

## Source and Surface Idols

Matt Chandler – May 29, 2016

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How are we? Doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Exodus, chapter 20, is where we're going to be in our time together today. While you're turning there, I don't know if you've picked up on it, but the last three to five years we've really established a rhythm on our preaching and teaching. Here's kind of how it works.

In the middle of August, we begin a fall series. In that fall series, we teach for about 12 weeks. For 12 or 13 weeks, somewhere in there, we have a series. That leads us right into Advent. We spend four weeks on Advent, and then we move into January, and in January we do what we call our *month of prayer*. In our month of prayer, we want to drive some stakes in the ground around some things The Village Church wants to be very serious and very intentional about.

We talk about life and what it means to be for life in all its forms. We talk about racial reconciliation. We talk about the nations. Then we talk primarily, as we talk about all of those things, that, ultimately, human effort alone will not be enough to push back those areas of darkness, so we need to ask and plead with God to really help us and to turn back these parts of brokenness in our cultures and communities.

From there, we move into a spring series. The spring series can be anywhere from 10 to 15 weeks, depending on what it is. That's pretty much our year. We've kind of established that as a rhythm here at The Village. Now there are some really good things about that, so let me talk about some of those. One of the things good about that is that we are constantly, in our relationship with you as members of this church, thinking, praying, and considering what will be most helpful for you.

We know that involves the Word of God, so when we're preaching through these series, one of them is almost always a book of the Bible, and the other one is almost always topical. Like what is the topic? Where do we need to grow? Where do we need greater understanding? How can we better serve *this* body in *this* place in *this* context?

When we're writing sermons, when we're getting ready for series, we're never thinking about podcasts or what could be curricular. No, no. We're thinking about, "How do we love and serve the men and women of The Village Church?" What that means is when we step up and do a big series, we've been prayerfully planning that and building around that for months.

For the last three months, I have been neck deep, along with a bunch of other pastors here, in the book of Exodus. We will start in mid-August a 15-week series on the book of Exodus. It won't finish the book. It'll just take us through Advent to chapter 15 of Exodus. Then we'll take our regular January break, and then we'll move into the second part of Exodus, and that's looking to be 15 to 17 weeks when we start that in February.

All of that is being built, studied, and prayerfully considered right now. When we gather, when the Word of God is opened, we're not just throwing something out there. We've considered you, we've considered the context in which we live, and we're trying to serve you and grow you into the fullness of what Christ has for you.

So that's the good. The bad, although I don't know that I'm willing to call it bad, is that there are times I'm compelled to share my heart with you in a way that's not in step with the way we've been preparing for six months. By the grace of God, the pastoral staff and the elders of The Village Church always just say, "Do that, Chandler. Just scrap what we've been working on and preach your heart." But that always feels a little wonky to me. I feel like we've spent all this time praying and building; we should probably honor what's going on here.

One of the reasons I've been really excited about this summer is that this summer in particular we haven't planned a lot, so I get to just preach my heart with you all summer long. One of those will form a tiny series, like we just did two weeks on prayer. That's what we're just coming out of. That wasn't prepared six months ago or even three months ago or even two months ago. We just said, "Hey, let's do two weeks on prayer. We could really grow in our prayerfulness, so let's do that."

I have a standalone here today, and then we're going to start next week a three-week quick series on Christian courage. Then I'm just going to share my heart with you the rest of the summer. We're going to start that today. Just kind of Pastor Matt's heart for the church, Summer 2016. We're going to start that by talking about idolatry, because there's nothing that says summer like a good sermon on idolatry.

If you have your Bibles, we want to look at Exodus, chapter 20. Even if you don't have a background in church, I think as we begin to read this text you'll know it. You might not know it word for word, but as we begin to read it, you'll go, "Oh yeah, I know that text." So Exodus, chapter 20, starting in verse 1.

**"And God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.**

**You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

**You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner [immigrant, alien] who is within your gates.**

**For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.**

**You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."**

If you have a background in church, even if you don't, you know that. That's the Ten Commandments. In fact, most of you, if you're over the age of 35, these probably hung somewhere on the wall in a classroom you sat in as you were growing up. These are the Ten Commandments.

