

**How Do Idols Wreck My Relationships?**  
*Men's Retreat / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 2-3, 2015*

**E. Stanley Jones** "If you don't surrender to Christ, you surrender to chaos." That's because you surrender to the chaos of your own sinful, selfish heart and desires.

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

**Romans 8:28** "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

**Ecclesiastes 7:14** "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other..."

"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!" ***When Sinners Say 'I Do'***, David Harvey, pp. 68-69

Husbands, wives, kids, and bosses around us don't CAUSE us to sin; they simply PUT enough pressure on your heart so that what was there all along comes spilling out in all its ugliness!

- So WHY do the idols of my heart and your heart create so much conflict and confusion with all the other people around us?

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

**James 4:1-3** "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you

do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

The biggest problem is NOT your spouse or someone else around you. It’s a heart problem. 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 can’t both be ‘King’ at the same time.

“‘I just feel rage,’ Steve said, looking like an overheated car. ‘Every time the guy in the next office walks by me, he shoots me a condescending look. I can understand why people murder.’ Then Ed Welch says, “Steve is angry and controlled by this other person. That’s obvious. But *why* is he angry? Chances are that Steve’s anger has something to do with his worship. Perhaps he worships at the altar of respect, and he has not been given the respect he demands. As a result, he is against his co-worker. He has declared war! But even more, he is against God, resisting the fact that God uses difficult people to refine us. Instead of submitting to God’s sovereign decisions and learning to forgive and love, Steve is saying, ‘I will be God, at least in this case.’ His desires rule.

Here is a general principle: your attitude toward God will be revealed in your worst human relationship. If you hate someone, you are ultimately hating God. If you don’t forgive, you are usurping God’s authority to act as judge.” **Motives: Why Do I Do the Things I Do?**, Ed Welch, p. 16

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

Having idols in your heart is like wearing sunglasses; it colors and tints and filters the way you see everything and everyone around you!

If your heart is being ruled by a certain idolatrous desire, then there are only **Two Ways** you can respond to everyone around you:

- (1) If you’re helping me get what I want, I’ll be happy with you, treat you well, allow you into my world
- (2) But if you stand in my way, I will be angry, frustrated, and testy when I am with you. There will be times when I wish you weren’t even in my life because you stand in the way of what I crave so I lash out at you, or I push you away, or shut you out.

“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

### Cravings underlie conflicts!

- So what have you been craving lately? What have you been saying that you HAVE to have?

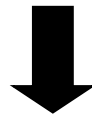
### III. Your Idols Ultimately Hijack Legitimate Desires and Turn Them into Ugly Demands

- So how does it turn into all out war between two people that started OUT loving each other?

In his book *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand* Paul Tripp walks us through the stages of our heart as it morphs from desires to demands and worse.

Desire ➡ Morphs into      Demand ➡ "I Must"      Need ➡ "I Need!"      Expectation ➡ "You Should!"      Disappointment "You didn't..."

Spirals down into...



Punishment  
"Because you didn't now I will..."  
or  
"Because you didn't now I won't..."

**Desires** – We all have '**Desires**'- many of them legitimate desires

- to have a godly marriage
- to be respected in the home and at work
- to be a hard worker or to do something meaningful with our lives
- to enjoy some relaxation
- to save \$ for retirement

**Demand** – is the closing of my fists around a desire. I can no longer imagine a good life without this thing. So now I enter the room with a SILENT DEMAND – "You must help me get what I want." **But here's the real source of all the confusion:** Other people around you don't know the rules of the game. You haven't announced your demand because you yourself are unaware that your heart is now being controlled by this.

**Need** – I now view this thing as ESSENTIAL TO LIFE. This is one more step towards SLAVERY to desire. And this is where envy, discouragement, bitterness, and doubting God start to grow as we become convinced that we are being DENIED things we NEED to live life as it was meant to be lived.

**Expectation** – If I'm convinced that I need it and you say you love me, then it only seems right for me to expect you to help me get it. Paul Tripp says this NEED-DRIVEN expectation is the SOURCE of 90% of the conflict in relationships today. You start to see this thing as a right, an entitlement, essential to life.

**Disappointment** – And so these sinful and demanding expectations SET US UP for deep disappointment with people around us. So much of our disappointment in relationships is not because people have actually wronged us, but because in our own minds they have failed to meet our expectations; they have broken the rules of my kingdom.

**Punishment** – Because we are hurt and disappointed we STRIKE BACK in a variety of ways to punish them. Basically we're angry because they've broken the laws of **my kingdom**. At this point I am no longer loving God and other people, instead I LOVE things and USE people to try and get them.

### Conclusion –

- Remember how Jesus talked to the woman at the well in John 4?

**John 4:10, 13-14** “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water’... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Only Jesus has the thirst-quenching satisfaction you've been looking for in all the wrong places! You'll never find it in marriage, or in sex, or that new job, or new wife — because none of it will ever satisfy you long-term.

And get this – not only does it leave you FRUSTRATED but it leaves everyone around you CRUSHED by the weight of your idolatry because everything in this life – from people, to projects, to objects were never designed to bear the weight of all your expectations and to give you all your satisfaction.

“If you get married as Jacob did, putting the weight of all your deepest hopes and longings on the person you are marrying, you are going to crush him or her with your expectations. It will distort your life and your spouse's life in a hundred ways. No person, not even the best one, can give your soul all it needs. You are going to think you have gone to bed with Rachel, and you will get up and it will always be Leah. This cosmic disappointment and disillusionment is there in all of life, but we especially feel it in the things upon which we most set our hopes.” **Counterfeit Gods, Timothy Keller, pgs.38-39**

- So where have you set your hopes?

### Four Ways You Can Respond to Disappointment:

- 1) You can blame the 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 just blame everybody wholesale around you, saying, “Curses on the entire opposite sex. I'm so done with women.”

- 4) You can do what **C.S. Lewis** talks about at the end of his great chapter on hope, in his book, ***Mere Christianity***. At the end of that chapter he talks about reorienting THE entire focus of your life away from this world and towards God.

“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.”

Cry out to God

Psalm 34:1-10

Psalm 42:1-5, 11; 43:3-5