



Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols

Brad Bigney

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Why do we find it so hard to change? Is it because modern-day idols trap us to commit treason against the gospel? Brad Bigney shows, using poignant testimonies, how to live joyfully and free.

Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols Details

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From Reader Review Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols for online ebook

Addy S. says

A very good book on hidden idols that I enjoyed a lot. Really gets you thinking about the heart. Would recommend!

Bob Mendelsohn says

Bigney and I were both religious workers when we met trouble head on. Both of our troubles were caused by ourselves. His journey led him to a deep study of the biblical theme of idolatry. His book is the tome that followed, and it's helpful on many levels. I needed this book today. I need it tomorrow.

He unpacks the theme of idolatry and applies it in ways I'd never considered before. I especially liked the "follow the money" idea as it related to what I was devoting myself to.

He also quotes Ezekiel 14 and makes it clear that idols come in batches and that I'm responsible for putting them in my own life. Very helpful.

The only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is that I wonder how people will evaluate and be able to separate his dual notions of "checklist" religion being my own redeemer and the 'habit' formation he encourages in the last chapters. I wish he would have unpacked that a bit more.

That said, this book is excellent, challenging, and will make you stop, again and again, to see where you want self-pleasure and not the pleasure of God. That in itself is worth the price.

Brian Nicks says

This was a hard read. Not that the grammar, syntax, or vocabulary were overly difficult (they weren't), nor was the subject too difficult to grasp, it was hard to peel back the layers of sin to get to the heart of idolatry in my life. And then, once it is exposed in all its ugliness, what do I do about it? Thankfully the end of the book leaves you with tools to fight and kill sin on a daily basis. Brad Bigney shows us how to expose the idols of our heart and kill them with Gospel truth. Thank you Brad.

Chris says

Probably the best non-fiction book I've read in a few years. Gets right at the heart of our issues as humans - idolatry. Don't read this book unless you're ready for some intense self-reflection and repentance. However, it's written in a way that is easy to read, with lots of good examples from the author's life, and it never gets repetitive (which most Christian books do). I highly recommend this and plan on re-reading it often.

Tanya Niewedde says

This is on my top 5 list! Easy to read, direct to the heart...Bigney, please write another book!

Janet Leman says

I gained some good points about my heart and the idols of my heart but I must admit I gained much more from his sermon series “Idols of the Heart”. Maybe his sense of humor and personality come out more, or perhaps he speaks a little more freely in his sermons? Both are good but I think I would recommend the sermon series more.

Makayla Miller says

If you are looking for something to assist in breaking down walls and doing some heart searching, this is just the book. Brad Bigney uses God's word to discuss common, and hidden, idols that may be present in our lives. He warns what the damage these idols can do, from his own personal experience, if left unnoticed. This book is a guide in helping the reader seek God, study scripture, and identify the hidden idols in one's own life. Don't be fooled, this can be a very painful process and is the focus of most of the book. However, Bigney doesn't leave you hanging feeling crappy about yourself. The last few chapters help you do something about the hidden idols and live a life more glorifying to God.

This book is challenging and hard, but in a very rewarding way. There are also sermons online that go with each chapter, and an online workbook, that I would highly recommend using when reading Gospel treason.

Xander Bergner says

I want to start by saying that from other reviews, it appears that a lot of people have enjoyed this book and found it fruitful. I am thankful for that; it was just not my experience, and honestly I am concerned about the bad theology some may pick up along the way (particularly surrounding mental disorders, see below).

Based on the description and subject matter I was quite excited to read this book when it was assigned as part of my seminary coursework. I actually elected to read it over another option. I was quickly disappointed, and I probably would not have finished the book if it were not assigned. It was fairly repetitive. Furthermore, a few sections undermined the author's credibility for me (see below).

The basic premise of the book is that sin is tied to idolatry, and that the gospel is the solution to both. I can agree with that. I agree that sin can often be traced back to idolatry, either of self, or of another person, or a job, money, etc. This book does a great job of unpacking that idea.

However, I don't think that all sin fits neatly into this paradigm.

For example, the author tells a personal story and traces his bad behavior back to an idol of “I deserve a break; no one should demand anything else of me—especially those closest to me! Just feel bad for me. Tell me how hard I have it. Ask if there’s anything you can do to help me.” (p126). Those four sentences represent the idol. I agree that the story is one of sin, and the author desperately needed the work of Christ in that situation. I just don’t think it’s always helpful to fit sin into a paradigm of idolatry before Christ can do His work.

A need to do so could easily lead to somewhat of a “witch hunt” mentality. Rather than simply identifying sin, repenting, and inviting Jesus to do His work, the task becomes to comb through our lives, hearts, and minds, and figure out what idol is contributing to each sin. I would argue that often the answer is “self”, but that this step is not always necessary.

The most helpful parts of the book to me were the last few chapters. Bigney does a great job underlining the centrality of the gospel in deliverance from idolatry and sin. I particularly enjoyed Chapter 12, “God’s Prescription for Freedom”, where the importance of guarding your heart, reading God’s Word, being in community and spending time in prayer are emphasized. These were helpful reminders in how to avoid sin in general, not just idolatry.

The bad:

The author said a few things that made it difficult to take him seriously.

Unfortunately, the worst of it was fairly early on, and it certainly colored my perception of the author and the book. Explaining how good things (like serving in church) can become idols, he describes a hypothetical situation:

“But the woman who spends so much time volunteering at church might have a family who’s saying, “Gee, we could use her help around here.” Her husband feels that he’s living without her. Laundry piles up, and he longs for a home-cooked meal, not to mention a romantic romp in the bedroom! Instead, his wife is always tired and seemingly unavailable.” (p42).

