

Matt, who is our lead teaching pastor, is out this morning. From what I understand, he is ministering in Southern California. So he is suffering for the Lord doing that there in California this week. You all can pray for him. I love him, but I always do love the times we have together when he is gone. It gives us an opportunity as a campus to just talk about life here among us in a little bit more grounded way. So I love the opportunities that I have to pastor you and shepherd you through teaching. So what I want to do today is piggy back off a couple of different things. One is the Gospel and Life study that we did in the Fall. In that Gospel and Life study, there was a chapter in that study on idolatry. And from a majority of the people who went through that study talked about how that chapter was one of the most helpful and shaping chapters of the entire study we did. So much of today is going to be taking some of those concepts, reminding ourselves of them and then drilling down a little bit deeper. But I also want to stand on the shoulders of JR Vassar, who spoke last week. JR came in and spoke at our Men's Retreat but then also spoke last Sunday, and it was fantastic. One of the main messages of sermon was to encourage us as a church and as individuals to give up on all the other saviors in our lives and to embrace Jesus Christ. He talked about embracing Jesus Christ with all of our heart. What that really means is that we give up on every other savior that we're looking to. And we're all looking to something or someone to save us, to save us from our unworthiness, to save us from our feeling of invisibility and on and on. So we're all looking to a savior, and he was saying that embracing Jesus means that we give up on all these other saviors. One of the words that we use here at the Village quite often to label those other saviors is the word "idol." We don't use the word "other saviors" a lot, even though they're interchangeable. We use the word "idol." We talk about idolatry a whole bunch. And so what I'm hoping to do today in our time together is clarify this concept of idolatry and maybe take it to the ground level of where you and I live and help us get into a time of maybe beginning to repent.

So I want to briefly define idolatry this morning, and then I want to give you a few questions that will help you move toward identifying and exposing the other saviors, these idols that are in your heart and in your life. But then I want to spend the majority of time talking about the complexity of the idolatry structure of our heart. It's one thing to know the concept of idolatry, but it's a completely different thing to know how complex our idolatry really is and how deep it really goes. And so I want to classify that a bit. And then we'll spend the remainder of our time maybe repenting and transferring our trust from these saviors to the one true Savior, Jesus Christ. The apostle John in 1 John wrote this. "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." So that's my heart and desire, to equip you and encourage you, by the power of the Spirit, by the grace of God and with the help of the church, to keep yourselves from idols. I was reading this morning in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. If you've never heard about it, it's a book about the history of the martyrs of the church, those who have died for their faith. I read about one of the guys who got persecuted and killed in the 4th century, and I thought, "Man, this would be wonderful if this was what would be said in the history books about our church or even about us as individuals. It says, "It is necessary now to particularize the most conspicuous persons who laid down their lives in martyrdom in this bloody persecution. Sebastian, a celebrated martyr. . .[was] an officer of the emperor's guard at Rome. He remained a true Christian in the midst of idolatry; unallured by the splendors of a court and untainted by evil examples." What a thing to have said about you. What a way to go down in history.

So let me pray that God would move us toward that being true for us as a church and as individuals. "Father, I pray now as we open up Your Word, as we talk about these things, that You would teach us to be Christians in the midst of idolatry. I pray that You would teach us and keep us unallured by the splendor and the sexiness of all these other people and things that are vying for our heart's affection and vying for us to put our trust in these things or people as savior. I pray that You keep us from being tainted by the world, from worldliness. So I pray to that end this morning, that You help us and that You use our time together. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

