**IDOLATRY**

*“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.”*

-Tim Keller (Counterfeit Gods)

**Read:** Isaiah 44:6-23; Colossians 3:5-10

In His book, *Counterfeit God’s*, Tim Keller writes: *“A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.”* This week we want to examine the idols that reside in our hearts. Some are veiled by our own unique issues. Hopefully, the first two weeks’ discussion on identity and the Holy Spirit have exposed some of the idols in our hearts. For instance, living in the flesh vs. the Spirit, an obsession with how others perceive us, being likable, or a desire to be in a relationship. Understand that idols come in an array of different shapes and sizes - some may even be thoughts or desires taken to extreme. It would be wise to ask God to show you any idols that reside in your heart. God wants to dethrone those things in your heart that are not worthy of your worship like He is.

**THINK:** What are some things you are serving with your time, talents, thoughts and energy?

To what extent are you giving yourself to this thing? Is it healthy?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Q: What are some of the common idols that reside in your chosen discipline?

Q: What might be the outcome(s) of failing to take idolatry seriously?

**ENGAGING WITH OTHERS:** In today’s culture this topic should surface pretty easily. Seek out people who are actively serving something, a job, career, family, etc. Find out how people devote themselves to this; do they stay balanced? Actively listen to them by asking thoughtful questions and resisting the urge to immediately share your opinion. Ask clarifying questions when they pause and listen when they share their emotions– but don’t interrupt. Make mental notes on what it is they serve, and how that is working for them. Sincerely thank them for sharing with you. If it is appropriate, offer to tell your story as it relates to your heart and what idols you have had. Speak their language.

**REFLECTION:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the issues around the idols you cling to instead of Christ. For example, if your main goal is success or approval, you may get depressed or angry when that goal is blocked. The goal is dependence on nothing but Christ and His Spirit.

**PRAYER:** Confess openly to God any idols in your heart. *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”* -St. Augustine

**OPTIONAL READING MATERIAL:**

*Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* - Tim Keller (on Amazon)

<http://vimeo.com/10952075> (Tim Keller talking about idolatry)

Love People, Not Pleasure article by Arthur C. Brooks

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/opinion/sunday/arthur-c-brooks-love-people-not-pleasure.html?\_r=0

**Additional Scripture**: Isaiah 44:6-10, 24-25

Exodus 32

Numbers 21:4–9

2 Kings 18

John 3:14–16

John 6:68-69\*