

# Gospel Treason

## *What Happens When We Give Our Hearts to Idols*

### How Do Idols Wreck My Relationships?

Correlates with Ch. 4 of *Gospel Treason* book

**James 4:1-3; Rom. 8:18-26**

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Feb. 5, 2023

Your relationships take some of the biggest hits because of your idols. It's the people closest to us—husbands, wives, kids, parents, co-workers—who are bearing the brunt of so much of our idolatry every day, while we go on thinking it's all because of these other people that we've got so many problems and frustrations.

“Do you have any conflict in your life? Do you experience moments of extreme irritation toward someone you otherwise love? Are there people who simply push your buttons more than others? Do certain things drive you crazy on a daily basis?...Why does it seem that people, things, and situations are in our way? Why do we seldom go through a day without some experience of conflict? The answer to all of these questions is that we think of our lives as our own, and we are more committed to the purposes of our own kingdom than we are to God's. We need to recognize that the people in our way have been sent to us by a wise and sovereign King. He never gets a wrong address and always chooses just the right moment to expose our hearts and realign them to His.”

~ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, pp. 75-76, 106-107

God is using your circumstances and the people in your life to expose your heart!

“After I was saved, and before I was married, I lived under the mad, undaunted delusion that I was spiritually mature. Mine was a rich and largely imaginary kind of holiness. If ignorance is bliss, I was in permanent ecstasy. The infrequent examinations of my seemingly innocent heart revealed little need for improvement...then it happened. I got married and became a blame-shifter.

John Bettler has said, ‘Your spouse always hooks your idol.’ But marriage didn't simply hook my idols; it hoisted them six feet in the air and towed them around the house. I can't tell you how many times I thought, ‘I never had these problems before. This must be my wife's fault.’ The truth is, I'd always been a blame-shifter it's just that after getting married, there were so many more good opportunities to express this fault!”

~ David Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”*, pp. 68-69

**Three Reasons** for so much of the conflict and confusion in our relationships:

#### **I. Your Idols Have Declared War on Everyone Else Around You**

When idols set up camp on the throne of your heart, so much of your day will be spent promoting your own agenda and your own kingdom at all costs.

**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? <sup>2</sup>You lust [**“epithumia” – long, crave**] 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. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss [with wrong motives *NIV*], that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

The real problem under the surface of all our conflicts is that two kingdoms are colliding. What's ruling your heart and what's ruling my heart are meeting head on, and we both can't be “king” at the same time.

#### **II. Your Idols Change the Way You See & Treat Everyone Else Around You**

If my heart is ruled by a certain desire, there are only **Two Ways** I can respond to you:

- (1) If you're helping me get what I want, I'll be happy with you, treat you well, and allow you into my world.
- (2) If you stand in my way, I will be angry and frustrated. Because you stand in the way of what I crave, I will lash out at you, push you away, or shut you out.

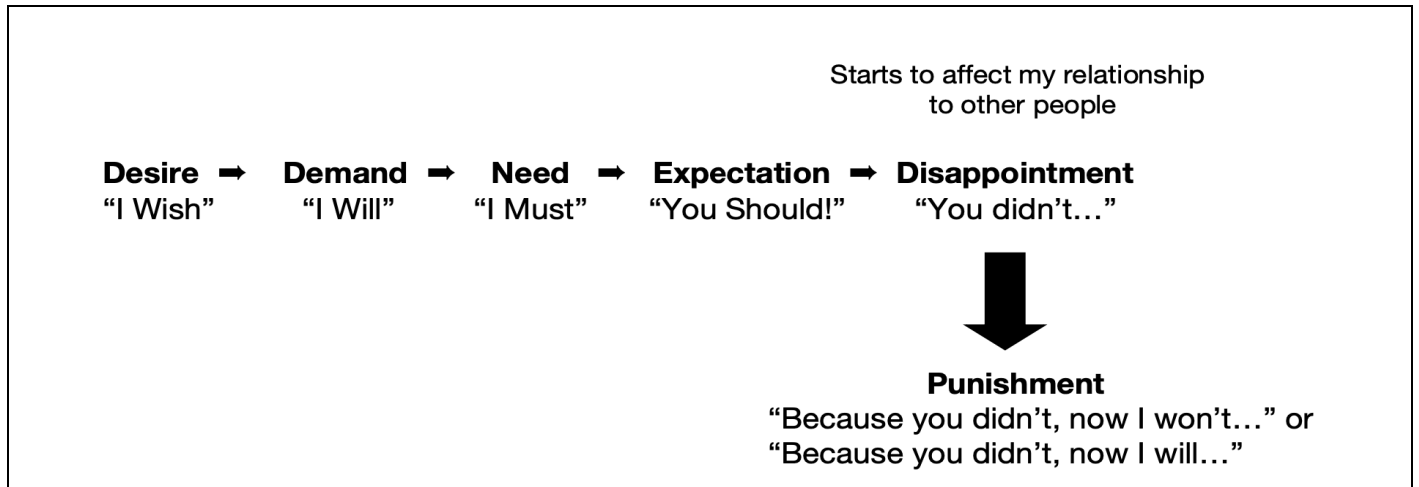
Instead of loving people, you start using people, avoiding people, and attacking people who get in your way.

“I have yet to meet a couple locked in hostility (and the accompanying fear, self-pity, hurt, self-righteousness) who really understood and reckoned with their motives. James 4:1-3 teaches that cravings underlie conflicts. Why do you fight? It’s not ‘because my wife/ husband...’ – it’s because of something about *you*. Couples who see what rules them – cravings for affection, attention, power, vindication, control, comfort, a hassle-free life – can repent and find God’s grace made real to them, and then learn how to make peace.”

~ David Powlison, *Seeing With New Eyes*, p. 151

Think about where you have the most conflict in your life right now. The two are not unrelated. Cravings underlie conflicts.

### III. Your Idols Ultimately Hijack Legitimate Desires and Turn Them into Ugly Demands



**Tim Keller** says that when you finally realize what keeps happening to you – and how you keep getting disappointed with people – there are **Four Ways** that you can respond:

- 1) **You can blame the specific people** or things that are disappointing you and try to move on to bigger and better ones.
- 2) **You can blame yourself** and beat yourself up saying, “I’m a failure, because everybody else I see is happy. So, there’s something wrong with me. I guess I’m just a big loser.”
- 3) **You can blame everyone in general**, by saying, “Curses on the entire opposite sex. I’m so done with men” or “I’m so done with women.”
- 4) **You can do what C.S. Lewis talks about:**

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world [something supernatural and eternal].” ~ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, “Hope.”

**Romans 8:18-26** “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> **For the creation was subjected to futility** [NIV frustration], not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been **groaning** together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan** inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with **groanings** too deep for words.”

### Homework

1. “Identifying Personal Idols” worksheet – several times.
2. Read “Gospel Treason” book: Ch. 4
3. Ask God to show you who or what your idols are.
4. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart; <sup>24</sup> test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”