

Appendix A

Control

Idolatry Defined:

Dictionary.com has two different definitions:

1. An image or other material object representing a deity to which religious worship is addressed.
 - a. These can be things like:
 - i. A Buddah statue, Hindus' worship of cows, or even lucky charms like a rabbit's foot or horseshoes.
 - ii. The Old Testament had things like Asherim poles (Deuteronomy 7:5)
 1. Female fertility symbols
 2. Carved images or golden statues
2. Any person or thing regarded with blind admiration, adoration, or devotion.
 - a. Movie Stars
 - b. Sports Stars
 - c. Sports Teams
 - d. Bands

In other words, idols are the object of our worship. So what is worship? Worship is any person or thing that we seek, serve, sacrifice for, spend our time and money on, speak about most, and trust in most. We tend to worship idols as a means to serve ourselves.

The Truth about Idols

- **Idols have something that we want.**
 - Fame
 - Popularity
 - Security
 - Happiness
 - Love
 - Character
- **Idols promise to give us the hope and security that we are looking for.**
 - If I can just get married, then all my dreams will have come true.
 - If I could make a lot of money, all of my problems would go away.

- If I could just know what is going to happen tomorrow, then I could prepare for it and not be so afraid.
- **Idols lie to us.**

“Idols promise everything and they take away everything”

How Idolatry Functions

Since our hearts are worshipping hearts, we are idol making machines. We can turn anything into an idol. This makes the idols of our hearts very complex. So, in order to find freedom from our idols we must first understand how they function.

There are two levels of idols according to Tim Keller in his book “Counterfeit Gods”:

- 1. “Deep Idols”**
 - a. Deep idols are the result of sin corrupting our deep motivational drives.
 - b. Power, approval, comfort or control
- 2. “Surface Idols”**
 - a. These are the things that we seek and serve in order to satisfy our deep idols.
 - i. These are things like money, a relationship (a spouse, kids), success, fame, etc.

Control

The deep idol I would like to focus on for this appendix is the idol of control. Many of us struggle with this idol and it is a main reason for a lot of our fears and anxieties. Some of us struggle so much with control that it causes a physical reaction in the form of panic attacks.

Definition: to exercise restraint or direction over; dominate; command.

Many of us can relate to this need for control. There are certain areas in our lives that all of us want to feel like we have control over. Our finances, our futures, and our relationships are just a few examples that we all deal with.

The big issue with the idol of control is that deep down we know that we can’t really control things.
Stuff happens.

If you struggle with the idol of control, the previous statement just made you a little sick to your stomach, but the truth is there are so many things on a daily basis that we can't control. This leads me to my first point, which is the emotion of control.

The Emotion of Control

The emotion of control really deals with the loss of control. The promise of the idol of control is that ultimate happiness and contentment comes from achieving complete control. The problem is we are never completely in control of anything. So as we strive for

control and are met with moments that are out of our control we deal with the following emotions:

1. Fear & Dread:

- Many of us struggle with the possibilities of disaster happening in the future.
 - **Sometimes this comes from experience.**
 - Many of us have faced tragedy and loss. If you have ever been through hard times, then going through them again is the last thing you want to do.
 - **Sometimes this comes from real possibilities.**
 - Bad things can happen. There is a little bit of truth in all our fears, but it is often over-exaggerated.
 - We do not want to be vulnerable. A few examples of this are:
 - Stage fright
 - Not being prepared
 - Ex. Oversleeping for an interview
 - Opening up in a relationship
- **Anxiety:**
 - A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.
 - Will I get that job?
 - What if I don't get into that school?
 - What if I fail that class?
 - What if they don't accept me?
- **Depression**
 - Severe despondency and dejection, typically felt over a period of time and accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy.
 - The acknowledgement of loss of control can lead to hopelessness.
 - "There is nothing I can do, so, why try?"

The Action of Control

Obsession:

- **Over-preparedness-** Going over every detail over and over again. This way there is no chance of something going wrong.
 - **There is nothing wrong with preparing, but you can never be fully prepared.**
 - **Psychology would call this OCD.**
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
 - I would call it an idol of control.

Avoiding:

- We stay out of places and situations that we feel most out of control.
 - An extreme example of this are phobias (<http://phobialist.com>)

Worry:

Ed Welch writes in his book "Running Scared"

- Worriers live in the future.
 - It is the preferred time zone.
- Worriers are pessimistic fortunetellers.
 - They see the future in minute gory details.
- If you worry long enough, eventually, your fears will come true.
- Worry is a protection mechanism.
 - It is your shield from getting hurt.
 - **"If I imagine the worst, I will be prepared for it." Worry is looking for control.**
- Worriers cannot be reasoned with.
 - They don't listen very well.
- Worriers are self-centered.
 - When we worry, other people listen. It lets us indulge in self-pity.

Crushing the Idol to Control

1. We have to crush our pride:

- The Idol of control is predicated on our ability to do things.
 - It is a constant focus on us.
 - What we will gain.
 - What we will lose.

2. Trust in God:

- What is God's most frequent command in Scripture?
 - "Do not be afraid."
 - Genesis 26:24: "That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you."
 - John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
- **Freedom from control comes from laying down your pride and trusting in the One who actually has control.**

Matthew 6 Principle: Read Matthew 6:25-34

1. God is in control.
 - God not only created everything, but He takes care of everything.
2. God cares more about you than you do about yourself.
 - v.26b
 - The question Jesus asks, "Are you not of more value than they?" is a question of trust. How you answer this question is the key to peace or anxiousness.
 - If God is in control and you know He cares for you, then, you can trust that whatever the future holds, God will be with you and will help you through it. Therefore, if you believe and trust this truth, you will have peace. However, you will need to meditate and remind yourself of it on a daily basis. Belief is knowledge with trust, and trust is an action not a feeling. You will need to choose to trust God.
 - Anxiety comes when we don't believe that God is in control and has our good in mind. We choose to take control into our own hands. We believe if we can prepare enough and worry enough about the future that we can prevent bad things from happening. The problem with control is that we know deep down that we have no control which leads to panic attacks and the other negative reactions described above.
 - So how do we practically trust God with our lives?

3. We focus on the present:

- The idol of control is a symptom of our pride and desire to play God. We spend most of our thought life:
 - Trying to redeem the past
 - Trying to setup or control the future

The problem with this pattern of thought is these are two realms that only God lives in. God is omnipresent which means that He rules everywhere at all times including over all of history. God is not confined to our timeline. We cannot control the future or change the past. All we are responsible for is to live faithfully for God in the present time.

However, how will live in the present and the choices we make do redeem the past in the fact that we can learn and be different from who we once were. The past has influenced who we are, but it does not define who we become. We have a new identity in Christ, and the gospel gives us new hope (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Also, how we live in the present and the choices we make today do influence the future. Wise choices produce good fruit. (Galatians 6:6-10)

6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. **7** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **9** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. **10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

So I encourage you - repent of your pride and the idol of control. Accept the gracious truth that you are not in control, nor do you need to be. God's rule over you is a part of His grace in your life that leads to peace.