
Identifying the idols of a mother's heart: fixing our eyes on Christ
"You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3

"Whether it's money, power, or even your own belly, the world is full of God-substitutes and God-additives – things that take the place of God in daily life. The reason we have trouble recognizing our own private idolatries is not because we don't have false gods anymore, but because we have so many!" – Ryken, p. 67

It has been stated that a good test for identifying personal idolatries involves stepping back to recognize what we *trust*, what we *love*, and what we *worship*. To understand where these are personally true for you, it may be worth spending some time asking God to reveal where you are turning to God-substitutes in your daily living. Where do your heart and mind linger? What do you see as the primary objective each day? Pray and ask God to be revealing even hard truths to you through this process that you might more fully worship Him – enjoying Him and glorifying Him forever! (See the Westminster Confession of Faith, Q/A 1.)

As we have already observed, many of the idols we worship today are, in reality, good things (gifts from God, even!) that have become elevated to a level of importance that makes them competitive with God.

"...how can I tell if I'm worshipping the blessings that I desire or God? ... If you are willing to sin to obtain your goal or if you sin when you don't get what you want, then your desire has taken God's place and you're functioning as idolater." – Fitzpatrick, p. 25

"The gospel asks, 'What is operating in the place of Jesus Christ as your real, functional salvation and Savior?'" – Keller, p. 174

As a test of your own tendency toward idolatry, read the following statements/scenarios to see which ones resonate with you. Which cause you the greatest fear and anxiety? The greatest joy? Can these at least begin to scratch the surface of where your heart's affections are misaligned? Are you fearing the wrong thing? Are you hoping in the wrong thing?

- Someone says hurtful things about you or your children that are untrue.
- Someone says wonderful things about you or your children (even if they aren't true).
- Your child's standardized test scores come home and you learn they are tracking in the 30th percentile – well below average in their class.
- Another child's test scores come home (99th percentile!) confirming you are raising a genius.
- Your family income is disrupted by the loss of a job.
- You open a credit card bill to discover that you missed last month's payment.
- Your 2 year old decides to skip a nap.
- You drop your iPhone and shatter the glass (or better yet, your child does it!). How long could you go without?
- Someone drops by your house unannounced and it looks like a cyclone just passed through it.
- A family member is diagnosed with a devastating illness.
- A family member is diagnosed with a devastating illness and your internet is down for three hours, preventing you from "Googling" it.
- You learn that you are unexpectedly pregnant.
- You come to the end of your day and NOT ONE THING has been checked off your "to do" list.
- You gain 10 pounds.
- You lose 10 pounds.
- The candidate of your choosing won the election (or if they didn't, what if they did?).
- The candidate of your choosing lost the election (or if they didn't, what if they did?).

Are there other things that would more accurately describe how your fears and hopes might be misaligned? Take the time to name them here:

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So many of these things are complicated. Even in the things we may see as “good” we acknowledge that they cannot be the thing that saves us. In the things we see as “bad” it is right to mourn the sin that is entangled with them even as we long to have Jesus right the wrongs we see on this side of the fall (Genesis 3). Yet step back and look at these things that can shake our emotions and even our faith to the core. Are any of them – *any of them* – so powerful, or so terrible, or so wonderful so as to unseat the King of Kings from his heavenly throne? No! Not one!

Praise God that he is sovereign and acknowledge that He alone is worthy of our worship.

Take time now to confess areas of struggle, and ask God to quiet your fears and realign your hope, knowing that He delights in answering prayers such as these!

In our modern era, where our eyes have shifted from looking up to looking in, perhaps the most accurate answer to the question of our objects of love, worship, and trust is ourselves. What do we love? Ourselves. Whom do we trust? We can't trust anyone except ourselves. Whom do we worship? Our own self-interest comes first.

To the degree these statements ring true for your, take some time in prayer to repent and rejoice in God's desire and ability to free you from these snares.

Close by reading Psalm 19. Read it through a few times, taking note of verses you can read in full agreement, and acknowledge verses that you long to have be more true of you. Ask Jesus to continue His work of transformation, and rejoice that “...he who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it...” (Philippians 1:6).

Psalm 19

¹The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
²Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
³They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
⁵It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
⁶It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.
⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
⁸The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,

giving light to the eyes.
⁹The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.
¹⁰They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.
¹¹By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
¹²But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
¹³Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴May these words of my mouth and this meditation
of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.