

My Heart Unchained

Book Two: Discovering My Heart

Helping Disciples of Jesus Connect
Their Hearts to the Savior

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PREFACE

MY HEART UNCHAINED HELPING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CONNECT THEIR HEARTS TO THE SAVIOR.

Current culture applauds following our hearts. And by “heart” it means our feelings. We have been taught and encouraged to pay special attention to our feelings and to trust them. A recent popular social media quotation claims, “You’ll know the truth by the way it feels.” Yet, feelings are fickle, and if we follow them, we will certainly be confused and misled.

It is true that we live from our hearts. Created in the image of God, we have the ability to think, feel, and choose. In Scripture the term “heart” is the center of one’s inner life and represents these three functions. Our intellect, emotions, and will are designed to work together to help us as Christ-followers live a biblically balanced and satisfied life.

A Christian disciple is one who desires to live wholeheartedly for Christ and is eager and involved in making other disciples. Therefore it is essential he is aware of his heart-responses in relationships and circumstances. And as the disciple becomes more discerning, he will be better equipped to align his heart to Truth, obey Christ, and maintain heart-health.

My Heart Unchained is a seven-part discipleship tool designed to help you, a follower of Jesus, understand and discern your heart so that you might live wholeheartedly in Christ by glorifying and enjoying Him.

In *My Heart Unchained* you will learn what it means to entrust your heart to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and His plan to rescue mankind. Also, you will learn tools to evaluate your heart and to establish healthy heart-attitudes and disciplines.

May the Lord bless you and refine you as you work through the lessons and enjoy more fully the Satisfier of your heart.

*Unchained: To be set free from
sin and what the world tells us.*

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Romans 6:18

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

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Women's Writing Team

Sharon Collard, Imelda Dodgen, Charlene Earle, Connie Johnson, Anna Plummer, Fritzeen Scott, and Shirley Sweetman.

Men's Editing Team

Seeing the value of *My Heart Unveiled*, a group of men undertook the project of editing and arranging the study so that it would resonate with men. George Hampton, Dan Hennes, Jay Scott, and Jason Wong replaced testimonies and biblical examples to make illustrations applicable to men.

In addition, we would like to thank the Elders of Valley Bible Church for their oversight, input, review, and support: Timothy Barley, Gary Darnell, Devon Dodgen, Jim Jahncke, Jay Scott, Gary Stafford, and Randy White.

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Understanding

My Heart

Unit 4: Understanding My Heart

As you learned in Unit 1, Adam was a passive leader. He knew the serpent was deceiving Eve and stood by to see what would happen. Adam followed Eve. He took and ate the fruit. Adam didn't trust that God was enough to satisfy. As a result, he turned from worshiping God to trusting self.

Deceived Adam:

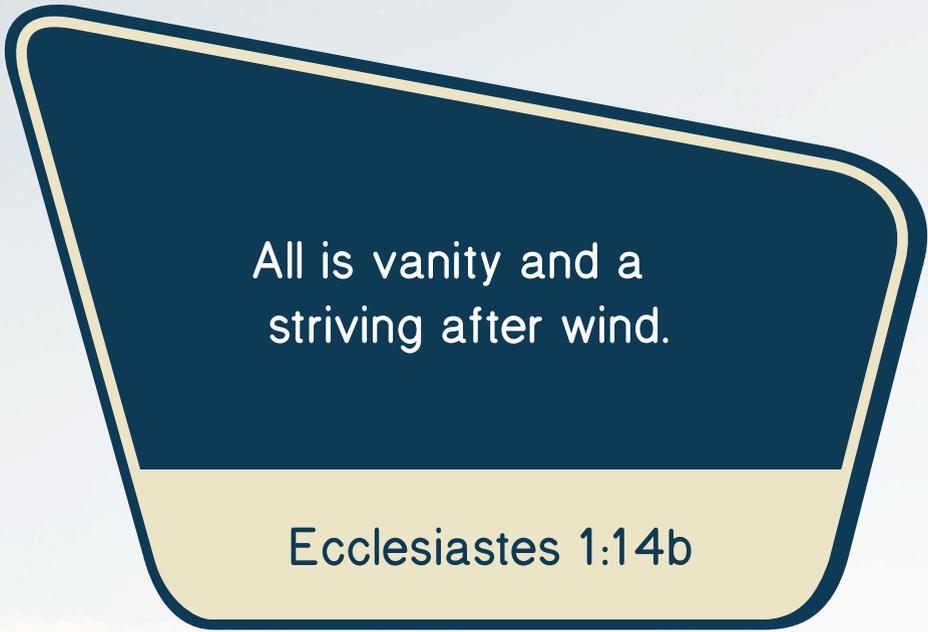
- Believed God's provision was not enough.
- Believed God was holding something back.
- Believed something beyond God would more fully satisfy him.

In Unit 2 you will learn what the Scripture means when it refers to the heart of man.

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LESSON 1: GOD ALONE WILL SATISFY

To begin, Lesson 1 will contrast a misdirected heart with one that finds its satisfaction in God.



All is vanity and a
striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:14b

A MISDIRECTED HEART

Like Adam and Eve, all people in their natural state wrestle with a misdirected heart. A misdirected heart is one that believes something or someone other than God will ultimately satisfy man’s core need for Him. That is the definition of an idol. When we take a good thing (family, relationships, job, etc.) and make them primary in our life we are creating a false god. The first commandment is “you shall have no other gods before me.” (Deuteronomy 5:7).

God created mankind with the innate desire to be happy—to be known intimately and loved deeply. The world promises happiness in a myriad of ways, many of which seek to minimize God or to replace Him altogether. But all that the world offers can never completely satisfy you in the way that knowing God will. Being known and loved by God and knowing and loving Him in return is ultimate satisfaction. (See Psalm 107:9; Isaiah 55:2–3; John 6:35)

ALL THAT THE WORLD OFFERS CAN NEVER TRULY SATISFY

King Solomon recorded in Ecclesiastes how he tried to find pleasure and satisfaction in the things of this world but discovered that “all is vanity and a striving after the wind.”

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11, 17

¹I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. ²I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” ³I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. ⁴I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. ⁹“So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind... ¹⁷So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

GOD IS THE “ALL-SATISFYING OBJECT”

“As C.S. Lewis says, God in the Psalms is the ‘all-satisfying Object.’ His people adore Him unashamedly for the ‘exceeding joy’ they find in Him (Psalm 43:4). He is the source of complete and unending pleasure.”¹

John Piper

In your natural state you cannot see that God is the ultimate end of your heart’s desire, but when you are born again (John 3:3), you gain the capacity to see Him as He is: all-satisfying.

Psalm 63:3a

Your steadfast love is better than life.

John 6:35

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

John 17:3

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

The following Psalms describe God as all-satisfying.

Hand-write each of the following verses.

Psalm 34:8

Psalm 37:4

Psalm 42:1-2

Psalm 63:1

ENJOYING GOD, PEOPLE, AND CREATION

God designed you to experience delight in himself, in people, and in creation. Our overall disposition about all of life should be that it is a gift to be enjoyed. These are the means by which you may experience Him as all-satisfying.