I don't want to spend too much time defining idolatry, but I do want to talk about it a little bit. I know that we talk about it often around here, but if you're new, I think it would be helpful, just to make sure we're all on the same page, to give some definition so when I say the word "idol" or "idolatry," we're all on the same page with what exactly I'm talking about. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who is a pastor in London, gives a helpful definition about what an idol is. He says, "An idol is anything in my life that occupies a place that should be occupied by God alone. . . .An idol is something that holds such a controlling position in my life that it moves and rouses and attracts me so easily that I give my time, attention, and money to it effortlessly." Simply put, an idol is whatever or whoever you and I give central value to in our lives. And because we do that, because we place central value to it in our lives and in our hearts, the rest of our life is completely directed and controlled by it. What controls our heart controls our lives. That is a big concept, a big principle. So whatever or whoever it is that we place in that position in our heart other than God, other than Jesus Christ, it controls us. Rebecca Pipert says it this way. She says, "Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by acceptance. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives." It's idolatry. It's making for ourselves another savior. And if you read Genesis 1, you see that in the beginning, God made human beings in His image. We were made to do two things. We were made to worship and serve God, and then we were made to rule over created things in God's name. So God made us to image Him by worshiping and serving Him, but then also to rule over the creation, the created things in His name. And instead you see that humans rebelled against God and fell into sin. And in falling into sin, what we did and the result of that sin actually reversed the originally intended order that God had created the world and humans for. Instead of human beings worshiping and serving God and ruling over created things in God's name, because of sin, we came to worship and serve created things. And because we worship and serve creation instead of the Creator, created things now actually rule over us. And that's what sin does. God created us in this beautiful way, full of potential and glory, and we rebelled against. And the result of our rebellion has been separation from God and also that the original created order has been turned upside down, that we now worship creation instead of the Creator. And we're ruled by whatever it is we worship.

And this is what Paul gets to in Romans 1. Let's start in verse 18. He says: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." So very clearly here, Paul outlines this horrific exchange that has happened in the human heart. "For although they knew God," Paul says, "or give thanks to Him, but instead we became fools and exchanged the glory of an immortal God for images resembling mortal man." So we have said, "Forget You, God. We don't believe that You're glorious, we don't believe that You're worthy of worship and we don't believe that Your all-surpassing beauty is satisfying to our hearts. What is satisfying to our hearts is this person or this thing that You have made." And Paul goes on to say, "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature

rather than the Creator." God created us to worship, so all of us are going to worship something. We don't have a choice in that. It's what we were made to do.

Darren Patrick very helpfully says this, "Because the human heart was made to worship someone outside itself, it continually seeks a place to rest. It seeks an object on which to set its hope. We simply must go to something or someone to feel at peace. Scripture teaches that we human beings will ultimately look to God or to something or someone else, be it achievement, relationships, family, status, popularity or even a hobby to make us feel socially connected, personally significant and emotionally secure. And whatever or whoever we look to to pursue, that will drive everything else in our lives."

The great theologian Madonna actually gave us a really helpful confession about this. This is from an article in Vanity Fair. She explains and puts some flesh on all of our struggle. She said, "I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. . . I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being, and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting" And I'm sure some of you are caught in this very same merry-go-round. She continues, "My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove I'm Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will." The early church father Augustine said it like this. "Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in God." As long as we're being driven by idols, as long as we're looking for our rest in these other false saviors, we'll never find rest. Which is what Madonna is saying.

So an idol is anything in our lives that takes the place of God. It can be anything and anyone. And normally it's a good thing. The idols, the false saviors are normally good things that we've made ultimate things when they shouldn't be, and thus they become false saviors and idols. But it's not normally some horribly bad thing for the majority of us in this room. I want to just stop for a moment to let the weight of idolatry settle in on our hearts. We talk about it so much here at the Village that we can get used to casually going, "Yeah, I have an idol." To choose to worship something other than God, when God has made us His children, is horrible. I was reading something by John Piper this week that really explained the horrifying nature of our idolatry, the horrifying nature of us looking and trusting in other saviors. He says this, "God is infinitely worthy and honorable, but sin says the opposite. Sin says that other things are more desirable and more worthy than God. How serious is this? The seriousness of a crime is determined in part by the dignity of the person and the office being dishonored. If the person is infinitely worthy, infinitely honorable, infinitely desirable and holds an office of infinite dignity and authority as God does, then rebuffing Him is an infinitely outrageous crime that deserves an infinite punishment." In our rebellion against God, we have done this, and it merits infinite punishment. And of course the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is, though we have done this, though we have exchanged the true God of the world for the gods that we make, Jesus Christ came to save us from our other saviors. He came to save us from the infinite punishment that is due to us for putting our trust in these other saviors, and He has offered Himself to us for our infinite satisfaction.

