

## Soul Care and Identifying Idols

“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Augustine

“Man’s heart is a perpetual idol factory.” John Calvin

“Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.” Martin Luther

### What Is an Idol?

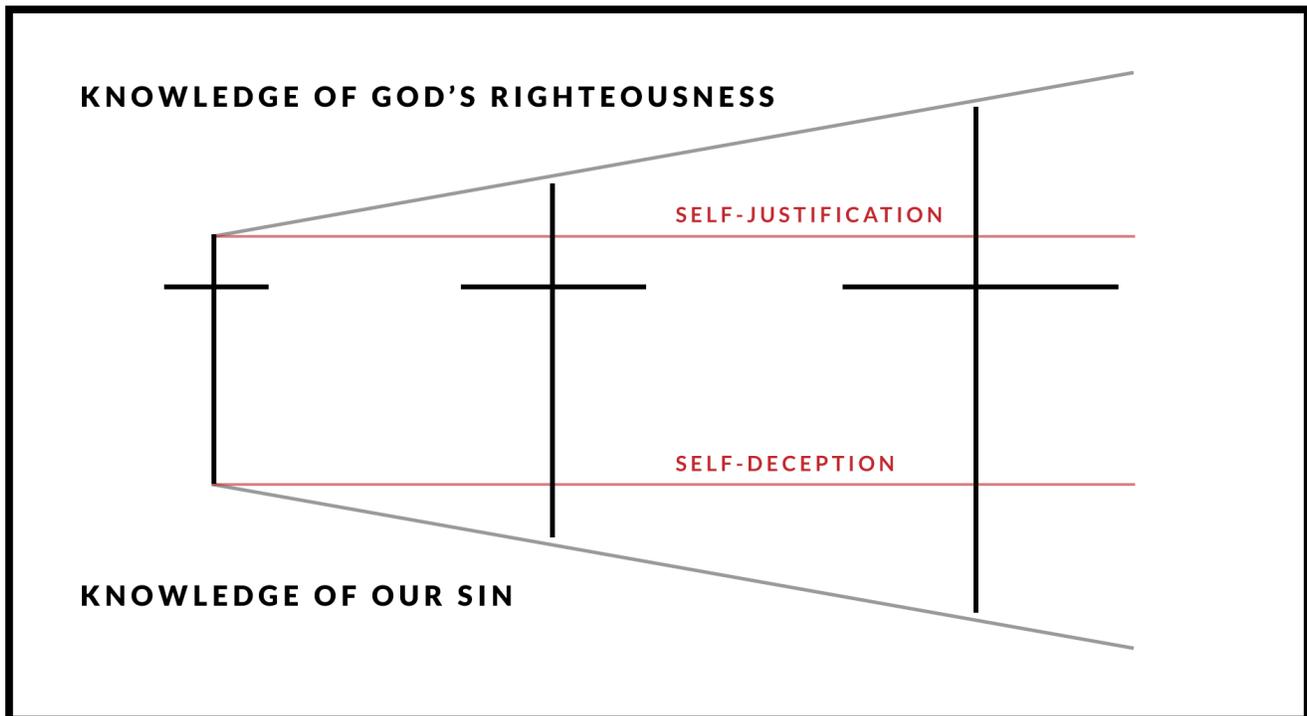
An idol, then, is anything you look to for ultimate happiness, identity and meaning in life other than God. Idols make promises but fail to deliver the ultimate satisfaction that can only come from the sources of happiness and meaning in life- God himself.

### How Do You Identify an Idol?

David Powlison says we should ask: Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to your heart’s trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear, and delight?

### The Power of Idols

Idols make empty promises to deliver heart satisfaction (happiness, identity and meaning) but leave us empty and enslaved to their temptation and deception. Not all idols are evil in themselves. This means anything can become an idol, including good things, such as career, family, achievement, independence, a political cause, material possessions, certain people in dependence upon you, power and influence, physical attractiveness, romance, human approval, financial security, your place in a particular social circle or institution.



**Self-justification** is believing that nothing needs to change; you are just fine as you are.

**Self-deception** is denial that you have sinful idols.

Below is a chart that asks deeper questions into the self-deception of believing false promises along with the certainty of Christ's work done on your behalf.

**What does it mean for the cross to grow in your life? We must repent of false messages and believe the gospel that brings true and lasting joy! Joy is found in cross-bearing.**

<b>Idols- False Belief about Self “Desire below the desires”</b>	<b>Alienation and Impact of False Beliefs</b>	<b>God’s Answer that leads to life in Him.</b>
<b>Performance “I am what I do”</b>	I am tempted to believe I am what I do. I am controlled by the avoidance of <b>anxiety and guilt.</b>	<b>Justification-</b> We are made right with God through Christ and he accepts us and brings peace because of what Jesus has done.
<b>Provision “I am what I have”</b>	I define what I need and the strategies to acquire it. I focus on provision in attempting to avoid being controlled by <b>fear.</b>	<b>Sanctification-</b> We are free from the bondage of sin as we live in light of God’s love, possessing all we need to do his will.
<b>Popularity “I am what others think of me”</b>	I am tempted to believe I am not complete without the acceptance of others. I am driven by <b>pride</b> that seeks to avoid <b>shame.</b>	<b>The Indwelling Spirit</b> reminds us that we are not alone, producing humility and reminding us that we have been accepted and adopted into God’s family as those who belong.
<b>Power “I am what I can control.”</b>	If I can control my circumstances, others, and myself, I can avoid <b>despair and disappointment.</b>	<b>Authority</b> in spiritual conflict comes from God’s promise that reminds us of the hope we have in a Savior who is making all things, including us, new. I rejoice in his control of my life.

