

# Gospel Treason

## What Happens When We Give Our Hearts to Idols

### How Does My Heart Deceive Me?

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 28, 2012

**James 4:1-3** “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your own pleasures.”

An idol = **Anything** or **Anyone** that begins to **Capture** our **Hearts** and **Minds** and **Affections** more than God.

When you're snared in the trap of idolatry you take on an entirely different identity. Long-term idolatry starts to redefine you... so that it's not just something you DO... or something you PURSUE... it's who you ARE.

“Sin is building your identity on anything besides God.” – Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*

“The person you met and mildly enjoyed becomes the person whose approval you cannot live without. The work you undertook to support your family becomes the source of identity and achievement you can't give up. The house you built for the shelter and comfort of your family becomes a temple for the worship of possessions. A rightful attention to your own needs morphs into a self-absorbed existence. Ministry has become more of an opportunity to seek power and approval than a life in the service of God. The things we set our hearts on never remain under our control. Instead, they capture, control, and enslave us. This is the danger of earth-bound treasure.” *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Paul David Tripp, p. 73

**2 Chronicles 16:9** “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”

NIV ‘... heart that is fully committed to Him’

NASB ‘... heart that is completely His’

**Jeremiah 29:13** “You will search for Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”

#### I. ‘I Am My Success’: You Start Defining Yourself in Terms of Achievements

One of the biggest tip-offs that you're into success idolatry is that you struggle to maintain any self-confidence in life unless you're at the top of your chosen field.

“I had no idea who I was, or what I could be away from tennis. I was depressed and afraid because so much of my life had been defined by my being a tennis champion. I was completely lost. Winning made me feel like I was somebody... It was like being hooked on a drug. I needed the wins, the applause, in order to have an identity.” *Good Housekeeping*, October 1990, pp.87-88, quoted in *Counterfeit Gods*, Timothy Keller, pg.76-77

**Philippians 1:15-21** <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: <sup>16</sup> The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; <sup>17</sup> but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice... <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

“Of all the subjects we obsess about... success is the one we lie about the most - that success and its cousin money will make us secure, that success and its cousin power will make us important, that success and its cousin fame will make us happy. It's time to tell the truth: Why are our generation's smartest, most talented, most successful people flirting with disaster in record numbers? People are using all their means to get money, power, and glory - and then self-destructing. Maybe they didn't want it in the first place! Or didn't like what they saw when they finally achieved it.” “Success Excess” by Harriet Rubin. *Fast Company*, October 1998. Quoted in *Counterfeit Gods*, Timothy Keller, pg.92

## II. 'I Am My Relationships' : You Start Defining Yourself in Terms of Other People Around You

God meant for us to live in community with one another. He made us to be social beings... But our sinful, idol-making hearts start expecting other people to do the one thing they were never designed to do – give us identity... meaning... purpose... hope!

“Joanna thought she had grown in her faith. The problem was that she had forgotten who she was, and it was not long before her identity in Christ was replaced by another identity. Joanna’s children became her new identity. They gave her meaning and purpose, and they really did give her hope and joy. The problem was that they were not sent by God to do any of that. Joanna lived vicariously through them, and the more she did, the more she became obsessed with their success.”

“Although Joanna was just as faithful in her personal devotions and public worship, God was no longer at the center of who she was. All it took was Jimmy to mess it all up. With all his inner turmoil, Jimmy didn’t make a very good trophy. Being with him often meant unexpected confrontations and public embarrassment. The girls were forced to live in the wings of Jimmy’s drama and they didn’t turn out to be trophy children either. Now that they were adults, Joanna was lost... In their tumultuous launch into adulthood, the kids not only broke Joanna’s heart, but they also robbed her of her identity. She felt like it had all been for naught. When she looked in the mirror, she felt like she didn’t know the person she saw there.” *Lost in the Middle*, Paul David Tripp, p. 275-276

Children are a gift, but God didn’t give us children to be trophies on the mantel of our identity!

"In order to be of service to others we have to die to them; that is, we have to give up measuring our meaning and value with the yardstick of others... thus we become free to be compassionate." -Henri Nouwen

When you base your worth and identity on your relationship to Christ, you are freed from the expectations of others, and that allows you to really serve them best. It’s tough to try to serve people and win their approval at the same time.

## III. 'I Am My Own Redeemer' : You Start Defining Yourself in Terms of Your Own Performance in the Christian Life

“As I got to know Kaitlyn more, I found that she habitually fretted over her sins, flaws, and imperfections, both real and imagined. When we, like Kaitlyn, are morbidly introspective or self-conscious, we turn in on our self, analyzing and examining, always trying to explain, understand, or make sense of our lives. We become our own Holy Spirit, gazing inward, looking for flaws, and usually finding them.”

Gary Thomas rightly suggests that when we are constantly anxious about or disappointed with ourselves, perhaps we have made an ‘idol out of our own piety.’ To grow into the person God wants us to be, we need to die to our habit of constantly gazing at ourselves, being morbidly occupied, worried, and anxious about our performance or lack of perfection. Instead, we need to learn to take our eyes off ourselves and fix them on the perfection, beauty, and grace of God.” *How to Find Selfless Joy in a Me-First World*, Leslie Vernick, pp 32-33

**Hebrews 12: 2** “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...”

Christ died for SINNERS... and those sinners after being saved by grace will continue to fight and fall into sin between now and when Christ returns.

**Romans 7:14-25**

It's your perseverance in the fight and your humble response to defeat that shows your Christianity, not perfection

“There are those who have been morbidly introspective and self-conscious their entire lives. They are fearful, anxious, and insecure because they not only over examine themselves but do so with a microscope. The problem with these folks is that their measuring rod is their own idealized version of their perfect self, not God's Word. *How to Find Selfless Joy in a Me-First World*, Leslie Vernick, p. 126

God delights in His Son – that’s the object of His greatest delight – He delights in us because we are ‘IN CHRIST’... not because of how well you are doing or not doing in the Christian life.

Pride is a huge factor with the perfectionistic, performance-driven person. You’re so devastated that you’ve fallen short because you think so highly of yourself. Instead of recognizing you can do nothing apart from Christ.

**I Timothy 2:5** “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

Real freedom is not found in just exchanging one idol for what might look like a healthier one. Idolatry is destructive no matter what shape it takes.

**Colossians 3:1-4** “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

When you know who you are in Christ - and your identity is on the solid rock of Christ, you are freed from the expectations of others, and from expecting so much from others.