

## Sermon Discussion Questions for Small Groups and Families:

*Idols, part I: Genesis 22:1-18 | Introduction & Chapter 1 of "Counterfeit Gods"*

1. Why did you decide to be a part of this class or small group? What do you hope to get out of reading and discussing this book?
2. In the introduction (xii-xiii) Tim Keller compares the ancient gods Aphrodite, Ares, Artemis and Hephaestus to the contemporary idols of beauty, power, money and achievement. He concludes by saying, "In ancient times, the deities were bloodthirsty and hard to appease. They still are." Do you agree? In what ways are these contemporary idols bloodthirsty? What evidence do you see in the world around you (or in your own life) of their destructive power?
3. Tim Keller defines an idol as "anything that is more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give." Given that definition, what are some of the most attractive and pervasive idols in our culture?
4. Keller argues that "we can locate idols by looking at our most unyielding emotions. What makes us uncontrollably angry, anxious, or despondent? What racks us with a guilt we can't shake?" What do your "most unyielding emotions" reveal about your heart? What idols tend to threaten your relationship with God the most?
5. "We never imagine that getting our hearts deepest desires might be the worst thing that can ever happen to us" (p. 1). Talk about a time when getting your heart's desire failed to satisfy you. What does that say about the desires of our hearts?
6. How do you respond to the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22)? What bothers you about the story and why? Does the story challenge the way you view God in any way? What unanswered questions does the story leave you with?
7. Why did God test Abraham?
8. One of the key points of Bill's sermon was "Often we don't know [what is the most important thing in our life] until we're forced to choose." Talk about a time when you, like Abraham, had to choose between God and something else that you love. What was at stake? What happened as a result of your decision? Would you do anything differently today?
9. "You don't realize that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have" (p. 19). Talk about a time in your life when something you loved and depended on was taken from you. What impact, if any, did that have on your relationship with Jesus?
10. Pastor Bill said, "Freedom is being able to say to your idols, 'because I have God, I can live without you.'" Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? How does this compare with our culture's definition of freedom? Can you think of a time in your life when you've enjoyed this kind of freedom? Talk about that.
11. "Sometimes God seems to be killing us when He's actually saving us" (p. 20). If that's true—what does that say about God's mercy? Given the pain that often accompanies salvation—are we willing to submit to God's saving work? Can you think of a time in your life when submitting to the transforming work of the Spirit hurt?
12. What else in the introduction and chapter one stood out to you, and why?
13. Think about the people in your life who do not know Jesus. Do they realize that they are still worshippers? Do they understand that they are being enslaved by what they worship? Can anything from the book, the sermon or this conversation help create dissonance in their lives, and open the door to the possibility that they may seek after a lord "who, if they find him, can fulfill them, and if they fail them, can forgive them"?

Spend some time in prayer for one another.

Dare to pray for God to "search your hearts" and expose your idols. Pray for grace to walk up the mountain and "surrender all" to Jesus

*All to Jesus I surrender; Lord, I give myself to Thee;  
Fill me with Thy love and power; Let Thy blessing fall on me.  
All to Jesus I surrender; Now I feel the sacred flame.  
Oh, the joy of full salvation! Glory, glory, to His Name!*