

Presence//3-Devotion//Exodus 20:1-5

I want to tell you about something very important coming up for the whole church is Friday.. Annual SENT conference. You know that our mission as a church is to plant 1000 churches and bless 1000 cities. This Friday night you can hear about what we're doing; where we're involved; you'll hear how you and your small group can be involved; we're going to pray.

'I don't feel called to ever really go.' It doesn't matter. We believe "sending" is not the assignment for a few of us, but for all of us. Our God is a sending God, and to know Him and walk with Him is to be part of the SENDING process. This is going to be good... great music, I'll be teaching 2x, and I think you're going to learn a ton, and you're going to be so inspired some of you are going to speak in tongues.

Details are in your worship guide... or on the website.

When people ask me what the biggest lesson I've learned in being a pastor for the last 7 years, I almost always tell them that it's that I seem to have to repeat things numerous times before people get it. I used to think that I'd say things once and there, everybody'd get it. Now, I know that's not true... sometimes I'll say something like 10 times and on the 10th time somebody will be come up and be like, "Pastor, that's awesome. I can't believe I've never thought about that before." I would be like, "I can't either because I've said it like 9 other times and I've even watched you write it down before."

- Here's my rule: I'm sick of saying it, then our leaders have just started to get it. *When they're* sick of hearing it, everybody else is just starting to get it." So, if you're sick of hearing it, just feel good about yourself that you are a leader and realize that someone around you is probably just starting to get it.

Here it is: The big point in the Exodus was not the slavery that they were delivered out of; the big point is what they were being delivered up unto, knowing God.

Exodus makes this point to us in two ways.

- First, there is what God says to Pharaoh: "Let my people go... that they might worship me." What is the point of all the Exodus? Worship. What is the point of all that God does in your life? That you might know Him, enjoy Him, love Him, desire Him, walk with Him. It's the only thing that makes Christianity worthwhile.
- Secondly, you get this idea from the whole layout of the book of Exodus. The first 18 chapters are all action: plagues and the death eaters and the Red Sea... but then the last 21 chapters are conversations and laws and pictures about what it

means to know God. The point of the first 18 chapters, the Exodus, is knowing the God revealed in the last 21 chapters.

Let me make this note again: in churches we often do a pretty good job of talking about what Jesus has saved us from: sin. What we don't do a good job of talking about is what Jesus has saved us unto... in a lot of the Christian music I was familiar with growing up we talked a lot about Jesus taking us to heaven, going to the streets of gold and the sweet by and by... but the point of Jesus' work was not simply taking us to heaven but getting the God of Heaven into us. The Lord's prayer is not "God, get us out of here," but God, "let your kingdom come, let your will be done... on earth, like it is in heaven."

Well, that's point of this whole *Presence* series: **The purpose of all that Christ has accomplished for us is that we might know and worship God** (to stand in awe of Him—that was our first message); and **to delight in and crave and enjoy His presence** (which was the subject of our 2nd message).

Well, in light of all that, how God opens up Exodus 20 makes perfect sense. This is the beginning of the 10 commandments.

Exodus 20:1-5 *And God spoke all these words: ² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me.*

God is saying, "I have brought you up out of political slavery; now I'm going to deliver you from the *real* slavery: slavery to idolatry. You have been freed politically; now I going to free you spiritually! So,

⁴ *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..."*

Proper worship of God and devotion to Him was to be the foundation of Israel's true freedom.

What I want to show you today is firstly what idolatry is; then, why it is the mother of all sins; then why idolatry is slavery, and lastly how we can escape it.

I. What idolatry is

Now, the word 'idolatry' conjures up images of primitive people bowing down...