So if we all struggle with idolatry, if we're all either worshiping God or another god, how do we know what our other saviors are? How do I know what I'm putting my trust in? David Powlison, who is a counselor, wrote a book called Seeing With New Eyes. In one of the chapters of his book, he gives a list of questions that are meant to help expose and identify the idols, these false saviors that we make for ourselves. He calls these questions "x-ray questions." So I just want to give you a few to get you thinking in this direction, especially those of you who have never heard some of these things. What do you worry about the most? What do you worry about all the time? A psychologist actually said, "If you want to find out what you're worshiping or what's determining or driving your live, look at your nightmares? What's your greatest nightmare? What are you worried about? What, if you failed or lost it, would cause you to feel that you did not even want to live? What thing, what relationship, that if you lost it, would lead you to seriously question whether or not you

should go on living? That's a really helpful and exposing question, or at least it was for me. What do you use to comfort yourself when things go bad or get difficult? Who or what do you look to for comfort when it's a bad day? What do you do to cope? What are your release valves? What do you do to make yourself feel better? What preoccupies you? What do you daydream about? Someone once said, "Your religion is what you do with your solitude." In other words, when you're alone and you have the time, where does your heart tend to wander to? What do you daydream about? What makes you feel the most self-worth? Of what are you the proudest? For what do you want to be known? Early on in conversations, what do you want people to know about you? What is the thing you want to be known for, identified by and labeled with? What prayer unanswered would seriously make you think about turning away from God? What are you asking God for or what has God given you that, if He didn't answer or took away, would make you seriously contemplate leaving the faith? For many of you, I know you don't have to think very hard because it has happened before. Maybe it's the reason you don't come and worship God here corporately as consistently as you ought. This is a real helpful question.

So these questions and others begin to help us see potential idols in our hearts and in our lives, but I think it's very important to recognize that idolatry, setting up false saviors for ourselves is much more complex than most people often realize. Even here at the Village, we talk about this stuff all the time and we can identify some of the answers to these questions, but I think we fail to realize the complexity in the human heart of the idolatry that exists there. Different counselors and pastors have talked about this complexity, and they have even set up different ways to classify these idols. I want to take you through some exercises to help teach this morning. Tim Keller, a pastor in Manhattan, says, "The idolatry structure of the heart is complex. There are deep idols within the heart beneath the more concrete and visible surface idols that we serve. We are often superficial in the analysis of our own idol structures." So he makes this classification between the surface idols and the deep idols. So surface idols would be these idols, these things, these people that we more easily recognize because they're on the surface. So even when you're going through these questions, these are probably the majority of things that come to mind. Surface idols are things such as money, sex, work, family, relationships, etc. There are these things that are easily identifiable. Another pastor called these "the branch idols." They're on the branches and you can see them, but they're not the ones at the root that are actually growing the branches. So there are the surface idols that are on the surface, and then underneath the idols, the idols beneath the idols are the deep idols. The deep idols are actually these drives in our heart that are what is producing the idolatry that we see on the surface. So the idols beneath the idols, the deep idols are what's driving all these surface things that honestly we tend to look to and that we spend the majority of our time on. The problem with doing that is, unless we get to the deeper idols that are driving the ones on the surface, we'll never change. And many of you experience that and are experiencing that. It's like mowing over the weeds. They're going to grow back unless you uproot them, unless you get to what's growing them on the surface.

