

## What are My Idols?

“The human heart is a factory of idols.  
Every one of us is, from his mother’s womb,  
expert in inventing idols.”

Jean Calvin, French Reformer

### Idols? Really?

It’s likely (although in 21<sup>st</sup> century L.A. not impossible!) that you don’t have little statues of gods in your apartment that you pray to at night or count on to bring you good fortune in life.

But is it possible that you nonetheless have idols controlling your life and dominating your imagination?

In his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, the New York based Presbyterian pastor Tim Keller explains:

“What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.” (xvii)

How can you identify these idols? How can you tell if you are worshipping a counterfeit God?

Keller says: “A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.” (xviii)

### The Idol Chart

Below you’ll find an “idol chart”—a grid of sorts that you can help you identify idols in your life. It was compiled from another of Keller’s books, *Gospel in Life*.

Read through the chart and ask God to help you identify those things which have been idols in your life.

"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I have power and influence over others."	(Power idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am loved and respected by _____."	(Approval idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I have this kind of pleasure experience, a particular quality of life."	(Comfort idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of _____."	(Control idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... people are dependent on me and need me."	(Helping idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... someone is there to protect me and keep me safe."	(Dependence idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone."	(Independence idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am highly productive and getting a lot done."	(Work idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am being recognized for my accomplishments, and I am excelling in my work."	(Achievement idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."	(Materialism idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplished in its activities."	(Religion idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... this one person is in my life and happy to be there, and/or happy with me."	(Individual person idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I feel I am totally independent of organized religion and am living by a self-made morality."	(Irreligion idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... my race and culture is ascendant and recognized as superior."	(Racial/cultural idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... a particular social grouping or professional grouping or other group lets me in."	(Inner ring idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... my children and/or my parents are happy and happy with me."	(Family idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... Mr. or Ms. 'Right' is in love with me."	(Relationship idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I am hurting, in a problem; only then do I feel worthy of love or able to deal with guilt."	(Suffering idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... my political or social cause is making progress and ascending in influence or power."	(ideology idolatry)
"Life only has meaning/I only have worth if... I have a particular kind of look or body image."	(Image idolatry)

*If you circled one of the first four on the previous list, the following table may help you think through some of the issues involved.*

If you seek	Your greatest nightmare	People around you often feel	Your problem emotion
<b>POWER</b> (Success, winning, influence)	Humiliation	Used	Anger
<b>APPROVAL</b> (Affirmation, love, relationships)	Rejection	Smothered	Cowardice
<b>COMFORT</b> (Privacy, lack of stress, freedom)	Stress, demands	Neglected	Boredom
<b>CONTROL</b> (Self-discipline, certainty, standards)	Uncertainty	Condemned	Worry

*Now that you've answered the questions above, look for common themes. What things tend to be too important to you? What are your idols?*

### **:: Confront Your Idols ::**

1. Name your idol(s) out loud.
2. Confess your hearts dependence on your idol(s) to God and someone else.
3. Repent, or turn away from, the idol(s) in your life.
4. Rejoice, or take joy in, the absolute certainty of Jesus' mastery of your life.
5. Replace your idol(s) with a renewed passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ.