

What Change Looks Like

Applying the Model of Biblical Change When "Heat" Invites Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism

The Nicene Creed

We believe in One God,
The Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth
And of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father before all ages,
God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God,
Begotten not created,
Of the same essence as the Father,
Through whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
And became human.
Who for us, too, was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
Suffered and was buried.
The third day he rose again
According to the Scriptures,
Ascended into heaven,
And is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
To judge the living and the dead,
And his Kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who together with the Father and Son
Is worshiped and glorified,
Who spoke by the prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic (i.e. universal), and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sin,
And we look for the resurrection of the dead
And the life of the age to come.

Amen

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Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Part 2 of the Introductory Pastoral Counseling Curriculum

Student Workbook
(Second Edition)

Adapted by Rick Horne
From the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation
School of Biblical Counseling Course

The Dynamics of Biblical Change
by
David Powlison

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What Change Looks Like

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Introduction to *What Change Looks Like*

The first course, *How Change Happens*, taught the model of biblical change as taught by David Powlison in the course *The Dynamics of Biblical Change*, in the School of Biblical Counseling at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation. The model was presented in two forms: *The Three Trees* paradigm and *The Eight Questions* paradigm.

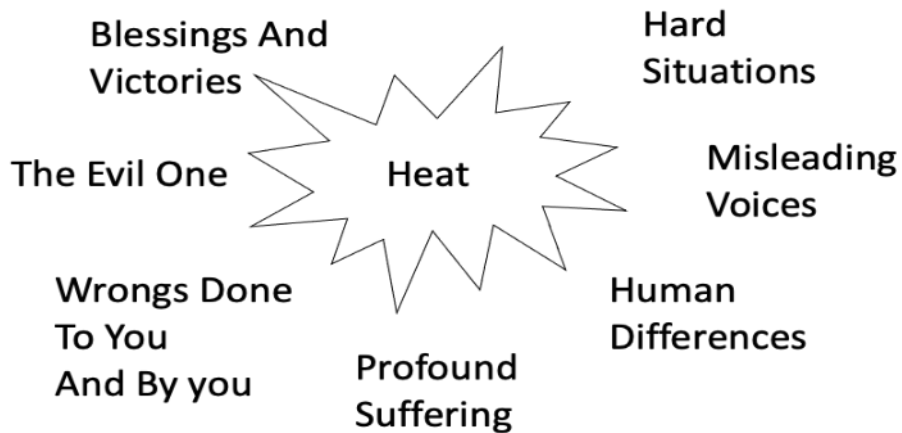
Our first course was roughly half of Powlison’s *Dynamics* course. This course, *What Change Looks Like*, is the other half.

If you have not taken *How Change Happens*, this second course may take a little time to understand. That model undergirds and is applied in each of the eight lessons in this second course. We’ll take time in the first lesson to review some of its key features.

How Change Happens focused on the key biblical factors in the change process that God has identified. That course put them in easy-to-remember forms that Powlison developed and taught for more than 30 years.

This course looks at seven forms of "heat" (see the figure on the next page) that come at all of us. "Heat" represents challenges to which we react because of what is in our hearts. Our hearts motivate us to respond righteously or unrighteously to any “heat” that comes our way. As our model displays in the first course, it's the focus on Christ that brings about change from ungodly to godly responses in these heated settings.

These lessons open up ways in which the cross becomes the very practical focus for the Christian. They show the trusted way our Father gives us for the Holy Spirit to produce godly responses in us when these seven challenging settings, and any others, come at us.



The seven forms of heat summarized in these lessons

Who this course is for

This course, like the first one, is intended to equip two groups of people for ministry within their body of believers. First, it is designed to equip church **leaders** to use the “power of the gospel” (Rom. 1:16) to “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Pet 5:2) who are overcome with difficulty in their spiritual warfare. Second, it gives the **soldiers in the trenches, brothers and sisters within the churches**, the “weapons of our warfare” (2 Cor 10:4) to help fellow warriors as God provides opportunity for them to “encourage one another” (1 Thes 4:18; 5:11).

This course is not intended to be a simple come-when-you-want-to-and-get-what-you-can seminar. Your willingness to commit yourself to work throughout this course will bring wonderful benefits to you, and, through you, to your church body. “In all toil there is profit,” Solomon counsels us “but mere talk tends only to poverty” (Prov 14:23). Good intentions alone won’t produce much of value. But your dedication for the next several weeks will. The people who are providing this training will be praying for you throughout the course and covet your prayers as they lead. May the Head of the Church be glorified as you learn and grow.

Two ways to take this course: Audit and Credit

Audit:

Auditing is definitely less work. It allows students to get the gist of the course but not the depth that would come with fulfilling all the background and undergirding work. Auditing may be wise because of work, church or family demands.

Requirements for Auditors:

1. Meet the attendance requirements just as credit students do.
2. Do the Bible memory work and pass the memory quizzes with at least half-credit value (i.e. no more than twice the number of mistakes as there are the number of verses memorized).
3. Complete all three of the two-page vignettes as described for credit students. They *do not* have to take the content quizzes or final exam or produce Response

Papers from the readings. They also *do not* have to complete a Self-Counseling Project or the Ministry Project and Ministry Project Report.

Credit:

Requirements for Credit:

1. Meet the attendance requirements.
2. Complete Bible memory and course content quizzes and final exam.
3. Complete the Response Papers for readings, the three two-page vignettes, the Self-Counseling Project, the Ministry Project, and the two-page Ministry Project Report.

How this course came to be

The contents that make up the first course, *How Change Happens*, and this course, *What Change Looks Like*, have been used by the Lord for more than 30 years to equip pastoral workers and Christian leaders serving in many different venues of ministry. The major concepts of the model taught in these two classes were originally taught by Dr. David Powlison as *The Dynamics of Biblical Change* in the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF) School of Biblical Counseling.

CCEF is the oldest and one of the most influential biblical counseling ministries in the modern church. For the last 30 years *The Dynamics of Biblical Change* has been taught on a graduate level and is used in a number of seminaries, Bible colleges, and other biblical counseling training settings in the U.S. and around the world. *How Change Happens* is roughly half of the graduate *Dynamics* course. *What Change Looks Like* is drawn, in large measure, from the second half of the *Dynamics* course. Both of our courses are reorganized to *not* assume a seminary or Bible college background.

Dr. Powlison and CCEF have granted Dr. Rick Horne permission to develop this CCEF course content for pastoral counseling training with The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) and other urban churches and para-church ministries. TUMI exists to equip city church leaders with seminary training that is affordable, accessible, and relevant for urban church ministry. For more information about CCEF and the School of Biblical Counseling, please visit www.ccef.org. For more information about TUMI International or TUMI-Chester, go to www.tumi.org or www.tumichester.wordpress.com respectively. For more information about our TUMI-CCEF pastoral counseling courses, contact Dr. Rick Horne at rhornetumi@gmail.com or www.TUMIChester.org.

Where this course can take you

This series, when complete, will lead to a Certificate in the *Foundation and Practice of Pastoral Counseling*. Students may take these courses with a view to receiving credit for the Certificate in the *Foundation and Practice of Pastoral Counseling* or may audit courses without the credit feature. Requirements for both options are in the course syllabus.

The theological commitments of this course

These courses are deeply rooted in biblical truth for both the content and process of pastoral counseling. They assume the sufficiency and inerrancy of Scripture as the “truth

that will set you free” (John 8:32). The Nicene Creed offers a framework of biblical teachings upon which our courses are built.

Enjoy the Lord and His Word in its transforming power,

Rick Horne, D.Min.
TUMI Associate Site Coordinator &
Oakseed Liaison for Mid-Africa and Dominican Republic

and, under the “shadow of your wings.” (sixty-nine times these specific terms are used.)

C. David is being threatened. Verse 1b says he is seeking refuge until the “storms of destruction pass by.”

1. This course is about “storms of destruction.” Forms of “heat” or threats we feel coming at us, to use a term from *The Three Trees* picture of how change happens.

2. Seeking refuge or protection or safety is as natural as the reflex action of blinking when our brain senses something coming toward our eye—or even if we *just imagine* something coming toward our eye (for example, blinking when someone is about to take a flash picture of us). We seek refuge when we sense a threat—whether it is real or imagined.

D. We will be considering seven general ways “heat,” or “storms of destruction” may come at us. Each of these may come at us from different directions and in different strengths. These “storms” can be

1. Real or imagined. Things threatening us for real (“...suffering...” Phil 1:29) or only in our imagination. (For example: “a ghost or zombie!” as with Herod thinking Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead, Mark 6:14.)

2. Present or future. Things in the present (for example, “...present help in trouble,” Ps 46) or things we anticipate in the future. (For example, the unbelievers in the last days fear exposure to the true King of Kings. They cry to the rocks, “...fall on us...hide us,” Revelation 7:16.)

3. Self-inflicted or from others. Things we bring on ourselves (For example: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin,” Ps 38:3.) Or things others bring upon us for their own reasons. (For example: Psalm 57 when Saul is chasing David. See also Psalm 5:6 where David describes his troubles coming from someone who has “...set a net...dug a pit...”.)

4. Directly or indirectly from God. Things that are from God’s disciplining hand (Heb 12:11), from enemies who refuse to be placated (Rom 12:18), or from enemies who hurt people, in general, and disregard God (“Arise, O God, defend your cause...,” Ps 74:22).

Believers can also get caught up in the webs of violence for no cause of their own making and encounter tough times and threats because of such violence. Isaiah states: “The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; he enters into peace; they rest

in their beds who walk in their uprightness.” (Isa 57:1,2).

5. Painful or pleasurable. Things that are painful (Heb 12:11) like an illness, or pleasurable (1 Cor 10:9-12) like wealth or a family gathering (1 Tim 6:17).

6. Visible or invisible. Things that are clearly seen or heard (2 Cor 11:23-29) like a computer breakdown or a verbal attack, and things that are invisible (2 Cor 11:3,4) like a threat to computer security that is advertised or a rumor or suspected gossip or threat of the Covid-19 virus.

The point of all this is that “Heat” doesn't always come at us in predictable forms, times, or situations. “Where did that come from?” and “I didn't see that coming.” are common reactions to such surprises.

E. Before we survey the seven “heat” sources of this lesson, consider how David saw God’s provision in the midst of his “storms.”

1. The storms are included in God’s “purpose for me” that He will “fulfill” (Ps 57:1a,3,10). They are not accidental. My Father is up to something good. God was his “refuge” expressed in terms like, “...in the shadow of your wings...your steadfast love (*hesed*—covenantal love) ...your faithfulness...”

a. David’s trust was in God’s “hesed” (a Hebrew word meaning His “covenantal love”). This is a word that is not easily translated into English with one word. Various translations use “kindness,” “mercy,” “lovingkindness,” and “steadfast love.” The feature this love has in mind is that it is love that is related to God’s promise of redemption. It’s a love that brings us into a relationship with Him—that is, it is covenantal. “Love because of blood.” His “steadfast love” is due to the blood of the sacrifice of Christ that is part of God’s determined plan for the redemption of all his people—past, present and future believers.

b. This was illustrated and prophesied by the Old Testament sacrifices and fulfilled in the shedding of Christ’s blood (Eph 1:7) on behalf of His people. It brings us into an adopted position within God’s family. We’re called “sons” and “children” of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1).

c. Covenantal love (“hesed”) gave David confidence in God as his “refuge” and his “faithfulness.” God, the LORD, YHWH (God’s covenantal, personal, redemptive name), had David’s back!

(Ps 38:21,22 cites all three prominent names of God in reference to the refuge that He is for David—refuge from his own sin and that of his enemies.)

d. In the New Testament, the benefits of trials and suffering are spelled out repeatedly. (For examples see Rom 5:3-5; 2 Cor 1: 3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:1-2.) We will address this concept much more fully in later lessons.

2. David saw that the storms are ways God brings about His own glory (Ps 57: 5,11). They are for “...your glory...over all the earth!”

a. David pictured God’s glory to be His greatest purpose. He connected God’s love with God’s glorious nature and understood God’s plan to extend His glory over all the earth—in real time and real earthly places (5, 11):

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!”

b. God’s glory is the most significant reason God saves and rescues His people. It undergirds all His saving and judging acts toward people. (See Isa 42:8; Prov 16:4; Rom 9:22,23; Eph 1:6,12,14; Col 1:16-18; 1 Cor 10:31.)

c. Psalm 67:1-3 identifies God’s end goal for all our prayer requests to be for His glory and His name. This is the reason for asking God for what we want. Our motive must be bigger than any of our requests in and of themselves.

3. While “storms” are the most common settings in which change happens, David’s heart orientation, as is the case with our own hearts, was critical for his stability in the midst of the storms (Ps 57:7-9). He declared, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast!” David was committed to God’s purpose—no matter what threats it seemed to bring his way. He saw that these trials were from God’s hand and would not cancel His love or faithfulness (Ps 57:10). God still “fulfils his purpose for me” (Ps 57: 2).

a. Change happens in David’s *unchanging* circumstances—it happens inside of him first and foremost. He’s trusting YHWH “till the storms of destruction pass by.” Storms are still raging. Change occurs because of what is going on within David’s heart (Ps 57:7-9). This is the consistent and frequent testimony of Scripture. Psalm 46:1-3 affirms that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help *in trouble*” regardless of the threats. Finding refuge in Him is the key. The writer of Hebrews picks up this theme in the context of financial threats because of persecution due to one’s Christian commitment:

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So, we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Heb 13:5,6, quoted from Ps 56:4,11)

This is also the testimony of James: "trials...testing..." make you "...complete, lacking in nothing." The ongoing nature of trials is the reason for our need of "steadfastness."

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4)

It's David's trust in the grace of God that gives birth to his confidence.

b. This trust and David's commitment to God's purpose and glory are the "cross" feature of *The Three Trees*. It's the trust in the Redeemer's provision for me expressed in questions five and six of *The Eight Questions*. Ultimately it's the blood of Christ that makes the difference. The *hesed*, His steadfast, covenantal love, shows up fully in Christ and secures us in our "storms of destruction" (Ps 57:16).

II. How Change Happens—Reviewing *The Eight Questions*. It happens *in* the situations of life, that is, *in* the "storms of destruction" (Ps 57:1). Consider how *The Eight Questions* are related to *The Three Trees* we've just reviewed. This is the second version of our model. We'll apply them to David's Psalm 57 situation.

Recall that *The Eight Questions* fall into two cycles: The Vicious Cycle and The Gracious Cycle.

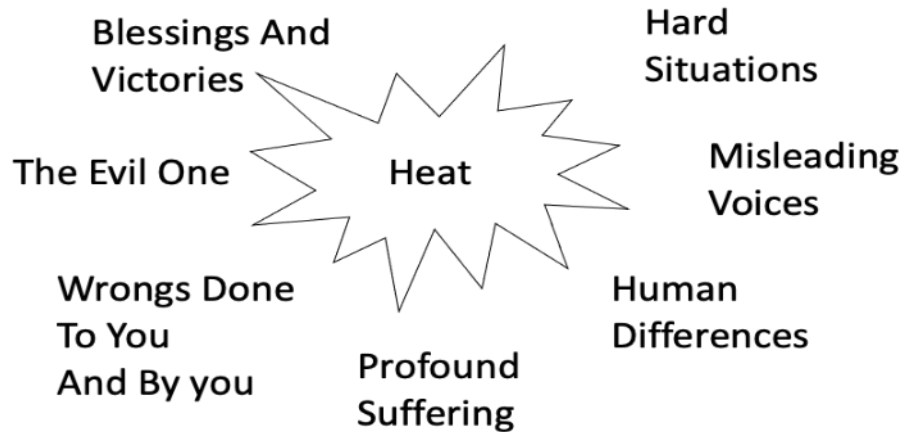
A. First, The Vicious Cycle. The four questions in it ask:

First Question: Heat asks, "**What's Happening?**" or "**What's coming at me?**"

1. The Bible is realistic. God's grace and provision is for His people in the "real" world. In this course we will be considering "heat" that comes at us from a variety of sources. This is the "Heat" in our model of *The Three Trees*. It's the "Situation" or "What's happening," (Question 1) of *The Eight Questions*.

2. Even when the “storms” don’t seem too much like threatening storms, they may be loaded with temptations to unsettle, distract, and hurt us and others we touch.

3 In this course we will consider temptations that come at us from seven threatening storms. We’ll apply our model of biblical change to each. Our focus will be to determine *what godly change will look like* as the gospel is applied in each stormy setting.



Second Question: “How am I reacting?”

1. There are two trees we encounter. The thorn bush (tree) and fruit tree. The thorn bush (tree) relates to questions 2-4 of *The Eight Questions* and the fruit tree relates to questions 7-8.

2. Jesus speaks of two trees and what each bears by nature (Matt 7:17,18; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:43-45; and compare Matt 15:16-20.)

Third Question: “What do I want?”

1. The thorny or good fruit reactions come from what is going on within us—not primarily what is happening around us. This is contrary to “common sense” and the popular social science observations of psychology and sociology.

2. Popular psychology and sociology typically consider what has happened to us or what is going on around us as our main cause of negative behaviors. They often *rightly identify* many of the pressures inside and outside of us to which we respond. They may also helpfully *describe* the way we commonly react to these pressures. These pressures are the “Heat” in our diagram. They are the “What’s Happening” of Question 1 of *The Eight Questions*.

3. But the world's concept is that because we are good, or at worst neutral, most of our inclinations toward good and evil behavior are *caused* by what is coming at us from the world around us. For example, the bad influences may be coming from our dysfunctional family, a poor neighborhood, poor schools, poor parenting we receive, bad friends, etc. In their opinion these life-related influences *determine* the way we are inclined to think and act. Jesus' teaching, noted above, teaches quite the opposite. The pressures around us are real, but our reactions come "from within" he said. The situations of heat we face invite these reactions, but don't cause them.

4. Biblically, our tendencies to sin, dysfunction, and self-destruction are explained by our, and all humanity's, sinful and innate desire to "...burst their (the Lord's and his Anointed One's) bonds apart and cast away their cords from us" (Ps 2:3). Our desire is to "be," as Satan lured Adam and Eve, "...like God" (Gen 3:5)—to be answerable to no one but ourselves. We want to make our own rules and set our own standards. I want to do what the old ME wants to do. I don't want to be accountable to anyone, especially anyone who may disagree with me.

5. Good fruit, Jesus said, comes from good trees. The fruit of the Spirit comes from a spiritual tree (Gal 5:22, 23). This contrasts with the bad fruit that comes from diseased trees which produce the works of the flesh. (Gal 5:19-21)

**Fourth Question: "What are the outcomes of these reactions?"
"Consequences?"**

1. What are the outcomes of these reactions that emerge from our hearts in this situation? In David's situation in Psalm 57, maybe his men would run away when they see David's angry or depressed or hopeless attitude. Maybe David and his men attack Saul and try to get rid of him.

2. Biblically, our tendencies to sin most often produce consequences of dysfunction and self-destruction. "The wages of sin is death," to one degree or another in this life, and eternal death in the age to come.

B. Next: The Gracious Cycle:

Fifth Question: (The Cross in *The Three Trees* includes both questions five and six): "Who is God (the Father) in this situation?" (Or, "Am I content with Him and His will for me?")

Question five focuses on God the Father. Is He in control? Is He good? Are the circumstances accidental? Are they able to hurt me in any final sense? No, as we saw in Psalm 57, "God who fulfills his purpose for me" (Ps 57:2). He is a God of "steadfast love" (Ps 57:3b).

Sixth Question: “Who is Jesus in this situation?” (Or, “Am I content with Him and His will for me?”)

1. This is what makes the difference. Galatians 2:20 notes that to be “crucified with Christ” is the source of life. The Spirit’s empowering work in us occurs because we trust in the Father’s loving, good control and purpose for all our situations (Question 5) and because we are satisfied with the Son’s saving, whole life transforming work by His death (Question 6). “Salvation,” is whole life transformation, by the “power of God” in the gospel. (Rom 1:16)

2. Am I satisfied with the forgiveness He's given me as my Savior? Is His saving work, my inheritance, my future blessing what I need? Is His will for me at risk because of my situation? David referred to His covenant love (Ps 57:3b, His “steadfast love”). This points to his trust in God as his redeemer. It also pointed to the coming one who would accomplish His salvation by His blood.

3. Paul asserted that he was focused in his ministry on seeing the cross emerge as a larger and larger factor in the lives of Corinthian believers. “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Cor 2:2)

Seventh Question (Fruit): “How should I now live?” or “What does God want me to do by the Spirit?”

1. David affirmed, “My heart is steadfast, O God, My heart is steadfast!” (Ps 57:7). He's committed because of his faith, because of his trust and satisfaction with his Savior, to do what God directs him to do.

Galatians 2:20 connects godly living clearly with seeing myself in light of the cross.

2. “Faith working through love” (Gal 5:6) is the outworking of a relationship with Christ. The small arrow leading from the new heart to the fruit tree in the diagram above illustrates this connection. Fruitfulness comes because of the ministry of the Spirit in the believer’s life (Question 7), not because we try harder to be good or do right things or even to please Christ. This “fruit” is *what change looks like* **during** and **after** “storms of destruction.”

3. *Moralism* is trying to live by a code of ethics or rules or laws to get God’s favor or blessing. This is also what the Bible describes as legalism, trying to be made right with God by being good or meeting some standard instead of trusting in Christ’s finished work. Paul used the strongest language of condemnation for people who try to live with a legalistic lifestyle. These

people want to add something to the completed work of Christ to be accepted by God. God condemns such a motive or practice. (Gal 1:6-9; 2:16,20; 3:3)

Eighth Question: “What outcomes will there be for living with Spirit-produced fruit?” “Consequences?”

1. There are wonderful outcomes (Question 8) for the believer who lives trusting Christ. Sometimes these do include persecution (2 Tim 3:12). But always they include God’s gift of a fruitfulness now (Phil 1:22,23) and eternal life to come: “...the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Rom 6:22).
2. Paul says that blessed outcomes occur because of the godly responses prompted by the Spirit (Question 7). This is the outworking of a relationship with Christ (Question 6) and of seeing God the Father controlling all my situations for my good and His glory (Question 5).
3. Jesus summarized outcomes in His Sermon on the Mount nine times in Matthew 5:3-12. “Blessed” (or happy is the way many translate the term). He said this over and over to display the results of godly responses.
4. Such godly living would mean unbelievers would “see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).
5. Similarly, Jesus said, “...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16).
6. Again Peter said “if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8).
7. James affirmed that such single-minded commitment to God's wisdom results in stability and joy—even in trials (James 1).

C. A Background Passage

Jeremiah illustrates and contrasts these two kinds of people and their hearts by using a metaphor of two trees, a fruitful one and a needle-laden fruitless one (Jer 17:1-13). Furthermore, he contrasts the destiny of each because of their heart commitment. The setting is a desert wasteland (like our world’s influences and brokenness because of sin).

1. Heat

Compare the parchness of ground for both trees at various times. Both have the same heat coming at them.

Verses 6 and 8 “desert,” “parched,” “wilderness,” “heat.”

2. Hearts

Contrast the hearts, the fruit of behavior emerging from them, and the consequences or outcomes that God ordains to follow these patterns.

One heart, verse 5, “trusts in man,” “makes flesh his strength,” “heart turns away from the LORD.”

The other heart, verse 7, “trusts in the LORD,” “whose trust is the LORD.”

3. Two Trees bear either Good Fruit or Thorny Behaviors

Verse 6, “like a **shrub in the desert**,” “shall not see any good,” “uninhabited.”

This is in contrast to verse 8, “like a **tree planted** by water,” “sends out its roots by the stream.”

4. Consequences

Verse 6, “...shall not see any good...shall dwell in the parched places...in an uninhabited salt land...”

Or verses 7,8, it is “blessed...does not fear when heat comes,” its “leaves remain green...is not anxious in the year of drought...does not cease to bear fruit.”

5. The Third Tree—The Cross of Christ—is what makes the difference.

a. It is causal! The heart’s orientation to the LORD, YHWH, the covenant keeping, redemptive name of God, is used here and points to Christ in the New Testament. He is in view (see, above, the notes on Psalm 57 in this outline). This tree, the cross, comes into view as the believer is satisfied with who God the Father is in the situation, trusts and is satisfied with Christ and who Christ wants him to be. He is then made a fruitful and flourishing tree doing what the Spirit wants him to do.

This is the person who asks, “Who is Christ in my life?” “Do I want what He wants for me?” “Who does God want me to see myself to be in Christ in this heated situation?” “Who am I in Christ even if the situation never changes in this life?” (James 1:2 says that in Him you can have “joy...when you meet trials...,” that is, when the “heat” comes and continues.) In Psalm 27:4, “One thing...” summarizes David’s desire. Notice in the context what is going on in David’s life when he affirms this single-minded desire (Ps 27:2,3; see also Ps 57:7-9).

b. Having begun by faith, this person continues to see change take place by faith. That is the New Testament’s testimony too (see Gal 2:20; 3:2,3; Rom 6:11-13). Consider the order of concepts Paul addresses in a number of his epistles. First he sketches teaching about Christ and the fullness of the salvation he accomplished for us. He wants us to live with a conscious Christian identity.

c. Then Paul and others typically move on in the latter portions of their letters to note principles for living as a Christian that emerge from our new identity in Christ. Like a whale needing the ocean as its environment to enable it to breathe (it would suffocate under its own weight outside of the water environment), the believer needs to consciously live in the grace of God, his ocean, in order to spiritually live and breathe and not spiritually suffocate under the weight of the commands and desires to “be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

d. Specifically, consider how Ephesians 1-3 sets the believers’ consciousness of God’s grace and redemption as the ocean context for his spiritual breathing so that he may live a life of fruitfulness described in chapters 4-6.

III. Guarding against legalism/moralism. (Review lesson seven in *How Change Happens*) and see how easy it is to slip into legalism.

If you are not sure what we're talking about with moralism or legalism and how easily counselors and pastors can slip into it in their teachings or counseling, it will be helpful to review that lesson. Legalism or moralism is expecting blessings or benefits *because* of how you live—not because of the gospel. You demand that others or you live by some standard, even God's perfect law, without thoughtfully trusting in the Father’s love or the Lord Jesus’ sacrifice.

A. A Case Study Example:

“This Course Doesn’t Really Help!”

In the following Case Study, mark the margins of your workbook with features of *The Three Trees* or *The Eight Questions* as you read through it.

Identify each of *The Eight Questions* or *The Three Trees* features in this case study—for Charlotte **and** the course instructor when confronted by Charlotte.

Suggest what “could” have been the situation if it is not clearly evident in the story itself. The point is to illustrate each of the features clearly, not necessarily to get all the facts straight in the illustration.

The setting—an instructor’s story:

In the last class of *How Change Happens* in a Philadelphia city mission, one of the case managers taking the course expressed her frustration of not seeing the things we learned to be realistic for their setting. She was working with the girls in the group home. She asked, “Is there any value to these things for us in our ministry?” She asked this because of the frustration and anger she experienced the night before in her conflict with one of the girls in the home.

Charlotte said that at dinner last night, Sheila yelled, “She’s trying to poison me!”

“I’ve appreciated your coming to teach us,” Charlotte said to the instructor. “This has all been interesting, but I just don’t see how I can use it with these ungrateful girls. They don’t care about Christ and God’s Word. They don’t want to hear about God’s grace. Last night I was so angry at Sheila for her ungratefulness and her accusation after all I have been doing for her. But I kept my head because it’s what Jesus wanted me to do.”

Charlotte was making beef stroganoff with mushrooms for dinner for the girls in the house. Sheila, one of the residents, had been watching her for about 10 minutes. She was already upset about something, Charlotte observed. Sheila’s face showed it clearly. Even though Sheila saw when Charlotte cut up the mushrooms and put them in the sauce, now, at the table, she was livid. “You don’t care about me at all. You’re trying to kill me!” Sheila hollered that she was allergic to mushrooms, and so she raced off raging along the hallway to the supervisor to report Charlotte’s evil intent.

Charlotte had been a case manager in this mission group home for six years. The work is hard. Most of the girls are between 18 and 25, are often single moms, and have no other place to live. Most are not believers, have no family to speak of to support them, but they still often come to the mission with a sense of entitlement. “The ‘You owe me!’ attitude,” the director told me, “is the hardest thing I have to deal with! Often the girls show very little gratitude because they think they deserve to be given what they want and to be treated in some entitled manner. To have to keep their space clean, follow up with chores, help keep the home straightened up, and show some basic politeness and gratitude seem to be totally foreign ideas or unreasonable expectations to them,” she said.

Charlotte and a half-dozen other case workers were part of the pastoral counseling course, *How Change Happens*. This was the last class of eight in the course. We had had wonderful times and thoughtful discussions about how they could use the biblical model of change in their own lives and in the lives of the girls they served. They were hoping

this course would add one more level of resources to their arsenal of spiritual weapons to serve the young women.

Charlotte was frustrated, though. She felt totally dissed by Sheila. Her months of service to her seemed to count for nothing. But she was also troubled by our course. It didn't seem relevant to the girls' needs—they didn't care about Christ and wouldn't be motivated to change anything for His sake. "I did try to be kind and loving to her because it's the way Jesus would want me to react," she said. "But nothing else changed. I was so mad."

The instructor asked Charlotte if he could use her experience as a teaching opportunity with the rest of the class. She was genuinely agreeable.

He asked the women to think about *The Three Trees* model they had been using to explain how change takes place in the Christian life. "How would you assess what Charlotte did last night in her effort to respond to Sheila?"

Linette spoke up quickly. "Charlotte, you moved from Sheila's heat, her accusation, and your thorny angry response, straight to the fruit tree—doing what you thought Jesus wanted you to do. But you didn't consider Christ for yourself! Only what to *do!*" She added with emphasis. "You left out the cross as your heart motivation for your responses. You forgot to reflect on who God is in the situation and whether you are satisfied to be who He wants *you* (she was emphatic again) *to be* in Christ!"

Charlotte's face looked in shock. It dramatically dawned on her that she had done just that. She slipped into the trap of just "trying" to do Christ-like things without a Christ-satisfied heart! "This is for me!" she declared much more meekly. "Not just for the girls."

Irene, one of the other caseworkers there, said, "You know, I had some pieces of the model in my understanding (she had missed some key classes because of her job), but until Charlotte and you guys talked about this experience I have not put them all together. This really makes sense now. I see how this may not be for some of the girls at all. It's for us! God can give you peace and love for Sheila because of who you are in Christ—not because of her respect and appreciation of you."

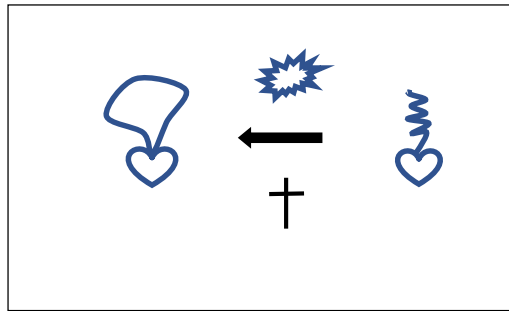
The teacher reinforced Irene's observation. "Yes, this model of change may not be of interest in the least to some of these girls right now. But it can empower you because you want to be who your Father wants you to be in the girls' lives."

Our model says that before we can truly practice fruitful living when in pressure situations, we need to take our hearts to the Father and the Lord Jesus. This submission is really our willingness to be who They want us to be in the situation. This is the *Cross* in our *The Three Trees* model and questions five and six in *The Eight Questions* version of the model.