So what I want to do this morning is give you some examples of what the deep idols are, and then we'll go through some case studies to help you identify how what I'm talking about works itself out in real life. So here are some deep idols in our lives. One pastor did a fascinating study on the Sermon on the Mount and really pulled these four deep idols from that particular sermon saying, "This is what Jesus was really going at." The first of the four deep idols would be power. The person who has a power idol thinks, if even subconsciously, "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have power, influence and success." What people with a deep idol are really seeking is success, achievement, influence, and these things drive us. This lust for these things drives everything else that we do. So power is a deep idol. Another one is control. Those with a control idol go, "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am able to get mastery over my life in this area, only if I'm able to get certainty in my life regarding this area." People with a deep idol of control are seeking self-discipline and certainty. They just want to know how things are going to go. They want to be in control of their little world, and it drives so much of how we live. Another one would be approval, that "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am loved and respected by ____." It could be an individual person, it could be a group of people or it could be just this faceless nameless crowd, but you're looking to others and the approval of others to make you

feel worth something, to make you feel, as Madonna said, "To feel like you're somebody." And of course it drives and dictates so much of the dysfunction in our relationships. The fourth deep idol is comfort. This is a massive one in my own life and my own heart. The deep idol of comfort says, "Life only has meaning, I only have worth if I have this kind of pleasure experience or quality of life. If I have this kind of pleasure experience or quality of life, that's when I know that life is good." People with this idol, like myself, seek privacy, lack of stress, freedom and all these things. We're just after comfort. We want comfort at all costs.

So these deep idols, these drives of our heart are really what is driving those idols that are at the surface. So let me give you a couple examples of how this works. Let's take the surface idol of work. Of course work is an idol for many in our day and age. I don't think that surprises any of you. Many people overwork and thus allow their jobs to control their lives. We all know that, we all see that and we all speak about that on different occasions. Yet there are different reasons why people overwork. So lots of people overwork, but they're overworking for many different reasons if you go around and ask them. Those reasons why they're overworking are really the deep idol that's driving the surface idol of work. Let me just give you a few examples here. See if you can figure out the deep idol from the description I give you. Jimmy Fallon is a comedian and has a late-night talk show. For a while there, I really feel like Jimmy Fallon hosted every award show imaginable for a span of three to five years. This is from an article in Rolling Stone magazine. It talks about his idol of work, which is easily recognizable. But then more important is why he was driven to work. Fallon made a vow and he said this. "I remember saying to myself, 'If I don't make it on Saturday Night Live before I'm 25, I'm going to kill myself.' It's crazy. I had no other plan. I didn't have friends, I didn't have a girlfriend, I didn't have anything going on. I had my career, that was it." And of course, it's easy to look at this and say, "This man obviously idolizes his work. He has a work idol." But if you keep reading the article and ask yourself the question, "What is driving this? What's driving him to have this sense of looking to this job as savior?" We don't have to guess. He tells us. It says, "Fallon's not so sure what drew him so fiercely to comedy, to making people laugh. He said, 'I never went to a therapist. I don't want to know.' But he does maybe venture a guess. 'It was a rush. I think it was the rush of getting a reaction. Maybe it's acceptance. Maybe it's a thing where you're pleasing somebody. I want to be friends with everybody, and if you make a joke and everyone laughs, you're like, 'That's it. I scored.' And that's what I thought making a friend was. You just feel like people liked you, so maybe it was that, acceptance." So this deep drive of acceptance, of approval is driving him to look at his job, at his position in such a way that he's saying, "If I don't get this job, I'm going to kill myself. Life is not worth living." So the deep idol of approval is driving the idol of work that's here on the surface that is so easily recognizable.

Let's take something else. Chris Evert, who was a female tennis player, one of the arguably greatest female tennis players in the history of the world. She said this in a Good Housekeeping article about why she was working so hard on the tennis court and why she was so wrapped up in her job. She said, "I had no idea who I was, or what I could be away from tennis. I was depressed and afraid because so much of my life had been defined by my being a tennis champion. I was completely lost. Winning made me feel like I was somebody. It made me feel pretty. It was like being hooked on a drug. I needed the wins, the applause, in order to have an identity." So it's achievement, success and power. Do you know what's amazing about the deep idol of achievement? This is one of mine, and I think much of that has to go to the fact that sports played such a massive role in my life. And of course, sports is all about achievement. Interestingly enough, I'm walking through the Gospel and Life material with a group of athletes at UNT and former college and high school athletes. To the man, every single one of them said their deep idol was achievement. So I say all that by the way to say if you are an athlete, were an athlete, if you're a parent, be very, very careful not to nurture this deep idol of achievement in your child. It doesn't have to be just sports. It could be being good at the piano. It could be a number of different things. Just be careful that you're not nurturing this deep idol where these children are growing up looking to their achievement and success to make them as Chris Evert said, "to feel pretty, feel worthy, feel like somebody." But this idol of work for many is driven by achievement, not approval. "I've got to be at the top. I've got to be the CEO. And that's why I'm willing to work all these hours and forsake and neglect my family in anything else. Because I have to be here."