One of the things Martin Luther, who was one of the fathers of the Protestant Reformation, said, or one of the insights he had into this passage, was that because the first two commands deal with idolatry... "Don't have any other gods before me, and don't make graven images of other gods and worship them and serve them."

He said that because the first two dealt with idolatry, the rest of the commands can only be broken if you break one of the first two. Luther's argument is that if you could steal, if you dishonored your parents, if you lied about your neighbor, or if you had sex out of the covenant relationship of marriage, you had already broken commands one and two. You had already believed there was something greater and more valuable than God. You are already guilty of idolatry.

Luther is going to argue, the Bible is going to argue, that the root issue in you and in me that has to be solved is the root issue of idolatry. That's why I want to talk about idolatry today. Now just a disclaimer before we dive in. Quite a bit of what I'll share with you today is not original to me. The first time I heard it a man named Dick Kauffman had created these categories and was sharing it with me. He was quoting a guy named Dick Keyes.

Since then, Tim Keller has grabbed ahold of it, and all sorts of other people have used this grid that I'll share today. I can't, for all of my effort, find the primary source. I am just not the primary source. I'm saying that to you, because if you think today, "Man, he's really insightful," I'm not; I can just read. So just integrity... I need to lay before you I have not put this together; someone else has. I couldn't figure out who it was or I would tell you exactly who it was.

I can tell you for further reading you can read *Counterfeit Gods* by Tim Keller, which is an excellent book. But we're going to dive into idolatry. Let me define it. In the simplest definition available to us, *idolatry* is valuing something more than you value God. That's base level. Because we're Americans in 2016, we don't even hardly have a category for idols. Idolatry is like people worshipping a monkey in the woods of some far-off country.

Idols kind of stir up in us *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Certainly we don't worship idols. Yet I think ours at times can be far sillier than a golden monkey in a temple in some far-off land.

We're going to talk about idols in two different ways. First, let me say why we're doing this. The reason we need to address idolatry... Well, there are multiple reasons. First, all of us are guilty of it. John Calvin said all of our hearts are idol factories, which means our hearts are constantly creating new idols.

The second reason is when we value something more highly than we value God we are forced in that moment to do two things. One is to suppress the truth of God, and the other is then to question the character of God. When you value something more than you value God, regardless of what it is, you will simultaneously suppress God's truth and question God's character.

Let's take whatever it is. In fact, one of the crazy things about idols is, more often than not (and this is what makes them so insidious), they're good things made ultimate. They're not bad things; they're good gifts. Instead of taking them for what they are, we've elevated them to be more than they should be. When we begin to worship a good thing as an ultimate thing, what ends up happening is we suppress the truth of God and we question his character.

So let's take a couple of these. If I have a relationship that is higher up in my valuing and celebrating and rejoicing in and pursuing than God, then anything God would say about that that makes it fall down a notch I have to suppress, I cannot listen to. And because he would dare try to take this from me or tweak this thing, then surely he can't be good. It could be anything, but once it's higher than God, anything God says about it that would lower it cannot be listened to; it must be suppressed. This is Paul's argument in Romans 1.

From there, we have to question God's character, because if God was truly loving, he would let me do what I want, and if God was truly a good God, he wouldn't say this about my idol. "How dare he? He made me this way. Why couldn't I?" This is the argumentation that comes when you worship something that's no god at all. So when we talk about idols, we're going to talk about them in two different ways. We're going to talk about them as *surface idols* and then *source idols*.

1. *Surface idols*. Surface idols are what you tend to be able to see. If you and I could go and sit down and have a cup of coffee and I ask you this... I ask this question a lot. In fact, some of you will smile because I've asked *you* this question. If we got to sit down, I might ask this. "What are your current pain points in your life? Where do you feel like you're misfiring?"

What I'm doing in that moment is asking an open-ended question that'll have you talking to me about your surface idols. If you're like, "Oh, this relationship is really *this*. *This* thing is going on..." Let me give you some examples.

A. *Image idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have a particular kind of look or body imagery." Now let's chat. That's a good thing. To be healthy, to take care of yourself. It's not a bad thing. It's not a sinful thing. In fact, there's much in the Scriptures about being a good steward of our body. There's nothing sinful about wanting to be lovely. It just makes a really crummy god. The issue is the first sentence. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have a particular kind of look or body image."