Charlotte "caught" it! She saw that the change that was needed last night was not so much in Sheila but in herself. It is when the ungodly see us with gracious, loving responses, even to their mean, spiteful, and even crazy accusations, that the gospel will be alive in us and in front of them. It is the "power of God for salvation" transformation and deliverance of us *and* them (Rom 1:16). Charlotte sensed her security in Christ. She knew she had a hope, peace, future, assurance and solidness about life and living that Sheila didn't have. She would be blessed when others would "revile and persecute" her (Matt 5:11). She was ready to love Sheila all over again—because of her identity in Christ and the love of her Father.

B. The common "Christian" approach to change:

The common pattern of many Christians and most unbelievers who feel guilty about something or are experiencing painful consequences is to move from the “Heat” and then the “Thorny” responses, directly to Fruit, missing the cross. (See the large horizontal arrow moving from the thorn tree to the fruit tree in the diagram below). This is what Charlotte did, in the case study example above.



1. Charlotte minimized the cross and her identity as one “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20; 6:14; 1 Cor 1:18; 2:1). She didn’t do that because she thought skipping the cross was the way to go. She didn’t think at all—biblically speaking. She just followed the *natural* inclinations of her human nature to depend upon herself and not look to Christ by faith.

2. Believers need to guard against the temptation of legalism. This is like saying, “I expect God to bless me in ways I desire or to answer my prayers for what I request, *because* of something I do or did.” It’s thinking, “I deserve God’s blessing,” or, “I earned it because of my obedience.” These ways of thinking miss the cross and jump from bad responses or negative behavior to trying to manufacture good fruit on our own.

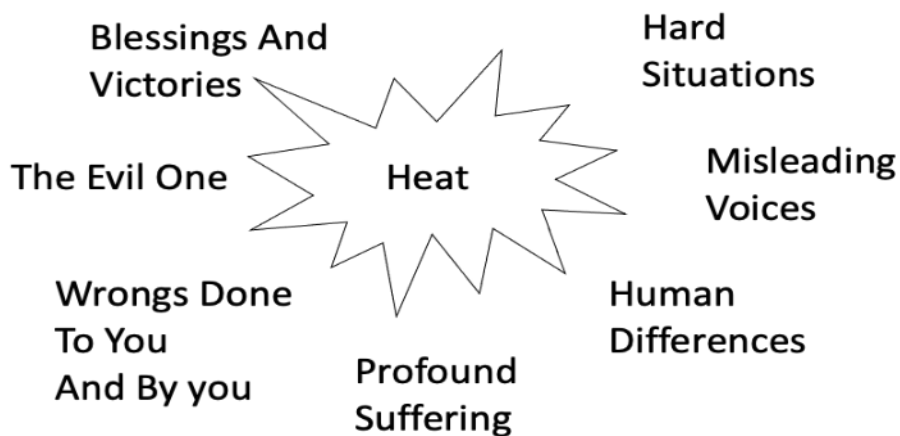
This thinking may nudge me to make new resolutions, new commitments, renew my dedication, or become stricter in my living. None of these new behavior choices are necessarily bad, in themselves. But they are truly evil when done to get or earn or deserve God’s goodness toward us. They are evil, because they deny the sufficiency of the freedom and power to live for Christ that Christ purchased. They deny the “power of God” in the “salvation” of the gospel (Rom 1:16) that Jesus purchased with His blood. We’ve been recreated in Christ to live holy lives in *conscious dependence* upon Him. We’re not “do-gooders” simply imitating the moral teachings of Christ.

3. There will always be some evidence of the Spirit’s fruit in the life of a believer (the thin black line in the diagram above, emerging from the believer’s heart and entering the tree) even if there is not very strong

fruitfulness (“...it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13; See also Rom 6:17-22; 8:1-11).

4. But the specific responses to “heat” that the Christian wants to change (control of his temper, lust, gossip, worry, etc.) which he tries to produce without consciously relying on the work of Christ will be weak, inconsistent, temporary, and, maybe, exhausting (Rom 7:13-25; Gal 4:15). Such a person’s strength is coming from himself, not reliance (“abiding,” John 15:1-11) upon Christ.

IV. Ways Heat Commonly Comes At Us (These are situations in which we often display thorny, fleshly, reactions or, more positively, the fruit of the Spirit.)



A. Seven common “storms of destruction” (Ps 57:1) come to nearly all of us to one extent or another. These are real, but secondary causes of our responses (see below). We must not ignore the heat and pretend that it doesn’t matter. Believers must not think, “If I am really spiritual, I won’t feel anything.” We still live in the real world as broken people and face its brokenness daily—sometimes with profound pain and suffering.

1. Hard Situations. There are some in Christian circles, and among unbelievers, who teach and preach that the Bible promises life without pain, suffering, and hardship if you are right with God and have enough faith. A small sample of biblical examples and teachings shows this assumption is false.

a. Job 5:7 “...man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

b. Rom 8:18-23: “...bondage to corruption...” “...creation has been groaning...” “...we...groan.” All these phrases are used to describe our human nature—even as believers.

c. Hardships are real.

A sample of hardships includes people who are crippled, limited in their ability to hear, think, see. Those who are uncoordinated, have a birthmark on their faces, are poor, are from an uneducated family or a single parent family, have violent relatives, live in a violent neighborhood, have the worst school system in the state, live with young adult children who can't find work, have chronic employment instability, or are fired from their job unfairly.

d. What change looks like with such hardships, troubles, and limitations:

i. Without God's view: anger, cynicism, hopelessness, escapism, "deep darkness." (Prov 4:19)

ii. With a Gospel view: "...a very present help in trouble" (Ps 46:1-3); with the "peace of God" (Phil 4:7); persevering and hopeful (Romans 5:3); joy in trials (James 1:2).

2. Misleading Voices: There are lots of authorities and "experts" about life.

Our western culture is a world with a wide variety of **interpretations** about life, sin, hurt, and failure. It's like living in a marketplace with all kinds of interpretations about life for sale for our hearts and minds to buy into. "We'll tell you how you should respond in situations that come at you," is the common message.

In the Old Testament these messengers were called false prophets and self-serving shepherds. In the New Testament Israelite community they were the Pharisees and Scribes (Matt 23:13-15). Today we get invitations about how to view life from personalities in radio, TV, music, Hollywood, politicians, Supreme Court Justices, news commentators, psychologists, social workers, police officers, hair dressers and barbers, insurance salesman, financial planners, termite exterminators, etc. The list of counselors or voices goes on and on and changes seasonally to meet cultural pressures.

a. Proverbs 14:12 asserts, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." By nature people want to respond to "stuff" that happens to them. And they often want to sincerely help others make good choices with their "stuff" too. ("a way that seems right"). But responses have consequences—good or bad. That's the reason for the comprehensiveness of Paul's command to "take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (2 Cor 10:5).

b. In addition to our own inclinations, we have **many prophets** who want to tell us how to interpret what we face: how we feel, how others make us feel, our health, our finances, our neighborhood, our

looks, terrorism, political matters, racial matters, parental matters, employment matters, etc. All of these challenges in life seem to threaten us. The prophets promise to bring relief if we follow their advice.

c. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: depression, guilt, discouragement, hopelessness, confusion, escapism, and false comforts (Prov 1:29-33; 4:19; 9:12; 13:13).

ii. With a gospel view: "...bold as a lion" (Prov 28:1); being made "free" (John 8:32,36); living "securely" (Prov 1:33); destroying "...strongholds ...arguments ...lofty opinions" (2 Cor 10:4,5).

3. Human differences.

Looks, talents, intelligence, athleticism, possessions, are all differences that **our culture and our hearts typically transform (or more accurately, distort) into standards of value** for peoples' worth.

a. These differences become ladders of worth or human value by our hearts and our culture. Psalm 139:14 affirms that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made."

b. Differences do exist, by God's design. There are those with "...five talents...two talents...one talent..." (Matt 25:14-30); there are those from "every ethnos, tribe, tongue" (Rev 5:9,10). Within the church there are "wise" and "foolish," "powerful" and "weak," "noble" and "low" and "despised." (1 Cor 1:26-29) The New Testament body metaphor similarly (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4;) speaks about diversity within the church. Mishandling these differences is a strong temptation—especially when our culture endorses the most popularly appealing ones on its "ladders of worth."

c. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: anxiety, fear, depression, resentment, anger, escapism, jealousy.

ii. With a Gospel view: "...his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..." Confidence, boldness, humility, a sense of usefulness and purposefulness. (Eph 2:10)

4. Profound suffering that we, and others, experience (our world is broken—Rom 8:18-23).

God has purposes for suffering and gives power for overcoming brokenness for the glory of God. His ultimate purpose is for His glory and our good, in Christ.

a. Sometimes the suffering comes from our shortcomings—our sins and failures (note the nearly 300 consequences for foolish behavior in Proverbs). Sometimes suffering comes because we simply live in a broken world. Sometimes it comes because others don't like our profession of faith, our "hypocrisy," inconsistency, or our moral stands and politically incorrect perspectives on socially charged issues (John 15:18-21).

b. Increasingly believers can expect opposition and suffering due to their commitments to morally unpopular perspectives about abortion, the exploitation of the poor, the definition of marriage, homosexuality, and other immoral matters. The world "hates the light" (John 3:19,20). James 3:14-17 speaks about the character and source of the "wisdom" of these perspectives. Such "demonic" wisdom cannot be expected to rest easily in the face of "wisdom from above."

c. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: anger, guilt, fear, bitterness toward God, hopelessness, false expectations ("I don't deserve this!").

ii. With a gospel view there are many remarkable outcomes: "...the testing of your faith produces steadfastness...perfect and complete..." (James 1:2-4); serious advances in personal growth and holiness (1 Peter 4:1,2); useful service (2 Cor 1:3,4); as a testimony to unbelievers (2 Thess 1:5-8); the "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore" (Ps 16:11); "a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90:12), a deeper knowledge of God, contentment, and more.

5. Wrongs done to you and by you

We are broken people living in a broken world among other broken people. The world breaks upon us in hurtful ways and we, just as certainly, break upon them. One huge way hurtfulness comes upon us and out of us, is in speech. "...no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man..." (James 3:8,2).

a. We do sin against others and others do sin against us. Our Designer did not leave us without counsel for godly, good-fruit

producing responses in both cases (Matt 5:23-26;18:15-17; Rom 12:19-20).

b. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: anger, resentment, grudges, vindictiveness, vengeance, bitterness, escapism, guilt.

ii. With a gospel view: "...all things work together for good" (Rom 8:28); "...love...do good, bless...pray" (Luke 6:27,28); unbelievers will "glorify God" (Matt 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12).

6. The Evil One; the Liar

The gospel is the powerful instrument God has given for all spiritual warfare, including confrontations with the Evil One (2 Tim 2:24-26).

a. Jesus came to "destroy the works," of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to "destroy the one who has the power of death..." (Heb 2:14); 1 Peter 5:8 depicts Satan as a "roaring lion". He steals, kills, and destroys (John 10:10).

b. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: guilt, helplessness, escapism, fear, paranoia, self-destructive attraction and seduction, oppression, demon possession or oppression.

ii. With a gospel view: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20).

7. Blessings and Victories

a. It's not only the hard things and sufferings of life that invite us to react. The good things do too. "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12) ; "a thorn..." because of privileges (2 Cor 11:16-33); wealth and those with the privileges of prosperity (James 2 and 5 and 1 Tim 5:17-19).

b. What change looks like:

i. Without God's view: pride, division, contentment, arrogance, aloofness, insensitivity, indifference, oppression (James 2:6,7)

ii. With a gospel view: “...use it to serve one another” (1 Peter 4:10); pleasure, peace, good modeling, and enjoyment (1Tim . 4:4; Prov 3:13-18; 14:24; 18:11; Ps 16:11)

B. Heat as a “secondary cause.” The hard things in our lives are not to be considered as irrelevant or unimportant. They are not to be taken lightly, but they are still only *secondary causes*.

(From *How Change Happens*, Lesson 5.) Some examples of heat that are significant secondary influences (but not the most significant) of our responses:

1. A thyroid problem, living with MS, PTSD, having repeated bouts of cancer. These can all be significant influences. This kind of problem is part of God’s stage for one to live on (Rom 8:28, “...all things...”). He is in control—even in this broken world, and even while living in a broken body. But none “cause” our responses.

2. Recall the illustration of suicide in *How Change Happens*. Some body factors like bio-chemical things may be going on and may be influential. But, typically, there are many motives in these sufferers that emerge from their idolatrous hearts making demands of themselves or others that are not being met in some way.

3. As noted in that course, this does not mean these “causes” are not real or important to consider in your counsel. Our awareness of these influences that our friend is facing is usually vital for us to notice. Our sensitivities help us with the relationship so we may help a counselee see how he may be substituting other “needs” (actually his demands, desires or wants) in the place of God and God’s provision for him in life at this crisis time.

4. Consider the variety of motivations for suicide. This subject can scare us because suicide is so big and final. Some of the most common heart motives, secondary causes masking the deepest heart cause, are illustrated in Scripture:

- a. Judas—driven by the failure of or guilt from his agenda.
- b. Saul – afraid of being tortured.
- c. In Judges, Jehu—didn’t want to die at the hand of a woman (shame).

Other contemporary culture examples of heart motives:

- a. Copycat suicides after Nirvana’s K. Cobain: despair, nihilistic world systems.
- b. Terrorist suicide bombers: ideals that drive a person’s life.
- c. Self-atonement suicides (I’m such a failure; I’ve blown it so badly!).
- d. Attention getting suicides.
- e. One feeling overwhelmed or with a desire to avoid responsibilities.
- f. Vengeance (e.g. girl, enraged at her father).

g. Solution to problems (A solution for me with many problems or a solution for my kids—I'm the cause of their problems.)

Conclusion

In this lesson we have surveyed the two paradigms of the model we taught in *How Change Happens*, illustrated them with the case study of Charlotte, and surveyed each of the seven forms of heat that the balance of this course will address.

In our next lesson we will differentiate between the Bible's use of the concepts of the heart and the flesh. We will conclude by talking about the "why" question and how it may help us to see heart passions more clearly, in contrast to the world's common use of that question to pinpoint outside *causes* for one's behavior.

Questions for Reflection

1. "Bad things happen to bad people!" Right? Critique this comment.
2. What makes God's covenant love so rich for the Christian in a "storm"? What would comfort be like without that covenant love focus?
3. Which of the two forms of the model for change (*The Three Trees* or *The Eight Questions*) can you see yourself using most easily to help yourself with change? to help a brother or sister with change? Why?
4. What is there about our human nature that makes it easy to want to move from the thorn bush to the fruit tree, skipping the cross?
5. What effects may come from confusing primary and secondary causes of troubles?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 2
The “Heart” and the “Flesh”
**(The Center Of Our Being & The Direction For Our Living; or
What We Love [Heart] And What We Do [Flesh])**

The Bible gives attention to both the heart and the flesh in the matters of change. What does the Bible say about the heart? And what does it say about the flesh?

I. The Heart (the center of our being, where living springs from, the center of our loves)

A. There are eight truths about the heart that are especially important for us to keep in mind as we counsel:

1. The heart is prominent. In our model, drawn from Scripture, the heart is prominent in the change process, **but not the most critical** feature of the model for change.

It's the cross that is center stage (Rom 6:11; 8:11; 1 Cor 1:18; 2:1,2; Gal 2:20; 6:14; 1 John 5:4). The heart, with its desires, is the part of us that connects us to both the world around us and the cross of Christ that delivers us from its control (1 John 2:15-17). Our heart identifies who we are. It is the center of our being. It radiates our greatest loves. “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov 4:23; see also Matt 22:37). The greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart...” (Mark 12:30).

Biblically, human body parts are used as rich metaphors to illustrate how motives arise from within our hearts, the core of our being.

a. The heart: central to life; command post. See the verses above.

b. The kidneys: similar to heart usage. Sometimes translated “the reins”; the guiding mechanism (as with horses) of what you are (Lam 3:13; Ps 7:9; Job 16:13, many KJV passages with reins are translated “heart” in the ESV, Job 19:27).

c. The bowels: capturing the emotions and desires that are felt deeply inside us (KJV Ps 22:14; Song 5:4); i.e. our “gut desire.”

d. The eyes and ears: access points from the outside to the inside of us (for example Prov 20:12). These draw attention to what we listen to (ears) or seek after (eyes).

2. The heart is the starting point for real change.

a. But the heart is not necessarily the starting place for your conversation with a friend in need. Other factors are critical to pay attention to in the relationship and to understand how one can apply the gospel in your friend's situation. The relationship and the data of his life situation are important. (More of the helping process will be the subject of our third pastoral counseling course, *Helping Change Happen*.)

b. But the heart is a critical destination toward which we want to drive in ours and our friend's understanding. True help will come as our friend eventually faces his struggles with his heart in view.

c. Jesus often started with external concerns people had and led His hearers to consider their heart motives. The classic case of the woman at the well, in John 4, illustrates this pattern. He began with her thoughts about drawing water from the well and led her to the point of her heart need for the Messiah, "living water." Other examples started with healings and concluded with Jesus' statement, "Your faith has made you well" (Mark 5:34; 10:52).

3. Listening is the beginning place to understand heart desires.

a. Understanding the *trauma* in the world of the counselee may be of first importance to listen for. The book of Proverbs frequently urges listening to anyone who wants to help others. On the other hand, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." (Prov 18:2)

For example, in cases of PTSD, one's inner conflicts, questions, inabilities "to 'get past' things I've seen and done and feared in the war" are crucial to hear. "I was in the war in Afghanistan, but now the war is in me," one vet said. Ultimately his heart's demands and commitments about what is real and true about life must be transformed. But to begin with his experience seems to be Jesus' frequent pattern with people.

b. Understanding some of the *wider world of fruitfulness* in a counselee's life may be important to get them past their immediate sense of hopelessness.

For example, a woman who couldn't see her Christian growth over the past several years since becoming a believer said, "I just don't seem to be growing." She was discouraged. She had made remarkable progress over the years but wanted growth so badly it seemed like she wasn't moving. When we reviewed some of the progress she had made with her responses to her husband's anger and her worry over his addictions, by God's grace, she began to see that God was truly working in her. She saw reasons to hope that He'd continue to do so. He'd done so in the past.

Psalm 126 is an example of the hope this kind of review of God's goodness produced in the people of God while in captivity.

Paul, likewise, seemed to have this way of challenging and encouraging the Corinthian Christians when he urged them to "Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test..." and "Your restoration is what we pray for." (2 Cor 13:5 and 9). In other words, "Look at what is happening inside of you. Be encouraged to keep on keeping on."

c. During your helping relationship with a teen, you must eventually bring the heart into view, though your conversation probably will not begin there².

For example, Adel may want a "good name" or reputation and yet be doing things that are hurting her health and welfare to get it. She was captain of her soccer team, participated in the choir, took the lead in the high school play, was active in a campus club, made demands on herself to be in the National Honor Society, regularly make the highest honor roll, and strove to keep her number one ranking in her high school class. In addition, she worked to pay for her car insurance and was president of her youth group. She was exhausted, depressed, and was having doubts about her relationship with God when we talked.

The desire for a "good name" is programmed into us by God's common grace. "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches..." (Prov 22:1a). There is nothing wrong with desiring a good reputation. In fact, for the Christian, God wants a good testimony to be seen by the world (1 Peter 2:12) to display His glory. But whether it's a reputation she defines for herself or is satisfied to have God define for her, makes all the difference between an anxious and harmful pursuit of it, or joy and freedom in Christ.³ Which direction she chooses, how badly she wants it, and what price she is willing to pay for her reputation are all heart matters.

It may be wise in the beginning of a conversation to listen for the ways she has sought to have a "good name." Eventually, though, the "good name," her heart desire, needs to be contrasted with the reputation God wants her to have and her willingness to be satisfied with His want for her.

² This concept for wisely communicating with teens, especially angry ones, is developed in *Get Outta My Face, How to Communicate with Angry and Unmotivated Teens with Biblical Counsel*, Rick Horne, Shepherd Press, ©2009.

³ More about the effects of making demands like this on oneself (and God) will be addressed in lesson four with the "circles of control."

Working with a teen's common grace desires, the "wise wants" she has, is the place the book of Proverbs most commonly begins with young adults, almost 600 times. But sin has distorted these wants. So, while listening for these may be the place to start a conversation to build the relationship and show you are listening, in time the teen must be pointed to the One who makes life work the way He's designed it to work. This only happens when one *pursues and is satisfied* with His wisdom—heart matters. The "fear of the LORD," similarly a heart matter, is the beginning, the top priority, for gaining true "wisdom" (Prov 9:10) and the "good name" He wants us to have.

d. All desires can be eventually traced to the heart because it's the control center for our living (Prov 4:23; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:43-45).

4. Christ is the heart transformer.

a. Being "in touch" with your heart motives or any other feature of personality (for example, desires, thoughts, or feelings) won't, in and of itself, produce godly fruit. Only Christ can do that.

b. Ultimately, "beholding the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18) is what transforms people. Getting "outside" of ourselves, to Christ, is what will make a difference—not first and foremost inside of ourselves, such as being in touch with our "feelings" or what's popularly referred to as our "inner child."

5. A heart focus gets people's attention.

a. Our model draws serious attention to the heart early in our discussion. It is the prominent biblical way and a quick way to involve people in the conversation of how change happens.

b. Commonly, people don't think about their hearts in this way. We tend to place the center of our problems and troubles *outside* of ourselves. For example, "The woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit and I ate" (Gen 3:12). "It's my wife!" "It's this stupid boss I have." "It's my back pain." We don't usually interpret life and decisions in terms of "What do I love?." All four of these blame-shifting excuses sought to place the blame on something that they could not control—"the woman," "my wife," "this...boss," "back pain." But our loyalties, loves, and heart passions play out in all our responses (Prov 4:24; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:43-45).

6. Our modern culture misses the heart. It redirects responsibility away from our self to other factors we can't readily control or be blamed for.

a. Popular TV, radio, and self-help book themes with psychological and sociological overtones, often urge people to interpret life by focusing on their genetic make-up and/or how others have affected them. These modern gurus

urge us to believe that our responses are determined by things we largely cannot control—our genetic, bio-chemical make-up or other influential people throughout our lives.

b. Biblically, we agree, our make-up and others in our lives do influence us. But that is different from seeing these influences as *causes* for our behavior.

c. Modern psychology and sociology may offer good *descriptions* of typical responses people have to hard challenges in their lives—sometimes with great insight. But their explanations about *causes* and *solutions* never pin-point the heart, as the source for either, as the Bible does.

d. In general, psychology and sociology have seen genetic or other-person influences on us, the “nature-nurture” explanation, as the cause for our reactions. The idea is that our *nature*, the genetic make-up we have, or our *nurture*, the impact of others on us, is what explains my reactions to things that happen in my life. Our world’s explanations point in directions radically different from God’s for explanations of why we do what we do.

i. **Nature** factors include things we inherit, our genetic make-up, for example. We are a bundle of goodness trying to be “fully functioning,” “mature,” “self-actualized,” or “free,” but we have things in our **nature** that direct us, things about us that make up who we are but that we haven’t had anything to do with—things we inherit. Our sexual preferences, our inclination to abuse alcohol or drugs, our inability to hold a job, even our tendency to always be late, can be blamed on genetic forces within us. The thought is that these bio-chemical, inside-the-body-influences, are largely outside of our control and make us who we are.

ii. **Nurture** factors, on the other hand, come by the people and situations in our lives that influence us. Parents, teachers, preachers, relatives, neighborhood friends and enemies, and others. These directly or indirectly affect us and our thoughts and feelings in ways that shape us. In other words, outside influences make us who we are.

iii. Popular counselors in our modern culture agree that nature and nurture influence us. They often add, however, that our thinking is a more powerful force and can help us rise above many of these influences. “Think right and you’ll be all right.”

* In this connection, people often think, “It’s my dumbness for believing what other people can do to me that makes me do what I do and makes me who I am. I need to put others in their place—physically, mentally, or emotionally, and take control of my life. It’s their bad influence or my believing in their opinions about me or life that makes me as troubled as I am. So I must change my thinking and behaving to change my world or

the way I think or feel about my world.” This is what popular media counselors like Dr. Phil, Dr. Laura, and Oprah commonly advise.

* There is some truth to this teaching. Like so many of the world’s approaches, there are elements of truth here mixed freely with lots of lies (from the Liar). Can you identify the partial truths and lies in the previous paragraph? A whole dinner doesn’t have to be poisoned to be deadly. Arsenic in just one portion of the entrée can be fatal. A rocket doesn’t have to be seriously flawed to fail in its mission. It just has to be off course a slight bit. Our culture advisors offer counsel with good intentions but with arsenic and a deviant trajectory. Their counsel can be deadly and misleading. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Prov 14:12).

Nature and nurture in more detail

A. Nurture: From 1985-1995, Powlison says, Abraham Maslow brought *nurture* to the forefront as concern for psychotherapy and education.⁴

1. For example, nurture provided the underlying explanation for dysfunctional families. “Some need isn’t being met by others in my life.”

2. His famous “hierarchy of needs” has had wide influence. Again, there are partial truths and significant lies authored by the Evil One (John 3:31; Eph 2:1-3) throughout the philosophy. Keep in mind believers and unbelievers can make similar *observations* when thinking about behavior. We see many of the same things. So it’s not surprising that those observations, perhaps very accurate notations about behavior, become building blocks for explanations and prescriptions by intelligent, thoughtful, but unbelieving people. These people often want to be helpful, and see “ways that seem right” (Prov 14:12) but miss the most critical component for an accurate interpretation of what they are seeing: “The fear of the Lord” (Prov 1:7; 9:10) or the “fear of man” (Prov 29:25) in the heart of the person. Another way of seeing this core of people is in terms of what or who they love: do they love God (Matt 6:33) or love the world (1 John 2:15,16)?

3. Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 assert that the “fear of the LORD” is the “beginning” of wisdom. This means it is both the “most important” (like the importance of gasoline to an engine) and the “most critical” place to start in a sequence (like buttoning a

⁴ More about Maslow is included in lesson three in order to contrast the world’s popular concepts with God’s statement about the importance of the heart in hard situations.

shirt, or beginning a rocket launch to the moon). Beginning right has a lot to do with ending right. This is true in problem solving and in living.

For example: Missing the most important starting point:

A psychologist came to my office upset because we were “ruining her daughter’s life” by not giving her daughter the honors courses her ninth-grade daughter wanted (though she was not qualified, in the teachers’ judgment). She and her daughter were very upset at the school’s decision. My response was, “Let me see if I understand what you are saying: unless people give your daughter what she wants, she will be crippled in her living. What others give or do not give her will determine her success or her ruin. Her motivation is determined by what others do or don’t do for her. Is that what you mean?”

The mother responded humbly, “Is that what I’m saying? I didn’t see that I was saying that the control for her future is in other peoples’ hands. But that is what I was doing.”

Where was “fear of the LORD” in this parent’s understanding about motivation? In her discussions with her daughter’s wants and demands? Where was any thought about God’s use of others to give us things to think about, even when they disagree with us? If the daughter was a believer, how satisfied was she with Christ’s plan for her character as well as her courses? Did his purchase of her by his death include a defective plan for her life and her responses?

4. Other people do influence us. But under God’s sovereign plan, their impact is never beyond either the range of his will for our lives or, most importantly for this discussion, our ability to live and respond in godly, wise ways. That is the conclusion James asserts, when he says

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all...But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea...he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8).

The nature of that wisdom is clear a little later in James 3, when he says there are two kinds—one that is “demonic” and one that is from God.

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts...this is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic...But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (James 3:14-17).

Character exhibits wisdom of one brand or the other. Do you see where the heart enters this discussion about responses to others’ treatment of us?

B. Nature (Genetics): From 1995-2005, Dr. Powlison says *nature* gained new popularity. Genetic predispositions and drives within us explain everything: homosexuality, obesity, depression, anxiety, hot-headedness, pedophilia, alcoholism, even being chronically late. It was what you inherited that made you who you are. E.g. you can’t help yourself and need to “be who you are.”

1. It is probably true that there are genetic factors that *influence* every thing about us and our desires. But that is different from saying these factors “*make us choose*” one direction or another.

* My wanting to eat sweets, see the glass as always half empty or half full, wanting to have sex with children or with someone of my gender or the opposite sex, does not give me warrant to give in to my “wants.” These aren’t needs. No one will die from not having sex or not eating another bowl of chocolate ice cream or the rest of the Oreos. There may be discomfort, even pain, in self-denial, but that will always be the price of love to God and to neighbor. (Love always involves saying no to some things and yes to others - regardless of how we feel.)

2. This is why the Bible’s lists of sinful practices contrast with many things that our culture says are programmed into us and are therefore excusable and not wrong. Homosexuality, adultery, lying, drunkenness, out-of-control anger, etc. are in categories of sinfulness, not sickness. Genetics may play a role in enhancing my particular temptations in given areas, but they don’t “make me” chose them. God holds people accountable for their choices.

3. This accountability and identification of these destructive behaviors as sinful behavior also have inherent hope of deliverance built into them.

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice

homosexuality, nor thieves, nor greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. **But** you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11).

These people *were* in these categories. Now, notice the “**But**” highlighted in the quotation above. They were slaves to their sins. But now they have been freed by the Savior. Genetics may have had a role in attracting any of these folks toward their particular sinful patterns. But Christ is a greater deliverer. In Christ, “...the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Rom 6:22).

C. The World’s Common Solution: Change Your Thinking. In most of the nature or nurture influences you face, many theorists believe right thinking will free you. This is called Cognitive Therapy (self-talk). (Aaron Beck, at the University of Pennsylvania, has been prominent in this movement.) Self-talk is a dominant force in understanding why we behave as we do. Tell yourself the right stuff and you’ll change your life.

1. Dr. Laura, Dr. Phil and other popular therapists affirm that change is possible if you change your thinking and then your doing on the basis of that. You can do it without reference to God or your “heart” as the Bible presents it. Simply changing your thinking and behaving will make the differences you want to see in your life. “You can take charge of your life.” “You are your own person. Don’t be pushed around or manipulated by anyone.”

2. The “saviors” of these systems fit their godless models: if your body is messed up, fix your body; if your family messed you up, get re-parented. In other words change the nurture factors of influence in your life. If it’s a matter of taking charge, then make better choices and think better thoughts.

3. In Nature/Nurture all responsibility for what’s wrong with you lies outside of your control, yet all resources for fixing what’s wrong lie within you. This is secularism, in its most common form, trying to live life as though God is irrelevant.

D. God’s Solution:

1. These theories of change have elements that make sense. We all live in God’s world and Christians work with the same data unbelievers have access to. Therefore, it should not surprise us that there will be features that sound like they fit with a realistic view of the way the world works—one that is similar in some ways to a

biblical paradigm or world view. For certain, God did create us with the ability to change much in our lives by changing our thinking and by making different choices. The book of Proverbs heralds invitations to turn to wisdom in the “markets” and from the “highest places of the town,” the centers of social activity (Prov 1:20; 9:3).

