

Chapter 4

After reading Chapter 4 (pages 74-88), answer these questions from the end of Chapter 4 for yourself. Then, discuss with your other leaders what you learned from this chapter and exercise.

AN EXERCISE IN SELF-EXAMINATION

Spiritual heart disease affects more than all “those other people.” As creatures living with sinful natures, we are *all* tempted by the idols in our hearts.

This exercise in self-examination can help you identify one or more of your idols. As you examine your own heart condition, you are being prepared through repentance for the healing power found in the cross of Christ.

Think of a specific conflict where you acted inappropriately. You may have felt these emotions:

- Anger
- Bitterness
- Pride
- Fear
- Jealousy
- Defensiveness
- Judgmentalness

With that situation in mind, reflect on the following questions to examine your heart.

1. To recognize idols related to fears, ask yourself these questions:
 - a. What did you want to preserve or avoid at almost any cost?
 - b. In this situation, what or whom did you fear most of all?
2. To recognize idols related to cravings, ask yourself these questions:
 - a. What did you find yourself thinking about much of the time? (Or, what kept you awake at night, perhaps even awake for a few nights in a row?)
 - b. What caused you the most worry? How did your anxiety replace your trust in God?
 - c. Fill in the blank: If only _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure. What does this suggest to you about your trust in God for what you desire?
 - d. When a certain desire or expectation was not met, did you feel frustration, resentment, bitterness, or anger?

- e. To fulfill your passion, what did you do that was not pleasing to God?
3. To recognize idols related to misplaced trust (e.g., trusting yourself as “god” and judging others), ask yourself these questions:
- a. How did your expectations of someone else person magnify your demands on him or her and your disappointment in that person’s failure to meet your desires?
 - b. How did you judge this other person when your expectations were not met?
 - c. How did you get even with the other person when your desires were not fulfilled?
 - d. How did you communicate to the other person what you felt that he or she must do?
 - e. How did you threaten the other person?
4. Considering your answers, identify the following:
- a. What idols were you serving in that conflict? Write down whether they were fears, cravings, or misplaced trust. (You may identify more than one—idols often overlap and relate to one another.)
 - b. Indicate what or whom you sacrificed or executed to get what you wanted.
 - c. What will be the end result if this idolatry remains unchecked?
5. Meditate upon 1 Peter 2:24. What hope is there for healing from your spiritual heart disease?

Praise be to our God for His undeserved grace found in our Savior Jesus! In the next chapter, we’ll explore more about the cure for idolatry and the healing that follows.

For group discussion:

- 1. What did you learn from this chapter about yourself?
- 2. What did you learn about your church?