

## PeaceMeal Archive

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### Idolatry and Materialism

Most of us think of an idol as a statue of wood, stone, or metal worshiped by pagan people. But the concept of idolatry is much broader and far more personal than that. An idol is anything apart from God that we depend on to be happy, fulfilled, or secure. In biblical terms, it is something other than God that we set our heart on (Luke 12:29; 1 Cor. 10:19), that motivates us (1 Cor. 4:5), that masters and rules us (Ps. 119:133; Eph. 5:5), or that we trust, fear, or serve (Isa. 42:17; Matt. 6:24; Luke 12:4-5). In short, it is something we love and pursue more than God (see Phil. 3:19).

Even sincere Christians struggle with idolatry. We may believe in God and say we want to serve him only, but at times we allow other influences to rule us. In this sense we are no different from the ancient Israelites: "Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did" (2 Kings 17:41).

Taken from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande, Updated Edition (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003) p. 104.

***Food for Thought:*** "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21 (NIV). Conflict starts in the heart because of idolatry. Still, how often do we talk about idolatry? The question, "So what idols have been tempting you today" does not seem to be a common topic of conversation. Perhaps we need to make it one!

*One area of idolatry I've observed is materialism and pursuit of comfort. Most of us have wealth far beyond our basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. Yet, we desire more. We may be so consumed with things such as shopping or earning a living that there is no time to chat with a neighbor or resolve the beginnings of conflict with a friend. The lawn, garden, garage, car, or another hobby might keep us from quality time with family or other key people. Or perhaps someone close to us is*

*feeling hurt because of our exorbitant attention to "some thing" and our apparent lack of attention to him or her.*

*In order to address the idols of materialism and comfort in our lives, we must understand how these things are interfering with our relationship with God and others. Let's ask God together to search our hearts and examine our minds for idols of materialism or comfort, then ask him to tear those idols down, that we may worship the Lord alone and love one another well.*

--- Jeanine Parolini, Pastor of Adult Discipleship and Small  
Groups,  
*North Heights Lutheran Church, Roseville, MN*

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