Read the following verses and record what you learn about each area.

1. Foremost, in your relationship with Him.

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Proverbs 16:9

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

Psalm 84:1-2

¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! ²My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3. In your involvement with and use of the material universe.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-9

⁷Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

I Timothy 4:4-5

⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

What are some indicators that your interaction with the world is not honoring to God?

I Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

God means for us to feel delight in these three areas. However, if a man is not experiencing delight for whatever reason, he should be encouraged to go to the Word to exult in God and cultivate delight in Him.

Jesus satisfied the woman's deepest need by directing her heart to Himself, the only One who could truly satisfy her soul. Jesus desires to do the same for you.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 2: GOD'S NATURE REFLECTED IN MY HEART

In Lesson 1 you noted that true satisfaction is found in God alone.

In Lesson 2 you will explore how your heart functions. In the Bible the heart represents all that you are: the whole inner person. It is at the core of your being and from it comes what you think, what you feel, and what you choose.

All that god thinks, feels, and chooses is rooted in His holy nature, is expressed sinlessly and lovingly, and is for His glory and our ultimate good.

FUNCTIONS OF THE HEART

You live from your heart. To understand your capacity to trust and obey God, it is important to understand how the heart functions. It is common in American culture to view the heart and mind as two separate parts, wherein the heart houses the emotions and the mind houses the thinking. The Bible does not divide man as such but presents the heart as the well-spring from which flows man's thinking, feeling, and choosing. Most likely you do not differentiate between the three functions of the heart as you go throughout your day. However, you are always thinking, feeling, and choosing whether you are conscious of it or not. You may observe that you are a thinker more than a feeler or vice versa. Your tendency to be more aware of one function or the other may be based on your God-given personality and past experiences.

In the Old Testament the word "heart" (leb) occurs over 600 times. In the New Testament the equivalent term (kardia) occurs about 200 times.

In Scripture, the heart represents all that you are, the whole inner person; it is at the core of your being and from it comes what you think, what you feel, and what you choose.

What is an example of thinking with your heart?

GOD'S IMAGE-BEARER

Man's ability to think, feel, and choose reflects God's nature; God created man as His image-bearer.

God is personal and has...

Intellect

Isaiah 40:13-14

¹³Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

See also Isaiah 55:8-9

Emotions

Exodus 34:6

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

See also Deuteronomy 5:9 and Psalm 7:11.

Will

Isaiah 14:24

The LORD of hosts has sworn "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand."

See also Acts 14:16-17

THE INTELLECT

The term *heart* refers to your thinking, understanding, and reasoning: the focus of your attention, what you believe, and your conscience. What you are thinking is a reflection of what you are believing. Your ability to think rightly will determine what you feel and choose.

How do the following verses demonstrate the heart's ability to think?

Review each verse and underline key phrases.

Matthew 13:14b-15

^{14b}“You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 8:10

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

What does it mean to think rightly?

Your intellect gives you the ability to make judgments and to be discerning.

THE EMOTIONS

The term *heart* also refers to your emotions.

Some people believe emotions are bad and should not be expressed. If this is the case, emotions may be suppressed or minimized. Other people believe emotions are paramount, and they allow their emotions to define them. If this is the case, they will live out of and be ruled by their emotions.

In truth, emotions appropriately expressed are a means to experience life more fully. They are a response to your beliefs, longings, desires, motives, and circumstances. They serve as a gauge to your inner and outer world, though they should not direct or control you. Nevertheless, God always cares about what you are feeling.

THE WILL

The term “heart” also refers to your will. The will determines what actions you take. God gives you the ability to choose. Your right choosing flows from your right thinking. When you choose to follow God’s truth, your emotions may not immediately fall in line. You may even feel like you are being hypocritical because you are making a decision against your feelings. But as you choose to trust God and obey Him, your feelings will eventually align with your godly choice. Remember these two things: 1) You are called to follow biblical truth, not your feelings; and 2) You always have the ability to choose to obey.

How do the following verses demonstrate the heart’s ability to Choose? Review each verse and underline key phrases.

Joshua 24:15a

“Choose this day whom you will serve.”

Psalm 25:12

Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

Psalm 119:30

I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Hebrews 11:24–25

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Although you may not always choose the circumstances in which you find yourself, you always have a choice to surrender to God in every circumstance and receive His grace to help you in your time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

LESSON 3: GOD GAVE ME A NEW HEART

In Lesson 2 you explored the three heart functions.

In this Lesson you will examine how God spiritually revived your heart. Now you have the ability to fight sin because sin no longer rules your heart. Be encouraged! Your regenerated heart can trust and obey God, resulting in you wholeheartedly loving God and being satisfied in Him.

When God saved you, He gave you a new beginning. You were born again by the indwelling Holy Spirit to new life in Christ. Now you have the capacity to fight sin and obey God and as a result, love and enjoy Him more fully.

SIN NO LONGER RULES YOUR HEART

Romans 6:3-14

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Consider the following points from the text:

Romans 6:3-10 explains what God has done to stop sin's rule in you. The Spirit immersed you into Jesus and thus into His death and resurrection; this immersion makes possible a new kind of life. This is what is symbolized in water baptism—that you were buried with Him into His death and risen with Him in your new identity and life. You have been brought from death into life!

Romans 6:3-4

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

3. Your response to Paul’s final command reveals whether or not you are yielding to the Master.

Romans 6:13

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

1 John 3:9

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Romans 6:17–19

¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

4. Paul concludes this Lesson with these encouraging truths: Sin no longer will rule over you. Therefore, you are free to obey God. So, sin no more!

Romans 6:14–15

¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

Romans 6:7

For one who has died has been set free from sin.
As a believer we will still face temptation and sin on this side of eternit (Romans 7:18–20). However, we will no longer want to willfully sin (1 John 3:9). When we do sin, we repent and rest of God’s grace (1 Johm 1:9, Romans 8:1–2).

Jesus provides a pattern to overcome temptations. Read Matthew 4:1-11, (also Luke 4:1-13) looking for how to face temptation and avoid sinning. What foundational truth do you discover for avoiding sin?

Lest you think, “Well he was Jesus, of course he did not sin.” Consider Hebrews 4:15— For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Give an example of a temptation you have experienced that has followed James’s pattern.

Name one or more desires that regularly lure and entice you. Why is it important to know what they are?

Identify the triggers or things that lead you to those desires. Why is it important to know and avoid those triggers (e.g., clicking an ad, time alone, having one too many drinks, flirting with a girl, watch a gratuitous movie)?

BE AWARE THAT THE SIN NATURE DESIRES TO INFLUENCE YOU.

See a few examples below.

1. The sin nature seeks to create within you the desire to practice evil.

Galatians 5:16–21

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

List the works of “the flesh” (sin nature). What is the benefit of knowing these things? To increase your understanding, you may want to take the time to look up the definition of each word. With what do you particularly struggle? Remember, all sin divides your heart.

2. The sin nature seeks to get you to “withdraw” from God and His people.

Hebrews 3:12–13

¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Who regularly encourages you to live authentically as a Christ-follower? Name them. If it is empty, name some candidates. Set up time with them.

