

What is an idol?

It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.”

If anything in all the world is more fundamental than God to your happiness, to your meaning in life, then that thing has become an idol. It has supplanted God in your heart and in your affections. You will pursue that thing with an abandon and intensity that should be reserved for God alone.

First chapter, we are introduced to idols and what they can do to our lives.

Chapters two through five talk about the strong grasp idols have on people today, Talking about love and sex, money, success and power

Chapter six and seven uncovers for us the bottom line, why we have the idols in our life

And the Epilogue is where we are offered hope . We need to realize that idols cannot simply be removed. They must be replaced. If you try to uproot them, they grow back; but they can be supplanted. By what? By God himself.

And finally we read how to replace them

Introduction:

- 1) what is your first impression of the book? What hope or concerns did God reveal to you?

Chapter 1

- 2) What are some of the idols that can easily become a part of a persons life?

- 3) What things capture your heart? What do you daydream about? What do you fear the most?

- 4) Prayer can uncover your idols. Ask God to show you what may be capturing your heart that takes your attention away from God. Ask Him to reveal the hidden idols in your life

Chapter 1

- 1) Why was God's command to sacrifice Isaac even more extraordinary that it may first appear? Read Genesis 22:1-18. Isaac was not just called Abraham's son, but rather "your son, your only son" Isaac was everything to Abraham. And what does that exclude? Who and what is Abraham putting his son in place of? And what would Abraham's life be if and when his son ever disappointed him, as he put his son first and hung his every dream on his son?

Genesis 29: 16-20

1. What verse shows us the extent of Jacob's unhealthy obsession with Rachel?

2. What does this verse say about Jacob's character?

3. What does Tim Keller tell us could be the underlying reasons for Jacob's obsessions with Rachel and what do you think they are?

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4. Have you ever felt like this about having love in your life?

how did it feel? what are some of the consequences?

page 29

5. Idolatry can lead you to:

- break promises
- rationalize any indiscretion or sin
- betray other allegiances in order to hold onto it

Do you have any times in your life when any of these happened to you because of an idol in your life? because of a love in your life? Have you ever made someone out to be a god, fixer, final answer for your life, other than Jesus?

Why do you think we do this? pg40

6. How does this play out in the lives of:

- Jacob: page 32, 34

- Leah pg 35, 36

What verse shows us that Leah finally got rid of her idol Jacob and replaced him with our Lord?

Chapter 2 Love is Not all you Need

7. Jacob ended in sheer disillusionment (cosmic as Tim Keller puts it) as a result of putting all his hopes and dreams and even survival in having Rachel.

List the four responses we can have to cosmic disillusionment. pg39

1. —

2. —

3. —

4. —

8. Do you think it is only single people that need to know Christ as their bridegroom? pg44

9. What bottom line did you take away from this lesson? How does it relate to the redemption of all creation through Jesus Christ?

FINAL THOUGHT:

The power to overcome idols is found in Jesus Christ alone. He says I am the True Bridegroom. Christ came into the world, not through the beautiful, fit, wealthy, noble, famous, jet-setters, celebrities. But instead through the unwanted and unloved ones. He took upon himself our sins and died in our place. If we are deeply moved by the sight of His love for us, it detaches our hearts from other would be idols or saviors.

Chapter 3 Money Changes Everything

1. Why do you think it's so hard to see greed in ourselves?

Luke 16: 13-15

2. Idolatry does 3 things: (pg 56)
 - a. _____ explain:
 - b. _____ explain:
 - c. _____ explain:

A must do attitude for believers: Your identity and security must be in God, and then you won't be controlled by worry or desire

3. What is some of the back story on tax collectors? How did they operate? What were they allowed to do? How were they thought of, in the time of Jesus? What was their place in society?

Luke 19: 3-7

4. What do you think is the significance of Zacchaeus climbing a tree? What was the impact on Zacchaeus from Jesus asking to come to his house for dinner?

Chapter 3 Money Changes Everything

Luke 19: 8-10

5. Based on the what we are told about Zacchaeus , what role does sin play in our perceptions about Christ’s promise of salvation and how does a person overcome this? What can you take away from Zacchaeus’s story? pg 60

page 63

6. What does Zacchaeus’s story tell us about this order? Which of these two come first? put a number 1.

	we change our lives, live good, do the right thing and then we are saved
	we are saved and then we change our lives, we live good and do the right thing

7. What is Tim Keller saying when he talks about “counterfeit gods come in clusters? what is the connection and difference between surface and deep idols? pg 64

Chapter 3 Money Changes Everything

8. Deep Idols: Do any of these statements speak to you? About yourself, your friend/s, family? Can you see this being lived out in yourself or someone else you know?
- a. power: life only has meaning or I only have worth - if I have power and influence over others
 - b. approval: life only has meaning or I only have worth – if I am loved and respected by _____
 - c. comfort: Life only has meaning, or I only have worth if – I am able to get mastery over my life in the are of _____

Deep idols are a matter of your heart. How do we go about changing our hearts? When in your life do you see any deep idols taking control of your heart?