2. But there is another messenger: the “Liar” and the “Father of Lies” (John 8:44). He is the “prince of the power of the air” and influences the “course of this world” (Eph 2:2). The culture redirects our attention from the Bible’s diagnosis of a bad heart with bad loves and idolatries, to more psychologically defined “needs.” Our troubles come from the wants, desires, loves, feelings, motives, and cravings caused by our unmet “needs.” These needs are largely fixed and unchangeable. We can’t really keep ourselves from wanting what we want because we have needs that must be met. We need to be loved, respected, treated fairly, appreciated, valued, and provided for, and to be free from suffering, deprivation, and mistreatment. None of these are necessarily bad desires. The wisdom of Proverbs affirms these desires. But in the strictest, and most realistic sense, they are not needs. They are desires. People have lived and thrived without many of these desires being satisfied in this life. In the extreme, even martyrs have thrived with the most profound denial of these desires (Heb 11:35-38) and received God’s commendation and reward (Rev 6:9-11).

3. Counseling, with a worldview that confuses needs and desires, directs people to use their own resources, especially the power of thinking differently and making different choices, to meet their “needs” on their own. This is what Satan wanted Adam and Eve to do in Genesis 3. He promised they would be “like God.” Is there some truth here in this approach? Of course. People can think and make choices that affect their lives. But the “beginning of wisdom” is missing: “the fear of the LORD.” And the “way that seems right,” yet without God’s wisdom, will always yield one level or another of “death” (Prov 14:12). Our inside heart loves are not considered in the world’s approach. Thinking Christ’s thoughts about him and ourselves are clearly not important in the world’s solution.

4. The heart relationship and reference to God are left out in our world’s efforts to bring about change. The thought is that *life can be lived without reference to God*. Life can be lived effectively by looking inward to my thinking, feeling, and choosing about the things and people in the world. I need not look outward to God and inward to what I’m doing with Him.

5. God has designed life to be covenantal. This means God created life so that every aspect of it is to be lived in relation to Him. As a matter of fact, all that we do has reference to God, whether we are conscious of it or not. We either include Him or ignore Him in all our living acts and relationships. But every act and relationship moves us to either obey, disobey or ignore (a form of disobedience) His decree to have no other gods before Him. This world's natural desire is that "We do not want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14); and "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us" (Ps 2:3).

a. "Unbelieving thought must take things from God's world and then misuse them" (Van Til) to make sense of the world. The words, objects, and relationships we have are all of God's doing. Even our ability to think about them is from Him. But people ignore His authorship and try to create meanings and helpful decisions without any reference to Him and His design of things. This is like purchasing a complicated object that you need to assemble and deciding to assemble it and use it contrary to its intended purpose—without referring to the will of the designer.

b. The Christian view is that we listen to His voice. We are God-referential first and foremost. Everything we think, say and do has some reference to God—consciously or unconsciously. The first great commandment and the first of the 10 Commandments make this plain. He is to be first. We ought not to take our cue about how to live primarily from others. All of life was designed for us to live in God's image, in His world, and for His purpose. Genesis 1 and 2 and Revelation 21 and 22 are bookends of God's creation plan (the way things began and the way they will end) for all people. They show that living in this world and for eternity is all about living in relation to Him.

c. As covenantal beings (Gen. 1:26-28) we were created to love someone and to commit ourselves to someone – Him first of all and then others. He has placed us in the real world where the living Christ steps in. God is involved at every turn. (Note the seven-sealed scroll, the panorama of history under the control of the Lamb in Revelation 5:1-8). In Revelation, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Father, Son, and Spirit counterfeits) exist throughout the panorama of history to turn people away from allegiance to the true God and His purpose.

6. We need to be concerned with all parts of a person's world to see what his first loves are. We explore *nature* matters (e.g. hormonal and disease issues) and *nurture* matters (e.g. "What was growing up in their home like?"). But it's their first loves in their world to which we want to eventually draw their attention. We then work to direct their affections to Christ and to adopt His gaze, view, mind, and wisdom about how to live in the world they actually have. Note: "the fear of the LORD" is the "beginning" or most important component of knowledge (Prov 1:7), and the first in the order of things, or starting place, for wise choices (Prov 9:10).

A seventh truth about the heart:

7. We can only know the heart in a limited sense. There is mystery about one's motives and will that we must acknowledge. Our hearts are even unknowable to ourselves, in the fullest sense (Jer 17:9).

a. We can describe it and see what it's doing, but we cannot really fully explain it. The "why" is often a mystery. Sin is insane, ultimately. It's crazy! It's self-destructive and hurtful to everything we care about. Yet we run after it. (Consider the demons who know God is the final authority and know that judgment is coming and tremble for it, but won't turn to Him and submit to Him (James 2:19).

b. Our own life experiences confirm this mystery. There is mystery in all willful sin. We know something is wrong, know that it will have hurtful consequences, block our minds from thinking about the wrong, and know that God sees everything we do. Yet we forge ahead with the wrong. And then we suffer from the choice, which we knew would happen from the beginning. Insane!! God created life, preserves it, redeems it in Christ, and gives us wisdom to live it. Yet we insist on, and persist, at many points, in ignoring the Author and His wise counsel. Consider the ridiculous, insane behavior described in Isa 44:15. Isaiah is speaking of a man who carved an idol out of a piece of wood left over from the wood he used to cook his food. He can't bring himself to admit that the thing he carved is merely a block of wood. Of the idol he carved, Isaiah says, "...a deluded heart has led him astray...he cannot...say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'" (Isa 44:20).

8. Biblical factors help us keep the world's wisdom accurately.

God does give unbelievers the ability to think. There are important insights that we may gain from unbelievers who care to help others. But at the same time, there are serious limitations to the unbeliever's understandings.

Several concepts will help us to think accurately about the similarities and differences about the world's and God's concepts about troubles and change:

a. In the world's wisdom, we understand that non-Christian theories of change have elements that often do make sense.

We all live in God's world and Christians work with the same data unbelievers have access to.

Therefore, it should not surprise us that there will be features in their practices and theories that sound like they fit with the way life actually seems to work—features that are similar in some ways to a biblical paradigm or world view.

For example, God did create us with the ability to change much in our lives by changing our thinking and by making different choices as Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura advise.

The book of Proverbs invites young adults to turn to thinking too. But more than thinking on our own. It's called wisdom, or godly decision-making. Thinking that is rooted in an attitude of faith and trust in God is called "the fear of the Lord."

Again, keep Proverbs 14:12 in mind, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." Jesus also said, "He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31).

There is an earthly perspective and there is a heavenly one. It shouldn't surprise us that some of what unbelievers say makes sense. They can think. That's God's gift to them, whether they recognize Him or not.

b. God's wisdom differentiates between needs and desires.

Counseling, with a worldview that confuses needs and desires, directs people to use their own resources, especially the power to either think differently or find ways to change bad feelings to good feelings.

In these ways, the world advises, people can make different choices more easily, live more fully, and meet their "needs" on their own.

This is what Satan wanted Adam and Eve to do in Genesis 3. He promised they would be "like God."

It is true, of course, that our choices can affect our lives. People can think and make choices that affect their lives. But if the "beginning of wisdom" is missing, "the fear of the LORD," one commonly does what "seems right" to him—in his own eyes. The "way that seems right," to a person, without

God's wisdom, will always yield one level or another of "death" (Prov 14:12).

Heart loves are not considered in the world's approach to causes of problems. Neither is thinking Christ's thoughts about Him and ourselves important in the world's solutions.

c. The heart relationship and reference to God are left out in our effort to bring about change.

The thought is that life can be lived without reference to God. This is called secularism. Life can be lived effectively by looking inward to my thinking, feeling, and choosing about the things and people in the world. I need not look outward to God, but if I do, I certainly don't have to look inward to what I'm doing with Him. He's largely irrelevant.

d. God's wisdom is relational, not just intellectual and emotional.

This is related to what I've said about secularism. Theologians talk about life being covenantal. This means God created life so that every aspect of it is lived in relation to Him.

All that we do has reference to God, whether we are conscious of it or not. We either include Him or ignore Him in all our living acts and relationships. But every act and relationship moves us either to obey, disobey or ignore (a form of disobedience) His decree to have no other gods before Him.

e. In God's wisdom about change, Christians listen to His voice.

All of life was designed for us to live in God's image, in His world, and for His purpose.

f. God's wisdom does direct us to pay attention to what is happening in the overall scope of someone's life. (See item #6 of God's Solution, above.)

Conclusion: Counsel that moves in the direction of the heart positions a believer to live out his identity as a believer and see change that God wants in his life.

1. Learn to listen for understanding of heart loves, desires, passions, and commitments. (Prov 10:14; 12:23; 13:3; 15:14, 28; 18:2; James 1:19). The heart must come into view unless we want to create Pharisees—people who do the right things but without devoted hearts. "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt 15:8). Jesus is quoting Isaiah in this verse. Heart and whole life commitment were not just New Testament concepts. God has always wanted that kind of love from His people.

2. Focus on the relationship to Christ. In our counsel to ourselves and others it is not enough to get people to simply do right things. We do not want to simply staple good apples onto a tree so that we can call it an apple tree (a Paul Tripp metaphor). Fruit grows out of a relationship to Christ in our lives, not simply obeying a list of morally good things. "...faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Root all behavioral changes to Christ-centered redemptive, heart motives. The heart affects attitudes, motives, feelings, thoughts and interpretations, decisions, willingness, actions, etc. That's how 1 Corinthians 10:31 can comprehensively say, "...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," even eating and drinking. Motivation, intention, thoughtfulness, etc., emerge from the heart which is intimately related to God in this verse.

II. The Flesh

A. The "flesh" (the New Testament description of how the heart, our motivation center, is naturally bent—what we do)

1. What is inside comes outside.

a. The Old Testament describes the wrong motives of the heart as a form of "idolatry." The New Testament describes our actions or "works" from our bad hearts as the "*lusts (desires) of the flesh.*"

b. Remember the water bottle illustration: "Why is there water on the floor?" Answer: "It's what's inside the bottle that ends up outside the bottle when struck." The striking has something to do with the wet floor, but the kind of wetness that is on the floor is because of what was in the bottle to begin with. What comes out of us, in reaction to the "heat" that affects us, comes from what is within our hearts in the first place. Not from the heat that strikes us.

c. To carry the illustration a little further, the diseased bottle (our heart) will affect the water that spills out onto the floor (the flesh); it will be naturally contaminated. Remember, what comes out of us, in reaction to the "heat," comes from what is within our hearts in the first place. Not primarily from the heat that strikes us.

2. God's will is for the inside and outside.

The first great commandment is about who or what masters us—either God or something else has captured our affections. The second great commandment is about how we relate to others because of the first commandment.

3. Diagnostic labels mask "desires of the flesh" on the inside—the flesh is commonly downgraded to a "disease" or "sickness" or "mental illness."

a. God's diagnosis of what we often refer to as "sickness" is the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21. Compare 2 Tim 3:1-5 and 15, 16 to see how thoroughly God's Word addresses the human condition. These concerns of Paul

for Timothy's ministry are not the "deeper" emotional or psychological problems to be left for professional counselors alone to address. They are the conditions among people which the Word of God equips Pastor Timothy to address (verses 15 and 16).

b. Culture's diagnosis is without reference to the heart, the flesh, or God. This is where care must be used regarding diagnostic labels such as anorexia, bulimia, OCD, low self-esteem, co-dependency, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and other *DSM-IV* or *DSM-V* labels (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Volume 4 and Volume 5).

i. These labels may *describe behaviors*, but labels like these *mask the choices* people make and *present themselves as an explanation* or reason for a person's choices. (The DSM volumes caution against using the labels for anything but descriptions. Authors realize they aren't explanations of causes.)

ii. But professional helpers who use the labels may say that clients "have" or "suffer from" bulimia or "suffer from" depression. This gives the impression of **an overall "condition" and masks the active verbs of trust, crave, demand, want—what is actually going on in a person's heart.** Labels ignore the trust, beliefs, wants, cravings, and the voices in one's life and heart that he or she is committed to listening to.

- **For example, generally speaking, depressed and bulimic people have certain beliefs** about their lives, which may be true or false, certain or uncertain. But their **"condition" is often the result of some of their beliefs and commitment to those beliefs.**
- It is true that there may also be some things in one's physical, biochemical makeup that make their temptations to react to hard things in life even more difficult.
- But much of what is going on in their lives emerges from wrong beliefs about themselves, their situation, others, and God. For example, one may be depressed for part of a day, and enthusiastic when her grandchildren visit or when his favorite team is playing and winning. One may be depressed at work or at home, during the work week, but not on the weekend. His "condition" isn't always in control—because it's usually not a condition. It is usually an outgrowth of trusts, beliefs, wants, cravings and voices to which he is listening at longer or shorter times during the day.
- He needs to listen to a different voice! God's. How does God describe who he is in the situation? And who he is in his relationship to God, through Christ, while in the situation?

iii. Another way to say this is that *labels* usually only describe a slice of one's life and choices at select times. They *masquerade as an explanation* and invite one to view his whole life as a *condition* rather than as a *person making harmful choices* at specific times. (This is not to minimize the power of these temptations, but only to emphasize that **these responses are not the only ones he or she is usually making throughout the day.**)

4. The flesh has to do with what the New Testament calls "Lusts".

"Epithumia" is the most common New Testament word for "lusts"—your desires. People want specific things. Most people today relate the word lusts to sex, greed, power, and control. But it is broader than that in the NT.

The concept of "lusts" also occurs in the Old Testament (Gen 3:6; Ex 20:17; Job 31:9-12; Ps 81:12; Prov 6:24,25). But idolatry tends to be the most common term or expression for them in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the concept of lusts and desires is cited by Jesus (Matt 5:28; Mark 4:19; John 8:44); Paul (1 Cor 9:27; 10:6; Eph 4:22); James (James 1:14,15; 4:1-3); Peter (1 Peter 2:11; 4:3; 2 Peter 2:18; 3:3); John (1 John 2:16,17); and Jude (16,18). These verbs associated with "desires" are active—not something done to someone, but something done by him.

a. Lusts/desires of the heart are specifically focused on some thing or person or desire; things that are immediately concrete (e.g. that woman's body, that dress, that piece of cake, that car, the approval of that person, etc.).

In Genesis 3, for example, "... when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took..." (Gen 3:6). Both delight and desire are from the same Hebrew word meaning longing—sometimes intense longing or desire for something.

b. Lusts often follow expectations (heart desires and hopes). If I have this girl (marriage, date, computer, role in the play, car, house, position on the team, GPA, etc.) my life will be...(happy, fulfilled, safe, secure, meaningful, etc.).

If one's counseling only focuses on the wrongful sexual lust one has, and misses the heart desires and loves and cravings, counsel will miss the engine that drives the lusts.

c. Lusts go wrong when desires become demands. I can want good things too much. What do you want? How badly do you want it?

Desires don't have to be wrong until they turn into demands. 1 Timothy 3:1 speaks of one "desiring" (epithumia is the root word) the work of the elder in the church. This is a good thing in its context! Of course someone can want that too much too. That may have been Diotrephes' sin (3 John 9).

d. “Lusts of the flesh” is the most common way of expressing wants-out-of-line in the New Testament. It’s the term that captures best what goes wrong with us.

i. Consider the “stuck in traffic” example that we used as an illustration in our presentation of *The Three Trees*. There is nothing wrong with wanting to get where you are going on time. But demanding that you get there on your timetable has moved you to the realm of the lust for control of your schedule, control of the way the world is working, belief that you are more important than others that cause the delay, even the accusation that God doesn’t know how to run the world or your life. None of the things are necessarily evil in and of themselves. It’s wanting them *too much* that is the issue.

ii. James notes that “...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14). Desire may be turned from when it occurs. Our problem comes when we don’t turn. When we entertain it and are “lured and enticed” by it. For example, a man’s first glance at a woman may attract him to thinking about her as a sexual object, but he can turn away or “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor 6:18) as Paul urged. Or, he can entertain one thought after another with her in mind and commit “adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28) as Jesus noted. It’s not the first look, but the “one who looks at a woman with lustful intent...” whose heart exhibited the lusts or desires of the flesh. This can be applied to money, fashion, attractiveness, achievements, recognition, and any of hundreds of objects and conditions. Martin Luther is noted as saying, “You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.”

e. “Idols” is the common term for these heart desires in the Old Testament (for example Isa 44:18-20) and some places in the New Testament (1 John 5:21).

5. All desires are not bad, but good ones may morph into bad ones, quickly and easily—in any context.

a. Good desires for good health, enough money, food, friendship, spouse, children, accomplishments, etc.

i. For example: Husband and wife who wanted their daughter to be a missionary, but in her freshman year at Bible College she became engaged to a guy who wanted to be an auto mechanic in PA. The parents were angry, depressed, resentful to God, each other, and their daughter.

ii. Another example: An older couple wanted a good relationship with their grandkids and repeatedly bought lots of gifts for them very often, contrary to the parents’ wishes—alienating the parents. They wanted their grandkids’ acceptance so badly that they didn’t mind violating the children’s parents’ will.

b. "The evil in our desires lies not in what we want (the object, content of our desire), but that we want it too much" (John Calvin). When we make the gifts the object of our desire rather than the giver we become madmen!

6. You can tell when desires go astray by the fruit they bear.

a. Fruit reveals the heart. If the fruit is bad, the desire has gone bad.

Dr. Ed Welch illustrates this by a "repentance group" formed by young men in his church. Each week the group met, they repented of their weak repentance the week before. If endless introspection and confession is the fruit of your desire to humble yourself before God, you may be struggling with self-righteousness/self-attainment. One of the members of the group went from a joyful man to one who seemed down and joyless. With some discussion with his friend, he found that his eyes were not on Christ and His sufficient sacrifice. Instead, his focus was on his own ability to live up to some standard of confession and repentance that was acceptable to God. It never was good enough. Hence: discouragement, anxiousness, depression.

The fruit was bad fruit because the desire the heart had latched onto too tightly was a good goal of humility before God.

7. The Bible uses vivid terms for the "lust of the flesh" (epithumia):

a. Terms are: "*Evil desire*" (Col 3:5) and "*polluted*" or "*defiling passion*" (2 Peter 2:10). (For example: "I want my way and you won't give it to me." "I want a break, but my kid wants one more story...a drink." A five year old: "I don't want my friend to think I'm stupid...." or "...to not like me.")

b. "*Deceitful desires*" (Eph 4:22): the reason we don't see this as a problem: Such lusts present themselves as "plausible" and natural desires.

i. Mormons at the door don't say, "Do you want to go to Hell?" They ask, "Do you want a better family?"

"I need to earn more for my kids' education," may mask the desire to be away from home more, the desire for bigger and better things, etc.

ii. The logic of natural affection becomes lust and seduces and destroys us. For example: the things that get people into deep jams are connected with good things they want to have. These seduce them and run wild. The desire for a remodeled kitchen, new TV, or car may trump tithing/giving support to missions/giving to the poor.

iii. The lust (idol) for *control* may mask as concern for righteousness in a marriage partner. For example: A woman who had an affair with a student she and her husband housed and whom she wanted to "help":

* She came as her own accuser and was filled with remorse. She asked her husband's forgiveness and entered into restoration and counseling. They rebuilt their relationship.

* Six months later, the husband kept getting angry at her. The wife felt she was under surveillance and growing suspicion.

* Husband said, "I can forgive her for the past, but it can't happen again." (Our desires run amok. He wants a wonderful thing, faithfulness in his spouse, but he is controlled by that desire. He is trying to guarantee that it will never happen again. So he becomes hyper-vigilant, irritable, etc.)

* Husband passionately says, "What is wrong with wanting my wife to be faithful?" (Nothing! *But if you want it too much you are trying to control the world. You become the monster and you are destroying the very relationship you are trying to preserve.*)

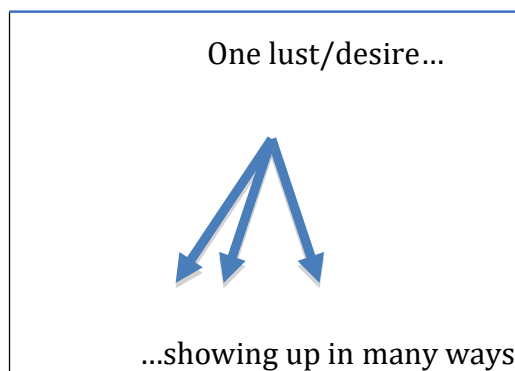
c. Other passages describing these desires: Ephesians 2:3; 2 Timothy 2:22; Titus 3:3.

8. Lusts and Thorny Responses may be in multiples. Listen for the heart's desire(s), called "deep waters" in Proverbs 18:4 and 20:5. In other words, the meaning isn't always on the surface.

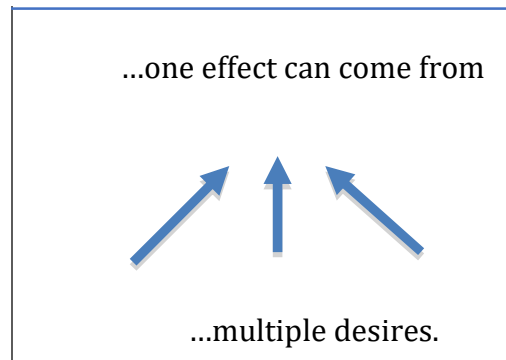
a. Many thorns can emerge from one dominating lust:

For example: One man's love of money [i.e. his lust for it] may spawn many other sins [thorny reactions]. These could include grumbling, worry, haughty superior attitudes, murder, inferiority, gambling and sexual sin.

If your counseling focus is only to deal with the sexual immorality or grumbling, you would miss the heart lusts leading to yielding to these other sins.



b. Similarly, many different lusts can produce the same thorny responses. (For example: erotic desires, affirmation and attention, money, escape, warped caring, getting even, twisted submission, and hunger for power can generate the thorn of sexual immorality.)



i. Examples: A single mom came very close to fornication with her landlord when he offered to waive her rent for sex. Her deacons were highly significant in providing help to her.

ii. Another Christian woman in her 20s was being seduced by her boss when he had her stay late. She managed to escape the situation, but she became very fearful of authority figures. Pastoral ministry to her won't only be concerned about the sexual matters, but her thoughts about authority.

iii. A girl wanted affirmation and was willing to give guys whatever they wanted to get it. It wasn't the sexual interest that motivated her, but her desire for affirmation. "Sleeping your way to the top."

iv. Revenge can also be a motive for immorality. A husband committed adultery with his wife's best friend, so she did the same with his best friend.

All these different desires manifested the same thorny response of sexual immorality.

The suicide motifs identified earlier are similar. The same thorny result may spring from many different motives, desires—lusts.

c. Thorny responses are not like separate items in someone's junk drawer. They are connected to root heart wants, cravings, and desires. In counseling we want people to repent not only about separate thorny responses (angry words, pornography, gossip, etc.), but about underlying lusts that generate these. These responses are the thorns that grow from the bad tree or heart at odds with God's will and gospel.

9. There are three core desires/lusts/pleasures: *The core, essential nature, of sinfulness is traceable to “desires.”* (This contrasts with the world’s thought that the cause of our problems is outside of us or genetically inside of us but outside of our control.)

a. There is an ancient debate about what the basic nature of sinfulness consists of. At its deepest root, what does sin spring from? Three items vie for that dishonor: *Pride* (I exalt myself), *Fear of Man* (I exalt others), *Unbelief* (I erase God). *All of these generate desires* (lusts-epithumia), which in turn produce thorns.

b. These “lust of the flesh” categories let you get specific because *desires have an object*. It’s not critical to determine which is the true “core” cause of all sinful reactions and decisions. *Rather, we can keep pride, the fear of man or unbelief, or a combination of them, in mind as we talk to a brother or sister because **one or a combination of these heart generated desires is going to be there.***

10. People can have conflicting motives/desires.

a. For example: a man won’t shoplift because to be caught would be shameful, but he might cheat on income tax because he thinks he can get away with it.

b. That is another reason why it is important to explore heart motives and not just address the thorny behavior (cheating on income tax). There may be other covetous things going on (lust for money, prestige, etc.)

11. Similar desires can look different at different ages. 2 Tim 2:22 urges Timothy to flee youthful passions. Some things attract us more at one age or stage than at others.

a. A teen isn’t tempted by a desire for a big house.

b. A newlywed isn’t controlled by a “bucket list.”

c. A twenty-something isn’t controlled by a fear of heart disease, but may have an idol of body image.

d. A 70 year-old may not be controlled by the desire to have more children but may have an idol of being thought well of by those she has.

III. Consider the “Why” question⁵ to explain behavior—but not as the world imagines.

A. The whole notion of “lust” (fueled by pride, the fear of man, and/or unbelief) answers the “why” question. (For example: “Why do you fight?” (James 4:1-2). The world says it’s your wife’s fault. God says, it’s what’s inside of you

⁵ More about using the “why” question is addressed in lesson four.

coming out. You want something badly and are not getting it! The world thinks desires are “needs” that must be met. They believe they are instincts that are hardwired inside of us.

B. Numbers 11-21 illustrates that our hearts are “idol factories” (Calvin). The people in the wilderness were endlessly wanting and craving more and more and bore thorns in keeping with their lusts. They grumbled and craved at least 10 different times displaying their dissatisfaction with God and His deliverance of them from Egypt.

C. Only believers see that human desire always has something to do with God. The psychologists understand everything without reference to God. For example: Interpersonal problems are something-to-do-with-God problems. I am to love you, not because of what I get from you or how you make me feel, but because of my relationship to the God who loves me unconditionally and tells me to love you if I love Him. My love reflects my consciousness of my relationship to God.

D. The concept of “lusts of the flesh” sees people chiefly as worshippers—covenant breakers, not empty “need” tanks.

1. None of us go through “neutral” acts of living—“secularly.” We either relate God to everything we do (“whether you eat or drink...” 1 Cor 10:31) or we ignore God, living as though He were irrelevant or non-existent.

2 People commonly live “under the sun,” (a phrase used 28 times in Ecclesiastes to describe living without a conscious reference to God). That absent God-consciousness, though, is still living with a kind of thinking about God. It’s saying, “God, you are irrelevant.” Something else has captured the person living like this. His allegiance or worship is directed to that something else. That is the flesh’s way to express itself out of a heart alienated from God.

Conclusion

In this lesson we've focused on the Bible's teaching about the heart and the flesh. We've seen that while they are not the key to change, Christ is. They are the contact point for any of us to see change happen.

In our next lesson we begin to examine common forms of heart and the Gospel's answer that will make up the rest of this course and show what godly change looks like.

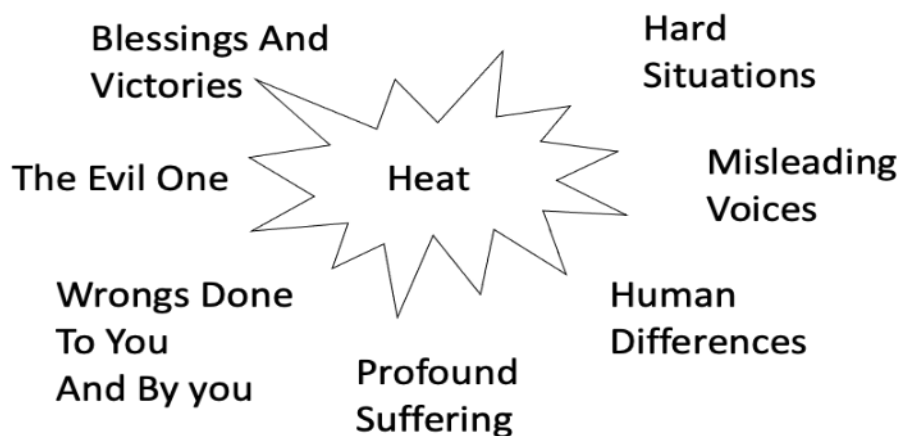
Questions for Reflection

1. How will the instructions in Proverbs 9:10 and 14:12 affect the way a helper views his own and his friend’s heart? How will this understanding affect his conversation with the friend he wants to help?
2. How does the unbeliever’s counsel to someone treat the heart? Why?

3. How are the heart and the flesh related? How will this relationship show up in non-Christian counseling and Christian counseling?
4. The 'lust of the flesh' categories (pride, fear of man, unbelief) let you get specific when listening to a counselee or friend. How?
5. If I ask "why?" in my counseling, what am I looking for? What am I not looking for?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 3
Staying Focused on the Heart in Difficult and Hard Situations



Introduction: In this lesson we begin to consider situations that invite us or tempt us to react in fear, anger, depression, worry, or efforts to escape in some way. These situations make up the “heat” in our *The Three Trees* model of how change happens. Situations we encounter reveal what is in our heart. They don’t create what is in our heart, as we saw in the last lesson. They also give us the opportunity to apply the Good Shepherd’s antidote, the Gospel, in its fullest sense, to the common temptations we face in these situations. The power of the Gospel allows us to display ourselves as His people with different reactions to hard situations similar to what unbelievers also face. In this way we “...proclaim the excellencies of him who called you [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). His glory is our joy!

Hardships do not necessarily come to us because of our personal sinfulness or sinful choices. They can. But as we’ll see below, God also uses hardships for good reasons. The disciples made the mistake of connecting a blind man’s condition with his or his parents’ sins.

“Rabbi,” they asked, “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:2,3)

There are four things we’ll survey in this lesson about situations that are important for us to keep in mind to be helpful to brothers and sisters:

I. Situations are significant.

A. Situations are significant, but limited in their effects. We must not ignore the situations that people are in. They invite a response. Life is not lived in a vacuum. Our situations are varied and all “speak” to us with “voices” to attract our attention and allegiance. We’ll give attention to those voices in the next lesson. In this lesson, though, we will focus on truths about hard situations that we all face.

The events with which life confronts us are important, but the testimony of Scripture is clear: it’s the heart that determines how we react, *not the situations we face*. **Situations don’t cause our responses. They invite them.** If we are going to help friends with their reactions in their troublesome times, we must work to understand what they are facing. The heart, however, eventually becomes our focus.

1. “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov 4:23).
2. “And he said, ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person’ ” (Mark 7:20-23).
3. This is why the first great commandment is to “Love the Lord your God with all *your heart...*” The inside determines the outside—regardless of how strongly the outside makes certain choices appealing, advantageous, painful or threatening to us. The second great commandment, “to love your neighbor as yourself,” flows out of this first one—especially in hard situations. It’s easy to love someone when they are loveable and life is going well.

II. Situations of hardship are always purposeful in the life of a believer.

A. The Bible is realistic about life and hardships. The Bible addresses people in real life situations—those of hardships and blessings or, as is often the case, a mixture of the two.

1. For example, God had a purpose for the Israelites’ 40 years in the wilderness. There, God brought challenges to their faith to test and grow their trust in Him. These settings were to help them know what was in their own hearts and see God’s provision for them as they trusted in Him and not in themselves.

“And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not” (Deut 8:2).

These challenges were for God to use to refine their motivation. He was saying, “You are on the verge of entering the land of promise. Will you forget me?”

Proverbs 17:3 says, “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests (refines) hearts.” 40 years in the wilderness had a point! God is trustworthy and is always up to something purposeful and good for His people. Circumstances don’t create what is in our hearts but they do reveal what is there. Furthermore, they are tools in our Redeemer’s hands to refine us and make us fit for His mission, to glorify Him, in this broken world.

2. Similarly, as the nation began to take possession of the land of promise, Judges 2:21-3:4 affirms that God left some of the pagan nations as remnants “...in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.” The challenges, defeats, and hardships that we face are not purposeless, in God’s providence and love for His people. He is up to something.