Are you kidding me? These are the main problems that arise from making an idol out of serving at church? Don’t get me wrong - I fully agree that a good thing like serving can become an idol and create relational problems, but being a husband myself I found this scenario downright laughable. Perhaps the husband in the story does not have arms with which to do laundry? There’s no mention of quality time. No mention of children missing their mother’s love. No mention of a husband missing companionship, or perhaps devotional or prayer time with his wife. Instead, the husband misses his wife’s cooking, cleaning, and sex. This scenario didn’t inspire an ounce of sympathy from me, except perhaps for the wife dealing with a useless, lazy, selfish husband.

Bigney also writes off panic attacks (p145) and various clinical psychological disorders (schizophrenia p142, bipolar p142, depression p102) as being chalked up to idolatry and a wrong mindset. I recognize that a spiritual issue could be incorrectly diagnosed as a psychological disorder. However, psychological disorders are real illnesses. It seems like in some Christian circles there is an assumption that because we can’t see psychological issues, they must be spiritual. It is as if the brain has somehow not been made susceptible to illness along with the rest of the body as a result of sin and living in a fallen world. These conditions are just as legitimate as diabetes or cancer, neither of which Bigney would write off as the result of idolatry or mindset (I assume). It is extremely unhelpful and unloving to tell a Christian to repent of their illness.

Jenna says

Having been a Christ follower since the age of 8 I have learned what it really means to "go through the motions." I've essentially become so used to Jesus and my sins that I forget just how incredible my Savior is and how terrible my sin is in light of this. What this book did so well was exposed those sin areas that are holding me back from being fully free in Christ. I read this book as part of a summer bible study and the only thing we often found difficult to understand were some of the stories or broad ideas the author brought up, but it made for great discussion and "bible opening" as I like to call it!

Marc Sims says

A helpful introduction to what idolatry is, what it does to us, how to detect our idols, and how the gospel provides a solution to it. I thought the diagnostic questions to detect idols were most helpful. This is inflated with probably too many illustrations and anecdotes and is a little repetitive, but is a real easy book to read.

Elaine Sturm says

This an excellent book. I have read the first three chapters and don't want to put it down. It is written in a way that hits the nail on the head, is practical and easy to understand. Every one needs to read this.

Dennis Henn says

Scripture references, anecdotes and quotes gave the book some heft. The last quarter of the book felt redundant.

Peter LeDuc says

Do you desire to worship and glorify God with all your heart? Well, God wants you to because He designed you to. He is a jealous, idol-smashing God who knows that your seeking of joy, comfort, and refuge in anything other than Him is not only treasonous to Him, but to yourself, for it will only lead to disappointment. With clear explications of Scripture and relatable personal examples, Bigney effectively shows what idols are, where they come from, how they function, how you can discover them, and how you can fight them. Because the heart never ceases to crank out selfish desires, he makes the case that discovering and repenting of idols is a lifelong commitment that enables us to delight in the Gospel and love Christ as our highest treasure.

Michael Philliber says

Not another book on marriage?!?! Yep, another book on marriage. This one is penned by Brad Bigney,

senior pastor of Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church in Florence, Kentucky, a member and certified counselor of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors and a member of the Association of Biblical Counselors. But it's more than just a book on marriage. This popularly written, 224 page softback is about why there are problems in marriages, how to decipher the idolatrous root of those troubles, and ways to move forward with a healthier marriage. The not-yet-married, newlyweds, older married couples, pastors, and counselors will all benefit from this work.

Since there are plenty of other reviews already hovering out there, I'll simply mention a few of the aspects I appreciated. Bigney does a heartening job on unpacking conflict: "The conflict that we often resent is God's appointment for the realignment of our hearts...We want him to remove the troublesome people and give us extra grace in their place, but he wants to realign our hearts to love him and other people more. The heart is what he wants to work on" (62). I think that coming to see our marital conflicts (and other relational adversities) in this light, changes their temperature and flavor to become more hopeful and health-giving.

Further, the author, drawing from James 4.1-3, explains how many of our clashes come from conflicting desires we have. Unfortunately, the desires have grown, so that "idolatry hijacks legitimate desires and turns them into ugly demands". These demanding desires then expand to become needs which launch into expectations (often assumed and rarely announced), which then finally fester into disappointment (70-4). I have sat in many marriage counseling discussions with couples and seen this played out in technicolor! But, I catch this pattern also lurking in my own heart.

Lastly, Bigney has helpfully addressed the ways we make our children and our marriages into idols. For example, don't "start trusting in your marriage for all your happiness. Continue to trust in God, and thank him for what he's doing in your husband, but don't redirect your trust away from God" (155). The whole point of the book is how we are all idolaters, making other things equal to or more important than, God in our lives. And so, often "times it takes a painful trial to expose our idolatry" (95).

"Gospel Treason" is an easy-to-read work that the not-yet-married, newlyweds, older married couples, pastors, and counselors will find beneficial. But it is also important for any Christian as they think about relationships of every kind (work, play, sports, etc.). This volume has a wide set of applications for those who really want to love God more, even in the middle of relational collisions, or other trying circumstances. I highly recommend the book.

Rob Steinbach says

One of the best books I've read in awhile!

Do you long for real transformation? Have you ever heard someone say "preach the gospel to you self" but didn't know what that meant? Or maybe you heard a preacher talk about dealing with your "hearts idols" or "the sin behind the sin," but didn't get it? If so this book is for you. Careful though. You'll have to deal with your heart and the "stuff" down deep. But where this leads with the gospel is real freedom and joy that you've been lacking. Gospel Treason is a well written, pastoral, real, honest, life-giving read for any who pick it up and work through it. I hope to read this with my whole church.