9. Surface Idols: pg 65

- a. love of money. superficial. deeper reason a person loves money could be for
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____

10. Can you just decide to not let the idol drive you and then just stop it? Will this end the sin this idol causes in your life? How do you overcome the sin and destroy the idol?

2 Corinthians 8:9

11. How do we root out the love of money in our own lives?

Chapter 3 Money Changes Everything

12. How does living a generous lifestyle demonstrate the gospel to others? in what ways are you challenged to be more generous?

FINAL THOUGHT:

What breaks the power of money over us is not the redoubled effort to follow the example of Christ. Rather it is deepening our understanding of the salvation of Christ, what we have in him and then living out the changes that that understanding makes in our heart.

Chapter 4: The Seduction of Success

February 26, 2011

1. What are some signs that you, or someone you know has made success/achievement an idol?

a. pg 72 _____

b. pg 74 _____

c. pg 75 _____

d. pg 75 _____

e. pg 76 _____

2. Read 2 Kings 5: 1-18

what is the backstory on Naaman. Who was he? what was his life like? What did he suffer from?

3. What was Naaman's plan to get his cure? How did these plans reflect his personality and how he viewed life? How did his overinflated sense of self and success affect his ability to deal with his problems? What was his operating system?

Chapter 4: The Seduction of Success
February 26, 2011

Final Thought:

Jesus's salvation is received not through strength but through the admission of weakness and need.

Chapter 5: The Power and the Glory

Overall thoughts on Chapter 5: A normal/flesh response to power is to believe we make our own, we will dominate other people and try to control lives. But Jesus shows us another way. We have to put our pride to death and turn to God for a life living for His glory, not our own. This creates a tender heart in us and we can love as Jesus loves.

Read Hebrews 3:12 - 14

1. There were two dreams that were troubling Nebuchadnezzar?
Read Daniel 2:31-35, the first dream.
What was that dream all about and why did it trouble (cause fear) Nebuchadnezzar?
pg 114
 - a. How much control do we have of our lives? How does that affect what we do and what happens to us?

2. As a believer, how are we to process this lack of control in our lives?
 - a. Read Luke 14:33
What does Paul say about this, he calls surrender? Phil 3:8

 - b. Read 1 Corinthians 4: 6-7
How and where does pride seep into our lives?
How does a works system make a person feel about who and what is in control?
What part does fear play in this work system?

 - c. How does God's grace system work when we surrender? What part does fear play?

Chapter 5: The Power and the Glory

3. The second dream. Read Daniel 4: 24-27. Do you see God's discipline working in this King's life? How?

4. Why does God discipline us? Read John 15:5-8

A little gardening wisdom: The vine's ability to produce growth increases each year, but without intensive pruning the plant weakens and its crop diminishes. Mature branches must be pruned hard to achieve maximum yields.

- a. Have you ever felt like you were in a "test of faith"?
Trials and hardships that asked you to surrender something (that you think has great value) to God, even when you felt you had every right not to? What was that all about?

- b. God doesn't apply pruning/pain when a more pleasant method will do. But pruning will be God's best answer to root out a deep desire that is causing sin. These events will draw you closer. How did an experience of pruning draw you closer?

- c. How did this pruning draw Nebuchadnezzar closer? Do you think it was worth it?

5. Which statement gives you comfort, and which does not?

- a. I earned my position by my own merit and works
- b. my success is a result of unmerited favor from God

Chapter 5: The Power and the Glory

Why? Where is the world in these 2 statements? Where do you see the world's statement being played out and glamorized?

Final Thought: By giving up our power and serving, we become all in, surrendered to Jesus. But we must first admit our sin, need and powerlessness and throw ourselves at His mercy. Then we will become secure in His love! And we will not want to oppress others.

Chapter 6 The Hidden Idols In Our Lives

So far we have looked at Personal idols

- Romantic love,
- Financial prosperity
- Political success

Tim Keller says these idols are easy to spot.

But there are others, that influence us but are more hidden. (pg 149)

1. When our hidden idol is focused on our future, and it doesn't happen or is threatened, what are the feelings we get? _____fear_____

When our hidden idol is focused on the past, and it went wrong, what are the feelings we get? _____guilt_____

When our hidden idol is focused on today, and it's not going where we want, what are the feelings we get? _____anger_____

Chapter 6 The Hidden Idols In Our Lives

Can you think of a possible hidden idol that is triggering feelings of fear, guilt, anger? Are these bad? What can make them dangerous or hidden idols?