- This summer my wife and I went to Athens, Greece ... She'd always wanted to go because she says I'm built kind of like a Greek god.
- In the older parts of Athens you can see that they literally had temples to idols on every corner...
 - Some of your big idols:
 - **Artemis:** goddess of prosperity, money
 - **Athena:** the goddess of intelligence and political prowess. In her temple they had this picture of Zeus' head being split open and her being taken out... pretty gross. But if you wanted to be smart, to have wisdom, you worshipped her.
 - **Nike:** the goddess of victory, worshipped by athletes and warriors and Michael Jordan, who made you run faster, jump higher, and soar above the competition.
 - **Aphrodite:** goddess of sexuality, beauty. You worshipped her by having sex with the temple prostitutes.
 - **Cloacina** the goddess of the sewer system. Not sure who worshipped her or exactly how you make an offering to her... don't want to know... sometimes we light a candle in our bathrooms, not sure if that counts.
- Most of us think, "Well, I don't worship idols like that," so this first commandment is irrelevant to me...
- But don't be so naïve.
- An idol is anything you look to do what only God can do in your life. An idol is anything so central and essential to your life that you couldn't imagine being happy or secure without it; something so important that, if you lost it, you'd feel like life is hardly worth living.
- Idolatry is not so much about what you bow your knees to; it's what you lean your soul on.
- For example, we may not kneel down to images of Artemis, the god of success, but we couldn't imagine being happy without it so we sacrifice all kinds of things to it.
- You have such a drive to succeed that you sacrifice your family to it;
- or, if you're a student, you obsess about graduating with the right GPA and getting the right job;
- We may not literally bow down to Nike, the god of victory, but...
- Every day we turn on the news we hear about athletes ravaging their bodies and compromising their integrity taking steroids in attempt to try and become the greatest player of all time. (**The Natural:** Robert Redford: I just want to walk down the street and have everyone say, "There he is, the best that's ever been.") They could have been happy and wealthy being a good player, but to be a great player they sacrificed *everything*.
- We may not physically kneel down to images of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and sex, but...
- Girls obsess over their bodies, and struggle with depression and jealousy toward girls prettier than them; some struggle with eating disorders in an attempt to get the perfect body

- Others feel like there is no way they could be happy single, so they are driven to get married, willing to compromise their standards or just about anything to be in a relationship;
 - Others feel like they need good romance so bad that they'll feel like, "I've got to get out of this marriage so I can find good romance," and they're willing to walk out on their kids (or to sacrifice them) and walk away from what they know the Bible teaches about staying faithful to your marriage in pursuit of this god.
 - Or I think about Eliot Spitzer... former Gov of NY; he won the election by a record margin; his prospects were incredibly bright (he was a rising star in the Democratic party); you had to think he really believed in his mission; by all accounts he had a great family; gave it all up for a 22 year old call girl from Washington who promised her services to him for \$4300. (or, our own John Edwards). That's the worship of Aphrodite.
 - An idol is not necessarily a bad thing... Usually an idol is simply a good thing that becomes an ultimate thing. I've heard it said like this: **An idol is a good thing that becomes a God thing and so becomes a bad thing. (Mark Driscoll)**
 - Word for glory in Hebrew is the word *kabod* which means "weight." To give glory to something is to give weight to it. You worship something when you give it the weight you should only give to God.
- All of you are worshippers, whether you or religious or not. You can no more turn your worship drive off by not being religious than you can turn your sex drive off by being single.

Vs 5 shows you exactly what an idol is by giving you the 3 ways you relate to an idol: *5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..."*

- **3 key words in that verse: jealous (about what you love), serve (what you trust in), bow down (what you obey)**

Vs. 5: "JEALOUS"

- Image of a marriage. God is jealous for our love and devotion like a husband is jealous for his wife's love. So there's the first part of your definition: **Jealous = (A) An idol is anything we love more than God.**
- Now, I know unfortunately for many of jealousy is a negative word, because we associate things with it like possessiveness and obsession: the husband who wants his wife at home and never talking to another man. And true, there is a possessive, obsessive, selfish, controlling, jealousy.
- But then there's also healthy jealousy.
- I want my wife to love me more than any other man—I want her to delight in me and desire me more than any other man... I am jealous for her affections, for her sake *and* for mine... and for the sake of our kids.

