



INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

IRH – Lesson 2 – The Heart is the Target

Concepts and Objectives

- Concept: The heart is active. It shapes and controls our behavior.
- Personalized: I must identify what effectively and functionally rules my heart.
- Related to others: I must be committed to be an instrument of heart change in the lives of those around me.

Lesson Content

The Connection between Root and Fruit (Luke 6:43-46).

Unpacking Christ's Illustration:

- Fruit equals behavior, in this case, speaking.
- Roots equal the heart.
- Application: we speak and act the way we do because of what is in our hearts.

Principles for growth and ministry:

- There is a root-and-fruit relationship between our heart and our behavior. That is, the heart controls everything we do and say.
- Lasting change always takes place through the pathway of the heart.
- Therefore, in personal growth and ministry, heart change is always our goal.

The Question of What Rules the Heart (Ezekiel 14:1-5).

Note, from the passage:

- The problem: idols of the heart.
- A definition: An idol of the heart is anything that rules us other than God.
- God's response: God addresses the idolatry.

- The unbreakable connection: Idol in the heart -> stumbling block before the face.
- Principle of inescapable influence: Whatever rules the heart will exercise inescapable influence over a person's life and behavior.

Principles for growth and ministry:

- Our hearts are always being ruled by someone or something.
- The most important question when examining the heart is, "What is effectively and functionally ruling this person's heart in this situation?"
- Whatever controls my heart will control my reactions and responses to the people and situations in my life.
- The way God changes us is to recapture our hearts to serve Him alone.
- The deepest issues of the human struggle are not the issues of pain and suffering. The deepest issue is the issue of worship (What really rules my heart?) because what rules our hearts will control the way we respond to both suffering and blessing.

The Matter of Treasure (Matthew 6:19-24).

Three treasure principles:

- Everyone lives for some kind of treasure.
- Whatever you treasure will control your heart.
- Whatever controls your heart will control your behavior.

The Bible and the Heart (Hebrews 4:12-13).

- The Bible reveals and judges our hearts' thoughts and motives.
- Although you cannot see a person's heart, Scripture will expose it.
- Therefore, Scripture must be our central tool in personal growth and ministry.

The Big Question: What is your biggest problem?

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Concepts

1. The heart is active. It controls our behavior.
2. Whatever rules the heart exercises inescapable influence over life and behavior. Your heart is always ruled by something.
3. God's Word alone is able to expose and judge the heart.

Personalized

1. If I am committed to personal change and growth, I must be committed to a biblical examination of my heart.
2. In the situations and relationships of my everyday life I must constantly ask, "What is really ruling my heart?"
3. I must always study the Word of God with an eye toward my heart, always asking what the passage reveals about my thoughts and motives. (What is really ruling me?)

Related to Others

1. As I minister to others, I want to be an instrument of heart change.
2. Heart change is always the result of the careful ministry of God's Word to a particular person in a specific situation.
3. I must not attempt to manipulate or control the behavior of others. I must leave room for God to work lasting change in their hearts.

Make It Real

1. How will the truths of this lesson shape your prayers about ministry opportunities?

2. Give some examples (good and bad) of your heart overflowing in your words and deeds. What kind of fruit stapling have you tried? When have you seen real change?

3. What are some idols and treasures that challenge the Lord for control of your heart? How have they shaped your interpretations of certain events and relationships in your life?

4. How can God use the things he has taught you in this lesson to enable you to help someone else?

5. Write your best definition of what it means to function as one of God's instruments of change in the life of another.