B. Hardships and blessings reveal what is in our hearts. God is up to something good for His people.

1. The difficult events in our lives reveal Jesus Christ as the complete Savior, Redeemer, Friend—no self-help book will say that. The typical secular (without-God-in-the-picture) interpretation is that tough situations are painful and pointless and ought to be avoided or escaped from ASAP. Of course people who make “lemonade out of lemons” are usually respected, but the situations they’ve been in were never considered purposeful from the outset. Paul, and the New Testament in general, have a different view. “Indeed, 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” (2 Cor 1:9).

2. The pleasant events reveal our heart affections and motives too. “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts” (Prov 17:3). What we praise or our responses to praise we receive, reveal what we love.

C. Christ loves His people and will produce the opposite of all the situational troubles and temptations that come from the Evil One or his subjects. This reversal happens often only partly in this life. But it is certain to occur fully in the age to come. Now, the Evil One affects “...the course of this world...” (Eph 2:2). He is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...” (Eph. 2:2). Some of the ways God works opposite of Satan’s intentions in this life are:

1. In hardships—He wipes away all tears (Rev 7:17).

2. With voices of misleading counselee—He speaks truth and is Truth (John 8:32; 17:17).

3. In our differences—We use them as excuses to bolster our pride. He created and uses them to accomplish His multi-faceted will (Eph 2:10) in the church and in the world.

4. When we are sinned against—His life was one of being sinned against, and for us He turns even the sins of others who are against us for our good, just as He did the hands that crucified the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:22-24).

5. In our suffering—He suffered in incalculable ways on our behalf, in complete innocence, and produces something not “...worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18; see also James 1:2,3).

6. With temptation to misuse God’s blessing—The world does this all the time. God’s people enjoy His goodness to His glory and with thankfulness. He is our ultimate gift. Even “...to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

D. God’s counsel applies to every life situation. It is realistic and not culture bound. Only the gospel is cross-cultural in the fullest sense. It’s not limited by generational, ethnic, health, intelligence, gender, economic, genetic or any other category factors that differentiate people. All the Epistles, the Psalms, the hundreds of Proverbs and messages of the prophets and of Jesus Himself, are God’s Word in real life contexts. His revelation is not detached theory or ideals. It is not culture-bound by philosophical or psychological models. It is not isolated from the troubles of broken people living in a broken world.

1. Non-Christian theories of suffering and hardship are generally **detached** in three ways.

a. They do not address the deepest features of relationships. Does the counsel of Dr. Laura or Dr. Phil or other popular “secular” advisors nurture love to enemies, neighbors, or spouses who misuse you, curse you, or hate you? Faith working through love can! (Gal 5:6).

b. They do not account for suffering that doesn’t stop. 1 Peter 2:21-24 shows Jesus as the model displaying love for His very abusers—not just one time. But repeatedly. Peter presents the Lord as the model for all His people in suffering circumstances. Peter’s version of Christianity did not pretend evil settings don’t occur. Similarly, he didn’t minimize the believer’s responses in those situations. Contemporary psychotherapies are self-centered. They are neither Christ-centered nor love-to-neighbor centered—especially in suffering situations.

c. Secularists deny the relevance of God for every aspect of life. The world’s “helping strategies” are detached because their **starting premise** is that God, the creator and sustainer of all life, as we view Him, is not relevant for living. The world says your resources for living are in yourself—or wherever you want to look, religiously, socially, philosophically. *Wherever YOU want to look for help.* And the world says Christians are insane?!

Notice David’s alarm at the counsel he receives when in trouble: “In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, ‘Flee like a bird to your mountain?’

...If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:1,3). The world's theories are detached from the "foundations" God has built for living—knowledge of Himself (Prov 1:7; 9:10). The world counsels us to "flee," to their "mountain" (theory of safety and health) or to be in despair if our "foundations (often personality qualities they think we should depend on, as they imagine them) are destroyed."

d. High school guidance counseling is an example of culture-bound theory. Most models of helping young people to think about college and career plans are interest focused. Find out what you are interested in and move in that direction. Only the modern western world has the luxury of making choices according to their interests. The economic, political or social structures in various world cultures restrict two-thirds or three-quarters of the world's population from any but a few choices. Similarly, theories of self-esteem, being assertive, or gender related choices only "work" in privileged cultures. God's Word and wisdom is for "...Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free..." (Col 3:11).

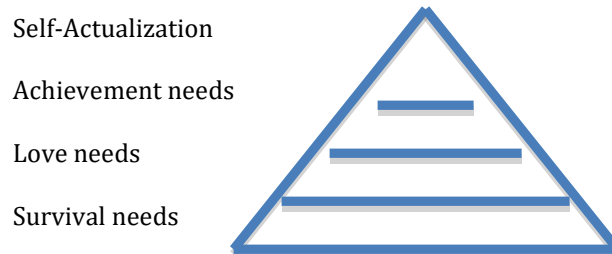
2. God's resource, His Word, is sufficient in every culture for every true "need" (see John 17:17; 2 Tim 3:1-5 and verses 16,17; 2 Peter 1:3).

III. Maslow--A popular misdiagnosis of what we "need" in difficult situations.

A. A misdiagnosis of what we "need"

1. Maslow's theory makes sense. It's logical—as long as the heart is left out of the interpretation of why people do what they do. Most thoughtful views of behavior make some amount of sense. Unbelievers and believers live in the same world and work with the same data to give interpretations to life matters. But they begin from two vastly different starting points and so arrive at vastly different conclusions. The Christian's concern with the unbelieving world's opinions is *not* mainly with their *descriptions*. It is with their *explanations* for causes, and their *solutions*. Their "beginning" point is wrong. Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 declare that the "fear of the LORD," a heart matter, is the beginning point for wisdom and knowledge about life and living. Unbelievers' explanations always miss the heart. And their solutions never include Christ. But descriptions are another matter. Unbelievers may be very keen observers. Typically, though, they leap from their descriptions to attempts at explanations or solutions to problems they observe—always off the mark.

2. Maslow's concepts are a good example of this limited perspective when not thinking biblically. His idea is that basic needs must be met before higher level needs can be met. Sounds logical. The highest level of maturity or growth, becoming a "fully functioning," or "self-actualized" person, can be attained only if the lower level survival, love, and achievement "needs" are met.



a. *Finding fault with Maslow's model is not to minimize the heartaches and trauma of deep suffering* when survival, love and achievement desires go unmet. Suffering in such circumstances can be very real. It is not to be minimized or ignored because it's not the *real need* someone has, as the Bible describes need. Some hard things are little (like being stuck in traffic or algae in a pond or pool you want to swim in). Some are severe, such as bereavement over losses by death, divorce, abandonment, being single (and never married or divorced), being married, having no children or having children, being fired unjustly, or being betrayed by a friend.

b. Maslow puts forth a common sense idea of the human condition. If our basic "needs" are not met, we won't be able to function at higher levels of maturity. We'll be stuck or focused or absorbed with trying to satisfy these desires—what he calls needs. Survival things like food and nutrition, especially for the young, are important for other levels of functioning. Life is definitely easier when these desires are satisfied. Yet in the **absolute or ultimate sense**, we don't **need** food, safety, love, achievement, aesthetics, money, survival, or relationships to fulfill what God has created us for: to keep the two great commandments—to love and enjoy Him and to love others. Maslow, like all of us, tends to transform any of the innumerable desires we have about life into 'gods.' They rule us. We call these desires our "needs." Our "needs" become our driving, self-centered focus.

c. Non-Christian thinkers see that life is hard and try to make sense of how to live in light of that. They see how people generally react to hardships. Professionals often use surveys of how people feel about matters to draw conclusions about the *causes* of their reactions. Their surveys identify what people "feel" or sense in their troublesome situations and then turn those reports into a theory of *why* people do what they do—ignoring the heart. "Children become depressed when they lose at a game, get a bad grade, are mocked or criticized. Therefore we must eliminate losing, bad grades, mockery, and criticism." Everyone gets a trophy! The pride of the human heart is entirely missed. Instead it's fanned into even higher flames with the message that "you deserve so much more than the treatment you are getting!" People behave the way they do because what they feel they need is not being met. And, of course, "we must get what we need." Right?

"I need to be loved, to be respected, to be successful, to have a sense of worth and acceptance, to be comfortable. If I don't have these *needs* met, I can be excused for

feeling or acting or treating others badly.” In other words, “It’s not my fault, my needs aren’t being met, so it’s not my fault I act as I do.”

The heart’s idolatries of “getting my way,” “being in control,” or “getting what I deserve” are uppermost in Maslow’s explanation of what makes someone a fully-functioning, mature person. This contrasts radically with the contentment with God’s purpose, control, and provision for his people (Questions 5 and 6 of *The Eight Questions* paradigm).

3. Our interpretation of causes and solutions comes from God’s Word. That’s where we’d be in conflict with Maslow. In his view, the heart is passive. It isn’t significant. For the secularist, the heart, as the Bible describes it, either does not exist or is not important. Unless other people fulfill your needs, you are operating on empty and can be excused for feeling or acting badly. The solution: change the people around you so your needs are being met. In this view our heart is not actively choosing a way to live and respond. It’s other’s actions or my thoughts about their actions that explain my choices. Jeremiah 17:9 asserts that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” My heart condition, not my feelings about situations or what others are doing or not doing, determines how I respond. I either respond with a new heart or an old one.

For example, consider the psychologist’s discouraged and angry daughter referred to earlier. She was “being damaged by the school,” in her mother’s opinion, for not letting her take honors English courses in 9th grade. The school is not meeting her needs and, therefore, is ruining her child—for life.

4. In God’s design, “What do you love?,” “What rules you?,” is more of an issue than “What do you *need*?” or “What *needs* are not being met?” Jesus uses “need” in very different ways than our culture uses it (Matt 6:31-34; Luke 21:16-18). Necessities for life are important, but not of greatest importance, in God’s economy.

a. For example: Consider the Hebrews 11:35-37 heroes of the faith of whom the “world was not worthy” (verse 38). Were their “needs” (as viewed by Maslow) being met? How or how not?

b. In light of the Hebrews 11 passage and Philippians 4:19, to whose definition of “need” must the believer submit?

c. Consider the Israelite’s “needs” in Numbers 11-21. They grumbled over and over again in these chapters on 10 separate occasions. Paul uses this as an example for the Corinthian church to avoid (1 Cor 10:1-12). It was idolatry, he says. Grumbling always pushes the real God out of the picture. “I am right and have good wants or *needs* that you are not meeting!” “God, you are messing up!” Their grumbling emerged from hearts with

* a false view of the past (Life in Egypt was good.)

* a false view of the present (Things should be different now; I should have no lacks, no deficiencies, no discomfort.)

* a false view of the future (His promise for the future is irrelevant. “God promised us a land flowing with milk and honey, but look what we have here and now.”)

B. “I don’t need this!” “I need...!”

1. In frustration and pain, some people exclaim, “I don’t need this!” Are they right in view of questions five and six in *The Eight Questions*? In your answer consider also James 1:2,3; 2 Corinthians 1:3,4; 4:17,18; 1 Peter 4:1,2, and the experience of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11:35-37.

2. Others insist, “I need _____!” (Fill in the blank.) How does this correspond with God’s Fatherly promise and provision in Luke 11:5-13 and Philippians 4:19? In light of these passages, how does our Father want us to define our “need or needs”?

IV. Prayer requests: A way to help ourselves and others focus on the heart in situations of “heat.”

A. God gives us an entrée into each other’s lives by asking, “How can I pray for you?” or “Would you pray for me?” This is a doorway for spiritual intimacy. Prayer requests are a wonderful way to get folks in the church family thinking about biblical counseling. It’s a way to get the biblical counseling priorities of the heart and the Gospel’s relevance into the spiritual bloodstream of your life, family, and church.

B. Prayer requests are statements about what I want at some level of personal depth. Commonly, however, only shallow or external requests are mentioned—not matters that touch heart level desires.

1. Shallow requests:

* We often don’t pray deeply because we aren’t awakened to our heart need.

* Our prayers are often a listing of leading lusts (gimmies or wantsies, greeds, not true needs).

* The “unnamed” or “unspoken” prayer request shields us and others from any depth of appeal to our Father for true heart level needs.

* Pious “bless” and “be with” requests are general and leave the person’s heart and applied Gospel needs unaddressed.

2. Situation-related **typical prayer requests** (these can still leave the heart unnoticed) but may still be well-intended, appropriate, and good to pray for:

- * Health and sickness (Two things a stranger to our evangelical church community may be tempted to think if they heard our prayer requests: God is especially interested in our health, and He must not be able to or care to do much about it because these matters keep coming up, over and over.)
- * Unsaved people
- * Work needs, responsibilities, pressures, deadlines
- * Major decisions
- * Travel mercies
- * Ministries
- * Money
- * Alleviation of various sufferings
- * People and ministries that are far away

NOTE: All these requests are *situation-centered*. All these requests can be quite legitimate. There are biblical examples of many of them in the epistles. But as we pray for them, they are usually situation-centered, not heart-centered.

We're seeing everything except the person and his or her heart—the person who is in that situation. This is a serious omission and loss of prayer opportunity.

3. Heart-oriented requests: The Scripture frames prayer for situations that people are in as prayers for spiritual change and help while on the spiritual battlefield. Prayers are for sanctification, wisdom, endurance, etc. They are not just for a change in the situations at hand.

For example: Consider the requests in the Lord's Prayer. They relate to both the external and the internal lives of believers. The heart is in view.

- * "Hallow your name"—Let all that I and others are doing, glorify you—not just with our lips!
- * "Your kingdom come"—Let your rule and will in all matters that I'm praying about be done and observed by all.
- * "Give us our daily bread" (a pure heart request)—Let my contentment and satisfaction be with your goodness.
- * "Forgive us...as we forgive..."—Teach us how to love.

* “Deliver us from evil and lead us not into temptation”—Save me from evils on the inside and on the outside.

4. Examine other New Testament prayers. Ask, “What heart features are nested in these prayers? What external situation features are the subjects of these prayers?”

* Phil 1:9-11

* Col 1:9-12

* James 1:2-5; 5:14 (Note that in James 1:2 the implied prayer for these people in trials isn’t about the trials. *It’s about the believers in the trials.*)

5. It’s not wrong to pray for things like sickness or travel. Paul prays for Epaphroditus’ health because of his sickness in Philippians 2. He asks prayer for safety for himself in 2 Thessalonians 3:2.

In praying about health issues, though, think about the thorn bush and fruit tree temptations or opportunities that one is likely to encounter in his situation—the personal temptations and inclinations, not just the health matters. Think about the temptations, fears, worries, perseverance and spiritual vitality issues involved in a sickness request.

* Example: A request for Thanksgiving travel and the visit to the family. “Pray for my travel. But I face a series of temptations when I visit _____. Most of my family are not believers—so...”

-Pray that I won’t graze over candy.

-Pray that I’ll keep up with my devotions.

-Pray that I’ll use the time well and not just veg out with football game after football game—but look for someone to love and help.

* This kind of prayer

-Considers the “heat” and places me in the situations in which I need to know Him and trust Him.

-Creates a context in which prayers are answered and counsel is welcome. It’s not just ‘woe is me’ types of problems. This approach to prayer names problems in a way that points to God’s goal for me and others.

* Think about how one can report about answers to prayer at the family gathering:

-The situation might not change (candy was still there, football still may be the preoccupation of most family members, mom and my nieces and nephews may be left to fend for themselves as the men watch football).

But God helped me

-Not to graze.

-To love.

-To have devotions three times.

-To love the kids and not just watch TV.

-To help mom with pots and pans (she won't let anyone but her handle the china) and have good conversation. (Mom commented about how my faith seems to be maturing me.)

* Effects:

-There can be an infectious change in the way the whole church or small group starts to share requests. Everyone becomes aware of where the battle is.

-You create a context of mutual counsel and encouragement.

-You get more pointed intercession.

-It works against distance between people and prayer lists as a recitation of despair.

-This invites occasions for prayer for serious needs and leads to worship with thanksgiving and submission.

6. Prayer in sickness:

* There are times where people get sick or experience trouble because they have sinned (e.g. drunk and in an accident, etc.)

* Some sickness has nothing to do with personal sin. It's part of the brokenness of our human condition and an occasion to trust Him and grow in grace.

* Sickness may be used by God to bring us up short and force us to see our need. (You've been irritable, driven, insensitive, put your trust in your health, etc.)

Sickness can be a temptation to:

- * Become angry
- * Become worshipful of medical care
- * Ignore or deny personal weakness and need
- * Become anxious and fearful
- * Become self-absorbed
- * Become hedonistic
- * Exaggerate matters to get attention

7. The point: hardship situations are not the enemy. Hearts out of sync with God and His loving purpose are. As we face real suffering, heat in any of the settings we'll be considering, don't forget to *pray for the person* in the situation—not chiefly the situation. These can be important occasions for counseling and discipleship.

Conclusion

In this lesson we've summarized God's truths about the hard situations that believers, and all people, face. We've contrasted God's view about them with the common philosophy of Maslow and others in regard to our "needs." Finally, this lesson showed how prayer requests can be a door into people's lives to reshape how they think about the heart and not primarily circumstances in the hard situations of life.

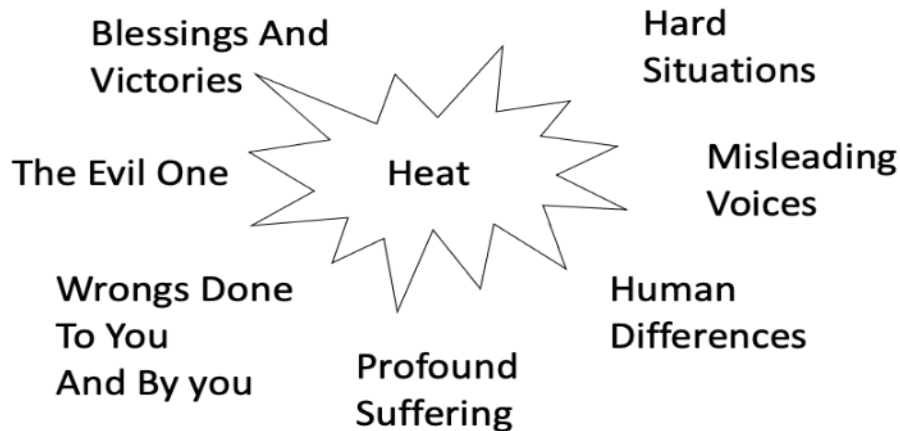
In our next lesson, we will consider the voices that popularly appeal to us. They invite us to look at life and the "heat" we face from what are ultimately self-destructive points of view.

Questions for Reflection

1. Pain and the evil intentions of the Evil One are never fatal for the believer. What are some important ways God makes hardships of value for the believer?
2. Explain the relevance of the gospel being "cross-cultural." How does this explain the richness of biblical counsel in contrast to popular TV and radio secular counsel?
3. How important is an accurate concept of "need" for helping people? How is the question "What do you love?" most relevant for an accurate diagnosis of one's problem?
4. What kind of prayer requests can help a church or small group focus most helpfully on heart matters for significant help in hard situations?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 4
Answering the Seductive, Misleading Voices in the Culture



In our last lesson we focused on the reality of the troubles and hardness of situations we face in this life. These situations are real.

When we listen to people who point us to wrong interpretations of our hard situations, we may only make matters worse by our responses.

We live in A Marketplace of Voices where people are always trying to get our attention—like merchants vying for attention and offering their wares for sale in a marketplace. But the wares for sale are deceptive if they don't line up with God's wisdom for life. Our hearts are revealed by the voices we pay attention to.

Answering the Seductive, Misleading Voices in the Culture

The Marketplace of Voices: Israel had made decisions over and over again about whom they were going to listen to. In the wilderness, for example, en route to the promised land, there were members of the community who competed with and grumbled against God's appointed leaders, Moses and Aaron. These included Korah, Sihon, Og, and Balaam. At other times, even Aaron and Miriam got caught up in making their own pitches.

Today, in our wilderness (Rev 12:13,14), we also have a virtual marketplace of voice-options about life priorities to choose from. And there is one who tries to flood us with false “knowledge” and pressures to destroy us (Rev 12:15). Who will we listen to? Whose interpretation of our life-situations and needed direction will we follow? Who will we set

up as the authority or authorities to listen to about the problems, solutions, and values (what to think is important) in our lives?

In this lesson we'll look at six cautions the Bible gives us about the common voices that we will encounter. Being familiar with these warnings will help us wisely and faithfully face most of the hardships and troubles that we experience.

A. Ultimately, there are just two “voices”.

1. Genesis 3:1-7: The lie! “God doesn’t know what He’s talking about! You make your own standards.” (“You shall be like God, knowing [discerning] good and evil,” Gen 3:5). This was the theme of the false prophets throughout the Old Testament. They promoted false gods. Their idols allowed people to keep their pride, power, control, and self-centered lifestyle in place and appear to be in favor with a god of their own imaginations. These lies come from their “father.”

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

a. Forms of idols and their lies change. They look different in different people and at different seasons of life. But the lie is basically the same. Literal idols existed popularly in the Old Testament times. Today, in Western culture, idols look different. Like the serpent in Genesis 3, they all erase God as the One to whom all must give account and the One with truth and wisdom for this life and the next. They all captivate the listener and sometimes totally dominate him or her. Isaiah 44:18-20 illustrates idolatry as being stupid, even insane and paralyzing. Speaking of a block of wood, half of which a man used to cook his food and the other half to carve an idol, Isaiah mocks idolaters saying :

“He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’” (Isaiah 44:20)

b. These voices show up in popularly assumed philosophies of life. Maslow, Rogers, Beck (Drs. Phil and Laura), Freud and others are groping after the image of God that humankind was created to display. But they don’t know it. God created man in wholeness and for wholeness (shalom). People have a sense that that’s not the human condition now. But they crave that quality of life. So “experts” in human development offer their formulas for wholeness in the marketplaces of education, popular mental health movements, therapy, advice columns, radio talk shows, seminars, YouTube sites, etc.

i. People want happiness, success, feelings of comfort, pleasure in life, completeness. But they want it *without* the covenant relationship with God, i.e. without bearing the fullness of God’s image. That is the misdirection that sin

offers. But that wholeness is what we were created for. Such “blessednesses” (the plural of “blessed” is used for emphasis in Psalm 1:1 and many other places in the Psalms to mean, *blessedness to an exponential degree*), are only found in that relationship with God, through Christ alone (Matt 11:28-30; John 10:10; 14:6; 17:1-2).

ii. Proverbs 4:19 says: “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” This contrasts with the previous verse, 4:18, which says, “...but the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.” These differences of deeper darkness and greater light are the outcomes of ignoring God’s voice or following it.

iii. These outcomes usually show up in this life, but because of the brokenness in this world, darker or lighter outcomes aren’t always plain to see. But both outcomes are certain for eternity. Choosing to heed God’s wise voice over all the competing ones is what makes the difference.

c. The culture’s values can affect a Christian’s view of ministry and himself.

i. For example: David Powlison was counseling three college Christian campus workers in roughly the same period of months: from InterVarsity (IVCF), Campus Crusade (CRU), and Navigators. (None of these wonderful organizations urged the misunderstandings of their workers described here. But this shows that our hearts can take good things and make them bad—depending upon the voice to which we listen.) The strengths of each ministry provided heat for the three workers. The IVCF worker was missing the six-times per week quiet time expectation that the ministry urges. The CRU worker was guilty over a lack of evangelistic zeal that the ministry urged. The Navigator’s worker suffered from Bible memory failure and hadn’t memorized a verse in six months, contrary to the strong encouragement of his organization.

ii. Their failures to live up to the expectations they had of a “spiritual worker” made them anxious, depressed, exhausted. The “voices” they listened to were not God’s or even their organizations. They were listening to the “success” voice of the culture that was telling them they had to meet a certain standard to be successful and worthy in ministry. They all fell short and were deeply troubled enough to seek biblical counseling.

iii. Goals for ministry are not bad. But they can morph into ladders of worth and into self-evaluation standards, even for Christians. This can become destructive. Ministry goals and busyness can speak too and replace satisfaction with Christ and trust in Him and His sufficiency.

B. The paradigms we adopt to interpret life determine what voices we listen to.

1. We all create and live with paradigms—models that help us explain how to view things that happen in life. *The Three Trees* and *The Eight Questions* are paradigms—

models or ways to think about how change happens. Decisions, our reactions, and changes we make emerge from the paradigms we choose for our life.

a. For example: Consider how different people view snow days: students, teachers, parents, snow plow operators, older folks who have to shovel their own walks or hire someone. All of these think about snow days differently. Some view a snow day and are happy, some are angry, some are irritated, some are immediately tired, some are frustrated, and some are enthused. We give meanings to experiences we have.

b. A more serious example: News commentators, political leaders, activists, etc., give explanations for racial unrest: years of injustice, unemployment, poor law enforcement, an inconsistent criminal justice system, single parent homes, bussed in rioters, etc. While none of these factors are irrelevant, they are secondary causes (as discussed earlier). They all miss the fundamental problem of heart demands that are controlling people. Generally, anger comes from unmet, dug-in desires (James 4:1-3) which emerge from unbelief, pride or the fear of man.

c. Our choices to behave in one way or another emerge from our interpretation of life (like the reactions to a snow day). And the intensity of our reactions comes from how serious we think things are—according to the paradigm we use to interpret matters. For example, I may justify my anger and action to smash businesses or set buildings on fire because of what I see as injustice. Our way of viewing life determines all our responses, serious ones and not so serious ones. There are no accidental choices. They are all intentional. God has created a world with billions of things to notice, want, and respond to. We might thoughtfully fit what gets our attention into some paradigm or mental map that helps us explain to ourselves what is happening, or we might thoughtlessly just live the way we *feel* like living (also a kind of paradigm--*living according to my feelings*). Both are choices and come out of the way our heart is leaning—toward or away from God’s wisdom for life.

d. Consider the bottle of water illustration. After striking the plastic bottle full of water, ask, “Why is *water* on the floor?” It was **not** there primarily because we struck the bottle. That was a factor, but a secondary one. The real reason for water being on the floor was because of what was in the bottle in the first place. If it was milk or gasoline, that would be on the floor. The point is: We adopt or choose to listen to an interpretation of life, take some action, or make any choice (the water on the floor), because of what is inside of us—what we want, crave, desire in the first place. A bumper sticker reads, “We don’t see things as *they* are but as *we* are!”

2. Our reaction to a situation reveals something about who we are. The situation matters. We must take the situations people encounter seriously (the events that strike the bottle), but there is a heart inside (the water) that directs our passions that we must not miss (Mark 7:18-23) in our efforts to help people.

a. All life situations are covenantal (i.e. lived in relationship to the God who is real—whether one is aware of it or not)! We can't get away from the fact that we relate to God one way or another—as relevant or irrelevant in everything we do.

We're either casual, caring, detached, or devoted. Our situations are the theater to reveal the interpretations of our hearts by our reactions. We don't live in a vacuum. We live on a stage where a cosmic drama is being played out. Our relationship with God is exposed in the big and little events of life. What we get angry at; what we talk about; what we daydream about; what discourages or depresses us; what we worry about, etc. All of these say something about what we believe about God and our redemption in Christ. (For example, see Luke 20:45-47. What was Jesus saying the religious leaders' actions revealed about their hearts?)

b. Knowing a friend's situation is crucial for knowing the person and how to help him. That knowledge will allow us to connect the *truth* to his *life*. It will allow us to get a sense of what way(s) he may be seeking to block a covenant relationship with God. Knowing the situation will allow us to understand the decisions he is making, where he is struggling, the allegiances of his heart, and where he is looking for refuge, comfort, relief, etc.

c. Knowing one's situation is a window into how seriously his heart is wrapped around his interpretation or paradigm for his situation. The situation is important in the quality or quantity of "water" or "gasoline" that comes out of a person's life when the "situation" strikes the bottle (life).

For example, consider the rich young ruler Jesus met. He knew he was missing something (Mark 10:17-25), yet his "god," his wealth, would not let him follow Christ. When Jesus' words struck the "bottle" (his heart), out came his love of money. He was listening to a voice from his family, culture, and/or his own heart about what was important.

In another incident in Luke 12:13 Jesus tells of someone whose covetousness was revealed by a request he makes to Jesus. "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus' response was about the heart: "...be on guard against all covetousness..." His brother's unwillingness to split the inheritance, perhaps his own covetousness, brought out a covetous reaction from this inquiring young man.

C. The "Why?" question can be a window into one's paradigm.

[Summary thoughts from the article, "Why Ask Why?" by Ed Welch. (*Journal of Biblical Counseling*, volume 10, issue 3). This helps us think about the "why" question carefully.]

1. A misleading use of "Why?"

a. Some Christian counselors (and others not writing from a Christian perspective, like David and Phyllis York in *Toughlove*) don't think you should ask the question

“Why?” They have accurately seen that it often leads to blame-shifting or speculation. “Why did you respond that way?” “It was my wife’s (son’s, neighbor’s, boss’s, doctor’s, etc.) fault.”

Reasons for “why” something is happening or has happened may sound rational and be an exercise in creativity, but they may also leave everything unchanged while we spend our time trying to figure out “reasons” for behavior.

b. For example, consider some of the different answers that may come from different interpretations (paradigms) of life. “Why did that boy hit his sister?” Different perspectives bring different answers to the question.

*Biologists: it’s a matter of molecules and hormones

*Psychologists: past experiences or a quest for power and mastery

*Sociologists: it’s a matter of family dynamics

*Parents: his sister took his favorite toy

*Some Christian counselors: “sin!”

c. As Christian counselors we are not interested in speculations and psychological diagnoses. They usually leave the biblical source of all choices untouched. We want to listen for what our friend “wants, craves or desires.” What rules him? What loves or demands drive his responses in his situation? What has captured his heart? We can learn about this even if we can’t figure out the ultimate reason or “why” some desire, love, or want has captured his heart or rules him.

In the case of the boy who hit his sister, his heart craving needs to come into the picture, not just willingness to share, or the wrongness of hitting. Both of these may need to be addressed, but they miss the heart.

2. A helpful way to use the “why” question: follow it up with another important question: **“What do you mean by that?” “What are you saying you must have or want to be different?”**

a. Asking “why” and the “follow-up” question may get at the counselee’s thinking and heart orientation.

This follow-up question may get at the voice he’s listening to. This follow-up question seeks what is important and needful, in your friend’s thinking, to make life work well for him. *Whether the answers to the “why” question are accurate or not aren’t as critical as what voice your friend is listening to.* Whose values are especially important for him to follow when he makes his choices?

Psalm 49:5 asks, “Why should I fear in times of trouble?” Verses 7, 15, and 20 give the Psalmist’s answers. The implication is that depending upon where one is looking he will fear or not fear. What voice is your friend paying attention to? Only one voice dissolves fear and replaces it with assurance (verse 15).

3. There are five common kinds of answers to the “why” question. (This is Dr. Welch’s summary from observations by ancient and prominent observers of human nature). These aim to explain why people make their choices.

a. **Biological or material cause** for *why something is happening*: Something about our body directs us to respond as we do. For example, a man with Alzheimer’s: His brain is malfunctioning. He may get angry because he can’t leave the house and thinks he’s imprisoned; or won’t shower because he thinks the ceiling is leaking and will collapse on him and gets violently angry if one tries to make him do it.

Biblically: we are psycho-physical units. Our bodies can be affected by our minds and emotions—even though we don’t intend to respond in certain ways. For example, a truck rumbling; fingernails on a chalk board; PTSD experiences. Our internal life does affect us physically. These factors do not mean one’s heart is uninvolved. But the physical/bio-chemical factors are powerful influences driving our insides to manifest outside, bodily effects.

b. **Event cause** for *why something is happening*: events and circumstances that preceded an angry outburst. For example, a wife who constantly demeans her husband “drives” him out to the bar with his friends. Saying “no” to a teen that sends him to his room, slamming the door.

