

INTRO

- What one thing do you enjoy doing when you have time all to yourself?
- Name three words that you associate with comfort?

READ

Isaiah 44:13-17

REFLECT

The picture Isaiah describes of the carpenter and the tree reminds us that the inclination or proclivity of our heart is to take that which God provides for our sustenance, or our pleasure, or our comfort, and turn those things into an idol or a god.

“gods: not who we look to for eternal life, but what we look to for daily life”

During the time of Isaiah, this picture of a carpenter and a tree would have been a clear illustration to the hearer.

Qu: What might be a comparable illustration today to communicate this message of idolatry?

RESPOND

According to the Bible, the heart is not just the seat of the emotions but also the source of our fundamental commitments, hopes, and trust. And from the heart flow our thinking, feelings, and actions. What the heart trusts, the mind justifies, the emotions desire, and the will carries out.

— Tim Keller

We are instructed in Proverbs to diligently guard our heart.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)

It will be our life long walk of faith to understand our heart, and our responsibility before God to guard our heart.

Qu: As we have considered idolatry and the gods that are at war for our affection, what have you seen in your own heart?

Qu: What is your heart drawn towards to put your hope and trust in? Are you looking for control? power? approval? comfort?

Qu: What are you tempted to look to for security, significance, self image, well being, safety, confidence?

Remember these practical steps:

1. **Name** your idol
2. **Expose** your idols in their inadequacy to ultimately save and satisfy you, in their danger to you, in how they grieve Jesus.
3. **Forsake** your idol and allow Jesus to take his rightful place in your attention, affection and allegiance again.
4. **REPEAT.**

PRAY

Consider Paul's words to Titus as you pray for one another:

- For God's grace to be evident in each of your lives.
- That by God's grace we would grow in our ability to identify, acknowledge, and confess our idolatry to live the lives God desires for us.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions (epithumia) and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Titus 2:11-13 (ESV)

IDENTIFYING YOUR POTENTIAL IDOLS

Use the following diagnostic questions to help you identify areas of potential idolatry in your heart. This can be done individually, or conversationally with people who know you well.

- What is really driving me?
- What is really depressing me?
- What is my chief joy?
- What goals must I obtain?
- What do I tend to fear or worry about?
- What do I manipulate others for?
- What do I crave or long for?
- What do I functionally trust in daily life?
- What makes my emotions most uncontrollable
- What consumes my thoughts or imagination
- What is more important to me than holiness
- What do I require for life to be meaningful?
- What do I have to resist spending too much money on
- What do I lean on when I'm distracted or bored or exhausted?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. [The Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#) — Thomas Chalmers (pdf)
2. [Counterfeit Gods](#) — Tim Keller (book)
3. [You Are What You Love](#) — James K.A. Smith (book)
4. [gods AT WAR sermon series](#) — Every Nation GTA :-)

HELPFUL QUOTES

The heart is so constituted that the only way to dispossess it of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.

— Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*

Idolatry is huge in the bible, dominant in our personal lives, and irrelevant in our mistaken estimations.

— Os Guinness

The opposite of theism is not atheism, it is idolatry.

— Peter Kreeft

We wants it.

We needs it.

Must have the preciouss.

— Gollum, *LOTR*

“My will be done.” Sounds like freedom, leads to slavery. “Thy will be done.” Sounds like slavery, leads to freedom.

— Matt Smethurst

If you wonder why you choose to worship other gods rather than wholeheartedly devote yourself to the Lord you love, examine the thought and desires that captivate your heart. That’s where you’ll find the answer to every sin and failure in your life. Don’t be deceived into thinking that you need to develop more willpower. We need to develop godly thoughts and desires.

— Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone*

Jesus is a teacher who doesn’t just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn’t content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; he is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, your longings.

— James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*