

**For the Love of the Family Ministries**  
**Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family**  
**Idols of the Heart**  
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**James 1:13-17, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."**

After several years of counseling people concerning their spiritual needs I have found the great need is to deal with the idols of the heart. Every spiritual problem is a problem of the heart. The reason we have many issues in our lives is because our heart wanders. Every child in rebellion is because their heart wanders. There is no Biblical change in the life of a Christian unless we get specific about idols of the heart. God has given us a tremendous mechanism. When we get saved, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us. God engages us in the heart, inner man, or mind which are all synonymous in the Scripture.

II Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever." When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it means God wants us to change that behavior of our life. It is not enough to just confess the sin to God. I have to repent of the behavior and "renew" or change my mind through God's Word. Remember the goal of every Christian's life is to honor and glorify God, I Corinthians 6:19-20.

The word "lust" or "lusts" in Scripture is an interesting word. In James 1:14, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own **lust**, and enticed." It is the word for strong, overwhelming desire. In essence, what I call a **demand lust. Something that you have to have. Something that controls and motivates behavior. In essence, an idol of the heart.**

Children are born with certain natural desires for food, drink, etc. They are not born with a desire for certain music, designer clothes, etc. Those things come along with the environment in which they are raised. However, our children are born with a sin nature and a desire "to go their own way," Proverbs 14:12, 14, 16:25. One of the great failures of the modern Christian home is the training of our children spiritually to live for

and serve the Savior and not to go "their own way." We do not train our children because we have failed to see the point of James 1:13-14.

Obviously, we cannot train our children if we do not understand that we cannot live for our own lusts, "go our own way." Galatians 5:16, "This I

say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not **fulfill the LUSTS of the flesh.**" Unfortunately, this is where the problem lies for the

contemporary Christian. We desire to live for the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, our children do as well. It is interesting to me that the

Bible tells us that each of us has our own special lusts, actually designer lusts. In essence, these are things that I like and want. Mine

may be different from yours. Ephesians 2:3 calls these "the desires of the mind." Ephesians 2:3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in

times past in the lusts of our flesh, **fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as

others." You see we all have our own "desires of the flesh and mind." In essence, designer lusts. We design our own lusts, the idols of the heart, Ezekiel 14:3-7.

James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Who is responsible here? We are. Who is not responsible here? God is not. What is the end result of this? James 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Notice it says if you do not deal with it, it becomes a sin of your life. The end result is death. The word here for death means destroyed or destruction. Many of God's people are destroyed because they do not deal with their demand lusts. This certainly happened with Israel in the Old Testament, Hosea 4:1-8. Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

Many of God's people are destroyed because they do not deal with their strong demand lusts or idols of the heart. The first thing I want to do in counseling with someone is to find out what the idols of the heart are. I generally find this out by asking them what makes them happy? Any answer except glorifying the Lord in my life will lead me to what is controlling their life and what the spiritual issues are. Of course, the idols of the heart are selfishness in their purest form. I also ask them what do they want to accomplish in their life? When they give an answer, I ask them what that means to them. We then can find the idols of the heart because they will tell me what they are. Almost all of it deals with living for themselves or going their own way. Of course, they do not understand why they are having the problems they are having. Every spiritual problem is a matter of a heart problem.

Changing behavior from an idol of the heart to having a real spiritual relationship with God and having long term change in our life has to be done Biblically. When I show someone I Corinthians 6:19-20, and ask them if the behavior they are doing glorifies God, they generally answer no. We have then identified one of the idols of the heart and generally there is more than one. **The person is struggling with any type of spiritual relationship and home relationships because of it.**

We then show them Proverbs 5:21-23, that if he will not Biblically change the cords of their sins will bind them tighter and their life will only get worse because of their failure to glorify God in their life.