- Right now I am jealous for my kids' trust... As their father, I want them to trust me more than they trust their friends. Her friends think that the doodlebops hung the moon and that the Jonas Brothers are the pinnacle of wisdom.
- In the same way, God is jealous for our emotion and our devotion and our trust. He is to be absolutely pre-eminent in all of our thoughts and affections: nothing is to excite us, entice us, or capture our imaginations like He does.
- Objection: "That makes God sound selfish." Think of it this way... every year, the earth rotates around the sun. Right there in the middle of our 8 planets and whatever Pluto is... Kharis: "No, Dad, 8." What? "8. Pluto was recused as a planet." I know; plus, you're not even using the word recused right... OK, well if the sun was a person, had a spirit and thoughts, and loved the earth, it would desire that it stay the center of the earth's orbit. Why? If not, the earth will freeze and die. The sun is "jealous" for the devotion of the earth; it wants the earth to stay centered on it.
- In the same way, we were created for God, so HE is jealous not just for His sake, but for ours. He knows that we can never, ever be happy or fulfilled until we are centered on Him, as He designed us to be.
- **So, an idol is anything you love more than God.** Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination and evokes your emotions more than God;
 - So, let's ask a question: What do you love most in life? What are you most passionate about having?
 - Here's how you can tell: It's what you dream about most. What do you dream about? About what do you think, "Man, if I could ever just have *that*, I'd be happy."
 - Great marriage
 - Great sex
 - Great body
 - To be regarded as the best in your field
 - To be rich
 - For a lot of guys in seminary, it's to have a big successful church and ministry
 - HS: For people at your high school to really respect and admire you
 - To have a happy family
 - What do you dream about? What's on your mirror that you are working hard to obtain? What do you sacrifice most for? Sacrifices are what you do for an idol, right? What do you really *sacrifice* for?
 - Getting good grades or getting ahead?
 - You put getting ahead before your relationship to God;
 - You'd sacrifice your friends or your family to it;

- in a pinch, you are even willing to sacrifice your integrity by cheating if you have to.
- All this comes from loving something more than you love God.

Vs. 5: "SERVE"

- When you serve an idol, you do so because of something it can give you: **success, happiness, safety, love, satisfaction**. **An idol is something you trust with your future.** There's part 2 of definition...
- **"Serve"= (B) An idol is anything you trust in more than God**
- What do you most trust in to give you what you'll need for the future? Here, I'll tell you how you can figure this one out: Look at your nightmares. (What you love most is revealed by your dreams; what you trust in is revealed by your nightmares.)
- OK, so I have this silly, recurring nightmare of showing up in my underwear and completely unprepared to speak at large college events. **I had a version of it the other night**, but it was about the church: I showed up here on Sunday morning but somehow had forgotten I had to preach so I stand up here totally unprepared and I look down at my notes page and it was completely blank... and in my dream I just stared out at y'all and y'all just sort of stared back at me... and I tried to tell a joke and it totally bombed... people at West Club start sniggering and twittering about me to each other **@pastorjdgrear is an idiot**) and everyone at Cole Mill got up to go refill their coffee... and then I woke up, and it took me a few seconds to figure out I was dreaming... (then I woke Veronica up and told her we were going to have to quit drinking so much before we went to bed...) **Here's the serious part of this: I have this fear of being humiliated and not being respected in life.** The admiration of people is an idol for me. *And I bow down to it, a lot.*
- I work hard to be a success and try to pump up the church because I feel like then everyone will think well of me.
- It's why I worry about the church's future... and I have nightmares about the church falling apart... I have this fear that all of you, suddenly, are going to realize, all at once, **"J.D. is not that good of a preacher.** He only has like 5 sermons that he basically preaches over and over..." And then I show up one week and nobody is here because you've all gone to a new church, and it's just me and V in this big room... and she's sitting down front listening to Mark Driscoll on her IPOD while I preach...
- *What are your nightmares about? What do you worry most about losing?*
- Being poor?
- Running out of money in retirement?
- Always being a nobody?
- Never losing that 20 lbs?
- Your kids not turning out right, or losing your husband to death or divorce?