Biblically: Scripture notes that other events do affect us. (Prov 25:24, “It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.”) But these events are not the complete answer. The heart from which anger comes is left untouched if this “striking of the bottle” is left as the prime “cause” of the mess on the floor. The way the husband or teen responds is an outworking of their demands to be left alone or have their own way in the situation.

c. **Cultural/nurturing or genetic causes** for *why something is happening*: The nature of a person, an event, or an object may cause a reaction or decision. For example, “I’m only human!” or “I’m German.” Or, “It’s my personality type.” “It’s in my genes to react that way.”

For example: One sister explained that the reason most of the people arrived late for Sunday School was because of “BT.” We were relatively new to the African-American church and didn’t understand. She saw the puzzled look on our faces and said, “Black Time!”

Another example: To many White brothers and sisters who don’t take the trouble to get to know people of color or other ethnic groups, “...they all look the same.” It’s the nature or structure of the way people look that explains my

lateness or my excuses and my unwillingness to work hard at getting to know individuals as individuals.

d. **Invisible cause** answering *why something is happening*: This was a mysterious cause to Plato that didn't fit into these other categories very neatly. Christians know God as that true ultimate, invisible cause. "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will" (Prov 21:1; See also Dan 4:35). Others, though, may wish simply to say it's God, fate, the devil, or Allah who made a thing happen.

NOTE: There may be threads of truth from any of these four "causes" as an explanation for why something occurs. None of these "causes," however, see blame-worthiness, *in the person* who is angry or reacting badly. There is no consideration of a spiritual, heart cause. *Understanding "causes" from all these perspectives misses the heart.*

e. **Biblical cause** or explanation for *why some behavior is happening*: In biblical terms, this has to do with purpose and motives: the heart. As an example, James 4:1-3 develops this clearly in regard to the matter of anger. Humanly speaking, the heart is usually the ultimate or final source of our choices. Some allowance should be made for other factors like body chemistry, effects of traumatic experiences and such conditions. But usually our choices emerge from our heart motivations—what we want. (Jesus affirmed this in Mark 7, Luke 6, and other places. He said that "Out of the heart..." moral and spiritual choices emerge. People make choices about the voices they want to listen to in the "marketplace" because of what is in their hearts—what they ultimately want.

4. The "Why" in three tenses. Biblically, there are three phases of one's situation that matter:

a. What happened in **the past** matters but is not determinative. For example: driving while looking behind you, in your past, is dangerous. Some people live always looking to the past to interpret and direct their present and future. The Scriptures never present the past as a factor that controls choices in the present. It influences them, but doesn't control their ability to choose because we are created in God's image. That is why James' command to "count it all joy" in various trials is not a pipe dream (James 1:2).

b. What is happening in the **present** matters. But what is ongoing and troublesome isn't all that is going on in one's life. It's only part of the picture of one's life. Seeing the big picture is important. Suffering people may tend to become disoriented and focused on their present pain and lose perspective about life and God's love and plan for them in the here and now. These folks often add to their suffering by isolating themselves. It may be easier to be alone. God is up to something, as He was in Paul's case in 2 Corinthians 1:9.

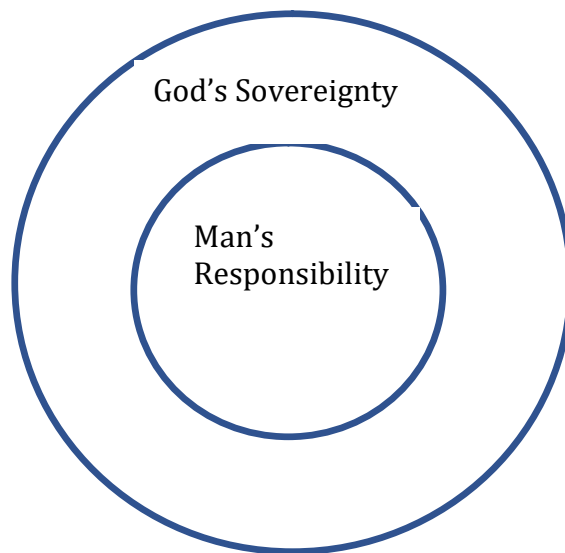
c. What one anticipates about the **future** matters. Being “anxious for tomorrow” can generate fear, hopelessness, depression, distraction, escapist efforts, and much more. It can motivate one to “store up manna” for tomorrow today. But that only produces wormy manna. The future is in God’s circle (diagram below) of sovereign control. Trust in what He says about the future, similarly, will affect my focus, discipline, love, and perseverance (1 Thes 1:3).

D. Voices you heed will expand or shrink God’s and your circle of influence.

“**Heat**” is not only suffering. It can also be opportunity. We can’t do everything. We often must choose from good options. Some people “have to” achieve highly, or be best in everything they do or they won’t participate. Some are so controlled by that “need” that they bring much suffering, depression, anxiety, fear, etc., on themselves.

* For example, a girl who got a “B” was anxious to the point of distraction. (She was an athlete, talented in music and art, had a job, was a youth group leader, involved in the high school drama, and was a class officer.) She was within 100th of a point of being valedictorian. She had to choose what to do and not do. She couldn’t do it all as she could when she was an underclassman. What voice(s) from the marketplace of ideas was she having to decide to live by?

* E.g. Circles of Sovereignty and of Responsibility.



Let the two circles represent God’s design for balanced, faithful living on the one hand and trust in God’s sovereign love and control and plan for the events in my life.

1. If I increase **my circle** (the center one), I’ll either become intense, anxious, controlling, or angry if things aren’t happening the way I want them to. Things are not in my control. Or, if I decrease my circle, I may become indifferent, excuse-making, or neglectful because the way I see it, things belong to God’s realm of control, not mine.

2. If I increase **God's circle** (the outer one), I may be angry at God or confused because He's not delivering what I think He should be doing as God. "He's responsible for things being different in my life." Or, I may rationalize my inactivity because "God is in charge." Or I may decrease His role, maybe as a "type-A," person. I'll try to take over in spheres where He is in control because I do not acknowledge His sovereignty. I may become pushy, demanding, manipulative.

3. Consider how keeping the circles in right proportion will affect how I think about "getting even" with others.

E.g. Vengeance: Rom 12:19 "Beloved, never avenge yourselves... Vengeance is mine, I will repay."

* My act of taking vengeance is my erasure of "Vengeance is mine..." You've forgotten who is King!

* Keeping the circles in accurate proportion is our counseling goal. He "will repay," He says.

* Rom 12:14-21 is all about how to treat others who have sinned against you. How will the view you have of God's "circle of sovereignty" affect your willingness to function within your "circle of responsibility?"

E. Drive toward the "What?" or "Who?" questions as you talk with a friend you want to help. Most significantly, what (or who) gets the attention of their heart? What voices are loudest to you or the brother or sister whom you want to help? It's either God or someone or something else.

1. Consider the attention the Bible gives to God's character. David Powlison observes that 80% of the Bible is the revelation of **who God is**. Why? This is to motivate us to say "no" to what's wrong and "yes" to what's right. He is God! With His character in view and our relationship to Him, we have a certain, solid, basis for choosing to practice "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6)—loving God and our neighbor, the first and second great commandments.

* The conclusion of Psalm 105:1-44 is in verse 45: "that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws." The previous 44 verses are about God and His acts.

* Giving thanks begins in Psalm 136:1-3 and concludes that way in verse 26. All verses in between are reasons from God's acts of creation, redemption and providence for His people to bolster those commands. And the chorus that is repeated in all 26 verses underscores these reasons: "For his steadfast love endures forever."

* Consider the more than 60 questions with which God challenges Job. None address his "Why is this happening to me?" question. All pointed to Him as the wise author of all of life and creation. "I can be trusted!"

2. Consider also the Bible's attention to genealogies. Why are they in the Bible?

- a. They are a **foretaste** of names of those written in the Book of Life. But, especially...
- b. They give a **sense of Jesus' identity** as the One who came to redeem His people. They show that Jesus is the Christ who fulfilled all the promises. He is the center of history!

E.g. (V. Poythress) Missionaries wanted to skip the genealogies in a Bible study of the Gospels with a native tribe. But upon inquiry the people discovered genealogies were in the text and insisted they be studied too. Genealogies, it turned out, showed the importance of a leader to the tribal peoples. The more ancestors a tribal leader could trace, the more authority he had. Therefore, Jesus must be extraordinarily important to have this extensive genealogy—twice in the New Testament! And these were only the summary tip of the iceberg genealogies. Even more extensive genealogies that pertain to Christ are listed in the Old Testament—the listings of lines of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, all leading to the Messiah.

The point: If you know who He is, you change! In part because you then begin to know who you are (John 8:14). If you don't know who He is, forget who He is, or believe false things about who He is, you will have a distorted sense of who you are and won't move to change in godly directions. The inner and outer circles, that we presented above, will be wrongly proportioned.

- c. View the video: *That's My King!* (Video by Dr. S. M. Lockridge—Brother Lockridge is now with his King! Available on YouTube.)

F. God's Voice (in contrast to the world's voices) clarifies identity:

1. His voice is the antidote to false, competing voices. He presents Himself as our Creator, Redeemer, Provider (Ps. 136). This is the antidote to other competing voices (from the Father of Lies). Consider the feature of God's relationship to His people that resounds, rings out, and blares out of the Psalmist and worshippers who use this hymn. The concepts here can't be casually sung if they are thoughtfully sung!

- a. The voice He wants to hear from us: "Give thanks..." (verses 1-2)
Antidote to focus on myself
- b. The reasons He gives as Creator (verses 3-9)
Antidote to voices about past concerns
- c. The reasons He gives as Redeemer (verses 10-15)
Antidote to voices about future concerns
- d. The reasons He gives as Provider (verses 16-22)

Antidote to voices about present concerns

e. His concluding voice (verses 23-26)

Antidote to focus on myself

2. His voice gives us a unique identity in connection with Himself.

a. Consider Old Testament and New Testament metaphors relating to our identity—who we are in Christ: We’re Saved, Forgiven, Accepted, Beloved, Servants, New Creatures, Light, Salt, Witnesses, Fruitful Branches, Soldiers, Bride, Friends, Sons, Children, Royalty [Kings], Priests, and more.

b. All of these are in connection with Him—none come from looking within ourselves—all come from looking OUT—to Him. This is our identity rooted in our “covenantal” relationship with God.

(“Covenantal” is a description of our personal involvement with our loving Father and Savior. This covenantal relationship will be described more fully in lesson 5).

3. His voice must become our voice. Applying the biblical model of change occurs as we tune in to His voice. Our own growth in our identity and our ministry to others means filling our minds and the minds and hearts of others we want to help with the “Cross,” and “Fruit” in *The Three Trees* model, or answers to Questions 5, 6, and 7 in *The Eight Questions* version of the change paradigm. We do this by asking:

* What does God want me to **know** about Him--His love, sovereignty, purpose, presence, control, etc. in my situation (even with my differences)? (Question 5)

* Who does God want me to understand myself to **be** and what will it be like for me to be satisfied with Christ in my situations (with my differences)? Is He my Alpha and Omega? What’s that mean for my identity? (Question 6)

* What does God want me to **do** in light of my new creation identity? In light of who He is as my loving Father and who I am as His child “in Christ?” in the Spirit’s power (Question 7). My doing is an outgrowth of my new identity—not my efforts to earn or be worthy of God’s goodness.

Conclusion:

In this lesson we explored the two voices—God’s and the Deceiver’s—that offer us counsel in hard times. The Deceiver’s voice seeks to increase our circle of responsibility and decrease God’s circle of sovereign, loving control. The paradigm we operate by determines the voice we listen to. The “Why” question can help us tune into a friend’s paradigm and, thereby, his loves and passions. God’s voice is what clarifies His will and our identity. Our counseling goal is to increase our friend’s willingness to hear God’s voice and bring the two circles into proper alignment.

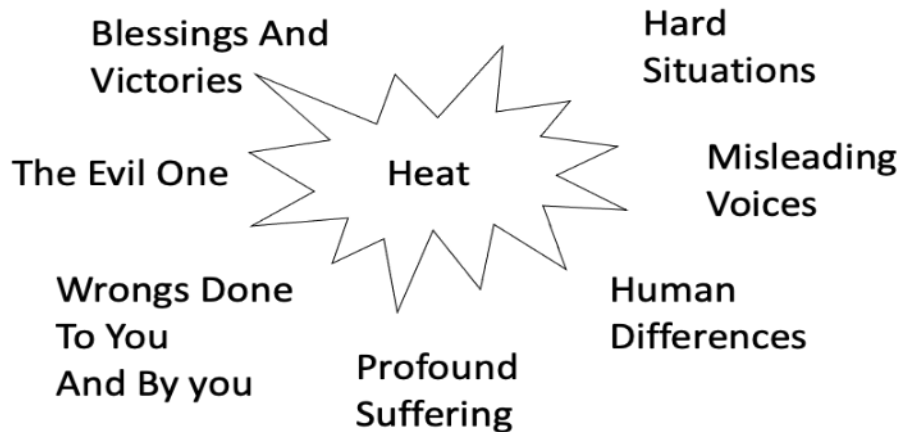
In our next lesson we will focus on human differences. The voices we listen to and our own hearts invite us to turn human differences meant to display God's glory, into ladders of worth—which never take us to the places we long to go. We will look at four examples of popular ladders: the self-esteem ladder, the appearance/beauty ladder, the social acceptance ladder, and the student achievement ladder. God's voice is the only effective antidote to this misleading counsel.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what sense can it be said that idols have voices? How can faulty images or ideas "talk" to people?
2. How can knowing a friend's paradigm be an important part of help to him in addressing a troubling concern?
3. How can "why?" be a helpful or unhelpful question in the helping process?
4. How can detecting a friend's thought about God's "circle of influence" or his own "circle of influence" give a clue to where his heart is and the voice to which he's giving most attention?

What Change Looks Like
Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism

Lesson 5
Human Differences



In this lesson, we'll identify one of the areas where our culture's and the Liar's voice is heard most loudly and most destructively: The area of human differences.

I. Human Differences Are By God's Design. They occur in every area. The primary spiritual gift passages in the New Testament (Rom 12; 1Cor 12; Eph 4) illustrate differences that God makes in His church—for the churches' benefit and for His glory. But they are among all people—believers and unbelievers.

Paul asked, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). This is a common theme throughout the Bible. More generally, the Lord says, "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both" (Prov 20:12). We are all "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14). God said to Moses when he began to make excuses about why he couldn't lead, "Who has made man's mouth" (Ex 4:11)?

Some examples in which there are a range of differences:



Young	Old
Small	Big
Rich	Poor
Strong	Weak
Beautiful	Plain
Ethnic majority	Ethnic minority
Multi-talented	Less talented
Master	Slave
Healthy	Diseased/unhealthy
Excellent in judgment	Poor in judgment

A. God shows no partiality on the basis of created differences. He uses the same standard in His judgment among people—moral perfection. His love and justice do not consider created differences as the standard for acceptance, value, or guilt (Rom 2:11). Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 address slaves and masters, children and parents, husbands and wives and apply the same righteous standard to them all.

While differences do not determine one’s standing before God, they do relate to differing roles the Head of the church wants people to fulfill within a body of believers. Different roles have to do with the orderliness and ministry focus within the church. They do not show some people to be more important, valuable, or worthwhile than others.

B. Differences change over time. Everybody loses or sees most of these created-into-us features, our differences, degrade over time. Before God all of us start off as poor, strangers, weak, disabled, slaves, dying, children, sick, and refugees (some of the terms the Bible uses for us). God takes these degraded states and makes them honorable, “...kings and priests to our God”; “beautiful” as the bride of Christ; rich, healthy, strong, etc. He even uses the “old,” or older, whom the world discredits and sees in “decline” for usefulness and worth, as those with a “crown of glory” (Prov 16:31) and who are still fruit-bearing and “ever full of sap and green” (Ps 92:14,15).

C. Ethnic differences are not value differences. Paul’s prayer is that we would be able to grasp this sense of worth in the saints. He prayed that the Ephesian church would grasp “...what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints...”(Eph. 1:18). He goes on in Ephesians 2 and 3 to specifically affirm the “mystery” of the Gospel has to do with breaking down spiritual and ethnic walls to make “one new man.” Ethnic differences are of no account in the Kingdom - except to display His creative wisdom, power and glory of the Kingdom He is building. They are not a basis for judging the worth of one another. His citizens reflect His character even with the differences each of them possess!. Revelation 5:9 and 10 illustrate this by depicting

the worshipping community in heaven as “...people of God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

The word “nation” in verse 10 is *ethnos* from which we get our word *ethnic*, referring to racial or ethnic differences. In Ephesians 2 and 3 the word is used to ethnically differentiate between the Jews and Gentiles.

The cross ends up “killing the hostility” between different people groups (Eph 2:16-18). It produces oneness in Christ. All other efforts to kill the hostility miss the heart change that is needed to create “one new man” (Eph 2:15). All other efforts will only make surface changes, at best.

D. Paul applies the body metaphor to gifts of all believers. Within the believing community, the body metaphor is used to show the value of all spiritual gifts. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, the major New Testament “gift” passages, condemn favoritism based upon spiritual giftedness. Such prejudices are artificial scales of worth.

E. Favoritism is forbidden. James 2:1-13 and the hundreds of references to justice issues throughout the Old and New Testaments forbid favoritism and unloving prejudices and oppression toward the weak, poor, needy, culturally and socially disadvantaged. This kind of injustice is even referred to as the “sin of Sodom” (Ezek 16:49-50).

The Bible does not ignore differences people have. But respect, justice and fairness issues are not ever based upon some differences being more acceptable or valuable than others. As we will see below, even the apostle Peter was rebuked for falling prey to the temptation to be discriminatory due to ethnic differences among believers (Gal 2:11-15).

F. Jesus emphasized justice and mercy. Jesus’ own mission statement in Luke 4:18,19 (from Isaiah 61:1,2), emphasized, and His life and ministry exemplified, this non-discriminatory approach to people. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” If there is any discrimination in His mission, it is on behalf of the poor and weak, the disenfranchised and those easily pushed aside. (See also Matt 23:23, “...the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.”)

The goal of Christianity is not to eliminate differences, even in the area of wealth. It is to advance God’s kingdom of Christlikeness among all peoples.

The response to poverty in the Scriptures is not primarily supplying wealth, but guaranteeing justice. Caring for the poor with material aid is significant in Scripture. But the greatest wealth for the poor, Jesus illustrated in his Luke 4 quotation, was to have the Gospel preached to them. They were not to be disenfranchised, especially in Gospel matters, because of attention being given to people of wealth or status.

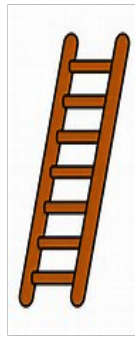
II. We make human differences ways to evaluate one another.

One of the unrighteous ways we are tempted to respond to the presence of differences is to turn them into ladders of worth—ways to evaluate one another. Ways to determine who to respect and who to not respect—ladders of worth.

There are five things about these ladders of worth that we should note:

A. We create the ladders. The human heart has a tendency to take the spectrum of differences and make it a ladder: the top being “good/high value” and the bottom being “bad/stigmatized and low value.” These differences become standards of worth and importance; places where people find identity and compare themselves with others.

Rich, Strong, Beautiful, Ethnic majority, Multi-talented, etc.



Poor, Weak, Plain, Ethnic minority, Less talented, etc.

B. We create ladders to “Nowhere” when we make differences into ladders of worth that we spend our lives trying to reach standards that we think will make us more successful or valuable or acceptable. None of these ladders create value that makes a difference in our standing before God. They are “Ladders to Nowhere.” It is faithfulness within the scope of our uniqueness that matters (Matt. 25:14-30).

On God’s scale of value, even if we get to what we or the world considers to be the top, we haven’t gotten anywhere that matters. “Let the nations know that they are but men!” David prays in Psalm 9:20. “Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish,” the Sons of Korah assert in Psalm 49:12.

In fact, if we fail to get to the top of a ladder, as the world or our own hearts conceive of it, we have not missed anything that really matters. God’s values differ significantly. “...man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

Jesus talked about losing life to gain it, being last to be first, serving rather than being served as priorities of His Kingdom.

C. Ladders of worth are distortions of talents entrusted to us by God. His assessment of worth is not based upon the talent-trust given to each of us.

Talents are the resources, situations and personal qualities which God has uniquely ordained for us to use as His servants. Gender, age, abilities, personality qualities, aptitudes, appearance, strengths, etc., and all other differences make up this talent-trust He's given to each of us.

Accountability with our talents applies to believers and unbelievers. Everyone has been created and endowed with talents to invest for His glory. Some with more and some with less. "Each according to his ability" Jesus said in Matthew 25:15. It is faithfulness within the scope of our uniqueness that matters (Matt 25:14-30) in God's economy! "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much" (Matt 25:21 and 23). That is God's criterion.

Only believers, of course, can fit into that faithful category, because only they are living with a relationship to God through Christ and seek His glory with their talents. But all are accountable with what God has entrusted to them. This offers strong incentive for people to come to Christ. Otherwise they will hear, "...cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness..." (Matt 25:30). Faithfulness with what one has is the issue! Only the believer is motivated in that way.

D. Our ladders are self-deceiving. Actually, humanly created ladders do go somewhere—but not where we think. They are ultimately ladders of self-deception and self-destruction, often within the scope of this lifetime. Consider the anorexic, the workaholic, the business "climber" (who steps on others to get to the top). The fears or anger that often drive such people commonly boomerang on them, and bring depression, anxiety, more anger, and the desire to escape. Often prescription meds for anxiety, depression, failed relationships, and the frequency of suicide are connected to the fallout from uncertain or failed efforts to climb one or another ladder of worth.

E. We are vulnerable to influence from the world around us.

The world's ambition for success, worth, self-esteem, beauty, athleticism, wealth, power and so much more, can seduce believers into climbing its ladders of worth.

Our hearts add value or degrees of worth to differences because of prevailing cultural, economic, beauty, entertainment icons, and popular psychological winds. Remember, secular psychology is man's best wisdom about man. Its weaknesses are evident by virtue of that description.

Psychology may help us describe people and patterns we can see, but it fails when it tries to interpret them without reference to the God of the Bible (Prov 1:7; 9:10; John 3:31). To acknowledge God would mean a loss of autonomy and freedom and

an identity that means we see ourselves as accountable to Him. These would be a threat to our pride and any sources of security we imagine we have apart from a relationship with Him. We think that our security and importance are determined by having stuff or being at the top of a ladder of worth.

“Do what you need to do to have your feelings of success, love, or importance, and so forth, validated. Climb those ladders!” The point is, we can be influenced and need to be alert to that possibility.

III. Examples of ladders of worth that are common forms of “heat”.

A. The self-esteem ladder—having a high or low self-esteem/value. My sense of worth—where does God say it comes from? Where does the culture point people to for their sense of worth?

1. Affirmations and talking myself into my own worth by saying things like “God doesn’t make junk” have a brief shelf-life—until the next person disses me.

2. The Gospel: it knocks this ladder down. It levels the playing field. “Who made the eye? Who gave the tongue?” was the sense of the questions God asked Moses (Ex 4:11; Prov 20:12). God claims a radical sovereignty over the differences. Worth doesn’t come from my self-evaluation or from what others think.

3. God is no respecter of persons. There is no partiality in terms of human standards. Only His divine standard of holiness counts (Rom 2:11; Eph 6:8,9). God does not look at the outward features of a person or the quantity of his livelihood, but at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). He urges us to live with that view, to have that mindset in ourselves (Phil 2:3), following Jesus’ pattern (Phil 2:5-8).

4. God is the great overcomer and destroyer of these ladders. Consider:

a. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). It was the beggar Lazarus Jesus esteemed highly.

b. The differences God discounts in saving His people. It is the foolish (not many wise), the weak (not many strong), the common (not many noble), those of little account (not many important), that God chooses. That's quite a contrast to those whom the culture esteems most highly. (1 Cor 1:26-31).

c. The knowledge of God trumps every other thing (Jer 9:23,24).

d. Whatever you have, you have been given (1 Cor 4:7). Whatever you lack is not cause for shame. Weaknesses are, as a matter of fact, occasions for God’s glory and strength to be seen (2 Cor 12:9-10).

5. By nature, we are all blind, naked, needy, dependent, disfigured, sick, poor, disabled, and weak.

God completely changes the rules. He takes the whole range of the typical ladders and says, “You are at the bottom of those ladders, even if you don’t know it. You need a Savior.”

6. God sets up a ladder that goes to heaven itself. It doesn’t match up with human differences.

a. It’s a far higher and harder standard to reach: the first and second greatest commandments are required. (It’s easier to reach Michael Jordan’s achievements or the wealth of Bill Gates than God’s standard which exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees [Matt 5:20,48; 1 Pet 1:15,16]).

b. It’s the one ladder you can get to the top of—because of grace. Grace came down! The ladder is given, not earned or achieved. It is God’s standard of acceptance in Christ. It is not a humanly contrived, artificial one. Every other ladder ends in loss. For example, as an older man or woman, while you had a great wit and memory and were popular in younger years, now you’re 85 and can’t remember your name. Human ladders are perishable, easily contaminated, and fade. Beauty and strength are ever present reminders of their temporary nature. God’s gracious ladder, our inheritance in Christ, on the other hand, is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Pet 1:4). Our identity, as His “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10), is ours by His gracious eternal plan to use us for His glory.

7. Illustration from David Powlison’s ministry—A woman dominated by her need to be beautiful:

a. “I have no peers. My world is filled with pit people that I look down on and pedestal people that I look up to.” She was never able to look eye to eye with anyone. Since age 15, her appearance was one area where she saw herself to be on the top rungs of the ladder of worth.

b. The difference between pit and pedestal people is that pedestal people can fall down, but rarely do pit people ever move up.

c. As she grew in her ability to see people through God’s lenses, people became people.

d. At a later meeting, she asked David Powlison, “Did you notice anything? ...this is the first time (since age 15) that I went out of my house without putting my face on.” The ladder fell!

8. Self-words are common to “self-esteem” goals and theories of motivation. Prominent terms that our culture uses with inherent “ladder” implications are:

Worship Terms	Descriptive Terms	Knowledge Term
Self-esteem	Self-image	Self-knowledge
Self-love	Self-concept	
Self-worth		
Self-confidence		

Most of these are really worship terms or are nearly so. Consider them to become conscious of how we commonly use them. They may signal a man-made ladder of worth your friend or counselee is using.

Left Column

a. Self-esteem: to regard highly. Would I want to have a good self-esteem? Is that a goal to pursue? From God’s point of view we are this odd mix of needy, weak, blind sinners and yet, children of the Living God. Esteem is worship language. Language of adoration and praise. We are created to esteem God most highly. “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” (they see themselves as needy, not self-sufficient or “all that...” Matt 5:3).

b. Self-love: a worship word. Self-hate is a problem, too, but self-love is not the goal. “Blessed are the meek...” (they have a focus outward, not inward, Matt 5:5).

c. Self-worth: literally a worship term; worship is ascribing worth or value to something/someone. “Blessed are those who mourn...” (they know something of their unworthiness, Matt 5:4).

d. Self-confidence: we were not meant to have **self**-confidence. We are meant to place our confidence in the one true and living God. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...” (they haven’t arrived, Matt 5:6). **Sound** confidence about our identity, who we are, is a blend of an accurate view of who God has made me and the hope, because of His grace and goodness, that He has made me for His good purpose (Eph. 2:10).

Middle Column

a. Self-image and self-concept: not strictly worship terms but descriptions of a picture of yourself. Synonyms for the sense of your identity. You want an accurate image/assessment of yourself. That is a good thing to pursue.

b. But the problem: these words tend to be used synonymously with the first column worship words (having a good self-concept or good self-image is often implied as desirable, or the opposite, a bad self-image, is often considered to be undesirable when the terms are used).

c. If we see ourselves, have a sense of who we are in ourselves, we will accurately deplore what we see. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:24) “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt 9:13).

Right Column

a. Self-knowledge: you want an accurate knowledge of yourself. This is probably the most legitimate term to be used as a goal for oneself (Rom 12:3).

b. Proverbs 27:23-27, in its primary context, urges the wisdom of taking inventory of one’s material resources. A secondary application of the principle would be taking inventory of your personal resources—your self-knowledge. Thinking accurately about yourself as Paul urged in Romans 12:3.

Like so many of the world’s designations and observations, there is an element of truth to be considered with the concepts in the left and center columns. We all live in this world, and unbelievers can observe things too. They can see what makes a difference positively or negatively in living. Confidence, the image in our minds we have of ourselves, the respect we have for our being, are thoughts we can accurately or misguidedly allow to speak about our identity. Only the “fear of the LORD,” God’s gracious perspective, is the antidote to the “fear of man,” our natural bondage-producing perspective. This “fear of man” ladder leads nowhere good. The “fear of the Lord” is the safeguard that these concepts don’t spin off into some self-destructive or hurtful-to-others orbit.

B. The appearance/beauty ladder

1. Beauty does not have to be bad. People in the Bible are described as beautiful in appearance: Sarah, Rachel, Joseph, David, Abigail, Absalom, Abishai.

2. The culture attaches value to these differences.

a. Models themselves fail against the standard. Consider Photoshop work on their pictures; the use of transvestites for runway models (their hips are more naturally narrow than women’s).

b. What is beautiful varies from culture to culture. In subsistence cultures, largeness is beautiful. In ours, with wealth and leisure as top values, thinness is most beautiful.

c. Beauty also varies in different eras. (E.g. the 60s where extreme thinness [Twiggy] was considered attractive. In the 40s, the pinups, in our eyes, would be considered fat.)

d. David Powlison's description of the TV advertisement regarding baldness

*First 10 minutes: man with little hair is a poor slob with out-of-date clothes, slumped over, unsuccessful salesman, no social life—lostness that arises when you don't have hair.

* Second half: the advertiser's gospel: a preppy guy who has hair comes out and explains the process of hair replacement.

*Last 10 minutes: the guy from the first 10 minutes now has hair and comes out and exudes confidence. Sales are better, social life is off the charts. Shows him at the beach with two beautiful girls - one on each arm.

3. These ubiquitous (ever present) images blare out the message to the imperfect or less than beautiful person: "You lose!" and urge finding some way to climb this beauty ladder.

A woman said to David Powlison, "When I look in the mirror, I see two people. One is a dotted image of what I ought to be like. The problem is that either I'm outside the line or inside the line. I never match up."

4. The heat of "image" is not the cause of the thorny eating disorders, self-hatred, surgeries, obsession with dieting, etc. The cause is the way the human heart embraces the heat. It becomes the belief system of the heart that controls the reactions on the ladders to nowhere. It becomes the center of the desire (for approval, acceptance, love, esteem, etc.) and fear (of failure, worth, a future, fatness, rejection, etc.) system.

5. Scripture's Critique of this ladder:

* Prov 11:22 "...gold ring in a pig's snout..."

* Prov 31:30 "...beauty is vain...fears the LORD is to be praised."

* Isaiah 44:9-20 portrays the absurdity of living for the "beautiful image." God mocks the ladder to set people free.