To Biblically change this behavior we then go to Ephesians 4:22-24 and show them they have put it off and then put on the new and change takes place by renewing their mind (changing their thinking about it to God's thinking about it). The only way to make long term Biblical change in a person's life is to change their thinking to God's thinking. If we change their thinking to God's thinking, then we can change their behavior. Not until. When a person tells me the idol of the heart, I then take them to the

passages of Scripture that deal with it. I ask them to read it and tell me what it means to them. The answers are always very revealing. I am always amazed at the power of God's Word to change a person's life if it is shown directly to them and they are seeking to know God's truth from it. I should not be surprised because I have seen it work over and over. However, the person now must be willing to change and apply what God's Word says for their life. God does not have the answer for them if they are not willing to apply His Word to their life.

James 1:16 gives us a warning about this. "Do not err, my beloved brethren." In essence, do not miss this. I am convinced that many of God's people have missed this. They do not see or understand the importance of dealing with this or training their children to deal with it in their lives. Galatians 5:16-25 gives us another explanation of this principle and the consequences involved in not understanding it.

II Corinthians 5:9, "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Notice the word "accepted". My goal in life is to glorify Him. The word "accepted" means well pleasing or glorify. The word glorify means to give the right opinion of God.

1. My goal in life is to glorify God.
2. I please God by being like Jesus Christ.

Matthew 3:17, God the Father speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom I am well pleased." It is the same as II Corinthians 5:9 "accepted" when talking about us.

Romans 8:28-29, tells us to "be conformed to the image of His Son." God knows I will not be perfect, but He does expect me to be changing, II Peter 3:18. Folks, there are only two choices on the shelf: Pleasing God or pleasing self. If you are determined to live for yourself and the idols of the heart, then life gets hard. Everything is a chore spiritually and in every other way. The person is led by their emotions. They are "feeling" oriented. They are led by their self pleasing habits. We cannot please God and live that way. Unfortunately many of God's people live there and wonder what the problem is with their children, marriage, and their relationships.

Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Proverbs 13:13-15, 29:1, "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Good understanding giveth favour: **but the way of transgressors is hard.** He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Let me ask you today. Do things seem hard to handle in your life? Are your problems overwhelming? You are going to have to deal with the idols of your heart.

Hebrews 11:25, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Dealing with these things is a choice. When I understand that this is God's way for my life, it is an easy decision. People who are led by their emotions and are not dealing with the idols of the heart, every spiritual decision is a hard decision. In fact, every decision is a hard decision. Doing right is definitely a hard decision for them.

Galatians 5:17, "...so you cannot do the things that you would." As an example a Christian knows they should be faithful in the house of God. What is the command in Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking..."

This becomes a hard decision for people led by their emotions and are living for the idols of the heart. They do not see it as important. They are conflicted because they are not dealing with their demand lusts. Every spiritual decision is a hard one. They do not want to do it. They do not understand it is sin and God will allow them to be destroyed if they continue that behavior. The person who deals with their idols of the heart are principled people **who are leading their life by the Word of God.** Life gets easier, Matthew 11:28-30. Mark 7:21-23, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

These are some of the things God wants to change in our lives. You have to have your thinking changed or renewed by God’s Word to change the heart. **You have to understand the importance of dealing with the idols or lusts of the heart.**

Maybe by reading this article today you now understand better why your behavior has been the way it has been. Why you are not having victory in your life or an area that you have prayed and asked God to forgive you for, but nothing has changed in your life. You are living in defeat, depression, and discouragement and you do not understand why God does not change this. God will not change it until you follow what He has instructed you to do from His Word, Ephesians 4:22-24.

Do you know though there is great hope for you? God through His Word truly desires to change your life and give you victory over the idols of your heart. You can start that transforming process today, Romans 12:1-2. Do not give up and live in defeat, discouragement, and depression. It only destroys you, and your family. May God help you today to understand the wonderful and powerful changes that can take place in your life, through the understanding of dealing with the lusts (idols of your life), Romans 6:11-13, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

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