

## Sermon Discussion Questions for Small Groups and Families:

*Idols, part V: Power & Glory | Daniel 2, 4 | Chapter 5 of “Counterfeit Gods”*

**Disclaimer:** I’m sure somewhere along the line someone warned you not to talk politics among friends. Well, today you’ll spend some of the conversation doing just that. Let me challenge you to approach the first three questions with a gentle and yielded spirit, and to listen well to those around you without being defensive.

1. Keller argues, in the opening pages of this chapter, that American politics have become ideological and polarized. He writes, “We can look upon our political leaders as ‘messiahs,’ our political policies as saving doctrine, and turn our political activism into a kind of religion” (98). Is he overstating his case? What evidence do you see around you, or in your own life, that this is true? Two signs that Keller mentions are:
  - a. **Fear:** if my party or candidate loses, then it’s the end of the world; there’s no hope
  - b. **Demonizing Opponents:** my opponents are not just mistaken, but evil.
2. Christians believe that the fundamental problem with the world is sin. What happens when we identify something else as the fundamental problem with the world? Can you think of some examples of this? Why is this *always* a set-up for disillusionment?
3. Do you think of America as having a corporate ego? If you can imagine that—would you say we have an inferiority complex, or a superiority complex? Why? Do you think we, as citizens, feed off of that in any way?
4. Talk about the complex relationship between power, fear and anxiety. How have you seen these dynamics at work in your own life? What about in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar?
5. Keller says that power idols are deep idols that can manifest themselves in different ways on the surface—often in a way that masks the idol to the outside world. Talk about a time in your life when you’ve engaged in a good thing, but with mixed or self-serving motives.
6. Sociologist Christian Smith argues that most Americans have a view of God that “literally makes you master of your fate and captain of your soul” (115). Does your faith cause you to revolve around God and His glory, or are you constantly trying to get God to revolve around you? In your relationships with people—do you revolve around their needs and put their interests first—or do you insist that people revolve around your needs and interests? Explain.
7. Keller argues that, “we are not as personally responsible for our success as we would like to think. Most of the forces that make us who we are lie in the hand of God” – see also I Corinthians 4:6-7 (117). Why do we tend to try to take credit for our successes? What impact does that have on the way we treat people who are less successful than we are? Why is experiencing, deeply and personally, the gospel of grace so important for keeping our pride and arrogance in check?
8. Discuss the quote, “pride makes you a predator, not a person.”
9. Discuss the object lesson of Eustace and Aslan (121-123) and then reflect on the following quote, “The death of pride can lead to a resurrection. You can emerge, finally, fully human, with a tender heart instead of a hard heart.” Talk about a time in your life when God assaulted your pride and humbled you. How did you respond at first. What sort of lasting impact has that experience had on you, and why?

**Finish your discussion by reading and praying through Philippians 2:3-11 together (see below).**

*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

*<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*

*<sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*<sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*