

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Growth and Change Pt. 2



1 INTRODUCTION

In Growth and Change Part 1, we learned that our hearts are at the center of who we are and what we do.

Proverbs 4:23 says

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

That being the case, in order to change ourselves, we need to change our hearts.

In this lesson, we will look at three steps to making heart change.

2 STEP 1- KNOWING MY HEART

The Bible says several important things about the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 says

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

It’s hard for any person to see and understand our own hearts, but it’s not impossible.

Proverbs 20:5 teaches us that,

“The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”

The Christian life is something we do together. We need one another to help us grow. In fact, the Bible has over 52 “one anothers;” love another, help one another, pray for one another, etc.

READ Colossians 3:16

- 🔗 What are we called to do to one another in this verse?

- 🔗 The word “admonish” means to “put to the mind.” The idea is that we lovingly confront someone showing them (putting to their minds) areas where they need to grow and change.

- 🔗 According to Colossians 3:16, what is dwelling in us when we admonish one another?

🕒 Why is that so important?

We rarely see ourselves accurately. It's important to have others help you see your own heart!
So how do we do that?

Here are a couple of ways:

1. THROUGH QUESTIONS

It's good to learn to ask key questions. We must be people who listen well. We should not just listen to respond, but listen to understand.

To really understand others, we cannot assume we know, and then accuse people of heart issues.

Garret Higbee says,

"A question pricks the conscience but an accusation hardens the heart."

So learn to ask good questions.

Here are a couple of key questions you can ask:

- Finish this statement... "If only _____, then I would be happy?"
- What makes a good day a good day?
- What makes a bad day a bad day?
- When you did _____, what did you hope to get?
- When you did _____, what was going on in your mind?

For more of these, see the excellent article "X-ray Questions" from David Powlison.

2. THROUGH OBSERVATION

Here's another important verse on the subject of the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

🕒 What can man not see?

🕒 But what can he see?

He can see the outward appearance. He can see the fruit. For example:

- How is this person responding to the heat of life around them?
- Are they responding with faith and trust in the gospel that evidences itself?
- Are they responding with despair, anger, fear, or foolishness?

We can't see the heart but the Bible says this in Matthew 7:16b-20

“Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

So, in one sense, we are fruit inspectors; meaning we look at the fruit, the behaviors and attitudes, in one another to help us see the heart.

So, the first step is to draw out the heart. What you are looking for are patterns and habits that will give you a clue as to where their hearts are.

Then comes this...

3 STEP 2- IDENTIFY THE HEART

Once you have begun to see the patterns, it's time to categorize them Biblically.

First, identify behavior patterns, then take it to a spiritual, soul level that drive at heart issues. Finally, go to the Word of God to properly identify the heart. Once that is done, we can begin to change.

In his writing and teaching about “Biblical Soul Care,” Garrett Higbee talks about four people; Disruptive Dan, Boisterous Bill, Sad Susan, and Anxious Anne.

- *Disruptive Dan*: You notice that Dan is always interrupting people. He wants to be heard and, in his mind, his opinion matters. He is often impatient and irritable. He frequently criticizes others and is harsh and sarcastic when he is dealing with problems. That's the fruit, but what's going on at a heart level?
- *Boisterous Bill*: Bill is loud and is always looking to be the center of attention. He seems to always be joking and goofing off. He will lie to cover up his mistakes and tends to be overly emotional. That's the fruit, but what's going on at the heart level?
- *Sad Susan*: Susan is always down. She's the eternal pessimist who just can't seem to see the good. She often complains, is very shy and self-conscious, and has a very low view of herself. Sometimes she gets really jealous of other people or she condemns them. That's the fruit, but what's going on in her heart?

- *Anxious Anne*: Anne lives in fear. She is a perfectionist sometimes bordering on being OCD. She puts on the victim mentality and sees herself as damaged goods. She really wants to control every situation because only then can she be assured that it will turn out OK for her. There's the fruit, but what's going on deep inside of Anne?

These are examples that aren't really all that exaggerated, if you know people. These are basic fruit patterns that we see often.

But at the root of these issues are 4 common heart issues. And we will give them biblical labels.

1. *ANGER*: This is Dan. He has a heart of anger. The world calls it "disruptive disorder" but the Bible calls it a heart of anger. Deep down, Dan wants control, authority, and power. And if those are threatened, Dan goes off.

2. *FOOLISHNESS*: This is Bill. The world would say he suffers from an impulsive disorder, but really he is just living for himself and he's making foolish choices. Often times, addicts are identified here. They are looking for self-fulfillment some way and they act foolishly. Deep down, Bill wants pleasure and attention and he is greedy.

3. *DESPAIR*: This is Susan. She is struggling to believe God is really good or that He really loves her. If she sums up her life, she's has a hard time believing God is as good as He says He is. Deep down, she is looking for comfort, affirmation, and an escape from her world.

