

Before next time...

A. Whatever controls us is our 'lord' or 'idol'. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our life." Rebecca Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the world* (IVP)

QUESTION: What sorts of things can control you?

B. Answer these questions to help you identify what can be your idols...

1. What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about most?
2. What do I rely on or comfort myself with when things go badly?
3. What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I the proudest of?
4. What do I really want in life? What would really make me happy?

C. The gospel approach to displacing our idols.

Our problem is that we are looking to something besides Christ for our happiness. We have been worshipping an idol and rejecting the true God. To replace idols we must learn to rejoice in Jesus who replaces the idol in our heart.

For example, in times of temptation, when we could be drawn to desire something other than Jesus, we could pray like this:

Lord, only in your presence are fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11), yet here I am trying to find comfort in something else. This thing that I am tempted by is just a pleasure that will wear off soon, while your pleasure will grow on and forever. (Proverbs 4:18). Please remove my idol of pleasure, which can never give me the pleasure I need."

Or when you feel rejected by others and worthless, you could pray:

Lord, when I forget the gospel I become dependent on the smiles and evaluation of others. I let them sit in judgement on me and then I hear all the criticism as a condemnation of me. But you have said, because of Christ, there is no condemnation for me now (Romans 8:1). You delight and sing over me (Zephaniah 3:14-17). Let me be satisfied with your love (Psalm 90:14). Please remove my idol of approval, which can never give me the approval I need."

Session 2 Heart Three Ways To Live

Recap and Bible Study

Last time we saw how God's exiled people living in Babylon were not to resemble the city or retreat from it, but they were to seek its prosperity. They were to settle down and be fully integrated, praying to the Lord for the city and seeking to serve and love the city. We are to do the same. But we will only be able to transform our community if we ourselves are being transformed by the gospel of grace. And the fundamental change needs to happen to our heart...

Would anyone would like to raise anything from the 'before next time'?

- Read together Luke 18:9-14

1. What does the Pharisee say in v11-12? Is he a hypocrite?
2. How does the Pharisee think he can be in the right with God?
3. The tax collector literally says, 'God have mercy on me *the sinner*'. What do we learn about repentance from his attitude?
4. How does God 'justify' us, or make us right with Him? cf Rom. 3:23-24.
5. Jesus says the tax collector went home 'justified' before God. Why? What does this passage teach us about justification?

Get someone to read Luke 15:11-32 aloud and then...

Watch the DVD

Use this space to jot anything down you find helpful from Tim Keller

Have Luke 15:11-32 open as you answer these questions...

1. Which of the two brothers is it easiest for you to identify with? Why?
2. What was the sin of the youngest brother? What does this show about his relationship to his Father?
3. What was the sin of the older brother? Look at his emotions and attitudes - what are they? What does this show about his relationship to his Father?

4. Look at Luke 15 - what are the other stories, and what is different about this one? Why do you think that is? (cf v1-2)
5. Who, at the end of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, ends up at home with the Father, and who ends up outside? Why? What is Jesus' point?
6. What do you think it means 'to repent not only of our bad deeds, but also for the reason we did our good things'? Why does this matter?
7. Tim said, "If I gave you a test on justification by grace alone through faith alone through the substitutionary work of Christ alone, you'd probably get 100%". If we're justified by grace alone, not by our good works or our moral efforts or anything we do, what then should motivate us to live an obedient, repentant life?
8. If Jesus is our true elder brother, how does that change the way we live day by day?

Spend time in prayer

- *pray that God may help you to live grateful for his grace day by day.*
- *pray for the particular concerns of each group member*
- *jot these down, and pray for each other during the week*