- Take my wife... she loves the church, but isn't obsessed with worry, like I am, about the prospect of it not doing well, because her identity is not wrapped up in it. She could be happy at a much smaller, not so successful church. But with her, it's different for our children... if one of them turns out badly, that reflects on her as a mother, which is her identity. Well, I love my kids, too, but my identity is not tied up in them. You see? We both love the church and our kids, but each one of us has our identity wrapped up in one of them. I've turned the church and she has turned the family into an idol that we've built our identity and happiness upon.
- Here's another way of coming at this question... **Where do you turn for comfort? What do you trust in when things go badly?**
- When you get depressed; when things are stressful... where do you turn?
 - Bottle of wine; drug;
 - gambling;
 - internet gaming;
 - pornography
 - Ladies: **shopping**. You get depressed and medicate with plastic. You can handle anything if you have the right shoes.
 - **Maybe food is your comfort**: Here's what sometimes happens with an anorexic... she needs a great body to feel good about herself, but she also turns to food for comfort. Causes her to live in a cycle of binge (for comfort) and purge (for her image). *2 gods in conflict: her god of comfort and her god of identity.*
 - For some girls, the only way they feel good about themselves is constantly to have a boyfriend. Serial daters. The attention of a guy is their comfort; it medicates them.
 - Maybe for comfort you turn inwardly to something about yourself that tells you that you are really ok, or that things are going to be ok.
 - *Saving Private Ryan*: "Just tell me I'm a good man." Finds redemption in the opinion of his wife. Sweet and pathetic! That's a lot of weight to put on your wife.
 - For some of you, when you are feeling bad about yourself, you tell yourself, "I'm a good person; a good mother."
 - Maybe in high school you feel rejected by your peers but you think, "Well, I'm ok... because I'm smart. Maybe you're artistic and you've resolved that even if no one else ever sees it, I'll just delight in myself and how creative and deep and beautiful I am on the inside.
 - For some of us what tells us we're ok is that we're more religious than everyone else... that's us. Doing bad in school... feel inferior... well, I know God and none of these people do:
 - Maybe we have a certain theological system we're proud of. I'm Pentecostal; Reformed; Baptist—makes you better.
 - Or, maybe it's your political position: You feel really good about yourself because you believe in sweeping health

reform or because you buy local, eat organic, and you recycle; others of you on the other side of the fence feel superior because you believe in small government and John Stossel tells you that, statistically, you give more to the poor than the commie-pinko liberals in this country.

“BOW DOWN”

- An idol is anything that we bow down to... something that commands our obedience. It speaks, we obey. **“Bow down”= (C) An idol is anything you obey more than God:**
- What we love is revealed by our dreams; what we trust in is revealed by our nightmares; what we are slaves to obey is revealed by our **most unyielding emotions. Here are some examples:**
- What are you most **bitter** about? When you think back on life, what has made you the most bitter?
 - Chances are it’s connected to an idol. You wanted a family and your husband left you, or you never got married;
 - You wanted a spot on the team or to have a certain job and you were overlooked.
 - Or maybe you just wanted to love of your dad. Not a bad thing, it just became an idol to you.
- What has triggered times of **depression** in your life? Lack of success? Maybe controversy or people criticizing you? Maybe a lost relationship?
- Who is it that you just can’t bring yourself to **forgive**? Chances are that the person you can’t forgive robbed you of an idol and that’s why you are unable to forgive them.
- **A pastor tells a story about two women who were very bitter against their husbands and couldn’t forgive them.**

One of them was a new Christian and the other was a very mature one. Both of them had a son were acting up as a result against their husbands, and so the woman who was a new Christian ended up forgiving her husband; but the woman who was a more experienced Christian could not. And one reconciled and one went to divorce. The pastor said that looking back years later he could see that the reason the more experienced Christian could not forgive was because, in the absence of her husband’s love, she had turned her own son into an idol. The only way she love in the world was through her son so if her son didn’t love her, she was crushed; she had nothing left. Because she depended on her son to live, she had an inability to forgive even if she knew she should. The other woman just loved her son and so she wasn’t as devastated and so she was able to forgive her husband and not let the ultimately healing.
- **What makes you lose your temper?** Again, chances are, it’s connected to an idol.
 - Some of you can’t control yourself when you’re disrespected: You get put down at work and you fantasize about shoving them into a woodchipper.
 - One of my favorite **Seinfeld** episodes where George gets put down at work and he spends the rest of the episode