B. *Work idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I'm highly productive, getting a lot done." Again, the Bible has a ton of positive things to say about hard work, about productivity. The Bible is not anti- these things. It's just saying if you make it ultimate, if you make your identity built on you being able to get things done, you become a slave, and you're worshipping at the wrong altar.

C. *Achievement idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am recognized for my accomplishments, if I am excelling in my career."

D. *Materialism idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."

E. *Religion idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I'm adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplishing its activities."

F. *Individual-person idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if this one person in my life is happy or they're happy with me."

G. *Racial or cultural idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if my race or culture is recognized as superior."

H. *Inner-ring idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if a particular social group or professional group or some other group lets me in."

I. *Family idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if my children or my parents are happy and are happy with me."

J. *Relationship idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if Mr. or Mrs. Right is in love with me."

K. *Suffering idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am hurting and in a problem, because only then do I feel noble and worthy of love or am able to deal with guilt."

Now here's why idolatry is so insidious. No one in this room is cognitively thinking, "My life only has value and I only have worth if [fill in the blank]." No one is cognitively thinking that. No one in this room is thinking, "I only have value, I only have worth, if I have this kind of body image." Instead, we just live in such a way that reveals that's actually what's going on in our hearts.

No one is thinking, "My life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have the iPhone 6S and I wear these kinds of clothes." No one thinks that. We just, instead, go into debt massively for trinkets and toys and stuff that doesn't matter, and that reveals our hearts. So we're not thinking this first sentence. No one is thinking, "Life only has meaning and I only have worth *if...*" Yet we live this way.

All of the ones I just listed... We could have gone on and on. I just clipped and cut, clipped and cut, to get this sermon into the length it needs to be. All of these are surface idols. They're what we see, but they're not really the problem. Here in our part of the country, it's that time of year where we're trying to get our yard on point. The problem with that, where we live, is this little plant from the depths of hell called *crabgrass*. It looks like grass, but it is not grass.

It is an unstoppable, dark, wicked thing that is very hard to destroy. Yet you go out on Saturday or whatever your day is. You get your mower out and you cut and you edge and you weed-eat, and then you're done. You get yourself a drink. You've subdued your part of the earth like God commanded in Genesis 1 and 2.

You're looking out at your yard. You're feeling like the man you are, just waiting for that "Yard of the Month" stick to be stuck into the ground. Forty-eight hours later, you see that quite a bit of your yard is not grass at all but it's actually crabgrass. Crabgrass grows at four times the rate of normal grass. You can mow it over, but it pops right back up.

The way to think about these idols I just listed out is surface idols. They're like crabgrass. To deal with them is simply mow over something but not really solve anything. To really get to the heart of the issue you have to go deeper, and that's going to take us into source idols. All of those stem from a source idol.

2. *Source idols*. What we're going to do is walk through the four source idols, and we'll see where we can find ourselves. Some of us are going to find ourselves in one. Some of us are going to find ourselves in two. Some of us are going to find ourselves in three, and, God help us, some of us are like, "Yep, all four." With that said, let's dive in.

A. *Comfort idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have this kind of pleasure experience or a particular quality of life." The person with a comfort idol seeks comfort. They want privacy. They want lack of stress. They want freedom. What they're willing to pay for that is productivity. They do not care about productivity. "Just give me comfort."

They're more than willing to not be productive at all as long as they can be comfortable. Their greatest nightmare is stress and demands. Now don't think I don't know some of you are like, "I thrive on that." We'll get to you, bro, in a second. We got you. We'll get to you. But for the comfort worshiper, stress and demands is their greatest nightmare.

Others often feel hurt by those who worship comfort. Why? Because laziness always has collateral damage. The problem emotion of those who worship comfort is boredom. They're people who are constantly bored. Boredom haunts them, because they have not been designed by God to sit around and do nothing. To worship comfort is to enslave yourself to boredom.