Who do you regularly encourage? Name them. If it is empty, name some candidates. Set up time with them.

Have you experienced a time when you have withdrawn (or been tempted to withdraw) from community? Why? Describe the situation—what you were thinking, feeling, choosing.

3. The sin nature can deceive you about reality and it desires things contrary to the Spirit; this leads to an insensitivity regarding Jesus and His truth.

Mark 4:19

[B]ut the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

What are the three things Mark lists that make God's Word of no benefit in your life? Give an example of how this can happen in your own life.

Ephesians 4:20-24

²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!—²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

4. The sin nature seeks to garner your allegiance.

Romans 6:12

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Romans 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

5. The sin nature always leads to further corruption in the quality of your life.

Ephesians 4:22-24

²²To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Be encouraged that though you are in a fight and your sin nature is always with you, you are no longer bound to sin. You need to learn to continue putting off your old self and putting on Christ. Like the Apostle Paul, commit to fight the good fight against sin.

“What God creates in the new birth is not a sinless Christian. What he creates is an embattled, not-yet perfect, Spirit-empowered, persevering, Christ-treasuring, sin-hating, new being—a new creation in Christ. And don’t miss those words ‘embattled’ and ‘sin-hating.’ The new creation in Christ is a fighter. Paul said at the end of his life, ‘I have fought the good fight’ (2 Timothy 4:7). And he tells Timothy, ‘Fight the good fight’ (1 Timothy 6:12).... The outcome is guaranteed, but the battle is real.”¹

John Piper

GOD CARES FOR YOUR HEART

Remember, God in His kindness cares for your heart and helps you in your ongoing battle with sin.

How does God care for your heart?

Consider the following truths:

- He creates in you a clean heart (Psalm 51:10).
- He searches your heart (1 Chronicles 28:9; Revelation 2:23).
- He tests your heart (1 Chronicles 29:17; Psalm 26:2; Psalm 139:23–24).
- He revives your contrite heart (Isaiah 57:15, 18).
- He places His Word in your heart (Psalm 16:7; Psalm 119:11).
- He instructs your heart (Psalm 16:7).

How have you experienced God's care for your heart?

Reflection

Marvel at the fact that God has given you a new heart. Reflect on the truths presented in this lesson.

Psalm 19:12-14

¹²“Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Pray and ask God to keep you from sin and to forgive you for sinning. Thanks be to God that He has granted you forgiveness and the power to keep from sinning. He has made you right with Him (justification) and He is continuing to make you like Him as you walk with Him (sanctification).

Application

What steps will you take this week to resist temptation and fight sin?

LESSON 4: RENEWING MY MIND TO GROW MY HEART

Created in God's image, you have been given the ability to think, feel, and choose. When these three heart functions align with God's Word, you have the capacity to live wholeheartedly and experience your relationship with Him, others, and the material world as delightful gifts to enjoy.

At the moment of your salvation, you were made new. As a result, sin no longer reigns in your heart! Yet, in Lesson 3 you faced the reality that though sin does not rule your heart, you will remain in a continual fight against it for the rest of your life. To better understand the battle and to be prepared to fight sin, you looked at the process of temptation and sin's devious nature.

In Lesson 4 you will examine the key weapon in your fight against sin: the renewing of your mind. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be transformed as you effectively practice this discipline. You mature and grow with God through scripture, prayer, and godly fellowship.

Do you recognize any specific areas of spiritual immaturity in your life?

EVIDENCE OF A MATURE MIND

What is the evidence of a mature mind? Read the following verses and record your response.

Psalm 9:1b-2

¹I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. ²I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Isaiah 26:3

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

BE DISCERNING

As you are sanctified and continue to mature in your walk with the Lord, you will become more discerning, able to distinguish truth from falsehood.

“But what is this discernment? The word used in Psalm 119:66 means ‘taste.’ It is the ability to make discriminating judgments, to distinguish between, and to recognize the moral implications of, different situations and courses of action. It includes the ability to ‘weigh up’ and assess the moral and spiritual status of individuals, groups, and even movements....

“Jesus’ discernment penetrated to the deepest reaches of the heart. But the Christian is called to develop similar discernment. For the only worthwhile discernment we possess is that which we receive in union with Christ, by the Spirit, through God’s Word.

“So discernment is learning to think God’s thoughts after Him, practically and spiritually; it means having a sense of how things look in God’s eyes and seeing them in some measure ‘uncovered and laid bare’ (Heb. 4:13).”²

Sinclair Ferguson

God’s Word is the standard by which we evaluate our thoughts, motives, and actions.

Do you consider yourself a discerning person?

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

The way you entered life in Christ is identical to the way you are to live life in Him each day. When you responded in faith to the gospel, you became a follower of Christ. In the same way, you are to “live by the Spirit, [and] keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). To “keep in step” means that by the power of the Holy Spirit, moment-by-moment, you are to walk by faith in the same direction and at the same pace as Him. As you respond daily in faith and in obedience to the promises and commands of God, the Spirit will Himself help you and transform you into the likeness of Christ.

Paul in Romans 8:4 states that the follower of Christ walks by the Spirit, not the flesh. The verb “walk” refers to the way a person conducts her life; it indicates a habit of living. Living according to the Spirit requires you to set your mind on Jesus.

In Romans 8:5-7 how many times does Paul use a form of “set the mind”? What two options does Paul specify as the object of a person’s thinking? What is the outcome of each? What is the mentality of the flesh?

