

What is an Idol? An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as a substitute for God. All sorts of things are potential idols. 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. As soon as our loyalty to anything leads us to disobey God, we are in danger of making it an idol.

That most basic question which God poses to each human heart: has something or someone besides Jesus Christ taken title to your heart's functional trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight?

Identify Your Idols

1) Use 'problem emotions/fears, loves, desires' to identify idols: If you are *angry/fearful or badly worried/despondent or hating yourself*. Ask, "is there something too important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am angry - because I am being blocked from having something I think is a necessity when it is not? Is that why I am so scared - because something is being threatened which I think is a necessity when it is not? Is that why I am so down - because I have lost or failed at something which I think is a necessity when it is not.

Answer these diagnostic questions:

- what is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about most?
 - What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live? What keeps me going?
 - What do I rely on or comfort self with when things go bad or get difficult?
 - What do I think most easily about? What does my mind go to when I am free? What preoccupies me?
 - What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?
 - What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I the proudest of?
 - What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?
- Now that you've answered the questions, look for common themes. What are your "functional" masters? What things tend to be too important to you?

2. Use motivational drives to identify idols We often don't go deep enough to analyze our idol-structures. For example, 'money' is of course an idol, yet in another sense, money can be sought in order to satisfy very different, more foundation or "far" idols. For example, some people want lots of money in order to control their world and life (such people usually don't spend their money, but save it) while others want lots of money for access to social circles and for making themselves beautiful and attractive (such people do spend their money on themselves).

<u>Far Idol</u> <u>What we seek</u>	<u>Price willing</u> <u>to pay</u>	<u>Greatest</u> <u>Nightmare</u>	<u>Others oft</u> <u>feel</u>	<u>Prob</u> <u>Emotion</u>	<u>Far Idol</u> <u>What we seek</u>
COMFORT (privacy, lack of stress, freedom)	Reduced Productivity	Stress, Demands	Hurt	Boredom	COMFORT (privacy, lack of stress, freedom)
APPROVAL (affirmation, love, relationships)	Less Independence	Rejection	Smothered	Cowardice	APPROVAL (affirmation, love, relationships)
CONTROL (self-discipline, certainty, standards)	Loneliness; lack of spontaneity	Uncertainty	Condemned	Worry	CONTROL (self-discipline, certainty, standards)
POWER (success, winning, influence)	Burdened; responsible	Humiliation	Used	Anger	POWER (success, winning, influence)
SECURITY (safe place, protection)	Co-dependent, Driven	Hurt, Vulnerable	Controlled	Stress	SECURITY (safe place, protection)

Dismantling Your Idols

1. First Step = Repent: (Taking Down the Idols) God calls you to repent. You have been worshipping an idol and rejecting the true God. Every idol is the center of some system of works-righteousness by which we are seeking to “earn” our salvation, so you are also trying to be your own Savior. You must repent. But this actually gives much hope. It means there is something you can do.

a) Name the idols in your life...Lord, these are the things I have built my life and heart around.

b) unmask the idols. Idols create “delusions”. They appear more wonderful or all powerful than they really are. Stand back and get them into perspective. Recognize how weak and poor they (your idols) are in themselves. Recognize how dangerous they are to you. (Idols enslave, and they will never be satisfied). Realize how they increasingly destroy you. Recognize how grievous they are to Christ. Idols ultimately are cruel to the heart of the one who offers us so much, and at such infinite cost. Realize that when you pine after idols that you are saying, “Lord, you are not enough. This is more beautiful, fulfilling, and sweet to my taste than you. You are negotiable, but this is not. Despite all you’ve done for me, I will only use you as long as you help me get this. You are negotiable, but this is not. You haven’t done enough for me - if you don’t help me have this, I will discard you.”

c. In prayer: praise God for being the only source of what you need, ask a strong God for his help to overcome your idols, admit how deeply you have grieved and de-valued Jesus, and ask forgiveness.

2. Second Step = Rejoice: (Replacing the Idols). God calls you to tremendous joy and encouragement. What you have turned from is the beauty, love, and joy of Christ. He offers what you have been seeking elsewhere. He awaits you, he “stands at the door” knocking (Rev. 3:20), seeking far deeper connection of intimacy with you than he has had previously. It is by rejoicing and resting in what Jesus has done and offers you that you will “replace” the idol.

a) Rejoicing in Christ. What does it mean to “rejoice” or “set your mind” on Christ? “Rejoicing” in the Bible is much deeper than simply being happy about something. What you rejoice in is the thing that is your central sweetness and consolation in life. To rejoice is to treasure a thing, to assess its value to you, to reflect on its beauty and importance until your heart rests in it and tastes the sweetness of it. So “rejoicing” is a way of praising God until the heart is sweetened and rested, and until it relaxes its grip on anything else it thinks that it needs. Thus, it is only as we rejoice in the absolute certainty of his love for us that we can truly repent.

How should we rejoice?

(1) Rejoice in Particular: To replace idols so they cannot grow back, you must learn to rejoice in the particular thing that Jesus brings that replaces the particular idol of your heart. Whenever you see your heart in the grip of some kind of disobedience or misery, some temptation, anxiety, anger, etc. always ask, 1) How are these effects being caused by an inordinate hope for someone or some-thing to give me what only Jesus can really give me? 2) How does Jesus give me so much more fully and graciously and suitably the very things I am looking for elsewhere? Then rejoice and think of what he has done and what he has given you.

(2) Rejoicing in Process: This is meditation and worship. Rejoicing in Christ is worship. You can get no relief simply by “figuring out” your idols and simply saying, “but Jesus gives me peace that this idol cannot.” You have to actually get that peace that Jesus gives, and that only comes as you worship. So it is not only important to spend time repenting and rejoicing in fixed times of solitude and prayer. You must also “catch” your heart falling into idolatry during the day, and you must draw on your hard work of reflection by learning to quickly repent/rejoice your heart into shape on the spot.

Example: When filled with anxiety, thinking: “If I slip up, if I make a wrong move here, I could lose everything.” But think or pray instead, “All the things I have are really gifts of grace. They aren’t here because of my performance, but by God’s generosity. He loves me enough to lose his only Son for me, surely he will continue to give me what I need. Console yourself with the faithful love of Christ.”