Worshippers of comfort see other people, even those closest to them, as potential obstacles to their comfort. Not surprisingly, then, authentic relationships do not come easily and, as a result, the person is only invested if the relationship provides an adequate layer of insulation. Think about it. If you worship comfort, all of your relationships can't get deeper than an inch, because relationships require work.

Deep relationships, not the "Hey, how are you doing; I'm fine" kind but the deep kind, require effort. They require us to get into uncomfortable spaces, to be exposed at times, for our weaknesses to be made visible. The one who worships comfort can't have that. It's too much work. So they just bounce around and never go deep with anyone.

See, the funny thing about the promise of the comfort god is it never delivers what it promises. For all the comfort you pursue and seek, you simply make yourself more uncomfortable, because the heart was created to abide in community and fellowship and work. Though comfort is not a bad thing, comfort makes a terrible god.

B. *Approval idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am loved and respected by [fill in the blank]." What you seek if you worship approval is approval. You want affirmation. You want love. You want relationships. The price you're willing to pay for that is independence. You don't want to be independent. You need somebody in your life. You don't want space at all. Your greatest nightmare is rejection.

Others often feel smothered by you. You are asking them to be what's not humanly possible for them to be. Your problem emotion is cowardice. What you're going to feel and have to work with all the time is the fact that you're a coward, that you lack a spine. What that means is with *this* group you're like, "I know; I hate him. I don't know why he's like that." Then over *here* you're going to be like, "I love him. He's one of my favorite guys ever."

Then you have to go to bed with yourself. You have to lie in bed at night and realize that you have no spine, that you are a coward, that you will never speak your mind and will never really have an opinion that matters to you, because having an opinion might be too costly. It might cost you someone's approval.

Again, I want to keep highlighting this. It's not a bad thing to want to be approved of. That's not a negative thing. We've been designed with this desire to be approved of, to be liked. In fact, even the guy who's like, "I don't care who likes me" is saying that because he thinks that you'll think he's cool for saying it and like him. It's a crazy irony. "I don't care what people say. Huh? Huh? I don't." *Like me, please, because that's how bold I am*. This is how it works.

The desire to be loved and affirmed is healthy and natural. The problem for the person with the approval idol, however, is that they are not ultimately satisfied with God's love for them and they seek love and affirmation from those they deem important. People with a worship of approval will do just about anything to make people happy with them.

Approval worshipers often overcommit, overpromise, and overstate in order to gain affirmation from others. They are radically insecure in their identity in Christ and fear rejection of people above a biblical fear of God or a hatred of sin. This leads to worry about what others think of them. Often those closest to someone with an approval idol feel smothered by the neediness of the idolater, whose desire to be loved cannot realistically be met by a mere human being.

C. *Control idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of [fill in the blank]." What a control worshiper seeks is control. They want self-discipline, certainty, standards. The price they're willing to pay is loneliness and spontaneity. We cannot be spontaneous if we worship control.

"What's the weather going to be like? Are we prepared? I read an article once that a kid got on one of these, and not only did *he* die but everyone died, so we can never ride these things." This is helicopter parenting. "There will never be anyone in any kind of danger." I'm not talking about being absurd. I'm talking about being freaked out, pretending that you can control everything.

The greatest nightmare is uncertainty. Others often feel condemned. One of the sentences out of a control worshiper's mouth is often, "Why can't you just...?" The problem emotion for those who worship control is worry. In fact, let me try to use control in particular to expose idolatry. Here's what happens when we worship control.

We seek to control our environment and discover we can't, so we worry, which then forces us to try to control it all the more, which only helps us see we can't control it, which leads to greater worry, which makes us try to control it even more, which lets us down, which leads us to worry, which then makes us want to control it even more. We get stuck in this cycle where anxiety and worry and fear devour us, so we clamp down even tighter, only creating more anxiety and fear and worry.

This is the god that control worshipers serve. It enslaves them. The person with a control idol is driven to control every aspect or order every aspect of their lives. But not just *their* lives, the lives of the people around them. Those who worship control are often so obsessed with making things go exactly as they planned they pay for it through deep-seated anxiety and worry.

The mantra of a true control worshiper is, "If I want it done right, I have to do it myself." We see this in how they handle their money. We see this in how they handle the people around them. We see

this in how they micromanage every area of their life. There is no peace. There is no rest. There is always something to be afraid of. This is control.

