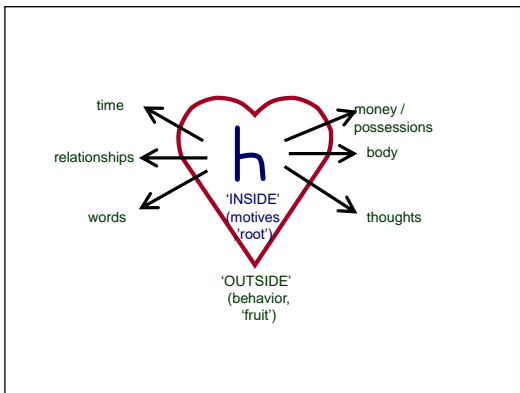
For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephesians 5:5-6

→ When people reject God they do not worship nothing; they will worship anything.

There are many unbelievers, but there are no non-believers.

Outward sin of any kind is always organically connected inner idolatry. The FRUIT always has a ROOT. Mark 7:21,22; Gal 5:19-21

→ THE CORE ISSUE FOR CHANGE: Who (or what) is on the THRONE of your HEART?



What causes wars and quarrels among you? Do they not come from your desires that encamp within you? You lust for something and do not get it. You murder and covet because you cannot have what you want.

James 4:1,2
(speaker's translation)

THE PROGRESSION OF AN IDOL

1. I DESIRE: "I want it."
2. I DEMAND: "I must have it."
3. I JUDGE: "I condemn you because you won't give it to me."
4. I PUNISH: "You die!"

¹ Many of these concepts are adapted from the brilliant work of David Powlison, throughout his writings.

**“SPIRITUAL MRI”
12 QUESTIONS TO
DISCERN IDOLATRY**

Basic Desires:

1. What do you WANT or EXPECT?
2. What do you think you NEED? (“felt needs”)

Emotions and Thoughts:

3. What do you get ANGRY about?
4. What do you get FEARFUL or ANXIOUS about?
5. What do you get SAD or DEPRESSED about?

[Note: Consider the thoughts going through your mind at the times when you feel each of these emotional states. The thoughts often reveal the desires that are driving those thoughts.]

Relationships:

6. Whose opinion really matters to you?
7. Imagine a group of PEOPLE talking about you. What do you want them to be saying?

What are afraid they might be saying?

8. When your “feelings are hurt” by others, what inner desires are being frustrated?

9. If you would “wave your magic wand” over the people around you, how would you change them?

Fulfillment:

10. Fill in the blank: “If only _____, then life would be worthwhile, happy, and fulfilled.”

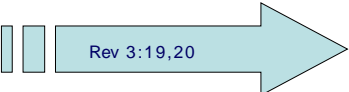
11. What are your typical FANTASIES and daydreams?

12. Picture an IDEAL DAY in your life ten years from now. Describe everything about it, in detail.


II. HOW CAN WE RESIST IDOLS?

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true---even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 John 5:19-21

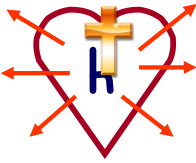


PRAY !



What to do with
your DESIRES?

SURRENDER !



LOVE !

God first, then
your neighbor

How do you handle your DESIRES to keep them from becoming idols?

PRAY! SURRENDER! LOVE!

(Love God first, then your neighbor—with the wisdom the Lord will give you.)

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but, through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment and offering forgiveness. I turn from my sin and receive you as Savior. Amen.

Prayer from Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York