4. *FEAR*: The Bible has a lot to say about fear. It's a very, very common sin struggle. It doesn't help to just call it an "anxiety disorder" and then prescribe some kind of medication. No. She needs help with the heart! Deep down, she wants security, acceptance, and peace. When those things are threatened, look out!

So many of the struggles that we have can be categorized by these four hearts. When we give them biblical titles, God's word gives us instruction on how to change and grow.

Now we draw out the heart, then we identify the heart and put them into Biblical categories. Once they are in Biblical categories, we can now change.

☑ Who do you identify with the most? Boisterous Bill, Disruptive Dan, Sad Susan, or Anxious Anne?

☑ Which of the Four Hearts do you struggle with the most?

4 STEP 3- CARING FOR THE HEART

1. WHAT WE NEED

This is an important place to start. What, exactly do we need?

We need God's truth as revealed in His Word.

READ Hebrews 4:12

☞ To what does this passage compare the word of God?

☞ In the end, to what does the word of God cut down?

☞ Why is that so important in this discussion?

So let's take this case by case and see just how powerful the Bible is to help each heart.

• *The Heart of Anger: Help for Dan.*

READ Colossians 3:8-14

First of all, do you notice how this text nails Dan's issue right at a heart level?

Put off anger, wrath, malice, and slander.
Put on compassion

It's not about Dan. It's about loving others and having a heart of compassion. Instead of an angry heart, it's having a heart of kindness. Instead of self-focused, it's having a heart of humility.

The Bible tells us that heart needs to change. But look again carefully at the text.

READ vs. 13

🔪 What is motivating Dan to change his heart?

🔪 Why, does the Bible say, should he forgive?

Because he has been forgiven. Do you see how the Bible is pushing Dan back to the cross?

READ vs. 12

As God's chosen ones, what made Dan holy? The Cross.

Beloved, You are loved by God! This text is drenched in the gospel.

And through the cross, Dan's heart can change from being self focused, and prideful, to other's focused, humble, and loving.

Dan, through the power of the cross, can surrender. He can say, "I'm giving up the battle for me. I'm now all about God and others."

• *The Heart of Foolishness. Help for Boisterous Bill.*

Again, what Bill needs is the Bible.

READ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Do you see self-driven, pleasure seeking sins in this list?

What are they really looking for? Satisfaction. They want their soul satisfied, and they long for that to happen through attention from others. Pleasure is in their pursuits and the guilt that reeks havoc on such people can only drive them back to finding satisfaction in other things.

But look at the hope that is offered to those who struggle here.

READ vs. 11

🔪 What is it?

This text makes you feel the weight of your sin. People who go to Hell are doing that. It's horribly wrong.

But this text also makes you feel the joy of being forgiven. That's who you were. There is hope. and there if forgiveness!

Think about the amazing satisfaction when the incredible weight and shame of my foolish choices are washed clean and I'm sanctified. It's so freeing!

But there again is the Bible bringing the Cross to bear on the heart seeking satisfaction.

And when Bill begins to live in the satisfaction of the cross, he will change.

- *The Heart of Despair: Hope for Sad Susan.*

READ 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Is life hard? Yes. Legitimately hard. So, it's not going to help Susan to say, "It's all going to get better!"

God does not guarantee life will get easier. What Susan is lacking most is hope.

Look at the hope given this text.

Life may be crushing, but I will not be crushed!

And once again, the Gospel is simply all over this text.

READ vs. 9-10 now jump to verse 14-15

Jesus died and was raised. Because of that gospel, we have a hope beyond this life! We need to carry that hope around with us everywhere we go.

- *The Heart of Fear: Help for Anxious Anne.*

READ 1John 4:18

What Anne needs more than anything else is to trust.

- How does this verse bring Anne to the cross to teach her to trust?

What does she need? She needs God's Truth and Grace as lined out in the Bible.

2. HOW WE NEED IT

It could be very tempting to say to Dan, “You need to quit thinking about yourself and think about Jesus, you arrogant jerk!”

And how far is that going to go?

So the Bible says to speak the truth in love.

We need love. Love wins so many battles. It’s the second greatest commandment. It’s how all men will know that we are the disciples of Jesus. It’s the natural outflow of those who are living life loved by God. So put on love.

But the answer to “How” we need truth is a little more complex.

Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:14

“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

What do the idle (or unruly) need? To be admonished.

What do the fainthearted need? They need encouragement.

And the weak need? (this is not Anne, or Susan, by the way. This is Bill.)He needs help.

Love first, then handle the heart issues according to this verse.

5 CONCLUSION

Think through the impact of the last two lessons:

- Change is hard, but through Christ it is possible.
- In order to change, I need to change my heart.
- For that to happen, I need help seeing my heart issues. What drives me? What do I want?
- Then I need to see how the cross really is the satisfaction to my needy soul!

Finally, I need to put on the gospel everyday. I need to live in the joy and pleasure and security of the cross. When I live in light of the gospel, I will change to be more like Jesus!

Put this into practice.

-  Under which “heart” do you camp out?

 How do the verses listed above help you?

 How can you live in the gospel more and more in your life?