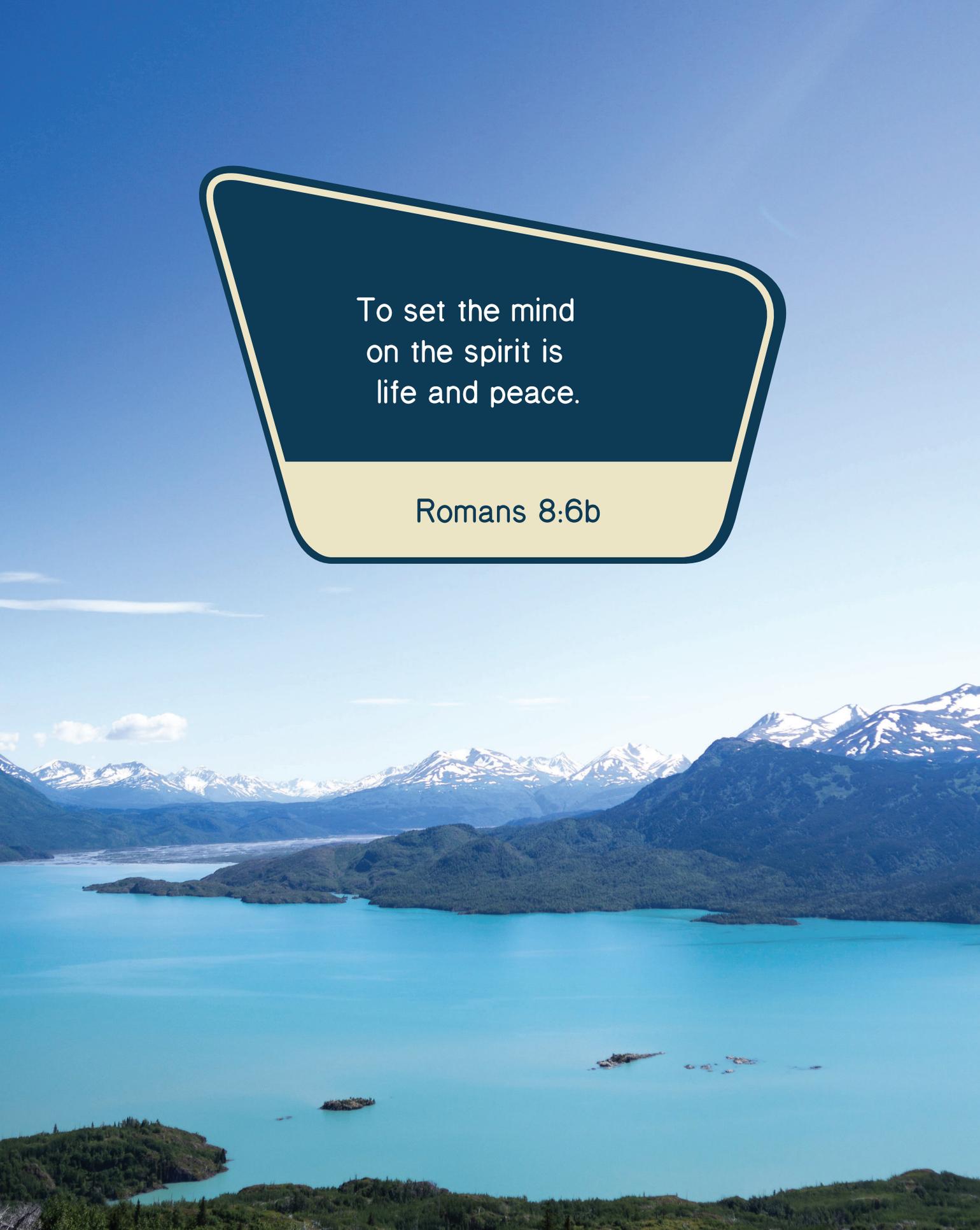
Read the following verses and record your response.

Romans 8:5-7

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.

What are areas of flesh that are most prominent in your daily life?

To “set the mind” (proneo) refers to what your whole heart—your thinking, feeling, and choosing—is absorbed by: what preoccupies your thinking; what influences your affections; how you spend your time and energies. This is the process by which the Holy Spirit transforms you (sanctification).



To set the mind
on the spirit is
life and peace.

Romans 8:6b

1 Peter 1:13-15

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Peter is urging his readers to be alert! To prepare your mind for action is to gird up your mind and has the idea of an athlete who would tuck his tunic into his belt so that he could run unencumbered.

What is encumbering your thoughts, preventing you from thinking on what is true?

Does your life look different than an unbeliever? How does your life show Christ? Do people see a difference in you?

STEPS TO RENEWING YOUR MIND⁴

This is a practical tool to help you renew your mind.

Consider your thoughts and ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify those that are not aligned to God's truth.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

CONFESS (agree with God) that some thoughts are not honoring to Him, acknowledging them as sin. In addition, if you recognize you have embraced a lie, confess it as such.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

CALL UPON the Holy Spirit’s power to help you set your mind on Jesus and His Word.

2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

CHOOSE to replace your sinful thought with a God-honoring thought. Select a Scripture with which to renew your mind and think on it often throughout the day. Take action and remove yourself from things or activities that lead you to temptation. Fill your time with godly activities.

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

REPEAT these steps when sinful thoughts or attitudes recur.

Resist the Devil

In order to renew your mind, you must be familiar with your adversary, the devil, and resist his ploys.

1 Peter 5:8-9a

⁸“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith.”

- **The Nature of Satan**—Satan is a liar and deceiver (John 8:44–45; 2 Corinthians 11:3) who only and always seeks to destroy you (2 Corinthians 11:14). He will do all he can to make you believe that: 1) God is holding out on you; 2) Jesus is impotent; and 3) You are not righteous in your standing before God. Satan is purely evil and unredeemable. He is relentlessly hostile to God and people. (See 2 Corinthians 2:11)
- **The Strategies of Satan**—Satan seduces people into dismissing him as a real threat. His goal is to neutralize sin and normalize evil so that you become convinced that you are just doing what everyone else is doing.
- **The Limitations of Satan**—Satan has authentic power in the world (1 John 5:19; Ephesians 6:10–18) But Satan’s power is limited and always under the sovereign control of God (Job 1:12) and is temporary (Romans 16:20).

God has set boundaries and Satan cannot operate outside of them. But within these boundaries he can produce a lot of damage! He is not omnipotent, omniscient nor omnipresent, but he does not need to be because he has a legion of demonic minions at his disposal who are scattered all over the earth, eager to do his bidding.

Though Satan cannot read your mind, you reveal your heart to him through your words and your actions on a regular basis.

So, you must resist and fight Satan with God’s resources, standing firm in your faith, renewing your mind, and trusting in God’s promises, provision, and presence through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:10–18; James 4:7–8).

The devil wants you to think you are the only one facing a particular temptation, trial, test or struggle. He wants you to despair and give in to his ploys. Be assured that you are not alone (1 Peter 5:9b). You “do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with [y]our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as [you] are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus understands your struggles and He knows you need His help. The great news is He is always gracious and eager to help you.

Satan has no hold on you because Jesus has covered over your sins. Satan has no case against you because the Judge has acquitted you by the death of His Son (Hebrews 2:14–15—“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”) So, “[r]esist him, firm in your faith” (1 Peter 5:9).

It is important to note that renewing your mind will be an ongoing process—even for the same thought. Just as Jesus encouraged Peter to forgive his brother “seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:22), so you must continue to do the work of renewing your mind so that you may increasingly “set your mind on things above” (Colossians 3:2).

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 5: GOD DESIRES MY WHOLE HEART

In Lesson 4 you noted that you must renew your mind to mature in your relationship with God. God unites your heart to His will as you renew your mind. When your heart is not aligned to God, you are living with a divided heart.

In this Lesson you will have an opportunity to discern your heart through using the My Heart Unchained Chart in order to live wholeheartedly for God.

*Psalm 139: 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

When you ask God to search your heart, you are coming to Him with a posture of humility and submission.

2 Corinthians 10:5b

Take every thought captive to obey Christ.

What are some practical steps you can take to take every thought captive when you face temptation (e.g., see someone provocatively dressed, someone cuts you off in traffic).



In order to destroy arguments and opinions raised against the knowledge of God, you must first know what the Word of God says. Second, you must prayerfully examine your heart (thoughts, choices, feelings) to determine if it is aligned to the knowledge of God or if some thoughts need to be “caught” and changed so they will align with the knowledge and will of God.

MY HEART UNCHAINED

Review the My Heart Unchained Chart (at the end of this Lesson). The heart evaluation exercise will help you discern the underlying motives of your heart. It is a tool you can use when you have an unsettled heart. An unsettled heart does not necessarily mean you have sinned. It is important to talk with God and ask Him to reveal your heart to you.