D. *Power idolatry*. "Life only has meaning and I only have worth if I have power and influence over others." What you seek when you worship power is power. We would define that as success, winning, influence. The price you're willing to pay to get that is to be burdened or to bear the responsibility. This is power. "I'll bear it. I'll do it. I'll handle it. I've got it. If it can make more of me, if it can build me up, give me more influence, more power, I'll do it." You're willing to pay the price of being burdened, bearing the responsibility.

The greatest nightmare of somebody who worships power is humiliation. It's not just about winning; it's about not losing. Others around those who worship power most often feel used. Why? Because the person who worships power doesn't love you or even like you. They use you to increase their influence, to increase their power. Their relationship with you is built on what you can bring to them to exalt and elevate their power and influence.

The problem emotion for those who worship power is always anger. I've never met a violent man who doesn't at his heart level worship power. Now someone with a power idol gains their identity in competition. The fiercer the challenge the better. Again, there's nothing wrong with competition. In fact, The Village Church staff is extremely competitive. It's an extremely competitive group of men and women.

In fact, there's always a tournament of some kind going on around here. Back in the day, we had this massive flag football tournament that we no longer have. There was a draft. There was like a 28-page rule book. There was a full-on tournament. There were never any physical altercations, but we crept toward the line a couple of times.

Now we just do cornhole, and that, for whatever reason, doesn't incite and inflame passions quite like flag football did. So we love competition here. I would never even downplay competition. It's a good thing. It's a gift from God. Competition, winning... That's great stuff; it just makes a terrible god.

Another way to describe the power worshiper is to say that their primary motivation in life is not so much to win as it is to avoid losing. Those who struggle with power not only tend to be violent people but they will oftentimes struggle with things like gambling and addiction to games where

they can win. Their heart is most often exposed when they lose or they feel humiliated. Someone who worships power would run up the back of their grandma to not lose. This is what it's like to worship power.

All of us, regardless of what you're thinking your felt need is... If I could say, "Hey, what's going on in your life? Where are you hoping that God could grow you? Where do you feel weak?" and you'd be like, "Body image is really an issue for me that I'm struggling with. Materialism is really an issue that I'm struggling with..."

I'm going to say, "Okay. Praise God that he has given you eyes to see that surface idol, but let's go a little bit deeper. Where does that spring from? What's really causing that? Is it comfort? Do you worship comfort? Do you worship approval? Do you try to do what only God can do and control everything? Are you really after power? What is it?" It's in those spaces that I think we should consider and try to get to the bottom of what's really going on in us.

Why should we do this? Well, because if we're worshipping one of these source idols, then we're suppressing the truth of God and we're calling God's character into question. We're taking a good thing and we're making it an ultimate thing; therefore, we're becoming enslaved by something that should rather be causing worship in us. Everything is on the line.

Maybe as we've walked through this... I said it and you were like, "That's me!" Or maybe you're like, "I'm not quite sure," or maybe, "Uh-oh. I could be all four. I'm not quite sure. I know I'm really angry right now about being bored because I'm lonely." Maybe you're just completely discombobulated. Here's the good news. When it comes to idols, God would simply have us repent. Maybe there's a question of how we should do that.

I want to put this on the screen. In 13 years of preaching, I don't know that I've ever put an illustration up on the board, but let's talk about repentance like this. When we're talking about repentance, we're talking about there being two pillars of the gospel that have to be understood. The first pillar is that *I am completely sinful*. That's true of every human being, all in mankind. I am completely sinful. Yet the other pillar of the gospel is *I am fully accepted*. Those are the two pillars of the gospel.

So when we're talking about idolatry, we're talking about seeing our sin. You can't repent if you don't see that there's an issue. So we see it. Part of what we're doing here today by laying some of

this language out before you is so you can see it. You can hear, "Oh my gosh, I do. I'm a comfort worshiper not a God worshiper. I care more about what other people think than I care about what God thinks."