* 1 Peter 3:1-8 contrasts false and true beauty

* God's Word pushes us to focus through the fog and darkness of these systems. (E.g. like missing the beauty of a wonderful scene because a scratch or mark on the window through which you are looking gets your attention.) Rom. 1:18-23

makes it clear that the knowledge of God is plain to see, but darkened imaginations and thoughts get stuck and are focused on worship of the creation and not the Creator through the majesty of His creation.

C. The Social Acceptance in the 'hood' ladder (adapted from a lecture by Carl Ellis, former African American Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary)

1. Heat in the 'hood' for pressure to have

- * money (and 'stuff')
- * freedom from authority and to have authority
- * freedom from majority culture standards/control
- * freedom from parent's pressures for success
- * a sense of esteem, importance
- * membership in a gang for safety, power, worth
- * freedom from rejection by the power brokers in the hood

2. Thorns

- * neglect of academics
- * fear of gangs
- * careless dress
- * careless language
- * disrespect to authorities (parents, police, teachers, etc.)
- * "reverse" discrimination
- * rejection of oppressive people (real or imagined as sensed by the gang, community, etc.)
- * abuse of women (asserting my 'power')
- * abuse of drugs
- * non-postponement of any form of gratification/pleasure
- * avoidance of anything with self-denial or the pain of self-discipline associated with it

Of course, not everyone gives in to these pressures, but the pressures and these responses to them are real and common.

3. Cross: Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 speak of the "fear of the LORD" as the "beginning" of wisdom and knowledge. This is the "Cross" coming into view—God's commitment to His redemptive plan (LORD, YHWH) in Christ for their good and His glory. "Beginning" in these two verses has two different emphases:

a. In 1:7 the "fear of the LORD" is the most critical part, the "head" of knowledge. Like gasoline to an engine, the fear of the Lord is to knowledge—it makes it go!

b. In 9:10 the "fear of the Lord" is the first in a series of necessary features to make life work well. Like buttoning a shirt or launching a rocket: if you start

wrong, you end wrong. This “fear” enables you to live life as God has designed it. Like a cornerstone, all of life takes its shape and direction from this “fear.” “The fear of man,” on the other hand, is a trap (Prov 29:25).

c. The urban church is on the front lines of this battle for the hearts and minds of these messengers. The majority culture church needs to partner with minority churches in their battles. It must not be paternalistic and try to lead or direct or tell the minority churches what they should do, as though they are the experts. Rather they need to come alongside and support the brothers in the hood who care to confront the evil messages that are so powerfully present among whom they serve.

*Psalm 74:20 says, “...the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.”

Any place without the word of the Lord is a dark place and violence is not far from that neighborhood.

*It's the “fear of the LORD” as the “beginning” of wisdom and knowledge that is needed (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

This is the “Cross” coming into view—God’s commitment to His redemptive plan.

4. Fruit—Consequences: Scripture’s critique:

If the cross is brought into the picture, life will happen. This is the fruit—the outcomes/consequences in our paradigm. Spiritual and physical outcomes are affected by embracing the One who is “wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30)—for the city and everyone else.

* Prov 14:12 “...a way that seems right...death.”

* Prov 9:12 “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself (“your wisdom will reward you” NIV), if you scoff, you alone will bear it.”

* Prov 11:18 “...the wicked earns deceptive wages...”

* Prov 13:15 “Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.”

* Prov 19:8 “Whoever gets sense loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good.”

D. Student Achievement Ladder (grades)

1. Heat:

- * There are lots of books and papers to read and write
- * There are deadline pressures
- * There are expectations of others (family, the institution, culture, etc.)
- * Keeping your scholarship or rank-in-class to qualify for one

2. Thorns

- * Anxiety
- * Competitiveness
- * Cheating
- * Drivenness
- * Escapism
- * Edginess/anger
- * “Cramming”

3. Cross:

- * We are “His workmanship” (Eph. 2:10) created with His limits.

Illustration:

Professional picture framers carefully choose the kind of material and design of the frame they want to build based upon the message or feeling the artwork is intended to communicate. Similarly, God’s wise construction of our life situations is designed by His wise, loving hand to enhance the picture He wants to be on display through us.

- * His goal—conformity to Christ’s character (Rom. 8:29)
- * Satisfaction with Him (Phil. 1:21; 3:10,11).
- * Satisfaction with weakness for Christ’s sake (2 Cor. 12:8-10).

Illustration:

My travel to St. Joseph’s University from 13th and Potter in Chester—from a shabby, unheated balcony for teaching God’s timeless, eternal truth to the remarkable structures of the University that teaches some perversion of the truth about everything, since the “fear of the LORD” is NOT their “beginning” in any sense.

In anger, I declared, “Father, look at these buildings...!”

In grace and undeserved patience toward me, the Father said: “And, Rick, who gets the glory...?”

4. Fruit:

- * You develop a rhythm to your work, using the Lord’s Day wisely, getting proper sleep, eating well, etc.
- * You become a wise counselor able to help others with the same “tyranny of the urgent” who are missing the “important.”
- * You “slow down” and absorb understanding.

* You become more aware of who you are and are not (e.g. one with a “flypaper brain” that remembers everything, or one who struggles to make anything stick).

* God is glorified through your weaknesses!

IV. God’s voice (in contrast to the world’s voices) for ladders of worth

A. His voice is the antidote to false, competing voices. He presents Himself as our Creator, Redeemer, Provider (Ps. 136). This is the antidote to other competing voices (from the Father of Lies). Consider the feature of God’s relationship to His people that resounds, rings out, and blares out of the Psalmist and worshippers who use this hymn. The concepts here can’t be casually sung if thoughtfully sung!

1. The voice He wants to hear from us: “Give thanks...” (1,2)
Antidote to focus on myself

2. The reasons He gives as Creator (3-9)
Antidote to voices about past concerns

3. The reasons He gives as Redeemer (10-15)
Antidote to voices about future concerns

4. The reasons He gives as Provider (16-22)
Antidote to voices about present concerns

5. His concluding voice (23-26)
Antidote to focus on myself

B. His voice gives us a unique identity in connection with Himself.

1. Old Testament and New Testament metaphors. These metaphors capture features of our identity: We’re Saved, Forgiven, Accepted, Beloved, Servants, New Creatures, Light, Salt, Witnesses, Fruitful Branches, Soldiers, Bride, Friends, Sons, Children, Royalty [Kings], Priests, and more.

2. All of these are in connection with Him—none come from looking within—all come from looking OUT—to Him. This is referred to as identity from a “covenantal” relationship with God.

(“Covenantal” is a description of our personal involvement with our loving Father and Savior. It refers to our daily, moment by moment, living with a sense that we are in relationship with Him. Everything is in relationship to Him. Like marriage, everything one spouse does has some impact on their relationship. Going to work, washing the car, picking up my own dirty socks, feeding the dog, etc.)

3. Ephesians, especially, highlights matters of our identity in Christ. There is a negative side about who we are by nature. But then there is this positive set of statements about who we are “in Christ,” now.

4. e.g. David Powlison tells of a man coming out of a homosexual background. He surveyed the book of Ephesians and passed his life through his observations:

a. He identified a whole series of particular identity statements from Ephesians—wrong ways he had been thinking about his life about which Paul speaks. These were identities that shaped everything in his former life.

b. Then he took the other identity statements that were his because he belonged to Christ and related them to the new person he was. He noted what God had recreated him to be in Christ.

5. Applying the biblical model of change: Our own growth in our identity and our ministry to others means filling our minds and the minds and hearts of others we want to help with the “Cross,” and “Fruit” in *The Three Trees* model, or answers to Questions 5, 6, and 7 in *The Eight Questions* version of the change paradigm. We do this by asking the questions in the “Questions for Reflection” section below.

Conclusion

In this section we sketched God’s plan for creating human differences and several factors about His design. Sin distorts these differences and makes them into self-destructive ladders of worth in our hearts. Finally, we summarized four examples of common ladders of worth. In our next lesson we will sketch biblical truths about suffering, the common effects of suffering, and suggest some basic principles to keep in mind in order to help suffering people.

Questions for Reflection

1. What does God want me to know about Him—His love, sovereignty, purpose, presence, control, etc. in my situation (even with my differences)?

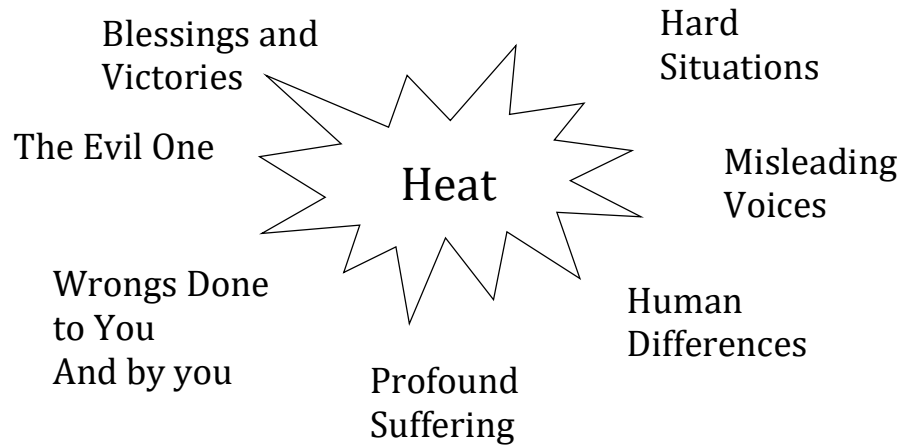
2. Who does God want me to understand myself to be and to be satisfied with in Christ in my situations (with my differences)? Is he my Alpha and Omega? What’s that mean for my identity?

3. What does God want me to do in light of my new creation identity? In light of who He is as my loving Father and who I am as His child “in Christ”? My doing is an outgrowth of my new identity—not my efforts to earn or be worthy of God’s goodness.

4. What other ladders of worth are common in your sphere of living? How does the Bible answer what people are striving for by climbing those ladders?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 6
Living with the Effects of Profound Suffering⁶—Ours and That of Others



There is a sense in which all the categories of heat in this course could be identified as “suffering.”

And, as we will see, there are degrees of suffering of every kind:

- physical,
- mental,
- emotional, and
- spiritual suffering

This lesson is especially about what we will call profound suffering—the more extreme suffering in any category. Suffering that cannot be easily ignored, like a mild headache.

It’s not about the regret you have for missing the baseball game, as much as anxiety, fears, or depression because of your marriage or parenting failures; or because of betrayals, or worries over serious health matters.

In this lesson, we will summarize some biblical truths about suffering and then talk about ministry to suffering people.

I. What God Says About Suffering—general observations about the suffering of God’s people.

⁶ Some of these concepts have been adapted from talks by Dr. Mark Talbot on the subject of suffering.

A. Suffering is real and personal; this may seem obvious, but it is an important place to begin.

1. The first time people usually think seriously about suffering is often when they suffer.

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.” (Ps 119:71; see also verse 75.)

2. Likewise, there is a certain sense in which any suffering is truly private.

“The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy” (Prov 14:10).

The empathy the rest of us feel, however, will always be short of Jesus' full understanding.

3. Jesus is touched with the feelings of our weaknesses and fully understands our sufferings and the temptations that go with them (Heb 4:15).

Our limitations should make us humble in our judgment of the seriousness of others in their suffering. It should also make us gracious in receiving well-meaning, but not always understanding, responses from others in our suffering.

B. There are degrees of suffering in every different mode of suffering

1. Physical: light headache, significant hunger, breaking your leg, getting malaria, having crippled feet, starving to death.

2. Mental: thoughts and fears of getting an injection, being disowned by a father, PTSD, or depression, or betrayal by a spouse, child, or friend.

3. The line between physical and mental suffering can be blurry. A diagnosis of cancer may be painful, but thinking of not being with my children, see them marry, etc., may be greater pain. A radical mastectomy is one thing, but uncertainties about what that will mean for my marriage is something else. Job's and Jeremiah's suffering took them to the place of “cursing the day of their birth” in Job 3 and Jeremiah 20.

4. What constitutes suffering as suffering also differs from person to person or even at different stages of life—shopping for Betty and me; Hip Hop for some and not others; loss of a puppy as a child or later in life as a veterinarian. Being mocked on Facebook as an adult is one thing. As a teen it may be something else and move a young person to consider suicide.

C. Throughout Scripture God’s people suffer severely and usually conclude that everything that happens comes from God’s hand—suffering is not thought to be neutral or fatalistic (“it is what it is”), accidental, or bad luck.

1. Consider Naomi, Job, Joseph, Jeremiah, the Psalmists Ethan, Heman, and David. (We will go into this truth more deeply later in this lesson.) All these people understood that God, in the final analysis, even if others were instrumental in causing their suffering, was bringing this into their lives.

2. Satan, in Job's and Paul's cases, was an intermediate “cause.” But it was at God's providential direction. (Job 1; 2 Cor 12)

D. People often resort to false beliefs when suffering profoundly.

1. “No one else has ever suffered like this or had to put up with something like this.”

Of course, Jesus in his humanity experienced temptation, including that which suffering brings—at every point we suffer. Yet he suffered without sin according to Hebrews 4:15.

2. “Others’ experiences are not relevant, so anything they say will miss the mark and not be helpful. My situation is different.”

There is a certain sense in which this is true. No one exactly experiences my suffering. Proverbs 14:10 affirms this: “The heart knows its own bitterness...”.

But in principle no temptation in suffering is unique. It's “common,” Paul says in 1 Cor 10:13. Jesus suffered, being tempted in all points as we have (Heb 4:15).

3. “God permits suffering but is not the ultimate source of it.”

We’ll see later that God’s sovereignty, even over our suffering, is the only solid basis for hope in suffering.

4. “Scripture has little to say about suffering like mine.” This leads to another temptation:

5. “My situation is hopeless. God can't do or won't do anything about it.”

6. God is insensitive to suffering people.

a. He does not enjoy hurting or causing sorrow to people, despite the fact that He does.

b. In Jeremiah 29:11 Jeremiah, writing to people in exile from Jerusalem, captured by the Babylonians, says, “For I know the plans I have for you,

declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Such a promise was given in the context of the peoples’ suffering.

c. What loving parent doesn’t bring suffering into the lives of his children? Even though they may not understand what is happening or why?

Hebrews 12:6,7 indicate our Father does this. Those whom He loves, He disciplines for their benefit—because of His love.

d. God not only “permits” it, He ultimately causes suffering. In Philippians 1:29, Paul says suffering is “granted to you...” Suffering is pictured as a “gift” for God’s good purposes.

7. Suffering should end quickly—it shouldn't go on and on.

God is faithful, even in long-term suffering. Job’s, Naomi’s and Jeremiah’s sufferings seemed to be resolved later in life—after years. Decades in some cases.

Consider Israel in Egypt for 400 years; the blind man blind since birth in John 9; the 40 plus year-old man that Peter healed in Acts 3, etc. God has faithful purposes—for long-term conditions of suffering.

E. The Bible has answers for the faulty ideas about suffering.

1. God “permits” but does not cause suffering. But suffering is not neutral, fatalistic, accidental, or bad luck. God is behind it all. (More of God’s sovereignty as a basis for hope in suffering is addressed below under “J”.)

a. This is an explanation that is supposed to get God off the hook. He won’t be seen as being a nasty, mean, absent, or limited God.

b. God does not only “permit” it, the biblical testimony is that He ultimately causes suffering—though He is unequivocally good, as asserted in Ps 100:5 and Psalm 136:1 and throughout Scripture.

i. In Philippians 1:29 Paul asserts that it is “granted” to us to “suffer...”. Suffering is pictured as a “gift.”

ii. In Jeremiah 20:14-18, Jeremiah (as Job did) asks the “Why?” question to God, because, as Job did, he is attributing his suffering to God's providence. Both of their opinions were right on this point—even if their attitudes and conclusions, that God was making a mistake, were wrong.

iii. Psalm 139:13-16 displays God’s providence.

“For you formed my inward parts...Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”

iv. His providence is comprehensive! Not partial. From birth to death. It includes the “all things” that Paul refers to in Rom 8:28.

2. God also determines events that cause suffering. Consider Isaiah 46:8-10.

God determined that Cyrus, the pagan king of Persia, would be used to conquer nations and to free Israel. Cyrus did just that and many suffered while God also used His rule to free the Jews and help them return to Jerusalem.

3. All of His control is for His “good” purpose (Rom 8:28).

a. “...all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

b. ...and for His glory (Rom 11:36).

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.”

4. Sovereignty and Responsibility or freedom are both taught in Scripture. He is in control, but sinless. It is people who sin. How can these two be reconciled? This is a mystery. But the Scriptures teach both. The trinity, the two human-divine natures of Christ, the matter of the inspiration of Scripture though it was given through sinful men—all are mysteries and all are taught plainly in Scripture and assumed on every page.

a. Theologians have tried to come up with explanations and have usually ended up emasculating either sovereignty or responsibility. People are not robots, yet God’s people can rest in His wisdom, love, and control in their real suffering.

b. If I insist that I must be able to figure this mystery out before I trust Him with my life and suffering, I deny the Bible’s testimony that God is incomprehensible. Isaiah 55:8-9 says His ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts; they are higher! beyond our comprehension.

“O, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”
(Rom 11:33)

F. Scripture describes and illustrates common effects of suffering. These include:

1. Suffering tends to isolate and disorient people (Ps 102:6-7—like a sparrow on a roof or an owl in the wilderness).

After significant loss (of a loved one, for example), some research concludes that it takes seven years for life to seem like it is running normally.

2. Sleep may not come easily. Psalm 32:3,4 “day and night your hand was heavy upon me.” Psalm 119:147 seems to connect sleepless nights with suffering of some sort.

3. The church may tire of hearing over and over about the ongoing struggle—so we stop asking suffering people about their life. (We can unemphatically feel, “Just get over it.” Contrary to Galatians 6:2, “bear one another’s burdens...”, a present tense command, meaning to keep on “bearing” their burdens.)

4. Such sufferers may look “together” on the outside but be falling apart on the inside.

“Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief” (Prov 14:13).

“The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy” (Prov 14:10).

5. Sufferers may find concentration on the Word difficult.

It’s easy to “forget to breathe” (for example, a physical therapist told a patient to “breathe”—the very thing that was too painful to do.)

In Job 9:17-18 his suffering was so profound that he felt like he couldn’t get his “breath.” We are to breathe in what God has breathed out (2 Tim 3:16).

6. Profound suffering is a hurt so deep and disruptive that its presence dominates life—yielding perplexity and disorientation and tempting one to anger and maybe even cutting into a sufferer’s will to live. This was the experience of Job (Job 3:3; 10:18-19), Jeremiah (Jer 20:14-18), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:4).

7. Unbelievers may use suffering as a reason to not believe in the God of the Bible.

“If He’s good, why doesn’t He stop it? He either can’t, doesn’t care, or doesn’t exist! In any such cases, He’s not worth believing in!”

This perspective assumes that what we see is the complete experience in and the full effect of a painful situation. “It can’t be possible that there really is a good outcome and purpose to horrible things that happen, can it?”

8. Some believers misunderstand God's love for sentimental kindness. They think one gets less suffering if you are a Christian. God is a God of love and power who intervenes for the faithful to deliver them from pain and suffering—now and forever.

The testimony of Scripture is exactly and plainly the opposite, as we'll see. Scripture tells us that the believer is now in the bullseye of at least three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

9. It is possible for believers to lose sight of hope—as Peter walking on the water focused on the waves and storm and not on Christ (Matt 14:30).

a. Psalm 37 “fret not” (vv. 1,7,8) is commanded to believers for a reason.

b. Acts 27:20, Paul was at sea when “neither sun nor stars appeared for many days.” They lost sight of the stars for navigation, but they were still there and God was still in charge—even if not seen. Our suffering moves us closer to a safe harbor with Jesus who has already weathered the worst storm for us. That's true in our dark times, even when we can't see the stars for finding our way.

10. Suffering slows us down in order to learn, hope and worship!

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.”
(Ps 119:67)

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.”
(Ps 119:71)

11. We want suffering to end and it gets us looking for help outside of ourself. It disrupts life's pleasantness!

a. Suffering involves disruptions of life's pleasantness to the point that we want the disruption to end. Hebrews 12:1-13 has this abstract concept about suffering in the context of discipline. Suffering by definition is something we want to get away from.

“My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?” (Ps 6:3)

“How long” is a term used 15 times in the Psalms, mostly as an appeal to God to please bring painful situations or effects to an end ASAP.

12. Such suffering for believers is not the last chapter in life—regardless of how it feels.

a. Suffering for believers is called discipline. God disciplines those whom He loves. Throughout history God has used suffering as a way to get people's attention about things that matter and that don't matter.

b. All discipline for believers is painful in one way or another (Heb 12:11).

c. In the context of parenting children, for example, discipline to be biblical discipline must be more painful than the pleasure that comes from folly or disobedience. (Wayne Mack). Our Father practices that form of discipline wisely.

i. Psalm 126:1,2,5 recall earlier restored fortunes for suffering people and give them hope in their present suffering. "...shouts of joy...tears."

ii. Jeremiah 31:13 "then...rejoice...dance...turning their mourning into joy...gladness."

iii. Romans 5:3-5 says "suffering produces endurance" and eventually leads to "...hope does not put us to shame."

iv. James 1:4 tells us that suffering leads to spiritual maturity—and so to consider it all joy when we are facing trials of many kinds.

13. Suffering may point beyond itself (Phil. 1:18-21).

For example, a headache could be a reminder that once before it led to a migraine or even a diagnosis of a tumor. This could take the appeal away (motivation) from what otherwise would give us great positive feelings (e.g. buying a car). Because it may point to something greater than the present pain, that changes our view of other things. This may prompt us to confront other realities (to reassess) we might otherwise ignore. E.g. the value and worth of things (Lk. 12:13-21).

14. It reminds us that our prosperity and plans are not under our control (Jas. 4:13-15).

Your life is a vapor! James says you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

G. When suffering, feelings are influential—they color everything.

1. We're not just thinking machines. Consider the biblical concept of heart: feelings are included in it (though so are thoughts, motives, wills—our insides). Our counseling must not run roughshod over where a friend "feels" they are (Prov 25:20; 27:14).

2. These feelings are not all there is to counseling, but rapport, connecting, has to do with people sensing that we care for them where they are.

3. Jesus expressed His feelings when He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even though He knew what He'd do in the next moments. He was fully human and yet fully divine. He wasn't controlled by His emotions, but He did exhibit them.

4. Our counseling must not run roughshod over our friend's experience.

a. Proverbs 25:20

“Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart, is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.”

Not tuning in to someone's “heavy heart,” but giving advice, leaves one cold or, at best, is seen as having just frothy, shallow good intentions.

b. Proverbs 27:14 says, “Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing.”

It's good to be blessed by a friend. It's even pleasant to be blessed loudly. But not early in the morning. Let me wake up first!

c. As noted above, feelings are not all there is to counseling. Rapport, connecting with our friend so that he is inclined to receive truth that we lovingly talk about with him, is also a part.

H. Suffering affects us in part because we sense that this is not the way things should be!

1. Acts 14:8-18 Paul was in Lystra: “God ...satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

God's common grace provision of good things in life for these people pointed to the fact that God does give people a sense of well-being when their basic needs are met. For example, on mission work teams in Dominican Republic villages, the villagers' contentment often surprised North American teens. The teens observed poor village people, among whom they worked, had few of Western culture's gadgets or conveniences, and yet they were content.

2. Pleasure is a gift from God (Prov 3:17—“pleasantness”).

3. Believers know something is wrong when and where there is suffering (Rom 5:3-5; Eph 2:1-4; Jas: 1:2-3).

4. Suffering slows us down and gets us recalibrated to reality in a fallen world as fallen people. It's a “gift” (Phil 1:29; Jas 1:17).

5. It was built into us from creation to think that life should be pleasant (Gen 1,2 and Rev 21,22; wisdom's ways are "pleasantness...and...peace," Prov 3:17). Since sin has entered life, life is now a mixture (Prov 14:13). Believers and unbelievers know this is a broken world and they long for something beyond the losses and hurts here.

6. Suffering makes us thankful for what we wouldn't otherwise see to be thankful for. (Only theists can see pleasure as *God's plan* for us.) Luke 17:11ff tells of 10 lepers Jesus healed. Only one returned with thankfulness to him, displaying how easily we can forget our suffering and gifts of healing. Naturalistic evolution provides no such generous Designer. (E.g. One man who struggles daily with his paralysis and is grateful for the ability to urinate—at one time during therapy he could not do so.)

7. Suffering (as in Israel's wilderness wanderings that included loss of life, discipline, diseases, conflicts, unpredictable provisions, etc., for years and years) nudges us toward questions and prayer requests that we should be asking and praying. (Ps. 126:4-6)

I. There are many prayers for sufferers in the Bible.

Consider Psalm 90:11-17. Moses' prayer requests in light of Israel's frailty, 40 years of challenging wilderness wanderings.

1. "Teach us to number our days..." (12) (What priorities of life should I be pursuing?)

2. "Return...How long?" (13) (How can I endure this unending uncertainty without you?)

3. "Satisfy us..."(14) (Can my heart be reoriented to be satisfied with your steadfast love and my joy be restored?)

4. "Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us..." (15) (Can life really return or be restored to the normal, the peaceful, the pleasant?)

5. "Let your work be shown..." (16) (Will you relieve our suffering in order to point the next generation to your promises and faithfulness?)

6. "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us...establish the work of our hands..." (17) (Will You display Your grace and its fruitfulness in my life and make my work useful for Your sake, notwithstanding my present suffering?)

J. Suffering and God's Sovereignty—the basis for hope.

Consider Naomi, Jeremiah and Job. All three attribute their suffering to God's plan and ordination. It wasn't bad luck, fate, or some other force to which they credited their suffering. Nor did they accuse God of wrongdoing. Job and Jeremiah came close to that, but it was more that they felt he didn't understand their situation than doing wrong.

1. It comes for our benefit (Rom 15:4). 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 shows us that painful experiences recorded in the Old Testament are for our benefit.

2. Naomi ("Pleasant"): loss of her sons and husband in a foreign land.

a. Changes her name to Mara ("Bitter," Ruth 1:20).

b. Her suffering didn't motivate her to doubt God's goodness or tempt her to disobedience.

3. Jeremiah: tortured by Pashur the priest (Jer 20:14-18).

a. Like Job he cursed the day of his birth and the man who brought news of his birth (Job 3:1-2,16-19; 10:1,18,19).

b. In Jeremiah 20:7a, "You deceived me" (literally "overpowered me," a strong word; used elsewhere in the Old Testament for rape).

4. Job, as noted above, cursed the day of his birth. (Job 6:8,9; 7:15,16; 9:13-21).

5. All three: Naomi, Jeremiah, and Job attribute their suffering to God's plan and ordination.

K. Scripture doesn't gloss over suffering.

1. It's common.

a. 1 Cor 10:13—temptations that come to us in suffering are "common." (Job 14:1; John 16:22; Rom: 8:18-28; 2 Cor 1; 4:16-18; Jas 1:2ff; 1 Pet 4:1,12; 5:10)

b. The temptation in suffering is to believe the worst and lose all hope—"If I can't see the stars, they must not be there." (From Paul's lost-at-sea experience, Acts 27:20ff.)

c. More than half of the Psalms are written in more of a minor key tone—Psalms that include deep grief and lament. Notice, for example, how David is in "anguish" with "fear and trembling...horror..." and wants to "fly away...like a dove..." and "...lodge in the wilderness..." (Ps 55:3-8).

2. It doesn't limit God. In all four cases (Naomi, Jeremiah, Job, Paul), their inability, in the midst of suffering, to think that life could be good again, was no measure of God's capacity to work all out for His glory and their good.

3. God doesn't enjoy hurting or causing sorrow to people, despite the fact that He does (Jer. 29:11). What loving parent doesn't do this for his children? Even though they may not understand what is happening or why? (Heb. 12:11)

4. Job's, Naomi's and Jeremiah's sufferings seemed to be resolved later in life—after years. Decades in some cases. We must remember to “breathe” in God's promises. “If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

L. More of God's answers to the most common faulty views of suffering:

1. Deism: God is not involved: like a divine watch-maker—He winds it up and lets life and the world go on their own. (**But** God is the “sufficient cause” as taught by His Word. Even our thoughts and thinking, moment by moment, are under God's control [Ps. 139:16]).

2. God “permits” it but, ultimately, doesn't cause it. (**But** the testimony of Scripture is more definite.)

3. Contrary to both views, God is involved and determinative **and, at the same time**, fully good, wise, just, and loving.

a. Jeremiah 20:14-18: Jeremiah and Job ask the “Why?” question to God, because they are attributing their suffering to His providence. They were right.

b. Psalm 139 displays God's providence (Latin *Providere*, to foresee.)

c. God also determines trends in history: (Compare Isa 46:8-10). God determined that Cyrus, as the king, would be used to conquer nations and to free Israel.

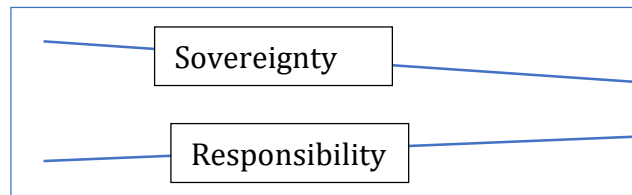
d. God governs inanimate things (Ps 148:8); weather (Job 37:9-13; 38:33-38); animals and their feeding (Ps 104:20-22); nations and their history (Dan 4:34,35; Acts 17); all events of life (Ps 139:16).

e. All of His control is for His “good” purpose (Rom 8:28; Phil 1:29) and His glory (Rom 11:36; Col 1:15-20).

f. Sovereignty and Responsibility are both taught in Scripture. He is in control, but sinless. It is people who sin. How can these two be reconciled? No one knows. Theologians have tried and have usually ended up emasculating either sovereignty or responsibility. The Bible teaches both (like other mysteries such as inspiration of Scripture, the Trinity, and the humanity and deity of Christ).

This affirms assurance for all people and affirms the realness of all people and their decisions and the comfort of being able to rest in His wisdom, love, and control.

Heresy is often the alternative to allowing the mystery to stand in this doctrinal area. (For example: the box with two non-parallel angled lines inside the box meeting somewhere outside the box—i.e. they come together outside the box somewhere. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility come together in God’s decree and time, somehow—outside of our brief lifetime and scope of intelligence.)



g. If I insist that I must be able to figure this out, I deny what the Bible has testified throughout about the incomprehensibility of God (Isa 55:8-11; Rom 11:33ff) and the limitedness of man (our lives are a shadow, vapor, dust, breath, mist, dream, etc.).

