

*pleasing, slave like behavior. That form of idolatry flourishes when your heart craves whatever good they promise and fears whatever bad they threaten.)*

3. What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?
5. What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?
7. What do you think you need? What are your felt needs? (*Our “needs” are frequently taken as necessities to be acquired, not as deceptive slave-masters.*)
10. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security? (*This question helps us understand our functional saviors, our gods we run to when we want to escape, our false trust, our false refuges.*)
11. What or who do you trust? (*Trust is one of the major verbs relating you to God, or to false gods and lies.*)
12. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living? Whose love and approval do you need? (*When you lose God, you enter an jungle of distortion. You tend to live a blind, futile life – one where you believe you are wise but are truly a fool.*)

### *What do we actually need?*

1. You need the gospel.
2. You need to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.
3. You need to love your neighbor as yourself.

### Resources for further study:

- Articles and books to read:
  - *Overcoming Sin and Temptation* by John Owen, Taylor and Kapic eds.
  - *“Talking About Idolatry in a Pastmodern Age”* by Tim Keller.
  - *“Who Are We? Needs, Longings, and the Image of God in Man”* by Edward Welch, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 13, number 1. Fall 1994, pp. 25-38
  - *“Idols of the Heart and ‘Vanity Fair’”* by David Powlison. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 13, number 2. Winter 1995, pp. 35-50
  - *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Henry Sougal.
  - *The Peace Maker*, Ken Sande.

# The Idol Factory – Part 2

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## I. Review the definitions.

*“As modern people we usually think of an idol as an animal or human figure made of stone or wood. We see it as an object for religious devotion or magical power for premodern people who might prostrate themselves on the ground before it. If we have updated the idea at all, we might use ‘idolatry’ to describe someone’s obsessional preoccupations with money or of an ‘idol’ like Elvis Presley.*

*We have, in effect, distanced ourselves from the whole idea of idolatry by pushing it out to the extreme cultural and psychological margins of life. This distance has produced **two problems**: **First**, we misunderstand the most comprehensive description of the shape of unbelief used by the writers of the Bible. If we as Christians today see idolatry only at life’s margins, we will be ill-equipped to use this powerful critical tool as the apostles and prophets did - to understand and challenge the surrounding world.*

*The **second** problem is similar to the first but even more important. If we do not understand the nature of idolatry, we will not be able to recognize or guard against it in our own lives and communities...Overlooking idolatry makes us blind toward our own problems...Idols are not just on pagan altars, but in well educated hearts and minds. The apostle Paul associates the dynamics of human greed, lust, craving and coveting with idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). The Bible does not allow us to marginalize idolatry to the fringes of life. All too often it is found on center stage.” - Richard Keyes*

***“An idol is not simply a statue of wood, stone, or metal; it is anything we love and pursue in place of God, and can also be referred to as a ‘false god’ or a ‘functional god.’ In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on (Luke 12:29; 1 Cor. 10:6), that motivates us (1 Cor. 4:5), that masters or rules us (Ps. 119:133), or that we serve (Matt. 6:24).”***

*- Ken Sande*

*“An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as God. All sorts of things are potential idols, depending only on our attitudes and actions toward them...Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God’s existence or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly*

good...An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero - anything that can substitute for God.”  
- Richard Keyes

### What's the danger of idolatry?

“It untunes and unframes the heart itself by entangling its affections. It diverts the heart from the spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God; it lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, so expelling the love of the Father (1 John 2:15; 3:17); so that the soul cannot say uprightly and truly to God, “You are my portion,” having something else it loves. Fear, desire, hope, which are the choice affections of the soul, that should be full of God, will be one way or other entangled with it.”  
- John Owen

“The person who understands the evil in his own heart is the only person who is useful, fruitful, and solid in his beliefs and obedience. Others only delude themselves and thus upset families, churches, and all other relationships. In their self-pride and judgment of others, they show great inconsistency.”  
- John Owen

**“The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much.”**

- John Calvin

## II. Examine the pattern in Romans 1:18-32

### What do you get when you live for your idols?

- Futility (v.21) – “but they became futile in their thinking...”
- Darkness (v. 21) – “and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
- Inversion (v. 22) – “Claiming to be wise, they became fools...”

### The Three Step Process

**Step 1:** We exchange God's glory for what we prefer.

**Step 2:** God gives us over to what we love.

**Step 3:** We prove our devotion by our actions; our symptoms show.

- What is the terrible tragedy here?
- What is the price? What is the nature of our punishment?

## III. How do we discern the idols in our lives?

### Scripture

- “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account,” **Hebrews 4:12-13.**

### Holy Spirit

- “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 ‘I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds’”, **Jeremiah 17:9-10.**
- “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” **Psalms 139:23-24.**

### Church

- “The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out”, **Proverbs 20:5.**
- “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” **Proverbs 12:1.**

### Circumstances

- **James 1:2-4, 9-11; 4:1-3**

### Behavior

- “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you,” **Colossians 3:5-10.**

## IV. Application.

### David Powlison's X-ray questions:

1. What do you love? Hate? (This is the first commandment question. There is no deeper question to ask of any person at any time. There is no deeper explanation for why you do what you do.)
2. What do you want, desire, crave lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey? (This summarizes the internal operations of the flesh in the NT. Sometimes we let others be our “god” – peer pressure, people-