

# HEARTSTORMING

## Part IV



### INTRODUCTION

In the previous Heartstorming exercises, we began exploring the deep desires of our hearts by considering our wants. In this week's exercise, we will continue to dig deep into the true desires of our hearts, but now from a new angle. Here, we will focus not on the things we *want* but on the things we *have*. Specifically, we will be taking a hard look at all of the good gifts that God has brought into our lives and assessing the extent to which these things compete with God for our hearts' affection.

As you go through this exercise, keep the thoughts of the just read God and Gifts reading in mind. This exercise is intended to identify objects and pursuits in your life that may have assumed godlike status. As you come into these areas, consider how these things might be enjoyed as gifts rather than idolized as gods.

## **FIRST STEP GIFTS INVENTORY**

First, take inventory of the gifts that God has brought into your life by considering the “*I have*’ s” that you treasure. List things in your life that are valuable to you and that you would really miss if you did not have. Include in your list not only physical possessions such as money or a car, but also intangibles such as a job or a good relationship that you enjoy. The categories below should help you to think broadly.

### **POSSESSIONS**

(e.g., house, car, savings, music, books, etc.)

- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...

### **PEOPLE**

(e.g., friends, running partner, co-workers, family, etc.)

- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...

**POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE**

(e.g., career, leadership role, parenthood, volunteerism, etc.)

- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...

**OTHER**

(e.g., health, intelligence, respect, ability to travel, chocolate, solitude, etc.)

- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...
- I have...

## SECOND STEP STATUS CHECK

For each of the gifts that you listed in the First Step, prayerfully consider whether or not you have allowed the gift to assume godlike status in your life. The status may not be immediately obvious, and your assessment may not come quickly, so let your thoughts and prayers linger. Ask God to give you insight along the way.

As you prayerfully consider each of the gifts in the First Step, put a star by any that you feel you may be treating as a god in your life. Journal your thoughts below:

Consider the following questions to get started:

- *Do you maintain this gift in an unhealthy way?*  
Examples of this would be working an unhealthy number of hours to pay the mortgage of a house you cannot afford, or allowing a boyfriend to cross boundaries to keep him from leaving. If this is truly a gift from God in your life, God would not require you to maintain it in unhealthy ways.
- *Would the loss of this gift leave you in despair?*  
In writing to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that he was “*hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair*” (2 Corinthians 4:8). In another place, when addressing ultimate loss, the death of a loved one, he wrote that we do not “*grieve like the rest of humanity who have no hope*” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Yes, loss can and does bring deep and lasting grief, but a heart that holds the gifts of God with an open hand will not feel the hopelessness of despair. Would the sudden loss of your savings, your career, or your health leave you in grief or in despair? The heart that lets God be God and gifts be gifts will grieve and grieve deeply, but this grief will also be coupled with “*a peace that passes understanding*” (Philippians 4:7).

These are only two of many possible indicators that a gift has become an idol and assumed godlike status in your life. These questions are only meant to help you get started in your heartstorming. Ultimately, God must show you if there are idols in your heart. Accordingly, prayer is a crucial part of this exercise.

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## THIRD STEP SURRENDERING IDOLS

Finally, talk to God about any idols you uncovered in the Second Step. Use the following to guide your prayers:

- *Confess the idol.*

The best way to surrender an idol in your life is to confess it before God. The introduction to your Conversations with God exercise for this week offers some basic guidelines on how to incorporate confession into your time with God. As mentioned there, biblical confession is described in two ways: *confessing sins* and *confessing Jesus as Lord*. As you confess to God areas where you have allowed his gifts to assume godlike status in your heart, remember to reaffirm Christ's lordship over these areas.

- *Thank God for the gifts.*

Expressing gratitude, when done genuinely, is a powerful exercise. As we thank God for the gifts he has given us and acknowledge that all that we have comes from him, we increase our ability to see gifts as gifts and God as God.

- *Surrender the gifts.*

The only way to fully receive and enjoy gifts as God gives them is to continually surrender them to God, embracing them in the moment but always allowing God to remove them at any time, if he so chooses. Surrender is a submissive act of the heart. It is a simple act, but not an easy act and it is not always immediate. The only way to truly surrender our gifts to God is to believe that God desires our good and that he alone will ultimately satisfy our deepest desires. If you are not yet able to fully surrender your gifts to God, talk to him about any resistance that you feel and ask him to bring you to this place of surrender.

Journal your thoughts below:

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## **HEARTSTORMING, PART IV**

Week 5, Morph Me, p. 118