The chart may be used individually or with a peer. You will practice using it both ways.

You will notice the chart is divided into eight sections to guide you through the process of freeing your heart. Your heart is always thinking, feeling, and choosing, though you may not be aware of any of these functions. Your responses indicate your underlying core belief and desire. Remember, you may not be aware of the internal working of your heart until you ask the Holy Spirit to reveal these things to you and begin the process of examining your heart.

The process normally begins by reflecting on a situation or circumstance; however, there may be times when you experience a flood of emotions but cannot connect them to any situation. In that case begin by examining your emotions. Remember, each step in the process is done prayerfully, asking the Spirit of God to reveal your heart to you. As you go through each step, write down your responses. You may want to keep a separate journal for your heart evaluation work.

Generally you will complete Situation, Feeling, and Thinking Lessons on your own. They are things only you know. You may want or need help from a peer in processing through Perceived Need/Desire, Choosing, Underlying Belief/Fears, God’s Truth, and Action Steps Lessons. As you process through these five Lessons it is not necessary to go in the order they are shown; however, it is important to go through each of them.

MY HEART UNCHAINED EXERCISE

Now it is time to practice using the chart. Begin by praying. Ask the Holy Spirit to quiet your heart and to direct you to choose a current situation or one from the past. Use the following instructions.

Complete the My Heart Unchained chart to the best of your ability. Do not feel like you must complete this process in one sitting. Put it down and come back to it, always asking the Holy Spirit to guide you into truth.

A lush green forest with a wooden plank path leading through dense foliage. The path is made of weathered wooden planks and is surrounded by various green plants, including large-leafed plants and ferns. The background is filled with tall trees and a dense canopy of leaves.

Steps to an Unchained Heart

MY HEART UNCHAINED INSTRUCTIONS

Situation

Describe in as much detail as possible the situation. Who? What? When? Is this a one-time or ongoing situation?

Feelings

What are you feeling regarding the above situation? At times you may suppress your feelings, particularly if they produce fear, guilt or pain. In this process allow yourself to experience your emotions. It is not uncommon to experience conflicting emotions, such as fear and excitement or joy and grief. You may feel guilty for feeling a certain way. Do not dismiss it. Your emotions may not make sense as you identify them, but they are windows into your heart. Record all that you are feeling about the situation. If you typically analyze more than you recognize your feelings, this may be a hard exercise but a very important one.

Thinking

What thoughts come to mind regarding the above situation? If it is easier for you to recognize your feelings than your thoughts, it may take you some time to put words to what you are thinking. Keep in mind that at this point your thoughts and feelings may not be in agreement. You may also have conflicting thoughts. Record everything you are thinking.

Choosing

What are you choosing now? It may be an outward action or just an internal attitude. How is what you are choosing benefitting you/not benefitting you? How is what you are choosing impacting others? Did you discover you feel the need to control a person or situation? Have you taken action to do that? Do you have a plan or agenda regarding the situation?

Perceived Need/Desire

Initially you may not be aware of your perceived need or desire; however, try to answer these questions for yourself. What is underneath your feelings or thinking? Are you thinking or feeling like you need something to

be okay, safe, happy, etc.? Are you thinking or feeling like you need to control a circumstance or person in order to meet this need/desire? Do you have an expectation that is not being met?

Control Responses

In Unit 5 Lessons 2 and 3 you will receive instruction and another opportunity to work through the chart, including this Lesson. The fight or flight responses identify common control strategies and fears.

Underlying Belief/Fears

An underlying belief usually manifests itself as an underlying fear. As you begin to recognize your perceived need or desire and how you are choosing to meet that need/desire, these questions may help determine what you really believe about the situation. Are you believing truth or a lie? Are you trusting God to take care of you in this situation? Are there things you feel you must do because you cannot be sure of God's will? Are you afraid God might ask you to do something you may not want to do? Do you trust God's timetable? Is this outside of God's control? Is this something too insignificant to ask God about?

God's Truth

Regarding what you discovered you actually believe, what does God's Word say? How does your belief align with God's Word? How does it not? Search the Scriptures if you are not sure what God's Word says. (Ask a mentor or trusted friend to help you.)

Action Steps

If you recognized a sinful attitude or behavior, confess it and thank God for His forgiveness. What attitude or behavior did you identify needs changing? What Scriptures can you use to renew your mind? Write these out so that you can review them often. Is there anyone you need to forgive or from whom you need to seek forgiveness? Do you need to seek accountability in an area?

My Heart Unchained

My Situation

My Response

FEELING

THINKING

CHOOSING

<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

CONTROL-RESPONSES

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

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Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

ACTION STEPS

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My Heart Unchained

My Situation

I catch myself saying hurtful words to my young adult child whenever he disappoints me.

My Response

FEELING

Inadequate

Inferior

Afraid

Shame

THINKING

I'm not good enough

They are godly. I keep sinning

I'll never be good enough

Its hopeless

I keep sinning the same thing

CHOOSING

Don't hang out with friends

Don't be honest with friends

Pretend everything is okay

Give in

Ignore it

Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

Pride

Self worth

Respect, honor

Legalism

CONTROL-RESPONSES

Escaping

Withdrawing

Focusing on another's sin

Denying

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

Need to feel I'm good enough to
earn salvation and in comparison to
others

Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

We are all fallen (Romans 3:23)

Don't compare

Jesus died on the cross. I can't add to it.

I can entrust my fears to Him (Psalm 33:4)

All God asks for is for me to accept His gift and follow Him

ACTION STEPS

Confess my fears and pride to God

Own my sinfulness and ask for an apology

Pray for a change of heart through the renewing
of my mind and yielding to His Spirit

Reflection

Meditate on the following two passages. Thank God that He gives you everything you need to discern your heart and live wholeheartedly for Him.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Peter 1:3-4

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Application

What will you do this week to better understand your heart posture and fix it on God?

My Heart Unchained

My Situation

My Response

FEELING

THINKING

CHOOSING

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Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

CONTROL-RESPONSES

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

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Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

ACTION STEPS

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My Heart Unchained

My Situation

My Response

FEELING

THINKING

CHOOSING

Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

CONTROL-RESPONSES

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

ACTION STEPS

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Lesson 5: God Desires My Whole Heart

No works cited.

My Longing

Heart

Unit 5: My Longing Heart

As you begin Unit 5 remind yourself of what you learned in Unit 2 Lesson 5—God Desires My Whole Heart.

In Unit 5 you will explore the progression from a longing or desire to an idol. You will learn to evaluate and recognize when you are treasuring someone or something more than Christ (Colossians 2:3). You will examine your underlying fears and resulting control-responses and how to surrender your heart to God. In addition, you will understand the roles of grief and worship.

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LESSON 1: MY LONGING HEART

At salvation you received a regenerated heart, a new identity, and a redeemed purpose for living—to love God, to enjoy Him, and to live for Him in every area of your life. As you walk in your new identity, your longing heart will enjoy true freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1).

The Feast of Tabernacles was 50 days after the Day of Atonement and lasted seven days.

