

Recognising idols related to **cravings**:

- What did you find yourself thinking about much of the time?
- When a certain desire or expectation was not met, did you feel frustration, resentment, bitterness, or anger? Identify the strong desire or unmet expectation.

Recognising idols related to **misplaced trust**

(trusting yourself as "god," a terrible idol, and judging others):

- Have you attempted to gently restore or lovingly correct someone, or have you sinfully judged and condemned the person?
- What means did you use to eliminate the other person's opposition or influence?
- How did you communicate to the other person what you feel they must do?
- How did you threaten the other person? ("Give me what I want or you will pay!")

For your specific conflict, identify the following:

- The idols I struggled with:
(fear, craving or judgment)
- What or whom I sacrificed or executed to get what I wanted:

5. Further reading and resources on getting to the heart

“Entry gate” questions

As peacemakers, we understand that conflict has everything to do with what is happening at the heart level. But how do we gain access to another person’s heart? In Paul David Tripp’s book, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hand*, Tripp discusses “entry gate questions.” An entry gate question is the type of question that helps us enter another person’s heart... where the true thoughts, feelings, motives and beliefs really live. Questions asked tenderly, respectfully and with a sincere desire to know and care for another person are powerful.

Some examples of entry gate questions are:

- “What came to your mind as ...?”
- “What are you struggling with most right now?”
- “What are you facing now that you thought that you would never face?”
- “What are you feeling?”
- “What are you afraid of right now?”
- “Are you feeling angry? Where is that a real struggle?”
- “Describe how you see God right now. What do you think He’s doing?”
- “Do you feel hopeless? Do you feel like God is asking you to do the impossible?”
- “What questions do you wish you could ask ... [e.g., your husband, your boss]?”
- “What questions do you wish that you could ask God?”
- “When you can’t sleep, what thoughts keep you awake?”
- “What part of the situation is getting to you most?”
- “What regrets do you struggle with?”

Asking questions is only part of the challenge to entering into another person’s heart. How do we understand what to do about what we discover? In other words, how do we help people move from where they are to where God would have them be?

Idols of the heart

Idols of the heart, in the form of ungodly desires, can be found at the root of all conflicts. James 4:1 asks: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" Many desires in and of themselves are not sinful. However, desires that are elevated to an inappropriate level begin to take us along the "slippery slope of idolatry." Based on Tripp's work, we understand that the slippery slope of idolatry follows the path of:

- Desires that become demands...
- Demands that become expectations...
- Expectations that lead to disappointment...
- Disappointment that invites judgment...
- Judgment that justifies punishment...
- Punishment that destroys relationship.

As peacemakers, a primary task is to help others see the idols of their heart. Matthew 7:3-5 suggests that believers occasionally need help to "get the log out of their eye." At times, idols are difficult to see. Some idols are like aircraft carriers—we can hardly miss them! Some idols, however, are more like submarines—they can be right next to us and we never realise it. Often people need someone (whose eye is free from their own logs!) to help them see what they are unable to see about ourselves. A conciliator will be an idol detective.

Idol-exposing questions

Peacemakers can ask questions that are effective at exposing heart idols. The following "x-ray questions" come from David Powlison's book *Seeing With New Eyes* and are helpful in exposing idols of the heart:

- What do you love? Hate?
- What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?
- What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?
- Where do you bank your hopes?
- What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?
- What do you feel like doing?
- What do you think you need? What are your 'felt needs'?
- What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?
- What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? What do you organise your life around?
- Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
- Whose performance matters? On whose shoulders does the well-being of your world rest? Who can make it better, make it work, make it safe, make it successful?
- What or whom do you trust?

- Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living? Whose love and approval do you need?
- Who are your role models? What kind of person do you think you ought to be or want to be?
- On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?
- How do you define and weigh success and failure, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, in any particular situation?
- What would make you feel rich, secure, prosperous? What must you get to make life sing?
- What would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight? The greatest pain or misery?
- Whose victory or success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?
- What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
- In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? Confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What are your escapes? What do you escape from?
- What do you want to get out of life? What payoff do you seek out of the things you do?
- What do you pray for?
- What do you think about most often? What preoccupies or obsesses you? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively?
- What do you talk about? What is important to you? What attitudes do you communicate?
- How do you spend your time? What are your priorities?
- What are your characteristic fantasies, either pleasurable or fearful? Daydreams? What do your night dreams revolve around?
- What are the functional beliefs that control how you interpret your life and determine how you act?
- What are your idols and false gods? In what do you place your trust, or set your hopes? What do you turn to or seek? Where do you take refuge?
- How do you live for yourself?
- What instinctively seems and feels right to you? What are your opinions, the things you feel true?
- Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?