## Idolatri Questions

“Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... \_\_\_\_\_”

### Performance Idolatri

- I am highly productive and getting a lot done. (Work Idolatri)
- I am being recognized for my accomplishments, and I am excelling in my work. (Achievement Idolatri)
- I have a particular kind of look or body image. (Image Idolatri)

### Provision Idolatri

- I have this kind of pleasure experience, a particular quality of life. (Comfort Idolatri)
- I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions. (Materialism Idolatri)
- I work in a profession that is prestigious and respected. (Position idolatri)

### Popularity Idolatri

- I am loved and respected by \_\_\_\_\_. (Approval Idolatri)
- People are dependent on me and need me. (Helping Idolatri)
- Someone is there to protect me and keep me safe. (Dependence idolatri)
- This one person is in my life and happy to be there, and/or happy with me. (Individual person idolatri)
- A particular social grouping, race or professional grouping or other group lets me in. (Inner ring idolatri)
- My children and/or my parents are happy and happy with me. (Family idolatri)

### Power Idolatri

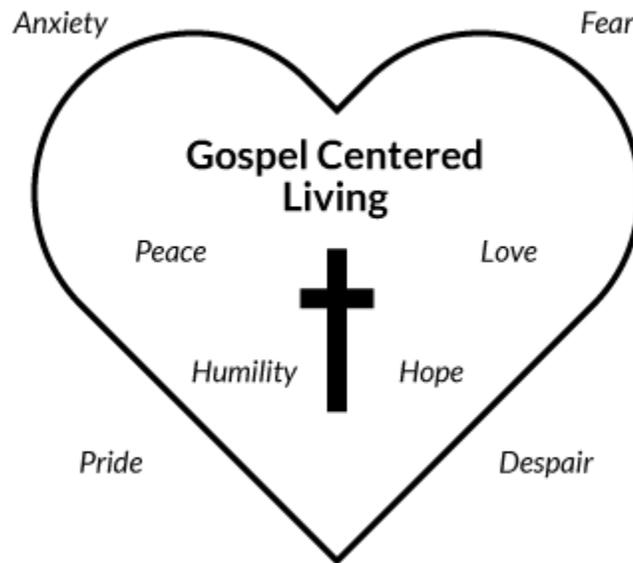
- I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of \_\_\_\_\_. (Control Idolatri)
- I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone. (Independence Idolatri)
- I have power and influence over others. (Power Idolatri)
- I am adhering to my religion’s moral codes and accomplished in its activities. (Religion Idolatri)
- I feel I am totally independent of organized religion and am living by a self-made morality. (Irreligion Idolatri)
- I am hurting, in a problem; only then do I feel worthy of love or able to deal with guilt. (Suffering Idolatri)

## The Importance of Discerning Idols

Idols are the deeper patterns of “the flesh” that we must discern beneath our behavioral sins. Idolatrous desires for performance, provision, popularity and are roots of the flesh that can continue to control our lives even as religious people.

## How Do You Identify Idols?

Root motivations of pride, anger, despair and fear can still be shaping our behavior because transformation must take place at the level of the heart.



## Living in the Power of the Gospel

1. Identify the idols that impact your heart and shape both your attitudes and your behavior.
2. Go back to the chart above and confess to God the deception and temptation that the idol is causing in your heart.
3. Repent of that idol and apply the gospel truth to your heart.
4. Remind yourself to look to the Holy Spirit to speak truth to your heart and to respond properly when you are tempted to live in anxiety, anger, pride, fear or despair.
5. Praise God that Christ has freed you from measuring your worth in value based on what you do, what you have, what others think of you, or what you can control.

## Luke 10: 38-42

Martha's idolatry expressed itself in her distraction, distraught disposition and her demanding spirit. Jesus deals with her tenderly, with truthfulness and invites her to treasure listening to his Word as her highest priority. This is a picture of repentance and faith and the engagement Jesus gives us by identifying our heart idols and inviting us to turn from those idols and turn to him for happiness, identity and meaning in life. Loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind means that we orient our lives to receive his love and to love him back. Loving God involves God-centered living.

**Begin to set aside regular time daily to cultivate intimacy with God (soul care) and prioritize the Sabbath to regularly discover what it means to “find your rest in him.”**