Many believers experience this constant struggle within themselves; wanting to do what they don’t do and doing what they do not want to do. Thankfully, Paul tells us this is evidence that we are sons and daughters of Christ. I venture to say that all other conflict stems from this internal personal conflict between man and God. It all begins inside of the heart of one person.

In the fourth chapter of the book of James, we see that selfish desires and wrong motives are the cause of quarrels among us. In the world of Christian peacemaking, we call these *idols of the heart* or *heart idols*. It is so difficult for us to wrap our minds around the truth that we are guilty of idol worship in our modern day and time. After all, we don’t have golden-calf statues lining our highways and byways. Statues and other physical structures may seem to be the most common idols apparent in the Bible, but the biggest idol of all throughout Biblical history is the denial that God is the Great I Am.

An *idol* may be described as anyone, anything, or any activity we substitute for God; or that competes for our devotion to God.¹

Just a few of the visible idols in today’s society are the following:

- relationship dependency
- fear of failure
- pride
- gluttony
- reputation worship
- career advancement
- addiction to the approval of others
- sexual addictions
- love of money
- love of luxurious things
- self-determination and self-reliance
- superiority complex
- fear of loneliness
- unbelief
- addictions to drugs and alcohol
- uncontrollably obsessive behaviors
- shopaholic-ism and workaholic-ism
- caffeine addictions

¹ As referenced in the text.
Do any of those idols sound like familiar motivators of your thoughts and actions? If so, go ahead and confess it to God. He already knows your every thought. We have the power through Christ to refuse to bow down to our modern day idols. The Bible tells us that “now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who had made the two one and had destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purposes was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death theirs hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” {Ephesians 2:13-18 NIV emphasis added by the author}

Although this was used by Paul as an argument to abolish the physical divide and separation among Jews and Gentiles, a Spiritual dynamic of this verse saying that Christ came to make one man out of two could also support the truth of the matter that Christ is the way that our flesh and Spirit will ultimately become one and in perfect unity when we reach eternity.

Often, we ignore the root cause or motivation underlying the temporary physical conflict. We agree to disagree, go our separate ways, focus on what is seen and not the unseen, or attempt to create an easy 1,2,3-a,b,c formulaic quick fix. For very few do these fixer upper solutions work to actually resolve the conflict. We focus on fixing the problem by physical, material, and temporary means only to find that the conflict erupts time and time again; but each time it rages more out of control than the time before.

This is why Christian peacemaking and the work of PeacePoint is different from the world’s way of resolving conflict. We believe we must address the motivations of the heart before we are able to solve the tangible physical and material issues. We believe restoration of the person to God and reconciliation and restoration of relationships between fellow believers is the Gospel way. “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, build on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lords. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” {Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV emphasis added by the author}
So, what’s the answer to resolving our constant conflict within ourselves and with others...?

**LOVE...**

This is NOT referring to the worldly feel good “all you need is love, love” version of love. God’s supernatural Holy Spirit power-driven LOVE is the answer. It is so easy to love those who affirm us. It is so easy to love those who say and do what we want them to. However, we will have much less conflict in our lives if we chose to pray before reacting. We will experience more peace at home, at church, and in the workplace if we see others through the eyes of Christ and if we chose to love others in ways they do not deserve. *True love* loves those who may not love back.

The Gospel is the key to real love: First Corinthians Love. Jesus died on the cross in sacrificial love for our sins for those of us who did not then believe in Him. He died for us who did not deserve such a sacrifice in hope, faith, and confidence that we would one day believe upon Him and have an intimate love relationship with Him. The most powerful realization is that He died for us without expectation of anything in return. Nothing we could ever do could repay His ultimate sacrifice of love.

The power of Christ’s love is that we are forgiven for wrongs we could never make right. This redeeming truth should allow our hearts to be open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit so he may reveal to us our wrong desires and motivations and that we may confess them to God and others and be reconciled to God and others.

*Believe in Christ...*

*Love and Serve Others Well...*

*Be Peace Seekers!*

written by Mariah McKinney, Communications Coordinator and Peace Advocate, PeacePoint

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1 The definition of an idol is provided courtesy of Pastor Tony McKinney, Mariah’s husband.