JESUS THE LIVING WATER

When Jesus was in the temple surrounded by the crowd, He spoke of the importance of “living water.”

John 7:37-39

³⁷On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Jesus is the source of abundant life (see also John 4:10). The person who comes to Jesus and believes in Him is truly satisfied. Out of her heart overflows delight.

GOD COMMANDS THAT YOU WORSHIP HIM WHOLEHEARTEDLY

The first of the Ten Commandments is “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3); Jesus said that the “great and first commandment” is that “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37-38). God has created you to worship Him, and your deepest longings will be satisfied only in worshiping Him. And yet, all hearts are prone to wander, so you will be continually tempted to worship someone or something other than God in your pursuit of happiness.

God is jealous for your allegiance and devotion (Exodus 20:5), which means that He will not tolerate your worship of any other person or thing. His jealousy is righteous because He is right in His assessment that He alone deserves your allegiance and devotion (Isaiah 48:11). God does not command your worship because He is egotistical; He commands your worship because He knows that nothing less will ultimately satisfy you!

What you delight in, you will treasure.

WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

Ken Sande of Peacemaker Ministries defines idolatry as...*“Anytime we long for something apart from God, fear something more than God, or trust in something other than God to make us happy, fulfilled, or secure, we worship a false god.”*²

What do you learn about idols? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

1 Samuel 12:21

“And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty.”

Psalm 16:4a

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.

Psalm 119:133

Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

Ephesians 5:5

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE FROM DESIRE TO DEMAND

I Desire

God has created you with many desires and longings. Your desires are to be submitted to the Father and aligned to His will and purpose, trusting that His desires for you will always result in His glory and your highest quality of life.

Your longings or desires may include:

- Security
- A godly marriage
- Intimacy in marriage
- Children
- A satisfying job/career
- Deep friendships
- Affirmation/validation
- Safety for loved ones
- Salvation for loved ones
- Good health
- A house in order
- Good grades
- To be good, right, or respected
- To be heard, appreciated, loved, or wanted

Review the list above and circle the ones with which you identify. Do you have desires that are not on this list? Record your thoughts

If a longing or desire (or a real or perceived need) is not being met, it is only natural that you may feel disappointment, hurt, fear, frustration, abandonment, depression, etc. These feelings indicate a struggle in your heart. Your struggle has the potential for two things: 1) to lead you to acknowledge your feelings, to recognize what you desire or feel you need, to surrender this to God in humble dependence, and to trust that He can comfort and satisfy you, or 2) to lead you to believe you deserve what you are desiring to the point of demanding it.

Pause and ask the Lord to align your desires to His.

If you recognize that something other than God has captured your heart, consider praying this prayer:

Create in me
a clean heart, O God, and
renew a right spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of your
salvation, and uphold me with
a willing spirit.

Psalm 51:10, 12

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Meditate on the following Scripture::

Psalm 18:1-3

¹I love you, O LORD, my strength. ²The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

Do you relate to God as your strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, and horn of salvation? Is God your strength when you are overwhelmed? Is God your rock in difficult times? Is God your refuge when you are afraid? Is God your shield when you are being attacked? If not God, who or what do you run to in these times? This is a great check to identify who or what you are desiring and trusting more than God.

Talk to Jesus about this and ask Him to help you make David's prayer in Psalm 18 a reflection of your heart.

Application

What desire or longing is taking God's place in your heart?

How can you put it in proper relationship with God? Or others?

How will you combat those desires this week?

LESSON 2: MY CONTROLLING HEART

In Lesson 1 you learned that a longing moves from a desire (real or perceived need) to a demand when you must have something or someone to be okay or content. This demand becomes an idol, a functional god, when you give it power to control you. At this point your heart has become divided because you are putting the object of desire in the place of God. When you do, the idol will dictate your beliefs and actions.

A controlling heart is not able to fully trust God because it has allowed someone or something to “occupy the place that should be occupied by God alone.”¹ In this lesson you will explore your controlling heart—your control responses and their underlying fears that result when your heart is divided.

FEAR IN ITS MANY FORMS

Fear may be an appropriate emotional response in certain situations. In the midst of fear, you may not be able to control your physical symptoms (increased heart rate, sweating, shortness of breath, fuzzy thinking, nauseousness, etc.), but you always have an opportunity to choose to trust God. As fear arises, you remember that everything depends on the Lord, not you. In Psalm 23, David chose to walk with God through his fear. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they will comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). Even in dark times when evil, danger or uncertainty mark your path, the Lord is your Good Shepherd who is with you, protects you, and comforts you.

“I don’t think it’s possible to not worry at all—it’s human nature and of course things that we cannot control tend to crowd our thoughts. It’s been through the last year and a half that I’ve realized there is a response to worry that can become worship. In choosing to acknowledge that our fear is a very REAL FEAR but that God is not only in control but FOR US, we can surrender that fear in worship to Him. It’s not that the worry has left us, but rather it’s found its home. It’s found its home with the One who died so we could be with Him. Our worry can be safely handed over to the Overseer of our souls.”

Elizabeth Wehmann

When fear controls you, you are choosing to believe the lie that God is not in control of the situation. Fear left unchecked grows into dread and terror, and manifests itself in many forms:

- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of the future
- Fear of failure
- Fear of missing out
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of consequences
- Fear of exposure
- Fear of pain and suffering
- Fear of loss (health, financial, relationship, security, reputation)
- _____
- _____

Initially fear may be a helpful response because it signals that you are in some way unsettled or hurting. It provides you an opportunity to check your heart, identify your feelings, and acknowledge you are in a struggle to fight the temptation to sin. In your struggle, you have two choices. You will either humble yourself and yield to the Father, (“I will trust you God.”) (Lesson 3 will discuss the topic of surrender in more detail), or you will remain prideful and yield to sin (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Identify Your “Go-To” Control-Responses.

Review the chart below and circle your “go-to” control-responses. If you are unsure, ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify them.

Flight

- Withdrawing
- Hiding
- People-pleasing
- Minimizing sin
- Escaping
- Denying
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Avoiding conflict
- Fantasizing
- Focusing on another’s sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Numbing

Fight

- Arguing
- Aggressive
- Manipulating
- Intimidating
- Convincing
- Anger
- Escaping
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Being negative or critical
- Condemning
- Focusing on another’s sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Being passive-agressive

You will notice “escaping” is on both sides of control responses. Why is this the case?

Escape is expressed in many ways. A person may escape by turning to excessive behaviors (e.g., exercise, overeat, unhealthy control of food, pleasure) or addictive behavior (e.g., substance abuse, pornography, a sexual encounter or an affair).

Ask God to Search Your Heart

Acknowledge and confess your sinful behaviors to the Lord, receive His forgiveness, and ask Him to help you trust Him.

You will notice that the fear and control-responses are listed on the My Heart Unchained Chart.

It is likely that after considering the flight and fight responses, as well as the list of underlying fears, a situation has come to your mind where you exhibited one or more of these behaviors and felt one or more of these fears. In Lesson 3 - My Surrendered Heart, you will have an opportunity to further process this information using the My Heart Unchained chart.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Meditate on the following Scripture:

Jeremiah 10:23-24a

²³I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. ²⁴Correct me, O Lord,

Application

In what area of life does fear show up?