4. God’s Good Gift

a. How to use Matt 7:7-11 to address God’s promised “good gifts” to His people. (For example, a woman who lost her husband to his suicide had her doubts about God’s faithfulness to this promise to give “good gifts” to His children.)

i. The assurance here is not that God will give what feels or looks good to His children, rather

ii. The assurance is that God, who is good, will give only what is good, by His definition, to His children. Even sinful fathers give good gifts and don’t deceive or give hurtful things to their children. So, God in His love and perfections, in His Fatherliness, will certainly give good to His children—regardless of how it feels or looks or what others say. He is up to something!

b. Hope for the future that we can offer to sufferers:

i. “Goodness and mercy” shall “follow me all the days of my life” (Ps 23:6). God is up to something!

ii. Recall the saints in their suffering (Joseph, Job, Naomi, Paul, Jeremiah). This is not a surprise to God. He is up to something good!

iii. Emphasize that nothing is outside of His control—there are no accidents. He is up to something good!

c. Faith becomes stronger. It's through suffering that our knowledge becomes concrete and not theoretical—knowledge about life as it is, with its brokenness, and grace and favor as they are, because of God's goodness in the brokenness.

i. Rom 5:3-5 "...we rejoice in our sufferings...knowing...produces endurance...character...hope...does not put us to shame...because God's love has...through the Holy Spirit..."

ii. Jas 1:2-4 "...testing...steadfastness...perfect and complete..."

iii. In 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10 Paul speaks positively (not idyllically as in some fairy-tale or "out of body" experience).

iv. Phil 1:29

v. Rom 8:18

vi. 2 Cor 4:17

vii. 1 Cor 2:9 "...no eye has seen..."

d. Keep in mind that God suffered too with His Son. Brought life out of death and does so for all His people (2 Cor 1:9,10).

e. In glory, everyone will be singing a new, unique song (Rev 5:9; 14:3) of worship because our redemption covers unique sins, failures, and sufferings. His acceptance and blessing assures that all suffering will be fully and uniquely answered by our sovereign, omniscient, loving Father, because of our being in Christ (Rev 7:15-17).

As the passages in the first part of this lesson indicate, suffering is not a marginal topic in the Bible. Much more has been written and can be unpacked about each of these items. But these concepts address common questions that our friends and counselees have.

The next section of this lesson briefly addresses some thoughts about how we may approach suffering people. This is not strictly a "how-to" section for counseling sufferers. But it does summarize God's intention for believers to engage other suffering brothers and sisters.

II. We Are to Serve Suffering People

A. Suffering, ours and that of others, is the rule, not the exception in our broken world.

Sin victimizes all people in this world, now and for eternity—unless they are in Christ (Gen 2:17, “...you shall surely die;” Rom 6:23, “...the wages of sin is death;” Rom 5:12, “...so death spread to all men;” Prov 4:19, “...deep darkness...”; Prov 13:15, “...ruin;” John 10:10a, “...the thief comes...steal...kill...destroy”).

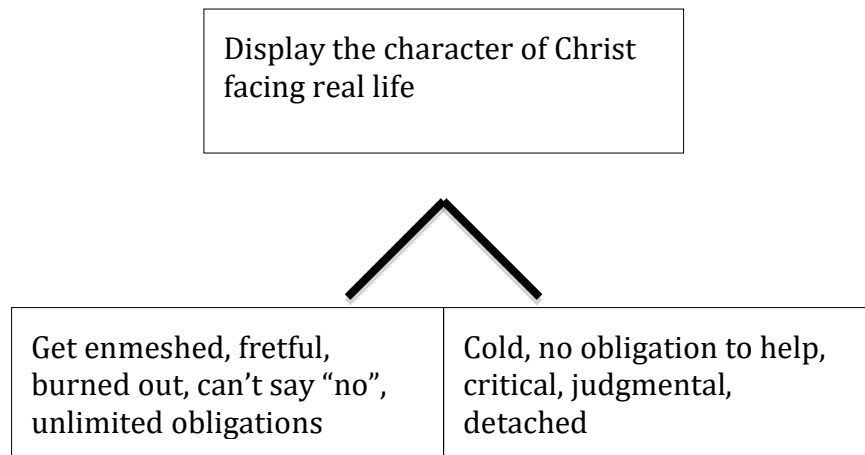
The focus of this section is mainly on the suffering of believers. We are to serve them by helping them acquire God’s gaze/perspective about their lives.

1. Suffering can be thought of as an “unsought gift” (Dr. Mark Talbot’s term) for all believers (Phil 1:29; Heb. 12:11) and unbelievers (Lk 13:1-5). Ultimately all events are determined by God to bring people to trust and know Him and to distrust and turn from themselves and their idols (Acts 17:26,27; Acts 14:15-18). The prophets and their mockery of idols illustrate this (Isa 44:9-20).

2. We are commissioned to serve suffering people. “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (I Thes 5:14).

3. God had purposes for Paul in his suffering in his own life (2 Cor 1:8,9; 12:7-9) and purposes that reached into the lives of the Ephesian church (Eph 3:13 and 3:16-19).

B. There are three common options for how we can face sufferers:



1. Examples of the right balance.

a. Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

b. High Priest (Heb 5:2,3)

c. Prayers of Daniel, Nehemiah, Jeremiah—identifying with the people, “We have sinned...”

d. Jesus wept (Jn. 11:35)

e. The church of Thessalonica (a godly group) grieved (1 Thes. 4:13)

C. Different responses are needed for different people.

“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (1 Thes. 5:14; cp Jude 22,23).

1. “admonish the idle,” (literally the word means unruly, disorderly, undisciplined). These are determined violators.

Counsel for working with unruly folks: deal with the trouble makers, high-minded sinners: adulterers, abusers, drunks, molesters, etc. Counseling in the dramatic mode; focusing on a change of direction. “Choose you this day whom you will serve...” A more brisk, decisive kind of counsel.

For example, a high school girl came to talk about getting academic help. Week after week there was no change, no progress in her study behaviors. She kept saying, however, that she wanted something different in her behavior and in her school success. (Coke machine example.) The girl’s epiphany: “That’s what I’m doing, isn’t it?!” The counselor: “If you want something different, you must do something different!”

E.g. Jay Adams tells of a woman who came with her husband to a counseling session and brought a notebook listing years of his sins and faults against her. A pretty accurate listing, it turned out. The counselor said upon review of the notebook, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone as bitter and resentful as you.”

2. “encourage the faint-hearted.” These are ready to give up. They are tired; have trouble trusting and going on.

Counsel for working with the faint-hearted, the hard of hearing, the forgetful, easily discouraged, struggling, anxious, fearful: More of a counseling patience, a slow-moving, nurture mode is needed because of their broken spirit.

Examples:

a. Ex 6:9: people with “broken spirit” (literally, “little souled” people) couldn’t hear Moses because they were suffering so heavily under harsh slavery.

b. Ps 77:3: “spirit faints.” Where are you, Lord?

c. Jonah 4:8: “faint” or “small souled,” or disheartened. God relieves him.

d. Isa 35:4: “anxious heart.”

e. Isa 54:6: The forsaken wife is grieved in spirit.

f. Isa 57:15: lowly, contrite.

E.g. College graduate but without a job in her field of social work. Lives with her single mom who is a homosexual. She's crossed moral boundaries herself while in college and is plagued with guilt. She's troubled when she touches a condom in a parking lot with her foot, touches door knobs that others touch, worried if someone sneezes in the same room with her. She reads lots of Christian literature, goes to a good church, but only sporadically, because of her work schedule in a department store. Her doubts and fears have plagued her since her high school years. She battles with them daily. Week after week, month after month she has memories that crop up about her moral lapses in college, her temptations with sexual and romance fantasy at work, her fears of germs everywhere and much more. There are no quick fixes. She is "little-souled," "Ready-To-Halt" in Pilgrim's Progress. There is hope for change, but no "quick fix" or "silver bullet" of counsel.

3. "help the weak." Literally, "hold on" to the weak, those with little strength of their own, fewer resources than most to help them persevere. These may have personality qualities that limit them. Maybe these are people whose background of entrapment has been so deep that only the slowest progress occurs, and then with occasional serious lapses and missteps. These can't take in much and may have shorter or longer seasons in which they persevere. Relapses occur periodically. They may need life-time help and support. These may have some challenges mentally, or some serious medical condition. They may need to be propped up all their lives, to one extent or another.

a. This is probably permanent-mode, life-long ministry. The significance of the church is vital here.

For example: A man with brain injury from work; his swiftness to pick things up, to remember, to sequence matters, was affected. No longer able to be the provider, his wife left him and took the children with her. He aches deeply, but grasps help very slowly. This will be a long-time helping relationship.

b. This is a true test of the strong—their persevering love.

c. In Ps 10 the hurting and the needy are pictured; it pictures all of us. We are all helpless at one level.

d. Counseling is a permanent life-long learning mode. This limits our goal: not expecting huge gains. We work with the capabilities that are there. "...protecting the less presentable parts" (1 Cor. 12:22-24).

- e. “holding on” includes pursuing, providing, protecting, and persevering with them.
 - f. This is a challenge to the church: Is the ministry only for the strong—those who can get organized, the rational, the quick study, the disciplined?
 - g. Pastors ought to have people in their lives who are “slow movers” in life. Not just the ones who eat up the truth. There ought to be such people in their caseloads.
4. “be patient with them all,” an under-scoring feature of ministry to all kinds of people suffering with one form of weakness or another.
- a. See Ex. 34 and God’s display of His shepherding of the people—communicable attributes for us to imitate.

Conclusion

In this lesson we’ve seen the impact of suffering in its various dimensions and seen some of the ways God uses it for the benefit of His people. God is not surprised by suffering and neither should the believer be surprised. God also gives some directions for how believers can enter the suffering world of such troubled brothers and sisters.

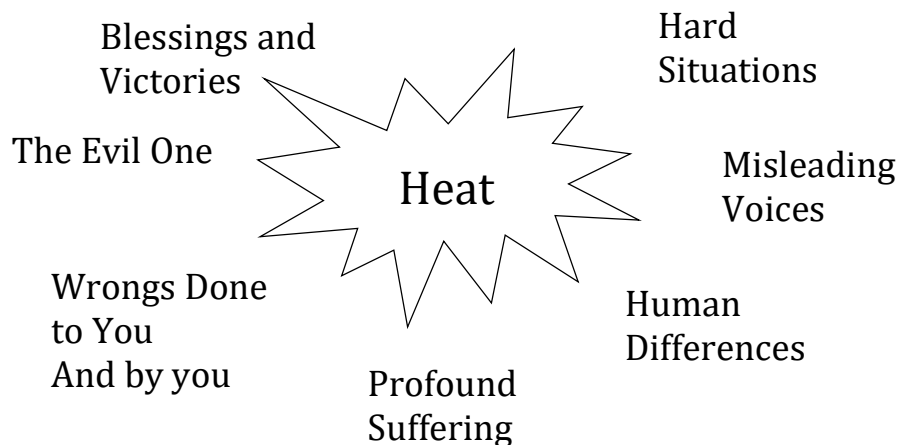
In our next lesson we will look at mistreatment as heat that comes to all at one time or another.

Questions for Reflection

1. Since most of us only think about suffering seriously when it comes into our experience, what wise responses to others in suffering situations should that create in us?
2. How would you respond to someone who thinks that suffering has no place in a Christian who is truly living a life of faith?
3. What concepts about suffering do the sufferings of Hannah, Job, and Jeremiah give to the believer who wants to understand or help others through their season of suffering?
4. How would you explain suffering in light of God’s sovereign character?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 7
Being Wronged and the Guilt of Wronging Others



I. Mistreatment is a Major Biblical Theme

A. Many books of the Old and New Testaments have mistreatment as a backdrop.

1. The prophets speak about this and Israel’s all too common unwillingness to respond with repentance and faith (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and most of the Minor Prophets). God used the imperialistic attacks by pagan nations such as Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, the Philistines, Moabites, Amalekites, Syrians, Midianites, Rome, and others for good purposes in Israel’s and the early church’s experience.

2. Habakkuk’s prayer in the face of Israel’s mistreatment by an evil, pagan nation shows how such experiences can be confusing to believers. In Habakkuk 1:13, he prayed, “You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?” He was troubled because the wicked Assyrians were used by God to bring discipline on the people of God.

Peter also counsels believers to “not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

3. More than 100 Psalms speak of God as a “refuge,” or “shelter” for His people—often in view of enemies who were out to get them.

4. Many New Testament books have mistreatment as a backdrop or key concern for believers to address.

a. Mistreatment is a theme in the Gospels, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, Jude.

b. Mistreatment is a theme of some entire New Testament books Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, Revelation.

5. God presents Himself as a refuge for His people and an enemy to His and their enemies (e.g. 2 Thes 1:6-9).

“God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

6. The imprecatory Psalms (Psalms that call down God’s judgment upon His enemies) show the same disposition of God against the enemies of His people. Some portions of Psalms that include these curses, according to John Piper’s *Desiring God* web site are: 5:10; 10:15; 28:4; 31:17-18; 35:4-6; 40:14-15; 58:6-11; 69:22-28; 109:6-15; 139:19-22; 140:9-10.

B. God has purposes in matters of suffering (more about this topic was discussed in Lesson 6).

1. It should not be a surprise to the believer that opposition and suffering will come his way (1 Pet 4:12). Jesus warned also that if He received opposition, they should expect it also as His disciples (Jn. 15:20). Paul said, “All who desire to live a godly life” will face it (2 Tim 3:12).

2. Suffering is part of the “calling” every believer has (Phil 1:29). Like a calling to faith, this has been “granted,” or more literally, “gifted” to us. Our Father is up to something in the pains and struggles we face from others. There are no accidents in God’s providence for His people.

3. Suffering purifies one’s faith (1 Pet 4:1,2).

4. James also tells us that the poor are “rich in faith” in James 2:5. What produces that richness? It may be that they suffer and cannot protect themselves from it by using their wealth; and, so, they learn to trust.

Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only two of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 who were commended without any rebuke. They also are identified as the only poor and suffering churches. The rest appear to have been more prosperous and secure and were warned about the danger of God’s

forthcoming discipline, in one way or another. Generally, there seems to be a connection between a lively faith and suffering.

5. It equips one to counsel others (2 Cor 1:3,4).

In 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 Paul says that “God... 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.” Being wronged, suffering unjustly, matures us for ministry to others.

6. It increases hope, perseverance, and maturity (Rom 5 and 8; James 1:3-5).

Hope, growth, and maturity come to each of us differently in the suffering we experience at the hands of others.

Even Jesus grew through suffering: he learned obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8).

Job (patience), James (wisdom), Jesus (obedience) and the Psalmists (trust) note that there are different purposes that God is working in us by suffering.

7. Suffering reveals who we are.

How one responds to mistreatment reveals who he or she is. It's when mistreated that one finds out where his heart is and what or who his life is directed by.

Psalm 81:10,11 show how Israel reacted to the oppression of Egypt and the challenges of the wilderness. Instead of turning to God, they grumbled and complained.

8. Mistreatment whets our appetite for our future hope, and future hope enables the believer to serve others even when they are mistreated

A Christian world-view must include God's ultimate destination for His people—a time and condition when we will no longer be sinned against. God's promises are crucial for our and our counselees' sanity and freedom to respond to being sinned against.

The future of the believer is not irrelevant. Peter says, in the context of suffering, “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.” (1 Peter 1:13). The future for the believer is significant for handling mistreatment now.

II. The Transaction of Faith:

A. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” (1 John 5:4).

1. “*Just* have faith.” The word “just” minimizes the challenge to trust. “I suppose there are a thousand commands and illustrations of faith in the Bible. Anything that is repeated that many times probably isn’t very easy to practice.” David Powlison.

a. Jesus asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8). See the context of an oppressed woman and unjust judge to whom Jesus refers in contrast to our generous Father’s love and faithfulness. Faith **in such needy, oppressive situations** is the victory. Jesus seems to affirm this, here. But such faith is rare. It’s not “easy.”

b. Typically someone who uses this phrase is doing what Proverbs 25:20 warns about. Solomon says singing “songs to a heavy heart” is “like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda” (Prov 25:20). In other words, the singer doesn’t really tune in to where a hurting person’s heart is. He utters words that seem to leave a hurting person cold or with nothing but froth and empty foam.

2. Trusting in God’s Fatherly goodness and wise counsel, i.e. trusting Him as our Refuge, is the road to travel for victory in the midst of the “storms of destruction” (David’s term for the oppression and unjust treatment he was facing from Saul, Ps. 57:1), until they pass by. So **how** does that happen?

3. Powlison uses three phrases to help us walk by faith in these “storms of destruction.” What he is doing here is **showing us how to apply questions 5 and 6** in our *The Eight Questions* paradigm or model of how change happens. He suggests:

a. Waking Up! (Blind eyes see; deaf ears hear; you were dead and were raised.) Biblical change is based on the awakening that God does in us.

i. Two parts to waking up:

* The **Bible becomes Technicolor** and Dolby Sound where previously it may have seemed irrelevant and only the situation (Heat) seemed to be Technicolor and Dolby.

* The fears I think and feel and the wants I have for relief aren’t all there is. There is a bigger story in process! There is a hunger and thirst for relationship with the living God and His Son, the Savior.

ii. Life is now a moral drama—a cosmic battle between good and evil.

A moral, covenant relationship is being lived out in every circumstance, every day and in every way I treat people (e.g. answer the phone, respond to having to wait). It's not primarily a medical, money, social, popularity, etc. drama as the world thinks. It's a right and wrong, truth and error, good and evil, wisdom from above or earthly, demonic wisdom dynamic that is in play.

iii. People change boldly when they grow in the persuasion that God is gracious: with Past, Present, and Future grace.

* Past grace: justification, adoption, atonement. (It says, "God is for you" (cp. Deut 7:6; Ps 103; Rom 8:29ff; 2 Cor 5:14,15).

Such grace is not established by something in your earthly, human history. But it is determined objectively, in Christ. "...before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). If one tends to beat himself up and reflect on failure, past grace is an important place to look.

* Present grace: He is with you and in you. Ephesians 1 is especially helpful with these reflections. Consider all the "in Him" and "in Christ" phrases. "...our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps 46:1).

Consider His good shepherdliness (Ps 23; John 10). Consider Romans 8:1 and Psalm 100:1. What kind of people are encouraged to rejoice, be glad, and hope? To whom is God addressing these words of grace? Spiritually and morally perfect ones?

Such a focus is important for believers who are engaged in ongoing, present tense struggles and who do not want to give up or give in. It's a version of the "...work of faith and labor of love..." (1 Thes 1:3) that energizes and encourages us in the ongoing warfare we're in.

* Future grace: consider Piper's illustration of water going over a dam (present grace—the water flowing over the falls now), into a lake (past grace—the water that has already fallen), coming from an ever-flowing river (future grace—the water yet to flow over the falls).

1 Pet 1:13. He says to suffering believers, "...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." God's future for the believer, eschatology, is not irrelevant for the believer (1 Cor 15:19; 1 Thes 1:3).

Such a focus on future grace will be helpful for suffering people whose situation may look like it will never change in this life. This is the major significance of the book of Revelation.

b. Owning up: dealing now with what is wrong.

i. Identify what is wrong specifically and accurately in myself. We have a tendency to be blind. “Sin” cuts through the euphemisms. (These are not “boo boos,” mistakes, weaknesses, poor choices—but sin.)

ii. *I* (emphasis added) do what I do! No one makes me do it. No heat/person makes me live the way I do from the moral standpoint. This responsibility cuts through blame shifting (thorn bush) responses such as * “my needs weren’t met,” the “devil made me do it,” “my dysfunctional family” (for example, “You should see me when I’m really angry!” “I’m not really angry at work. I’m a great guy. But my wife pushes all my buttons.”)

* genetic factors (for example, “Anxiousness runs in the family.”), or

* ethnic differences (for example, “I’m German! So I just speak my mind.”).

iii. Seeing that sin is serious before God. (Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20—my sin is the reason for Christ’s death. It put Him on the cross.) Two other tendencies are to gauge the seriousness of my sin before my own eyes and the eyes of other people.

Remorse or sorrow for my offense or hurt to other people alone doesn’t lead to real change. I need to realize that the problem is between God and me, first of all. This is liberating. It propels me to where this moral dilemma exists—between me and the living God before whom I live—and opens the door to God’s grace (Jas. 4:6) for my own faithfulness and joy and for any reconciliation I must initiate.

c. Shifting weight: the actual believing, moving toward the Father and the Son, our Redeemer, interacting with God’s Spirit, trusting, abiding, depending upon God’s words of grace and promise, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...” (Heb 12:2).

Nobody changes by analysis, alone. It’s the relationship with Christ that changes us. This includes:

* Confess: naming the problem for what it is.

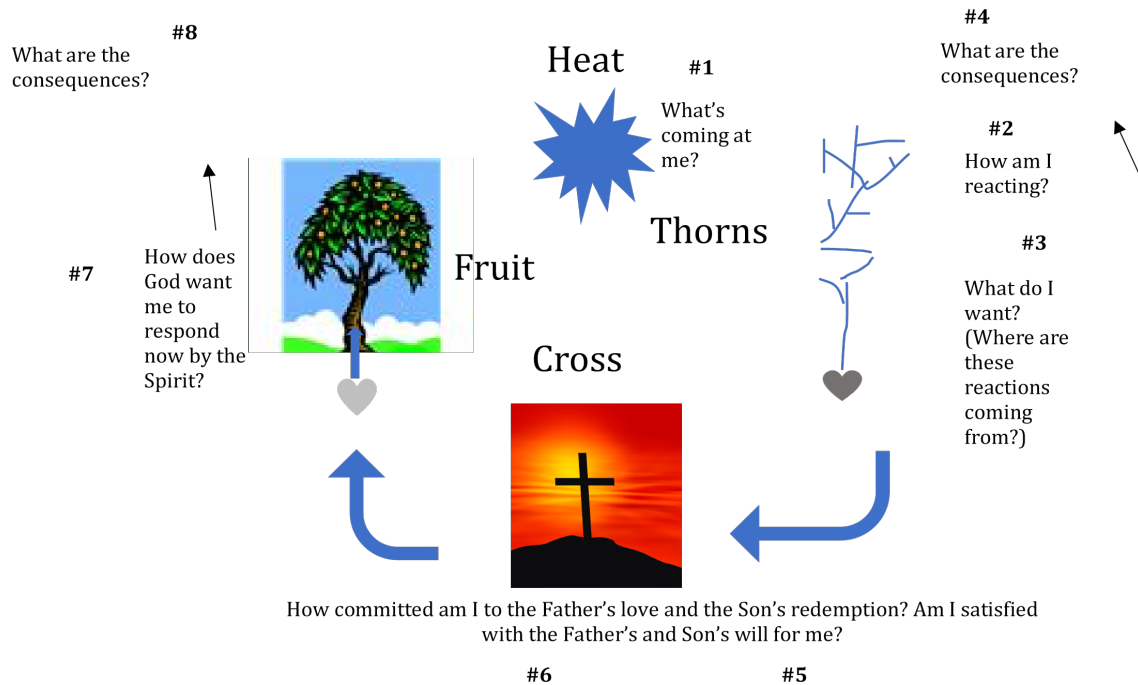
* Ask for mercy: naming our need from God. We need His forgiveness; to be washed in the “blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

* Rely on, trust in, God’s promises—a refuge of mercy (Ps 32; 51; 103; 130).

* Rejoice and give thanks. This is where the “big arrow” is completed. You are grateful. This is the “godly sorrow” that leads to life. The joy of repentance. (Consider again to whom Psalm 100 was written—received, redeemed, trusting, believing sinners. See also Psalm 50:14,15.)

III. Faithfulness (Faith that leads to action): The Small Arrow from the Heart to the Fruit Tree

The Three Trees and The Eight Questions



Paul summarizes the goal of faith in the believer.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love” (Gal 5:6).

“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5).

Another way to ask this is to ask, “What does living redemptively look like?” What does living like a Christian, one redeemed by Christ, one bought and paid for by His blood, look like?

What do I do as one who is seeking to live by faith in my difficult situation—when I've been wronged or, perhaps, when I become aware that I've wronged another person.

Getting straight with God sends me out to the world. It does not make me complacent or satisfied to be at ease on a mountain top.

A. Living redemptively puts our relationship with God, through Christ, at the center of everyday living. It means believers become more and more truly human!

1. Ecc 12:13 “...the whole (duty-the term is missing in the Hebrew text as the KJV and NIV note by their italics and footnote) of man.” Christian faith and humanness are the same thing! At the center of the Christian life is the redemption of creation, including our humanity.

2. The Bible is about normalcy—everyday life.

a. Greeting one another

b. Good and bad anger, jealousy, sorrow

c. Paying taxes and other money matters (money is the single biggest topic talked about in Scripture)

d. Sexuality

e. Food and eating

f. Gratitude and generosity

g. Dying (Dying in our modern Western world is what pornography was to the Victorian era—it's not a topic for common open conversation. But it's one thing that is certain. Thinking about dying is central to being human.)

3. The Psalms touch hundreds of our deepest heart desires, fears, and hopes. Likewise, Proverbs addresses many life situations in which we need wise judgment.

But both books repeatedly emphasize the foundational covenantal relationship with YHWH. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...” and “...wisdom” (Prov 1:7; 9:10).

4. There is much more in Scripture about living than having a quiet time, denominational distinctives, church government, small groups, church dinners, accountability, how to dress for “church,” mystical experiences, etc.

(Paul even downplayed a mystical spiritual experience of his own. He summarized a mountaintop type experience he had in 2 Corinthians 12 when he was driven to speak about it because of problems in the Corinthian church.)

Many of these and other things occupy much print and attention. But the Scriptures put their emphasis on the rubber-meets-the-road matters of living. Consider the life applications that follow the doctrinal foundations laid out in many epistles. Consider two examples: In Romans 1-11 Paul addresses our identity in Christ before the life applications that he takes up beginning in chapter 12. In Ephesians he follows the same pattern: In Ephesians 1-3 he speaks of our identity. Then he takes up daily life issues beginning in chapter four.

B. Living redemptively means we live with a consciousness of who we are in relation to our Father, our Savior, and the Spirit (Questions 5-7; the “cross”). This gives believers a framework for biblical self-knowledge. We do it by:

1. Slowing the video down (thinking about our actions). We do this by asking *The Eight Questions* or thinking through *The Three Trees*. In this way we get a sense of the reality map by which we are charting our life course. “What wants am I serving?” “What or whom am I fearing?” “What are the consequences of my reactions?”

C. Living redemptively teaches us to think of ourselves as warriors. Examining ourselves—how our Savior wants us to be fighting.

J.C. Ryle, “...being at war with yourself” is being a disciple of Christ. “Being a Christian costs you your sins. You and your sin must quarrel if you and God are to be friends.” (Romans 7 affirms this battle is the true experience of every Christian.)

D. Living redemptively means we are fruit bearers. Fruit bearing is inevitable, if I am living with a conscious trust in Christ (Rom 6:11). Setting clear expectations for change is now possible. Because of my dependence upon Christ, I can now choose to address my failures, practice faith working through love, and rest on God’s grace.

1. Keep in mind that change, growth, is incremental. Value highly each movement toward Christ-likeness, each incremental change, even though it’s short of perfection. “I’m not all that I should be, but I’m not what I was (and I am not what I will be”). I have hope for the future. (See Phil 1:6.)

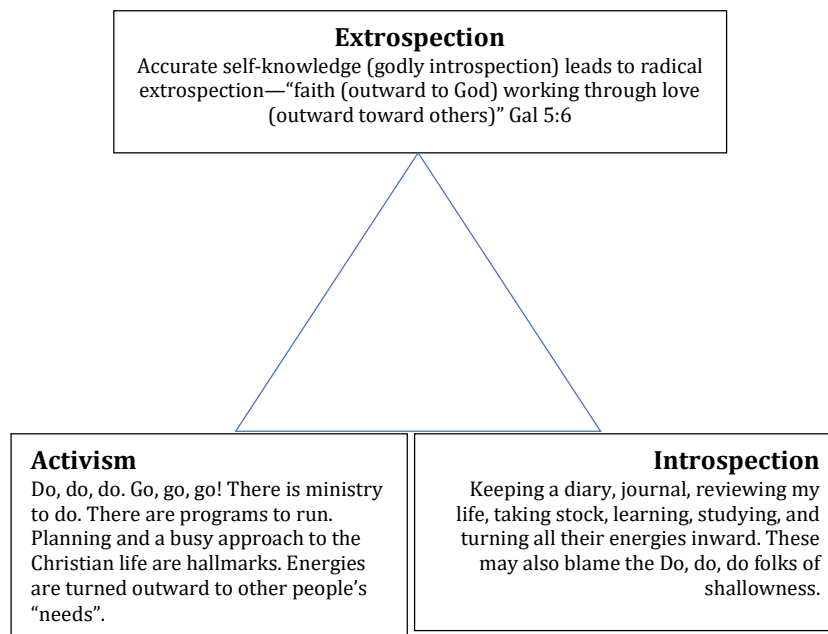
2. Changes in frequency of outbursts of anger, intensity of anger, duration of anger and how quickly you turn to God and the Redeemer reflect your growth, increase your appreciation for the Love of God, and increase your ability to be a

peacemaker. Fruit-bearing will vary according to how quickly we learn to turn to and trust Christ during sinful eruptions.

3. Asking for help is part of the fruit tree as well. Growth occurs by the function of each part of the body, “every joint” (Eph 4:13-16). The church is God’s primary community for growth as Paul asserts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4.

E. Living redemptively means living with an outward focus.

“Extrospection” is the goal in contrast to being focused on myself. “Introspection” or “Activism,” which can also be “doing,” is for my own benefit. “Extrospection” is a manifestation of “faith working through love.” It involves heart motives.



F. Living redemptively means we express godly emotions in godly ways. Every one of these can go bad, and usually do, because of what our hearts crave. But they may also be part of a godly and reconciling experience.

1. There is a godly form of every emotion (for example, anxiety, 2 Cor 11:28; Phil 2:2,27,28. Consider also jealousy, anger, fear, etc.)

2. We often give special attention to intellect or to will features of our personalities. We typically consider them more reliable or useful than our emotions. But there is strong biblical evidence that voices in all three areas are intertwined and often wrong voices to listen to. We can think wrongly, want wrongly, and feel wrongly. Often, we experience some of each of these at the same time. For example, there are emotional connections to love and faith. The

Psalms reflect this clearly with fear, guilt, anxiousness, comfort, joy, celebration, laughter, singing, etc.

3. Neither stoicism (being emotionally detached or unmoved) nor emotionalism (being freely and overly expressive of feelings) are a guarantee of the Spirit's work.

4. Biblical truth is not Prozac. It's not meant to make you calm. There are many times when it will rattle you. It should!

a. Painful experiences: God wired us with pain sensors. The issue is where does that pain take you?

b. Our reactions grow out of our heart. The pain experience is not neutral. With betrayal, for example:

* We may experience denial and be overwhelmed, hypersensitive, feel things are "complicated" (too many loose ends to tie together). Our situation may appear and, in fact, may be endless and look hopeless. Or...

* We may experience betrayal at appropriate intensity, with appropriate arousal as the emotional people we are created to be. It becomes "simple" (not easy or unimportant or trivial) in that God's view and voice are light for us. "...in your light do we see light" (Ps 36:9b). I have the Father's assurance that betrayal is going somewhere in His providence: "He is up to something good!"

c. Injustice, the pain inflicted on others especially, should anger us! It is a major theme throughout the Bible.

i. Justice is part of what the Prophet Micah summarized as God's will for the character of His people (Micah 6:8).

ii. Justice is what Jeremiah said was what should comprise our boasting (Jer 9:23,24).

iii. Injustice was what Ezekiel said led to the downfall of Babylon (Ezek 16:49,50).

iv. Injustice is what Jesus condemned in the Pharisees for omitting justice from their priorities (Matt 23:23).

v. Injustice is one of the great themes of the end times that God will eliminate on behalf of all of His people (Rev 6:9-11).

d. Weariness can lead to negative emotional and behavioral reactions. 1 Sam. 30. "David and the people who were with him...wept until they had no more strength..."

i. Their pain becomes complicated. The people blame David and become bitter.

ii. But handling the pain became simple (not easy). David strengthened himself in the Lord and led on, victoriously.