plotting how to create a situation where he can really slam the person back—***the jerk store called, and they're running out of you (anyone?)***; You just can't handle when somebody disrespects you: you even about lose it when somebody you don't even know cuts you off in traffic like it's PERSONAL or something! (How dare they do that to *me*?) And you know this little voice is saying, "Walk away!" But you **CAN'T** because you have been disrespected, and you don't see yourself as a whole person if others don't respect you; see, they've attacked you at your core; it's attacked your *idol*.

- **How about urges you can't control?** This urge hits you and you feel like, "I've just got to have this."
 - Sexual urges: pornography; homosexuality; illicit extramarital sex;. For any of them you feel like, "I can't say no!" You feel like you can't live without the satisfaction of those urges. At that moment it "weighs" more than God to you. It commands your obedience more than Him.

What you dream about; what you have nightmares about and your most unwieldy emotions: **These things are like smoke from the fires of the altars at which you worship!** Follow the trail of smoke of your dreams, your worries, and your emotions and you'll see what you worship.

Many of you say you keep the commandments and think you are a pretty good person... Do you really keep this one?

Is God first and foremost in your heart? Is there anything that dominates your dreams, fuels your nightmares and commands your obedience more than God? Anything you strive for more than to know God? If so, then your soul is consumed with idolatry—you stand in egregious violation of the 1st and most important commandment.

And you are a bunch of idolaters. Admit it. I am too. There is not a one of us that is not saturated and dominated by this sin. I don't care how you grew up or who you vote for or how many verses you know—if you don't see how this sin has DOMINATED your life you don't know your own heart at all.

- During the last message I asked you if you wanted God's blessings (money, good family or marriage) more than His presence, and a lot of you said "No, of course we want God's presence more." This past week, what did you spend most of your energy in pursuit of? What did you strive after most? Where did your mind go when it idled? What captivated your attention?

Would you please give up this idea that you're a pretty good person! Idolatry is cosmic treason of the highest order and an utterly damnable offense and you are completely dominated by this sin.

The opposite of Christianity is not atheism; the opposite of Christianity is idolatry.

Listen very close to me: Before sin is **commission**—doing things that violate the law, sin is **omission**—failing to love God; before sin is a breaking of laws it is a betrayal of love; before sin is *doing* something improper it is failing to love something properly.

II. Idolatry is the mother of all sins

Breaking this commandment is what causes us to break all of the others. I think I've already showed you that...

- Why would you lie? Usually because you worship an idol (me with lying)
- What would make you murderous? Trace it back, it will go back to idolatry. You hate somebody because they have something you want; or they have somehow made you so mad because they attacked an idol in your life.
- What makes us covet? There's something we are missing that someone else has that we need to be happy.
- What makes people rob and steal? Idolatry.
- What makes the pastor resent people who are more successful in ministry, even though he knows they're all on the same team and he should be happy for them! Idolatry...
- What makes the anorexic starve her body? Idolatry.
- What makes us lash out in anger at others? Idolatry.
- What makes you cheat on your taxes? Idolatry.
- Why do you get jealous of others? Idolatry.
- What makes the Wall Street executive greedy? Idolatry.

Idolatry! The NT says this over and over: Colossians 3:5 says directly, "Greed comes from idolatry." James 4:3 says that idolatry is behind all of our jealousy and hatefulness and anger toward each other.

- Martin Luther said that if we could ever bring ourselves to keep the first commandment we'd naturally keep the other 9.

Listen... idolatry causes you to be blind to how much you break the others. (They say that a drug addict or a sex addict gets so driven by their addiction that they are just oblivious to how much they are hurting and exploiting others, in the same way); Idolatry keeps you blind to how much you are breaking the other commandments! You rationalize your disobedience... a woman leaves her husband and tells me, "God wants me to be happy so He's ok with me breaking some of His laws b/c I'm

sure deep down He wants me to be happy.” What she really means is, “I need my idol so bad that I refuse to let God get in the way. And if He does try to get in the way *I’ll crucify Him by redefining Him.*”

Idolatry is the most subtle of all sins, but it is the mother of all sins. It is the heart of all rebellion, and again, you are dominated by it.