The reason we're having this conversation is so you can see it by the grace of God. Then if you can see it, here's the second step and the one that few people want to make. The second step is now that we've seen it, own it. This is so counterintuitive in our culture. Here's what I mean by *own it*. Your sin is not something external to you. You don't sometimes lie; you're a liar. Do you hear the difference in those sentences?

What we like to do is distance ourselves from what we actually are. "I'm not a liar; I just lie sometimes. I'm not a reviler. I'm not a sexual deviant. These are just things I struggle with." No. It's something you are, and to own it is the gateway to joy. Let me try to explain that biblically. One of the things the apostle Paul does that can get on your nerves until you understand it is he always reminds you of what you used to be.

So in Ephesians 2, in 1 Corinthians 6, in Romans 1, in Titus 3, he's like, "You were revilers, drunkards, addicts, and sexual perverts, and you were lustful." You're like, "Why do you keep bringing this up, man? I thought I was free." Paul is the guy you're not inviting to your barbecue tomorrow, because he's stepping in going, "Remember what happened last year? We just exercised our Christian freedom right into drunkenness, when Bill over there..." You just don't want Paul to be there. He's always bringing this stuff up.

"Let it go, Paul. Second pillar. I am fully accepted. I've been forgiven freely, fully, and forever, Paul. Let it go, bro." But why won't he? Why won't he let it go? Because if we're not willing to own what we are, we will never be able to rejoice in all that he has done for us. Jesus tells a beautiful story in Luke, chapter 7, of a prostitute who comes in and falls at his feet. She's weeping all over his feet and wiping his feet with her hair. Simon, the Pharisee, thought to himself, "If Jesus knew what kind of woman this was, he wouldn't let her touch his feet."

Jesus answered his thought, which is always freaky, and said, "Simon, quick question. Two men owed a debt to a lender. One owed a whole bunch, and one owed just a little. Both were forgiven of their debt. Who was more grateful?" Simon the Pharisee, knowing he was busted, said, "I guess, I suppose, the one who owed more." Jesus said, "You've answered correctly. When I came into your home, you did not give me a kiss and you gave me no water for my feet."

If that "didn't give me a kiss" kind of wigs you out as a 2016 American, think Brazilians or Italians in the motherlands. Just affectionate, love you, give you a kiss, so glad you're here. Over the top hospitality and friendliness. "You did not honor me. You did not show me true hospitality. You did not show me that I was really wanted or desired here. Then you gave me nothing for my feet, but this woman, from the second she walked in the door, has not stopped kissing me and has washed my feet with her tears. So although her sins are many, they are forgiven fully."

Jesus' point to that room and to *this* room was that when we own our sin as we should, we really pick up velocity as we move toward this idea down here that I'm a bigger sinner than I thought. Our culture says, "Forget all about that. That might make you melancholy or sad, but you shouldn't be, because you're awesome." It's the doctrine of awesomeness that steals and robs us from joy in Christ. It's the idea that God kind of picks the best athletes for his team. That's not how this works.

When we're able to own our sins... "No, I am a liar. I am a pervert. I am broken. I am rebellious. I worship approval, not God. I think I know better than God, which is why I try to control things and don't trust him. I think I can dispense justice better than he can." All of your idols are accusations against God...unfair, undue, unfounded accusations against the Creator of the universe. You accuse him of not being good. You accuse him of not being for you. You accuse him of not blessing you. You accuse him, all the while breathing his air in the body he gave you.

To own our sin creates velocity that pushes us into our far idols. So now we're down in the depths. We're in our hearts. We're not up on the surface; we're under here, which then creates the velocity. By faith, after we've repented, now we're shooting up into this, "I am fully acceptable." Now Christ is a bigger Savior than I ever imagined.

You'll never be able to rejoice in that if you don't think you're guilty of anything, which is why Paul constantly brings this up in the New Testament. It's why he's telling to those in Crete, "You were perverts and liars and revilers and fools and sinful men." It's why he says the same thing to the church at Ephesus. It's just what he does.

There's always, in each of those texts I named...1 Corinthians 6, Titus 3, Ephesians 2...a beautiful three-letter word after that long list of reviler, drunkenness, sexual perverts, blah, blah, blah. *But...* "But God, who is rich in mercy, abounding in steadfast love, saves you through Christ." We see our passivity and God's activity in saving our souls.