G. Living redemptively means I create a climate of grace in my relationships—when I sin against others and when they sin against me.

We approach others with a fundamentally merciful and constructive attitude of mercy (1 Cor 13:4; Col 3:12-14). We seek to be imitators of God, as His children. God enters into a constructive displeasure of mercy in the face of people who sin against Him (1 Cor 13:4; 1 Pet 2:24,25).

1. When we sin against others: We need to be willing to ask forgiveness where appropriate. The words matter.

a. Common mistaken forms:

* "I'm sorry it bothered you so much."

* "I'm sorry if I hurt you. I didn't mean to."

* "I'm sorry you're upset."

* "I'm sorry you feel that way."

* "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

* "Forgive me for reacting when you were..."

* "Well, do you forgive me for getting angry?"

* "I'm sorry. I apologize." "That's OK." (There is no transaction, true interaction, intimacy or closeness here.)

b. Essential ingredients:

i. Naming your wrongdoing.

ii. Recognizing the effect. Here is where "I'm sorry." is appropriate. Hurt was involved.

iii. Asking forgiveness. This is where true interaction/transaction is desired. "Please forgive me." Sin was involved.

iv. Accepting the consequences. Making wrongs right where possible.

c. Apologies are for accidents. Forgiveness is sought for wrongdoing. Being sorry is for the effects my behavior has had on another.

2. When others sin against us. We need to be willing to forgive; to be no threat to our accuser.

a. Forgiveness is best as a transaction or interpersonal effort to build or rebuild a relationship—a two-way street. It includes personal attitudinal features and an interpersonal communications effort. The first is always possible because of Christ in you. The second depends upon the willingness of another party to forgive or to ask for your forgiveness. We cannot control, and are not expected to control, another's willingness to respond righteously.

i. Luke 17:1-4 and Matthew 18:15-17 say to "Go to your brother" when asking for or granting forgiveness.

ii. How many times should I forgive my brother? Jesus' story of the king forgiving his servant's debt and the servant refusing to forgive a debt owed him is Jesus' rationale for his 70x7 answer.

iii. Granting forgiveness is not necessarily forgetting an evil done to me. Countless times Scripture urges us to be prudent and wise in our relationships—this means using one's judgment about another's trustworthiness.

iv. Granting forgiveness at its heart is a three-fold promise:

* regarding the other person (I won't bring this up to you again.)

* regarding others (I won't bring this up to others.)

* regarding my own self (I won't bring it up to myself and keep nursing this in my own mind.)

v. Three ways we can mishandle this effort:

* with internal bitterness and resentment

* with an attack out of anger, vengeance

* with slander, clamor, gossip

b. Forgiving like your Father (Matt 18:21-35)

i. The servant's heat is that he owes 100 denarii. In a subsistence culture, this is meant to communicate a huge debt.

ii. Jesus is talking about 70x7—big stuff is intended.

iii. Thorns: unforgiveness

iv. Good fruit: forgiveness

v. Who's the Great King? The Lord who is just and abounding in mercy.

vi. Heart reactions (the thorn bush in *The Three Trees* or question 2 in *The Eight Questions*). I am in debt towards God = 10,000 talents. "Treason" ("vengeance," Rom 12:19) is what I commit when I act as if I'm God (James 4:12ff). This passage is meant to show that whatever significant debts others owe us (sin against someone always means incurring a debt) there will be a cost to someone if it is to be forgiven. All these offenses are minor in comparison to our debt to God. This doesn't mean they feel minor or look minor on the scale of human relationships. But in contrast to the debt we owe to God, they are at the level or on the scale of nano-offenses.

c. Having an attitude of forgiveness. This is a private, internal, spiritual matter between you and the Lord. This grows out of your interpersonal relationship with God Himself (Eph 4:32). "Whenever you stand praying, forgive" (Mark 11:25). There is no thought here of someone "needing" to ask your forgiveness. If they've sinned against you, forgive.

If I refuse to forgive, I am claiming God's prerogative to be judge (Matt 6:14,15; Mark 11:25; Eph 4:32; James 4:12).

d. Working for transactional, interpersonal forgiveness. This is where someone comes asking for forgiveness (or perhaps the sin is egregious or public, then for testimony's sake, you may want to be proactive—you go to him/her (Matt 18:15-18). "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18).

i. This creates a quality that if you have to say hard things, it won't have that hostile edge. You are looking for concrete ways to give grace to someone who is your enemy (Matt 5:43-48)—to love him: to "do good," "bless," and "pray for" your enemy (Luke 6:27,28), even by being a friend who must "wound" him (Prov 27:6).

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy" (Prov 27:6).

E.g. “Making fudge”—a neighbor in a downstairs apartment shows generosity to the rude upstairs tenants by making them fudge and showing kindness. E.g. A man with an insolent, nasty boss gets coffee for her and helps her with the copy machine. “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (Prov 16:7)

ii. Go forward with purposeful “patience,” “endurance,” “forbearance,” “longsuffering,” and “perseverance.”

* These qualities, the fruit of the Spirit, are hard to learn.*

*These imply that the “heat” doesn’t go away quickly—or at all.

* They are on every list of what God is creating in His people. They are a prominent part of His purpose. His communicable attributes. In the 1 Corinthians 13 definition of love, the first word in the list is “patient.” He is longsuffering.

* One’s ability to endure reveals what he is living for.

iii. Enter into constructive conflict. When you wrong me, how do I move toward being merciful to you? (Fruit Tree/Q7—after visiting the cross!)

* Speak with candor: saying what is true to another. (Satan takes this into the realm of vengeance, to incite me to “get even.”)

* Redemption is always “messy.” (See Tripp, Relationships: a Mess Worth Making.) Comfortability, convenience, neatness, may not be what characterizes this process—with even the best intentions and gracious approach.

* On one side: rebuke, admonish, reprove, exhort, judge, confront, talking about a problem, dealing with something that is wrong—as Jesus did. (Jesus did not always say what made people feel good. He seemed to always be “stirring the pot.”)

* On the other side (Satan’s): vent, criticize, nag, judge, be judgmental, accuse, attack.

* It’s the “take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” dynamic (Matt 7:1-5).

* Admonishment can be blunt at times. It’s always fair and accurate. It’s never exaggerated or unbalanced. (See the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3.) It always holds out hope and has an invitation to turn.

The Peacemaker by Ken Sandy of Peacemaker Ministries sketches sound biblical details and how to enter this process biblically and constructively.

Conclusion

Believers live in a world in which they are sinned against by others and sin against others, themselves. This lesson summarized how believers need to see these events and how to respond redemptively, by faith, when they occur.

In the next lesson the heat of Satan's attacks and the heat of things going well will bring these lessons to a conclusion. The lesson ends with a summary of the faith that does lead to victory in all heated settings.

Questions for Reflection

1. Explain how faith played the key role in how you navigated a time of mistreatment by displaying God's grace and power in your life (the "victory" of 1 John 5:4).
2. Faith is a transaction. Explain what that means.
3. Living redemptively means one becomes more fully human—as God intended. How will such living show up more and more in the Christian's life?
4. In what sense does a believer who has been sinned against need to forgive the offender, regardless of whether he or she asks for forgiveness? Does it always mean confronting the offender?

What Change Looks Like
**Applying the Model of Biblical Change When “Heat” Invites
Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, and Escapism**

Lesson 8

Demonic and Satanic Influence and the Dew of Blessings and Victories

I. Satanic and Demonic Influence and the “Heat”

A. Satan (adversary) is in God’s world. He is a creature. He is subject to God’s rule as a creature, though being the devil (slanderer, liar, Rev 12:9)!

1. Satan is introduced as a creature in Genesis 3. We are not living in an animistic world (everything possessed by a spirit).

2. **“Satan” means “adversary”** or opponent. But in Job, Satan is shown to not be able to touch a believer until God gives the say-so. Even that “touch” is limited to God’s boundaries.

3. The Bible’s main description of what Satan does is lie (Rev 12:9). He offers misleading counsel. But he is also a murderer of all who stand for the truth. Behind murder is a Murderer (John 8:44). Behind slander is a Slanderer. Behind loss is a Thief (John 10:10a) and an Accuser (Zech 3:1,2).

“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” (Rev 12:9)

“...the devil...was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Satan is a counterfeiter. A usurper.

4. In Genesis 3:4,5 he **casts doubt on God’s Word** by his rationale and appeals to Adam’s and Eve’s hearts to “be like God.” To have power, independence, likeness to God Himself!

a. The Bible lifts the curtain on evil in this world and shows that behind lies is a Liar (John 8:44).

b. When addressing lying, murder (anger), gossip or destructive speech, covetousness or theft, etc., bringing Satan into the subject isn’t changing the subject. Behind these kinds of behaviors is one who perpetuates them (John 10:10a).

5. The world's "wisdom" of "**bitter jealousy** (literally bad zeal) and selfish ambition in your hearts...is earthly, unspiritual and demonic" (James 3:14,15). The world takes its cue (usually without awareness of its source) from the Liar!

6. Satan has a **world-wide influence**: he is referred to as the "god of this world."

"... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).

"...whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rev 12:9; cp Isa 14:12,13).

7. **The conclusion** of all of this testimony: **Spiritual warfare is Satanic warfare** at one level or another.

B. How do we fight in spiritual warfare?

1. Consider the commands and direct statements in the New Testament about the believer engaging in spiritual warfare:

"Resist the devil..." (James 4:7)

"Put on the whole armor of God...against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11; and the broader context in verses 10-20).

We are "...waging war" ...with "divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..." (2 Cor 10:3-5).

There is a sense in the New Testament that all our spiritual battles are spiritual warfare. For example, pride is a flesh problem, but it is also "demonic" (James 3:15,16), and "from the world" (1 John 2:14-16).

2. There is no example of exorcism urged as a means of ministry in the New Testament. The normal ministry to occult-ridden culture was with the preaching of the Gospel.

a. The New Testament world was a world of the occult. Consider the world as it is depicted in Acts:

i. Simon the magician in Samaria in Act 8

ii. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra in Acts 14

iii. Paul in Philippi with the girl who had the spirit of divination in Acts 16

iv. Paul in Ephesus with Demetrius and believers burning their magic books in Acts 19

b. There are no instructions or examples put forth to follow in the epistles that urge any mode of ministry in an occult-obsessed world other than preaching and applying the Gospel. There are not two categories of need: sin and spiritual warfare. It's all spiritual warfare!

3. There were cases of direct confrontation with the demonic world by Jesus and the apostles. For example, there was the demoniac whom Jesus addressed, the convulsive boy whom the demon threw in the fire as a youth, and the girl with the spirit whom Paul rebuked.

a. But when it comes to directions for the church in its warfare, it appears to be the preaching and applying of the Gospel by the church that brings about "The God of peace...soon crush[ing] Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20).

b. It is the Gospel (the "Rock") through the ministry of the church that makes the "gates of Hell" shudder and collapse (Matt 16:18) in the spiritist-dominated culture of the New Testament

4. The "armor of God" in Ephesians 6:10-20 is an allusion to the Old Testament Messianic warrior. It was *not*, first of all, a metaphor from the Roman soldier's armor. All but the shield is from Isaiah and the LORD is wearing the armor.

a. The armor (compare the armor of Ephesians 6 to that in Isaiah)

i. "Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins" (Isa 11:5).

ii. "righteousness as a breastplate...and a helmet of salvation" (Isa 59:15-17).

iii. "feet of him who brings good news, who published peace..." (Isa 52:7).

iv. "He made my mouth like a sharp sword..." (Isa 49:2)

Note that in each context it is the LORD (YHWH) who is wearing the armor and invading the dark world!

v. The shield gets developed in the Psalms (God is presented as a "shield" for his people 20 times). He is also represented for this protective and security function by the term "refuge" 42 times. It is the

LORD, YHWH, who is most often referred to as the shield/refuge. In the counterattack by evil, there is One who will shield us. He is our shield. That is the essence of the Gospel.

b. Every piece of the armor is the norm for the believer in all the moral and spiritual kingdom battles we face, as is illustrated in Ephesians.

i. Ephesians 6:10-20 is not Paul changing the subjects he has been dealing with up to that point.

ii. Spiritual warfare is not spooky or mystical armor and warfare. It's the normal way to battle by applying the Gospel to life.

iii. It's Paul's call in Romans 13:10-14 to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

iv. Spiritual warfare is not a separate category of our battle. It's the essence of faith—which is our victory! (1 John 5:4).

5. Exorcism of the demon possessed/demonized is not about spiritual warfare as a separate category of ministry, but it is mercy ministry to suffering which Satan causes. Like His other miracles, or those of the apostles, these extraordinary acts were to confirm Jesus' identity as God's Messiah and their word as His Word. His mercy ministries included raising Jarius' daughter, the Widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus from the dead, giving sight to the blind, healing the woman with the issue of blood. He had mercy on many. His casting out of demons was another example of that.

a. Casting out demons is not about dethroning Satan. It's about relieving suffering. The "strong man" has already been "bound" (Matt 12:29). His kingdom is being "spoiled," i.e. conquered. In Luke 7:20-22, casting out demons is a category of healing along with healings of plagues, diseases and blindness. Healing and relieving suffering is what Jesus is doing. He heals. He casts out demons! The demonized are in the same category as epileptics, lame, etc. whom Jesus heals. There is nothing spooky or weird here (Matt 4:23ff).

b. New Testament exorcisms serve the same purpose as Jesus' and the apostles' other miracles—they show Him as the Messiah and verify His message (John 5:36; Heb 2:3,4).

c. Saul (Old Testament) was tormented by spirits sent by the Lord—these were sufferings of judgment. The *demons did not cause Saul to sin*. He was tormented by his sins, by his afflictions and pains.

d. When the Bible deals with exorcism, there are spiritual warfare issues going on, not moral commands. There weren't demons of smoking, anger,

depression, immorality, drunkenness, anxiety, etc. that needed to be cast out.

i. Suffering is in view. Jesus is responding to that. He's the King. He is showing visibly what He told the disciples He saw happening when they preached and healed. Like all His miracles, they were to verify His identity as Messiah first (Heb 2:3,4). Display His mercy, second.

ii. The disciples were sent to "Heal the sick in it (any city you go to to heal and to preach) and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you...'" When they returned to Jesus, they noted that "even the demons are subject to us in your name!" Jesus confirmed this and said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..." (Luke 10: 9-20).

e. Moral matters like addictions, bitterness, pride, fear, unbelief, occult activity, are all part of spiritual warfare—not special realms of demon power and encounters with demons. How are they to be dealt with? Calling people to repent and believe the Gospel. That was how they were dealt with by the apostles in Acts and appears to be the mode of ministry urged in the Epistles. No alternatives are urged to be practiced by the church anywhere in the New Testament.

6. How does the Bible address those who are involved with the occult?

a. Consider Manasseh (2 Kings 21). He was like an encyclopedia of the occult. He did it all. He was called to repent. Not doing so led to captivity. Then he repented and was restored.

b. Simon the magician in Acts 8 is confronted by Peter and told to repent. The Bible portrays people in bondage to sin as blind, held in moral slavery to sin. Simon was one such case.

c. The converts in the New Testament were often from occult backgrounds (as the Ephesians). Monotheistic Jews and rationalistic Athenians were the only ones not involved in occultist demonic settings. Moral bondage of all people is addressed and alleviated by Word ministry—the Gospel.

d. Paul's instructions to pastor Timothy at Ephesus, for ministry to those "...captured" by Satan "to do his will..." were for him to "...teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may...escape from the snare of the devil..." (2 Tim 2:24-26).

Paul is urging Timothy to do spiritual warfare by preaching and teaching the Truth.

7. We need not be intimidated. We're commanded to "Go therefore and make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." (Matt 28:19,20).

a. But neither should we be disrespectful of Satan and his power. "...when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you"(Jude 8).

b. The counsel of Psalm 2:11 is relevant: "Serve the Lord with fear..."

8. Jesus said to his disciples that the weapon of prayer was a necessary component of spiritual warfare. "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but by prayer" (Mark 9:29). Mercy ministry was what was going on here. The child was not commanded to repent. The implication was that he could not at the moment. He was having a demonic seizure. The usual means for ministry among demonically influenced cultures is preaching the Gospel and prayer.

II. The Dew of Blessings—Strengths and Successes as Heat: The good things in life, just as much as the bad things, reveal what is in our heart.

A. Testing, assessing our hearts, can be by what comes at us—good or bad. "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise" (Prov 27:21). Both the praise we receive and that which we give reveals our heart. Both are a form of purifying, refining "heat."

1. One psychiatrist's key question to help him understand his patient: "Tell me your earliest bad memory." But the earliest good memory can give information too. Everything is revelatory of how we look at life. In this psychiatrist's model, what is bad is key to understanding what needs are not met.

2. Typically, people believe bad things become the cause of their problems. But whether bad or good comes at us in our world, because of our covenantal nature, our hearts react to the positive or negative things and reveal what we love most at that moment.

3. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 is a warning from the experience of the Israelites that deliverance, victory, success, a sense of safety, or achievement is no guarantee of freedom from idolatry. Such temptation is "common to man." So, be careful if you think you "stand...lest you fall" (verses 12,13).

B. Examples of Blessings: God's Gifts, Strengths and Successes

1. Poverty and prosperity: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God" (Prov 30:8-9). Poverty or riches—both are heat! The common thread is the covetous materialism of the

worshipping heart. The abundance or lack is significant. It invites but does not determine what comes out of the heart.

2. Victories in warfare and prosperity: In Deut 8, Israel is facing a situation different from their testing in the wilderness (Deut 8:2-4). They will be tested in a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut 8:7-17). But the dangers, because of the heart, are the same as they were in the wilderness. Testing includes times of deprivation and abundance of blessing. Our Father often prepares us for victorious time by trials (Judges 2:21-3:2).

3. Pleasures, security, relationships, and food: We were meant to enjoy, with thankfulness to the Giver, much in this life.

a. The whole gamut of pleasures, good gifts from God, will reveal what rules the heart. We're wired to enjoy a sunset, a chocolate sundae, etc., but there is a way that these can go bad (as with food, drink, sexuality, etc.). Speaking about God's goodness to mankind, Paul asserted that

“... He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).

b. This tendency to drift from a righteous use of these pleasures is what David had in mind when he said to “rejoice with trembling” (Ps. 2:11). God gives us many privileges for enjoyment in living. But they can take our hearts away from His intention for us.

c. Experiencing goodness in this life is a demonstration of God's goodness. Why would the one with a loving family and the one who is beautiful, popular, and successful be just as gripped by the fear of man as one who does not have these things? It's what's in the heart, not the abundance or lack of “stuff.” What our heart does with these gifts is what is most alarming!

d. In Moses' directions for tithes and for traveling to sacrifice to the LORD, God asserts that joy and feasting are part of His plan.

i. “...and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household. 27 And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you” (Deut 14:26-27).

What makes this holy is eating “before the LORD” and “not neglecting the Levite.”

ii. Our culture has made food images and voices, on the one hand, salvific (the way to true happiness and 'salvation'), and on the other hand, poison. Food is God's gift, but it is not life itself.

iii. God tells the people to eat junk food and celebrate with God-centeredness and generosity. "Then He said to them, 'Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength'" (Neh 8:10).

e. What about the person uniformly loved and stroked, etc. but who is anxious about the next person's reaction to him or her? The human heart can take either situation, being ignored or being made much of, and produce idolatries and bad fruit.

4. Success, long life, happiness, and fruitful living have a connection with God's wisdom. He usually brings great privileges of enjoyment, life and success with faithful and wise living. This can be "heat" too, inviting a response.

a. "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed."

Prov 3:13-18

b. But not always. Martyrdom sometimes follows faithfulness as does persecution and suffering, Paul asserted (2 Tim 3:12). Certainly that was Jesus' experience and the one He warned His followers of (John 15:20).

c. Agur in Prov 30 warns his young readers about dangers when we find ourselves in either a wealthy or poor situation: "...give me neither poverty nor riches...poor...and steal...and profane the name of my God...or...say, 'Who is the LORD?'"

III. Conclusion to What Change Looks Like

We will finish this course with a focus on faith that changes us in settings of heat.

In lesson 7, we considered some features of faith. There are a few more thoughts that are critical for seeing change in ourselves and in helping others to see change:

A. Exercising the Faith that Changes Us

1. Transaction and Action (transaction from Latin, *transigere*, to “drive through or across” a condition or barrier or to “carry through” with something. “Transaction” is used of an exchange in business; or of the faith of one trusting another for providing something. (E.g. “Through the transaction with the dealer, Bill was able to get a new car.” He provided the money and the dealer provided the car. There was actual interaction, trust, reliance, faith that included his dependence upon the dealer’s offer enough to entrust his money to him for the car. He didn’t simply know about the offer or even simply believe that the offer was sincere and true. He put his money, an extension of his life, up for the purchase.)

2. This is like the believer trusting Christ for his identity, completeness, security, acceptance, worth and usefulness, etc. That “transaction” or “driving through” need, doubt, unbelief, or “driving through” false ‘saviors,’ to a trusting, dependent relationship in Christ is what transforming faith is about.

3. The New Testament uses many images to convey the nature of saving and sanctifying faith. It’s the abiding, trusting, relying, believing, “eating and drinking” of Christ’s flesh and blood, taking up one’s cross and following Christ, and many more similar relation-rich pictures. This is the “transaction,” the “drive through” of faith in Christ.

4. See the diagram differentiating ‘transaction’ from ‘action’ (large and small arrows) on page 119.

The large arrow, below the cross, is the transaction that occurs with Questions 5 and 6 in *The Eight Questions* and at the Cross in *The Three Trees* versions of our model for how change happens in the Christian life.

The smaller arrow, between the heart and fruit tree, is the action of question 7 and the fruit tree in *The Three Trees* version of change. This is dependent upon the transaction of faith in Christ. It is by means of this trusting relationship that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to make the choices that bear the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

B. Examples of Faith that Change Us

David’s “storms of destruction” (Ps 57:1), to which we referred at the very beginning of this course, and Paul’s “deadly peril” (2 Cor 1:10) are examples. Both illustrate this transaction in their heated situations and their victory over any temptation for debilitating, disorienting, or paralyzing reactions of fear, anger, depression, worry, or escapism. But there are some important differences.

1. David's "storms of destruction" and his transaction of faith
(Ps 57)

a. David was fleeing from Saul and hiding in a cave (preface to the Psalm).

Metaphors he uses to capture the threat he was facing include "storms of destruction" (v.1), "tramples on me" (v.3), "in the midst of lions," "fiery beasts," "teeth are spears and arrows," "tongues are sharp swords," and, "they set a net" and "dug a pit in my way," (v.6).

b. His "transaction" of faith is pictured as well.

He was taking refuge, seeking escape, in a spiritually healthy way: "...in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge..." (v.1).

Later in the Psalm, v. 7, David affirms, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast!"

c. His heart goal was not merely his escape. Though for good reasons, that can be a godly goal. (Jesus, Paul and other believers escaped dangers at times.) It was God's glory! David exclaimed this passion of his heart two times.

"Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" (vv.5 & 11).

d. Think about the other reactions David could have had in this situation. What would be ruling his heart that would have fed such reactions?

e. Note the fruitful responses he manifested in this Psalm—while the "storms of destruction" were still breaking on him. The Psalm ends and the storms were still breaking on him. Nevertheless, he bore the fruit of righteousness in this situation.

* Prayer (verses 1, 2)

* Confidence/victory/assurance/hope (verses 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10)

* Commitment (verses 1,7)

* Joy/peace/thanksgiving (verses 4,7,8,9)

* Worship/praise among "the peoples" and "nations" (verses 5,9,10,11), his ministry to others (he wrote the Psalm for other believers—like us, 30 centuries apart from him)

2. Paul's "deadly peril" (2 Cor 1:10) to illustrate his "transaction," his faith.

a. The "heat" coming Paul's way summarized in 2 Corinthians 1, is probably from his Acts 19:21-41 experience of a riot in Ephesus.

i. Paul's preaching and the conversion of many in Ephesus had raised the anger of Demetrius, an idol maker in Ephesus. The Gospel challenged the occultist worship and practices of the Ephesians and threatened Demetrius' business. Demetrius gathered a mob and sought Paul. There were other threats from Asian city leaders as well.

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, 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. 10 He 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. 11 You 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." 2 Cor 1:8-11

ii. Note that, in this temptation, the heat was the threat of persecution that was brought to Paul's heart. If the Acts 19:21-41 setting was what Paul had in mind, this is not actual persecution of him that he experienced there. He was hidden by the brothers. Rather, it was the "threat" of persecution. He could have been caught. David's experience was actual. Paul's was a threat. It was a real threat. But nevertheless, a threat. The point is that a situation, one of real "heat," may be actual or a threat of something terrible that may come. This "heat" was actual heat for two of Paul's colleagues. They had been hauled into the arena by the mob when the people couldn't find Paul.

b. The Thorns: This threat was severe enough that he didn't think he could handle any more. (Perhaps this was because of previous persecutions and threats he had experienced in other cities—Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth before coming to Ephesus.)

i. Despair—hopelessness. He didn't think any rescue was possible. He felt trapped.

ii. He felt "the sentence of death" had been passed on him. The mob would kill him if they found him. It was "deadly peril."

c. Consider his heart trusts. He skipped to the "gracious cycle" by turning to God and Christ. What ruled his heart even when the riotous situation was out of human control?

i. This challenge had the effect of driving him to "...rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor 1:9).

ii. This spurred him to have the hope that there would be further deliverances.

d. The fruit that the Spirit produced in him was

i. Hope that more is going on than what I can see or feel with my own senses.

ii. Faith in one who “raises the dead” and, therefore, can restore us also.

iii. Endurance (He seemed to be saying that “He will deliver us again, so we’re going to keep going!”)

iv. Ministry: “You also must help us by prayer...” (2 Cor 1:11). Their intercession was effectual. It mattered. They were part of his ministry and should keep at it.

v. Paul himself, in the Acts situation, moved on to further ministry in Macedonia, Greece, Troas, and Phillipi after escaping from Ephesus (Acts 20:1-6). His security was in “God who raises the dead.” On his return trip to Antioch, his home church, and Jerusalem, he decided to sail past Ephesus. This was probably because of the riots and his desire to not be held up in his plans to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

e. Outcomes from Paul’s faithfulness:

i. Many would give thanks and would worship and praise God for these deliverances as blessings from God (2 Cor 1:11).

ii. Many would be encouraged because they could see that they were part of Paul’s conquering mission ministry (2 Cor 1:7). Paul “encouraged” the church.

iii. Many would be impressed with God’s faithfulness and His blessing of His people because of the prayers of His church (2 Cor 1:11).

iv. The Elders were deeply bonded to Paul for his sacrificial love and risks on their behalf for Christ’s sake (Acts 20:36-38).

C. Fear, Anger, Depression, Worry, Escapism—layers of all of these temptations probably blanketed both David and Paul.

1. They felt the heat but it didn’t control them. The Gospel applied made the difference in both instances—not a change in the circumstances; not looking inward for strength; not positive thinking; not getting in touch with their feelings.

2. Trust in Christ, in God the Father—who raises the dead—made the difference in both cases. Their trust yielded godly fruit and had lasting effects on others.

D. What Change Looks Like

1. Practice applying the transaction of faith necessary for growth in the settings below. Directions: In small groups or in the larger class,

- a. Examine each hypothetical challenge below.
- b. Imagine sample situations that may invite the challenge that is mentioned.
- c. Identify the transactions of faith that are necessary to bring about fruitfulness in the believer's life. What would you need to remind yourself of and believe (use actual prayers you could pray that would reflect Questions 5, 6, and 7 of *The Eight Questions*) to enjoy the change and fruitfulness that God wants you to have while in the situation?

2. Situations to challenge your faith in Christ.

a. Temptations to be fearful (Ps 57:4,11) "I don't think I'm safe. You are or could be threatening my success or safety." What would be wise to pray?

- i. Q5 responses
- ii. Q6 responses
- iii. Q7 responses

b. Temptations to be angry (James 4:1-10) "I'm not getting what I want deeply or what I'm demanding! You are or could be blocking or interrupting me." What would be wise to pray?

- i. Q5 responses
- ii. Q6 responses
- iii. Q7 responses

3. Situations that invite you to be depressed (Ps 42:1-5) "I will never get what I need. It's hopeless!" What would be wise to pray?

- i. Q5 responses
- ii. Q6 responses
- iii. Q7 responses

4. Situations that invite you to worry or be anxious (Matt 6:25-34) “I am uncertain. The future is uncertain. I can’t control what I need to control.” What would be wise to pray?

i. Q5 responses

ii. Q6 responses

iii. Q7 responses

5. Situations from which you may want to escape (Ps 11:1,2ff) “I need to get away or stay away from this risky situation where I won’t be safe the way I want to be.” What would be wise to pray?

i. Q5 responses

ii. Q6 responses

iii. Q7 responses

E. Final comparisons:

1. Compare believers who suffered and yet lived “by faith,” in Hebrews 11:35-37 to the situations of believers you’ve described above. Paul affirms that God will meet the “needs” of believers in Philippians 4:19. Which “needs”?

“...were tortured, refusing to accept release...others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated...” (Heb 11:35-37)

a. Is Philippians 4:19 a contradiction to the Hebrews 11 believers’ situations? Why or why not?

b. What temptations for thornbush reactions could you imagine these believers to have experienced? (How about the ones in northern Iraq, in Iran, in Libya, in Sudan, in Pakistan, in China, in North Korea, in U.S. high crime, high poverty city areas?)

c. What is the solution to these thornbush responses? How do we help people get off the Vicious Cycle of Folly and enjoy the Gracious Cycle of Wisdom?

d. Such testimonies of fruitfulness are in contrast to the idolaters’ questions challenging the people of God in Psalm 115:2 and Psalm 42:3.

i. These unbelievers were asking “Where is their God?” and “Where is your God?” Was this because the unbelievers saw the believers trusting in the

same things and having the same reactions they, the unbelievers, would have in difficult times?

ii. The Psalmists point worshipers of the LORD in a very different direction to that of their unbelieving neighbors so that there would be no reason for pagans to ask, “Where is your God?”

iii. Our counseling goal is the same as the Psalmists’. To point people to trust their Father and Redeemer and display His powerful presence in the midst of trouble (Ps 46:1ff).

F. Final encouragement: In 2 Timothy 2:1-8, Paul urges Timothy to “...be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus...” and to do that he urges him to “remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...my gospel...”

1. He needed strength. Timothy was a pastor with all the challenges of modern day pastoral workers (2 Tim 3:1-5).

2. Strength was to be found in God’s grace in Christ. He is the Good Shepherd, the Head of the church.

3. Strength comes by “remembering” Jesus Christ—the risen One. He’s alive to provide all He’s promised to His people for their spiritual warfare.

4. Change looks like Christ, comes because of our trust in Him, and has His promise to make it happen in the lives of His people!

Conclusion

Satan and blessings from God present challenges for the believer—more heat to be handled in godly ways. God gives the resources for this spiritual warfare and every other confrontation with heat in our broken world. Ultimately such victory is by a living faith in God, through the Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what sense is all spiritual warfare an engagement with Satan?

2. When you examine the passages that relate to Jesus or the Apostles engaging in exorcism, how can it be said that these are mercy and not moral ministries?

3. Blessings from God’s hand, the pleasant things he showers us with, are forms of heat, just as painful things. What cautions must you take when such pleasures come your way?

4. Explain the “transaction” nature of faith that gives believers victory in their spiritual warfare.