III. Idolatry is slavery

- You serve an idol because you need something from it, and every idol gives you promises and threats: it promises blessings if you obey; and threatens you with curses you if you fail.
- The god of beauty says “Find me, and you’ll be happy; miss me, and I’ll make you miserable.” So you strive and strive to get beauty! Same is true for money, the god of success...
- This is where we becomes slaves. We look to them... but they never deliver. If anything, they put you in a constant cycle of satisfaction and despair... always promising you happiness is right around the corner... or driving you to despair because you can’t ever seem to get it;
 - **Angelina Jolie...**
- Or maybe you feel happy at the moment but death or disease comes in and takes everything from you. How many people have felt good about life only to have seen divorce or sickness take everything from them?
- In the financial crises of last year, a lot of financial managers went into deep depression, became alcoholics or drug addicts, some even committed suicide. One guy I read about, a high profile Bear Stearns exec who, when he learned he would not be hired by JP Morgan Chase overdosed in drugs and jumped out of a 29th story office window... His friend said in explanation, “This Bear Stearns thing broke his spirit.”
- That’s why the worship of God is the gateway to freedom: **Jehovah is the only God who, if you find Him, will satisfy you, and if you fail Him, will forgive you.**
- Some of you have striven all your life to have someone approve of you! When people are happy with you, you feel great; or when you feel successful you are confident and proud; but when you are not you are insecure and in despair and jealous and vengeful. You are a slave, always trying to prove yourself to somebody.
- What God is telling Israel here is “You have MY approval. You are my treasured, precious possession. I have saved you and made you mine.”
- People, with that, I mean, what else is there? They have the absolute approval and acceptance of the only one whose opinion really matters!

o The same is true for us in Christ. Jesus has saved us, and in Him we have the God who created the sun and the stars and the molecules...we have His approval! Whose approval do I need if I have His? What other securities do I need... money, prosperity... if I am held securely by Him?

So here's the question:

IV. How can we escape the slavery of idolatry?

Some of you are like, "You got me. I'm an idolater." Where is the support group... Idolaters R Us...

How do you escape it? This is very important, and surprising even.

Did you see what comes *right before* this command?

- Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words: ² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery..."

I have already redeemed you. It's not that I'm going to save you as a reward for loving Me... it's that you love me in response to the love and salvation I have already given to you.

Every other religion in the world teaches you that if you love God enough, He'll love you back. God turns that on its head here, and says, "I love you first. I have purchased, accepted you... saved you, now dwell on that, think about that, *BELIEVE* that... and then love me in response to salvation, not in pursuit of salvation."

You see, we can't just work up love for God. Because we'd always be trying to prove ourselves to Him. (Is it enough?)

We love Him in response to His extravagant love for us.

That was for Israel; it's also the offer of salvation to us. God has already purchased our salvation in Jesus' work on the cross. It's all done.

And if we would just see that, embrace it, *believe that*... if we would ever just get our minds around the immensity of the love

that God showed us at the cross, and we just stood in awe of the magnitude of compassion shown for us there, it would move our heart to such passion for Him.

He is the Father who has loved you and never left you and always believed in you and kept coming for you. You could not ask for a better friend, or a more compassionate King. Now, just respond!

So here's your question: Are you going to let Him be your God or not? Are you going to receive His salvation? Who are you going to serve?

In C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the white witch holds the land under a spell, called an enchantment. But the enchantment is broken, and for a time, people can escape the spell of the god. They have a choice: the spell is broken, and if you want to choose to go free, you can.

That's what has happened at the Exodus. God has freed them.

For many of you, that has happened. The god you have served has let you down. And now you have an opportunity to come to the real God.

You have to choose, "Which is the real God?" Who do you want to build your life on? Who do you trust? Who do you think can satisfy you?