Of course overwork can be driven by the deep idol of comfort. Many overwork simply to keep up a comfortable lifestyle. People are willing to sacrifice their family and their other relationships in order to maintain a standard of living that is comfortable to them. Their lust and demand for comfort drives them to overwork. You see this all the time. "I want this car, I want this sized house, I want this lifestyle and I'm willing to work long hours away from my family because this comfort is that important to me." So being comfortable can drive overwork. Do you see here how the deep idol is driving the surface idol.

And many people overwork because they're controlled by this deep idol of having to be in control. You often hear about people who grow up in poverty, get a good education, go to college and they come out saying, "I'm never going to have my family have to experience what I experience. I'm going to control my environment to such a degree that we never have to go through that. So I'm going to do whatever it takes. I'll overwork, I'll stay away from my family to be at the job so that I can control the environment and never make anyone go through what I had to go through." One of the mantras of people who are driven by a deep idol of control is the mantra of, "If I want something done right, I've just got to do it myself." Sometimes this is true. Sometimes you're not going to ask that person to do that because it's not going to go well, so you go ahead and do it. But if you are constantly saying this to yourself, if this is the mantra in your marriage, in your house, in your study group, on your team, there may be a deep idol of control there that you may want to look into.

So do you see the difference between the surface idol and the deep idol? The surface idol of work in all these cases is being driven by a different deep idol that is causing the same thing to come out on the surface. Let's take another surface idol. Let's take the surface idol of sex, sexual desire. Last June the House of Representatives impeached a Federal judge in Houston for lying about his sexual assaults against two women who worked in his office. He was the first federal judge impeached in twenty years. Of course on the surface it's easy to see the headlines, to watch the news and just go, "Well that guy is a pervert. He's just an old dirty man who is trying to have his sexual desires fulfilled. He just needs to control his desire for sex." And I think that's an overly simplistic way to look at what was really happening. I think that because if you read the articles about this man, if you read the stories, something else begins to emerge that gives us a hint as to what was actually driving the perversion that we all see on the surface. This is an excerpt from Texas Monthly. I was just reading this article, and it was so explicit what was happening here. It says, "Until earlier this year year, when he became known as the 'sex judge'--the first federal justice ever to be indicted for sex crimes--59-year-old Samuel Barstow Kent was the most powerful person in Galveston, a figure of such magisterial authority that citizens called him King Kent." The article goes on to say, "It was the most spectacular downfall the justice system had seen in decades. A federal judge, who in nineteen years on the bench presided over more than twelve thousand cases, had been caught himself in a flagrant abuse of power." It's not just as simple as saying this man is a pervert. There is something underneath that that he bought into, looked into and lusted after that was driving the perversion of his actions. At the end of the trial, "Cathy [one of the women assaulted] stood at the lectern and, trying to keep her voice from cracking, called Kent a "drunken giant" who 'used his incredible power to his own benefit, and hurt so many people in the process.' Donna, the other woman he assaulted, followed with her statement. 'He abused those around him and misused the power that his position had brought him.'" So these sexual sins that are on the surface are horrible. His heart had been so taken up with his sense of his own power that had led him to do these things. So power was driving what was happening here. That was really what was deeper going on in his heart. So we see sexual misconduct, sexual perversion, sexual impurity driven by the deep idol of power.