Thoughts

- a. should be married
- b. should be financially secure
- c. should be healthy, fit
- d. had a wayward 20's
- e. let some people/family down
- f. need that promotion
- g. need that new apartment/ dress/ earrings/ couch....
- h. Need to be recognized for all I do

2. Have you experienced "if I cannot achieve X (pick one) then my life won't be valid"

Or "since I have lost or failed X, then I can never be forgiven and never be happy.

- a. can you remember a time when an event or a person got you SO ANGRY or SO SAD or SO LOST? What do you think was behind all of that?

b. Who is it who can reveal the hidden idol and restore you to a proper relationship? How? Does it happen to you?

Chapter 6 The Hidden Idols In Our Lives

3, Proverbs refers to a “scoffer” many times.

Read Proverbs 9:8 12:1 14:6 29:8

a. What is a scoffer and what is a mocker?

(taunts the good natured, shows contempt, insecure, makes fun of things/others, feels superior)

How are they worshipping _____ more than God?

What is it they are worshipping

(works system)

b. self justification – how does that play out in Church (pg 131)

4. The story of Jonah shows us 3 hidden idols in Jonah’s life (pg 136)

a. ministry success _____

b. national interest of country _____

c. moral self-righteous, felt superior _____

Where in your life are any of these hidden idols affecting your relationship with God? How do you think any of these hidden idols appear in your life?

Chapter 6 The Hidden Idols In Our Lives

5 Themes in Jonah: obedience, trust, surrendering to God.

Jonah loved himself more than being in an obedient relationship with God.

How did Jonah look at the people of Ninevah? What did he think of them?

Tim Keller says that contempt and disdain for others is a sign that we do not see our salvation as God's grace, but that we believe that we are so good we deserve and have earned God's Grace.

Pgs 138 & 139

- a. What do you think could block God's grace in your life?

- b. Do you think you or anyone can become spiritually blinded? How?

- c. What is the difference between an intellectual relationship with God and a heart felt relationship?

6. What does Tim Keller mean when he says Jesus is the ultimate Jonah? Meaning Jesus is what Jonah was asked to do, and couldn't.

- a. How does remembering and meditating on what Jesus did for us, for everyone, help us in our struggle with idols?

Final Thought: Thank God for sending his Son for us. Ask Him to forgive you for when you have desired some good things more than you ought. Ask Him to continue to reveal hidden idols in your heart.

Chapter 7 The End of Counterfeit gods

So far we have looked at different types of idols

- Romantic love,
- Financial prosperity
- Political success
- Hidden Idols

Now we are going to dive deep into 'how do we replace the idols?' so that we can be rid of them

1. Interesting thought from Tim Keller, pg 154 – that our enemies/problems are idols.

How can that be? Do you see that in your life? How is it an idol? What must it do to us to make this an idol? (it's all about becoming aware of the idols in our life)

2. The Returning Jacob and Esau

What does Tim Keller say the reason is that Jacob stole the birthright? Pg158

Can you see that? How does that relate to you?

Winning through weakness – what was the wrestling between Jacob and God really about?

What personal breakthrough did Jacob finally have?

Chapter 7 The End of Counterfeit gods

3. Galatians 4:6 and Galatians 3:13-14 How does this verse put into perspective for you on how to actually and finally replace your idol/s ?

4. Have you sensed through the Holy Spirit – God speaking to you?

What is that blessing that gives you the confidence and strength to replace your idol/s?

How does that make idols unnecessary? Pg 164

5. How do you or will you replace any idols you may have?

Epilogue: Finding and Replacing Your Idols

We are going to talk about how we recognize our idols and then how do we replace the idols.

Tim Keller talks about why we fail to keep our promises to God that we are going to remove the idols in our life. Page 166

1. Do you think you have made something more important to your heart than God himself? – human approval, reputation, power over others, financial advantage, a boyfriend or husband, how you look

There were four questions to meditate on to identify idols in your life. Let's talk about them

- what do you habitually think about to get joy and comfort in the privacy of your heart?

- What is your pattern of spending - what do you spend your money on?

- how do you respond when prayers don't get answered the way you want or expected?

- what gets you in a rage, mad, angry, cry?

Epilogue: Finding and Replacing Your Idols

2. Set your mind on heaven. How do you do this? What is his definition of worship?
(pg 172) Read (recite) Col 3:1-5

3. How do you “hate your sin” What most assures us of God’s unconditional love?

4. What is the secret to replacing your idols? Name them. How have you incorporated them into your life? What successes have you seen? What can you do, should you do, for the idols that are not replaced?