And God gives you the same offer He gives to Israel:

- Repent of your idols
- Receive my salvation

Surrender to Jesus as Lord. Receive His offer to save you!

He's not saying, Come clean up your life. Get rid of all your junk and your dirty magazines... that will come in time. He's saying, come and receive me as your God. Learn of my love for you, and I'll change you. Are you ready to enter into this covenant, of embracing this God as God and Savior?

Bullpen:

(T Keller points out that whole cultures have idols they trust in: Western cultures think that what makes them good, and sets them apart, and what they trust in for the future, is their emphasis on individualism, freedom of expression and right to choose your destiny; Eastern cultures think that what makes them good and sets them apart is their emphasis on family or their religious fervor.)

An idol is not primarily a statute you bow your knees to, but something you bow your soul to.

Career; your reputation; your money; your beauty or your brains

- In her recent memoir, *Easter Everywhere*, Darcy Steinke tells about how she, the daughter of a Lutheran minister, turned her back on it for the excitement of life in New York City. She got a dream job as a writer, and spent her nights club hopping and obsessed with sex. In her memoir she talks about a growing lack of fulfillment and restlessness. She quotes from a book Simone Weil she said told her life story, "One has only the choice between god and idolatry... If one denies God...one is worshipping some things of this world in the belief that one sees them only as such, but in fact, though unknown to oneself, imagining the attributes of Divinity in them." (from Keller, "Talking about Idolatry in a Postmodern Age")
- Your identity is what the most important person in your life thinks about you.
- You are depressed because your husband doesn't love you as much as he should... The creator God has a plan for you!
- Why we need the approval of others; why we feel the need constantly to justify ourselves is we either don't realize the magnitude of God or realize how much He loves and approves of us. In Christ we have the highest possible approval of the only One whose opinion really matters!
- Tozer quote
- Praying Life, chapter 5ish illustration

When you are disappointed, you might start to blame others: your parents, your spouse (because she's there) and begin to tell yourself that there was a perfect soulmate out there for you somewhere and somehow you didn't marry her. Yeah, she's right there next to the unicorn.

What is owed to God: when you see the size of God, you'll see your sin
How other idols break their hearts

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion... and that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God; for this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."

Driscoll on idols

- Contrast me with my wife...she loves the church, but isn't phased as I am by it not doing well; but with her, it's our children... one of them turns out badly, that reflects on her as a mother, which is her identity. I love my kids, too, but my identity is not tied up in them. For each of us, it's beyond love, it's something more...
- Whose approval do you need even if you have Jesus'?
- **Chances are that the person you can't forgive has robbed you of an idol... A pastor tells a story about two women who were very bitter against their husbands and couldn't forgive them.** One of them was a new Christian and the other was a very mature one. Both of them had a son were acting up as a result against their husbands, and so the woman who was a new Christian ended up forgiving her husband; but the woman who was a more experienced Christian could not. And one reconciled and one went to divorce. The pastor said that looking back years later he could see that the reason the more experienced Christian could not forgive was because, in the absence of her husband's love, she had turned her own son into an idol. The only way she love in the world was through her son so if her son didn't love her, she was crushed; she had nothing left. Because she depended on her son to live, she had an inability to forgive even if she knew she should. The other woman just loved her son and so she wasn't as devastated and so she was able to forgive her husband and not let the ultimately healing.

A need to be needed

A need to be great

- “If I have that, I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.” Many words to describe that type of relationship, but perhaps the best one is worship.

(Challenge and change the prostitute and Pharisee)

- You become like your idol (Tozer)
- All of life is repentance
- See sermon in R Bruce book: What keeps you, at the moment, from growing in your love for Christ?
- New Keller stuff on idolatry (article and intro chapter)

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- It’s why I get depressed when I preach a bad sermon...

It’s why I sometimes get jealous when other people are better at me in things important to me. I worship at the altar of people’s opinions.

The first commandment is that we love, desire, crave, seek, trust in and obey God more than we do anything else. And when there is anything, good or bad, that we love, trust in or obey more than God, that is soul idolatry—an egregious violation of the 1st and most important commandment.