How does it manifest itself? (See list on page 238)

How will you deal with that fear this week?

LESSON 3: MY SURRENDERED HEART

In Lesson 2 you were introduced to underlying fears and sinful control-responses that lead a person to try to control someone or something, including self.

In this Lesson you will learn what it means to surrender control to God and confidently trust Him, just as Christ did, assured that He will care for you in every situation.

DEEPEN YOUR DEPENDENCE ON THE FATHER

You bring your emotions under submission to God...

- by expressing them to Him
- by asking God to reveal what you are thinking about the person or situation and how it aligns with His truth
- by renewing your mind in truth
- by obeying His direction

It is important to remember that unmet desires have the potential to deepen your dependence on the Father, and this is a wonderful thing.

Be like Jesus:

- Approach the Father confidently.
- Implore the Father passionately and relentlessly.
- Humble yourself before the Father.
- Pour out your feelings and thoughts to the Father.
- Believe the Father hears your cries and responds.
- Seek God's plan and will.
- Trust and obey the Father completely.
- Know that you will receive grace and mercy to help you in your time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

What does the alternative look like?

Galatians 5:24

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

What does it mean to “crucify the flesh”? Daily, what does this look like?

How do you keep passions and desires in their proper perspective?

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

What should compel you to live for Him instead of yourself?

My Heart Unchained

My Situation

My Response

FEELING

THINKING

CHOOSING

<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

CONTROL-RESPONSES

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

ACTION STEPS

<hr/>	<hr/>

(Refer to My Heart Unchained Instructions on p. 215)

My Heart Unchained

COMMON CONTROL—RESPONSES AND FEARS

Control-Responses

Flight

- Withdrawing
- Hiding
- People-pleasing
- Minimizing sin
- Escaping
- Denying
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Avoiding conflict
- Fantasizing
- Focusing on another's sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Numbing
- Denying

Fight

- Arguing
- Manipulating
- Intimidating
- Convincing
- Anger
- Escaping
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Being negative or critical
- Condemning
- Focusing on another's sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Being passive-aggressive

Underlying Beliefs/Fears

- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of the future
- Fear of failure
- Fear of missing out
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of consequences
- Fear of exposure
- Fear of pain and suffering
- Fear of loss (health, financial, relationship, security, reputation)

Reflection

Meditate on the following Scripture:

Hebrews 12:1-3

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Application

What are you willing to change the way you tend to control people or circumstances?

How can you actively surrender those tendencies to experience God's desires for you when you rely on him?

LESSON 4: MY GRIEVING HEART

As you discovered in Lesson 1, a desire (real or perceived need) has the potential to control your life. The person or object of your longing becomes an idol once you fixate on it and believe you must have it. At this point the idol controls and enslaves you while you desperately try to control it.

In Lesson 2 you identified underlying fears and resulting control-responses—things you do to try to control and protect your world or the world of someone you love.

Next, in Lesson 3 you learned that as you surrender your control and entrust the person or situation to God, you are confessing your need for God and choosing to trust Him. It is important to acknowledge and address the reality that as you relinquish control, you may experience deep loss, pain, and sorrow. In this lesson you will examine how to walk through the pain of unmet longings and painful losses.

As you practice a surrendered life, you will need to surrender your control of some very difficult situations as well as some less grievous ones. In either case, the sense of loss may be significant, and in order to truly trust God it will be necessary for you to recognize your pain. Allow yourself to mourn even if and when the pain seems disproportionate to the situation. Never minimize your pain.

For example: Your adult child is choosing to use drugs. You cannot stop him or effectively control him, yet you witness his life spiraling out-of-control. Though there may be some helpful things you can do, truly you know that you cannot change him. But God can, so you surrender your son's life and his choices one by one to the Lord. This is at times an agonizing moment-by-moment process, one in which you may fear the loss of your reputation as a parent. You may experience the loss of dreams for your child, the loss of hope for him, the loss of relationship with him. You may even fear the loss of his very life. In this painful process of surrender you are experiencing various losses that result in grief.

Examples in Scripture

Scripture is filled with lament. Habakkuk cried out to God regarding the coming judgment of Israel. “O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you ‘Violence!’ and you will not save?” (Habakkuk 1:2). The book of Lamentations is a one long lament. “Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord!” (Lamentations 2:19a). Our Savior, too, cried out in lament on many occasions. As Jesus approached Jerusalem (the triumphal entry), Jesus grieved the Jews’ rejection of Him and what that would mean for their future. “And when he [Jesus] drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes’” (Luke 19:41–42).

The lament psalms are more in number than any other category of psalms (about 40%) and express the heartfelt cries and honest pleas of the troubled, hurting psalmists to God whom they trusted and chose to praise. You can do the same—cry out to God, ask Him for help, and choose to trust and praise Him.

What emotions are expressed? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Psalm 22:1-3

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. ³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

Psalm 44:23-25

²³Awake! Why are you sleeping, O LORD? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! ²⁴Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? ²⁵For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground.

Psalm 13:1-2; 5-6

¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ²How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? ⁵But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 57:1-4

¹Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. ²I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. ³He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! ⁴My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts—the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

You may be surprised by some of the emotions expressed in the above prayers. You may also be surprised by some of your emotions as you express your pain to God in prayer; however, God is not surprised nor is He put-off by your emotions or your expression of pain. He is near to the broken-hearted.

Keep in mind that you can mourn a loss, expressing all your emotions to God, and yet not surrender the situation or person to God. By not surrendering the situation or person for which you still feel the need to control, you are not able to access God’s resources of peace, comfort, and direction in the mourning process. Also, be aware that surrender is not usually a one-time action. In a season of mourning you may need to surrender over and over again, each time the painful emotions come up. Continual surrender is an important part of mourning “well.” Mourning “well” means to allow yourself to feel your emotions, to surrender them to the Lord, and to continue to move through the painful season without getting stuck in the pain.

Are you presently in a season of grief? Perhaps an old hurt? Have you surrendered it to God? What is keeping you from seeking God’s comfort?

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. ⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

ENGAGING YOUR WILL AND YOUR MIND

As you mourn, honestly expressing your feelings to God, it is important to also engage your will (your ability to choose) and your mind (your thinking). In Timothy Keller’s book, *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, Keller describes how Paul tells his readers in *Philippians 4:8* to “think (*logizdomai*) about these things” and *Romans 8:18* to “consider (*logizdomai*) that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”¹ The word *logizdomai* is an accounting word sometimes translated “to reckon” or “to count up.” Paul is telling his readers to “count up” the truths of God. This is a response of the will and the mind even if the emotions do not seem to agree.

How did the psalmist and Jeremiah count God’s truths in the middle of pain? Read the following Psalm and record your response.

Psalm 42:3-5

³My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴These things I remember, as I pour out my soul how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. ⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Lamentations 3:17-25

¹⁷My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; ¹⁸so I say, “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord.” ¹⁹Remember my affliction and wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! ²⁰My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. ²¹But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope ²²The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ²⁵The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

Jeremiah also “counted up” God’s truths when he chose to call to his mind God’s faithfulness and steadfast love even as he expressed his pain.