Often sex and sexual impurity is driven by the deep idol of comfort. I had a roommate right after I graduated from college. When he graduated he had a lot of free time before he found his job. So of course he did what many young men would do today. He played video games. At the time his PlayStation was the console and Madden was the game to play. So he had his team, and he was so into it. So I'd come home from work and go, "How did you guys do today?" And he would tell me and give me updates on the game, who got hurt, what happened, who got this many yards. It's kind

of humorous, but he really got into it. He got into it to such a degree that, when he lost, it really was painful to him. It hurt his feelings. It was one of those things where he was really upset. It wasn't just, "Well, that stinks." No, he thought about it to the degree that, one time after he lost, he told me he got so frustrated that he turned off the game and, in order to sooth and comfort his anger and disappointment, he masturbated. Now, you look at that on the surface and go, "What's that about?" It wasn't like he was looking on-line at pornography or anything like that. No, there was this area of discomfort in his life, so he looked to sexual pleasure, to comfort where he was sensing pain. Most of you continue to look at pornography, most of you continue to have sex in your relationships outside of marriage because you have a deep idol of comfort, and you're looking to soothe it. And that does it. . .at least for about five seconds. And then it's over and the guilt, shame and remorse come. And it's great that you have Covenant Eyes on your computer and set up some of these boundaries. That's all great, but if you continue to deal with your idolatry on the surface and you don't ever realize the reason you're doing these things is because you want comfort more than anything else in the world, you'll never change. And this is just where some of you are at right now. You love, love, love comfort so much that you just can't stop lusting after it. So the way your lust works itself out is in all these things that are easily noticeable on the surface. And that's where you stay. You notice those things, but you never get to the idol underneath. And therefore you never change and just keep mowing over the weeds. To get to it, you've got to get underneath it. You see all these men in positions of leadership that have all these sexual falls? Do you know what I think is going on a lot of times there? Let's just use pastors for example, because it seems to happen so often among pastors. It has happened at Grace Temple Baptist Church who met in this building before us. It happened to the pastor right before we came in in the office that I'm in now. What happens there? The role of the pastor is a very demanding job. Unlike anyone else except for counselors, pastors walk through the wreckage of human sin day in and day out, and it's painful, at least if you're a good pastor. You empathize with your people, you walk through that pain with them and you feel the pain with them. And if you're not looking for comfort from the Spirit of God or from the body of Christ, you're going to find it somewhere in this role or roles like it. So it's a very easy step from the discomfort of these roles and these positions that we walk in to finding a comfort to soothe our discouragement, our weariness and all those things, and sex just provides it. So next time you see the news and it's another Senator or another pastor who has fallen, before you just write him off as a pervert, maybe you think about that and maybe you think about your own heart and your own life if maybe there's a deep idol of comfort that is driving so much of what you do on the surface.

Of course, sexual impurity could be driven by the deep idol of approval. I could just recount the number of men and women who end up in my office with just shame and guilt over the fact that they wanted this person's approval so badly that they were willing to do anything, and now they're walking through the wreckage of that. You see this all the time. You know this better than I do. People who are looking for approval look to sex to get it. But it is the approval piece that is driving the sexual impurity that's happening. I will say this about approval. I think one of the reasons men, whether they're married or not, are addicted to pornography is because pornography is safe. There is no chance that the person on the screen is going to reject you, ever. She's always there, she's always willing to be there for you and she's never going to reject you. You can always find approval there, so that's where you go. If you get in an argument with the wife, she rejects you and you don't have approval from her, "Well, I'll go get here, because she'll give me approval." It's not really approval, but that's what's going on subtly underneath our heart.

And then sex can be driven by the deep idol of control, that people will actually use sex as a tool to gain the upper hand and control the relationships they're a part of. Laura Sessions-Step wrote an entire book about this called Unhooked about the college culture of women who are actually leading now and making sex a big, big part of the relationships that they're part of before marriage. She talks about how they do this because they think that they'll get an upper hand and they'll actually have more control over the man in their relationship. Maybe they have a fear that they're going to lose this person's approval, so before they even let that happen, they're going to get control over the relationship and they're going to use sex to get it. Ironically, horrifically and sadly, what they find is that the exact opposite happens. In trying to

get control in this way, they actually lose it more than they would have to begin with. So that is an example of sex being driven by the idol of control.