When we get that, then we start to believe it. "Jesus lives in me. God sees Jesus in me. Jesus died for me, and Christ's life, his perfection, has been imputed or granted to me in Christ. Now we walk in the joy of the Lord. This is how we repent. We lean into our shortcomings and failures. We don't numb our minds to them. We spend time thinking about them. How counterintuitive is that? The world is trying to distract you from your failures or give you someone to blame for them.

It's not your fault; it's your dad's. Gosh, if he would have just hugged you a little bit more, told you how awesome you were, would have showed up to your games... It's your dad's fault you act like that, not yours. It's your spouse's fault. If they would just [fill in the blank] then you wouldn't have to. Right? If you sin, and maybe you'll acknowledge that, you only do it because of what other people have done. This is the mantra of our day, and it's not working. So this is how we repent.

What if you're just not there? You just heard all I said and you're like, "Yeah, yeah. Okay, whatever. I'm doing fine. Maybe I'd like to repent, but I just don't feel like that's where my heart is today." Maybe we could do this. One of the reasons we want to give you some language today is so that it can aid you as you pursue repentance.

Here's the first thing we could do. We can *name it*. If you can name your idol, we've taken a step in the right direction. I'm not saying your heart is broken and you're full-on repentant, but if you could just do a couple of minutes of work and go, "Okay, this is my idol." What you'll say when you name it is, "I worship comfort. I worship approval. I worship control. I worship power."

If you can name that, then you can *unmask it*. Once you've named it, you can unmask it for what it is. You can see how it lies to you and how it grieves the heart of Christ, how it compares to what God has for you compared to what it has actually brought into your life. If you worship control, you know you can't control. You know the worry and anxiety you walk in. You know it has betrayed you. If you've tried to pursue comfort, you know it's fleeting.

You can get to that vacation and come home just as tired. You can head to that thing that was supposed to bring you a great deal of comfort, only to find out it wasn't lasting comfort. Those who seek power can see the havoc their anger reaps in the workplace, at home, in their relationships. You name it and you unmask it.

Then you *consider how grievous it is to Jesus Christ*. "Well, I don't know how grievous it is." Okay, you need only to look to the cross of Christ for that. You need only use your sanctified imagination to ponder them ripping the flesh off his back and punching his face until it was a mashed-up, unrecognizable, bloody, tortured thing and to hear his screams as they drove nails through his hands and his feet. Brother, sister, that was about your comfort, my approval, your control, my power. It was about me. That wasn't for them; it was for me.

We just stay there for a second. We don't download another app. We don't rush off to find another movie. We don't play Whirlybirds, or whatever the world is in right now. We stop, we think, we consider, and we remember how grievous it is to Christ. Then we *repent*. We lay it down. We ask for forgiveness. Here's what's great. Then we *rejoice*, because there's no one in this room not guilty of these things, and yet the cross of Christ bids us come and be made new, come and be forgiven, come and be washed clean.

The only way to displace these idols is not via human effort but by divine action and surrender to that divine action. The only way to remove these idols from your heart is not by greater effort to *not* be about comfort but, rather, to allow Jesus to reign and rule in your life in such a way that he displaces them.

If you're not a Christian there's no way to displace these idols, because all mankind worships. Everyone you know is a worshiper. The most staunch God-hating atheist out there worships. He or she just worships the human intellect, which makes a really terrible god. You can't help but not worship. You were created, built, designed for it. You are. The question is...*What are you worshipping?* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the opportunity today to consider these things. I pray, Holy Spirit of God, that you would give clarity in these moments that follow. Whether we can just recognize surface or maybe, by your grace, we can see some source, I just pray you'd bring about clarity, that we'd be able to name, we'd be able to understand more fully what's going on in us and underneath these things.

For those of us who have experienced some victory in some of these areas, we praise you today, but I pray all the more that you would expose those areas where we worship things that are no gods at all. Will you reveal to us what the actions of our lives and the states of our hearts are accusing you of, and would you allow the weight of that to break our hearts? For your patience with us we are

overwhelmed with gratitude. You are gracious and kind, and we praise you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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