"Driewing" – A Personal Testimony

I was raised in the rural community of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska. As a young boy I developed a love for hunting and fishing and would often spend the weekend outdoors with my dog. Our family was poor and with eight brothers and sisters, whatever I brought home was welcome.

At the age of 12 my father passed away. After he died, I was told that God needed him. I became angry at God because I couldn't understand how God needed him more than I did. When I was 14 my mother and I had an argument. She told me she did not love me and that I should leave. I had been working on a cattle ranch and had saved up a bit of money so I bought a bus ticket to Reno. When I arrived there I worked on a construction crew until the boss realized that I should be in school and said I should go home. I called an older sister who was married and living in Oregon and went to live with her. I went to school and worked on another cattle ranch until 1963 when, at the age of 17, I joined the marines.

In 1965 my company was sent to Vietnam. Although we were among the first Marines to land, the fighting was fierce. Over the next 13 months I saw many of my friends killed in combat. When I came home on leave I felt I was fighting another war in my own country because of the way people treated me. My company commander told me to take 30 days leave and go home because we would be going back to Vietnam.

My last night home I was in a car accident and broke my neck. While in the hospital I met a woman whom I later married. We had a daughter and another child on the way when she left me for a former high school sweetheart. I became an angry young man and trusted no one. It seemed everyone had abandoned me including my country.

When I married again, my new wife had two children from a previous marriage and we had the usual problems of a blended family. I thought my job was to discipline her children, but my method was that of a drill sergeant. They, in turn, hated me and did everything they could to undermine our marriage. By now, my anger had become intolerable. Our family life was miserable and I feared I would lose my wife.

A friend suggested I get counseling so I met with a pastor to talk about my anger. He told me that my anger was just a symptom and the root cause was my fear of abandonment. He showed me from scripture what God says about anger. An angry man stirs up trouble, and a hot-tempered man makes himself look bad. But if a man will humble himself, he will gain honor. Proverbs 29:22–23. That was me! It was my anger that was causing all the pain in my life. That night I went home and apologized to my family. I told them things would change and asked them to give me another chance.

On my way to counseling the next night I remember thinking how powerful God's Word is and wondered what else it could accomplish in my life. I pulled the car over right there and surrendered my life to Jesus Christ.

Since then God has shown me He is faithful and will never abandon me. He took my anger and turned it into a special love for my step-children. He has restored my relationship with my mom and my family and He has given me a forever family. God's Word is powerful and I encourage you to memorize a scripture or passage that speaks to you. One of mine is Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

Reflection

Think of a time of grief in your life. Perhaps you have never acknowledged and thanked God for His faithfulness to meet you in your pain. Take time now to do so. Even if you have thanked Him in the past, once again recall His kindness and provision, and praise Him for His faithfulness.

Application

Is there a situation that you have not fully or properly grieved? Will you begin the journey of grief now?

LESSON 5: MY WORSHIPING HEART

You learned in Lessons 1–3 that you must surrender your fears, demands, and control in order to have a whole heart toward God. A worshiping heart toward God allows you to see Him for who He is. It frees you to worship Him.

WORSHIP DEFINED

The Hebrew word for worship is *shachah* (Strong’s number 7812), and the Greek word is *proskuneo* (Strong’s number 4505). Both words mean “to bow down.”

To “bow down” before God is not just a physical posture but a heart posture, one of humility.

The word “worship” comes from the word “worthy.” True worship comes from a reverent, humble heart toward God. It affirms that God has worth and that He is worthy of our complete adoration and devotion. In corporate worship we exalt God together—we speak and sing about how good, beautiful, wonderful, and awesome God is. He is worthy. The same attitude of worship should be a part of our daily lives.

According to Webster’s Dictionary (1828), worship is “to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission. Worship “express[es] the beauty of holiness through an extravagant or exaggerated love for God, and you...live in extreme or excessive submission to God.”¹

As you more and more behold the glory of God, your desire to honor Him and to show Him extravagant love will grow.

How would ‘extravagant love’ in acts of worship be exhibited in your life?”

What does whole-hearted worship look like for you?

“If anything matters to you more than God, you are not acknowledging his glory. You are giving glory to something else.”²

Timothy Keller

Having a right view of God—rightly understanding the fear of God—is essential to true worship.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

There are more than 150 references to “fear of the Lord” in the Bible.

What Does it Mean to Fear the Lord?

The fear of the Lord is “that indefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us.”³ The fear of the Lord gives you the right understanding of God in order to truly worship Him. You will have a firmer grasp of what Psalm 111:10a means when it states “[t]he fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” When you do not understand who God is, and what it means to fear Him, you may be prone to be complacent or cavalier about your sins and sinful patterns.

“‘Safe?’ said Mr. Beaver; ‘don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.’”

C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

What do you learn about the fear of the Lord? Write out the following verses and record your response.

Proverbs 1:7

Psalm 86:11

Matthew 10:28

The word “fear” in both the Hebrew (*yir-a*) and the Greek (*phobos*) mean “to have terror or “causing fear.” It also means “respect, reverence and a sense of awe.”

“These two common uses of the word ‘fear’ in the vocabulary of the people of biblical times (and also in some measure in our vocabulary) are both included in the biblical notion of the fear of God. There is a legitimate sense in which the fear of God involves being afraid of God, being gripped with terror and dread. Though this is not the dominant thought in Scripture, it is there nonetheless. The second aspect of fear, which is peculiar to the true children of God, is the fear of veneration, honor, and awe with which we regard our God. It is a fear that leads us not to run from Him but to draw near to Him through Jesus Christ and gladly submit to Him in faith, love, and obedience.”

Albert Martin

THE GOSPEL AND THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Because of the punishment that Christ endured for you on the cross, if you have put your faith and trust in Him, you need not fear God for “the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Romans 2:5).

Jeremiah 17:14, 17

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved, for you are my praise. Be not a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster.

When you truly understand the gospel message, how without God’s plan of redemption to “heal” and “save” you from the “day of disaster,” you cannot help but marvel and tremble at God’s “spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, and holy love.”⁵ Seeing the infinite beauty and excellence of God causes you to respond in gratitude and worship.

Acts 9:31

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

“Nothing is so well fitted to put the fear of God— which will preserve men from offending him—into the heart, as an enlightened view of the cross of Christ.... Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.”⁶

John Brown

As you grow, is your gaze increasingly set on the cross? In your daily life, how do you recall/remember what God has done for you?

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP IS IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

What kind of worshipers is the Father seeking?

Read the following verses and record your response.

John 4:23-24

²³“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Hebrews 12:28-29

²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹or our God is a consuming fire.

In your own words explain what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth?

What is unacceptable worship?

Worshiping God in spirit is only possible for the follower of Christ because God’s Spirit makes your spirit alive and ignites and energizes your spirit to worship Him.

Worshiping God in truth is worshiping Him in His fullness, not taking only a part of Him. Worshiping God in truth is to have a proper view of Him based in His Word—to

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