These surface idols, be it work, sex or relationships, what's the idol beneath the idol in your life? Until you get there, until you can identify that, I don't know that you'll change to the degree that you're hoping you will change. Tim Keller says, "Idols cannot be dealt with simply by eliminating surface idols like money and sex. The deep idols have to be dealt with at the heart level." So for me, the deep idols are achievement, power and comfort. Of course, I slip into control and approval more than I want to, but if I'm looking at a situation, if I'm looking at the behavior of my life, what's typically beneath all my sinful behavior, it's the desire for those two things as I've looked into my life and had others look at my life with me. So how do you begin to deal with these things at the heart level? If you've identified the deep idols, how do you begin to deal with them at the heart level? Quite simply, we repent and we rejoice in Christ, motivated by the gospel, the good news. It's inside-out. It's not outside-in. We don't start with our behavior and try to go in and change our hearts. We start with our hearts. So motivated by the gospel, as we see it, as we believe, as we hear it, as we embrace it with our hearts more and more, we transfer our trust from these other saviors onto Jesus Christ. So there is a believing the gospel that leads us to repentance, which is us transferring our trust from this thing or this person onto the person of Jesus Christ. According to pastor Tullian Tchividjian, the gospel essentially gives us all things that we're looking to these other saviors to give us. It actually does give us what they can't ever give us. He says, "The gospel is the good news that, in His life, by His death and with His resurrection, Jesus Christ secured for sinners all the approval, justification, affection, achievement, freedom, meaning, righteousness, rescue, purpose and protection that we are longing for." All these things that we're longing for are found in Jesus Christ. And if we want to displace the idols, even the deep idols that are in our heart, Jesus Christ has become more beautiful to us, more hope-giving to us than these other things.

I'll use this illustration. My son is eighteen-months-old, and I love him. I just never knew that having the opportunity to walk with a son would be this joy giving. I just thank God for it and all that He has taught me through it. He's at a stage now where he gets attached to different things easily. One of his favorite things is a couple of tubes of toothpaste and a little baby toothbrush. He wakes up in the morning and that's what he wants. He wants the toothpaste, and he just holds on to it. And if you try to take these things out of his hands, he just has a conniption fit. He is so attached to them, they are so important to him, they're so wonderful to him, they give him so much joy that if you start to take them from him, he gets upset. We have found that there are really two ways to get these things out of his hands. One is neither preferable for him or me. It's for me to just take them out of his hands, to overpower him and take them from him. Though I don't like to do that, I will, especially when I need to. But the other way we get them out of his hands is to put something in front of him that is more wonderful in his mind and his heart than what he's got in his hands. If we do that, he'll drop the toothpaste and toothbrush and he'll grab hold of whatever it is that we're holding out that is more valuable and beautiful to him in that moment. It's the same with us. If we want to displace these deep idols in our heart, if God is gracious, He might rip them out of your hands. He may do that if He's merciful. If He's not merciful like we read in Romans 1, He just lets you continue to chase them. The other way we can displace these idols is if we come to see Jesus Christ as infinitely more beautiful, infinitely more valuable, infinitely more hopegiving and worthy of our affections than whatever it is right now for you that's your savior that you're looking to give you only what Jesus Christ could do. So it's only when Jesus Christ becomes the predominant affection of your heart that the other things that your hearts are giving affection and attention to will be uprooted and replaced. So whatever you've been looking to for significance, whatever you've been trusting in to make you somebody, whoever you've been depending on to make life worth living, look away from that this morning and look to Jesus Christ.

So let me pray to that end. "Father, thank You for Your mercy to us. Thank You that despite our rebellion, the fact that we have chosen not to worship You and have chosen to worship creation, You have sent Your Son so that we could be saved from Your wrath and also from these other saviors that we're looking to give us rest in our hearts. I pray this morning,

as we come and remember the good news of who Jesus Christ is and what He's done, that You would help our hearts believe that if we transfer our trust from these other things to Him, we'll have life to the fullest. So by Your Spirit, now I pray that You would sweep us up into these things for Your glory, for our good and for the good of the world and the city around us watching. We pray and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

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