



INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

Lesson 3 – Understanding Your Heart Struggle

Concepts and Objectives

- Concept: The cause of my struggle is not the people or the situations in my life, but the “heart” that I bring to those relationships and circumstances.
- Personalized: I must live with a willingness to examine the true ruling desires of my heart and to learn how those desires shape my responses to people and circumstances.
- Related to others: My effectiveness as one of God’s instruments of change involves helping others to recognize and confess what really rules them.

Lesson Content

Fights and Quarrels (James 4:1-10).

- The fruit that James wants us to examine is human conflict.
- James wants us to examine this fruit of conflict by asking, “What causes it?”
- Notice that James calls us to do something different than what we normally do; he tells us we must examine our hearts.
- James says that the “fights and quarrels” are rooted in the desires of our hearts.
- It is important to understand what James says about the desires of our hearts:
 - He does not say it is wrong to desire.
 - He does not say these fights and quarrels are only caused by evil desires.
- James says that our fights and quarrels come from desires that are waging war within our hearts...until they rule us.
- Scripture uses the term idolatry to describe a desire that rules my heart. My own idolatry is what causes me to be angry.

How Desires Take Control

1. Desire: “I want.”

2. Demand: "I must."
3. Need: "I will."
4. Expectation: "You should."
5. Disappointment: "You didn't!"
6. Punishment: "Because you didn't, I will..."

Central principle of this passage: Human conflict is rooted in spiritual adultery.

Turning Point: James says that change begins as we "submit to God." That involves two things:

1. "Wash your hands." – change our behavior.
2. "Purify your hearts." – rid our hearts of idols.

James is essentially saying that you cannot keep the Second Great Command ("Love your neighbor...") if you have not submitted to the First Great Command ("Love the Lord your God...").

Powerful Emotions and Desires (Galatians 5:13-26).

- The call is that we would "serve one another in love" (v. 13).
- The struggle is with the sin nature. Instead of giving in to God's call, we give in to the desires and demands of the sinful nature (v. 24).
- The warning is that we can destroy one another.

God's Provisions for the Struggle

1. We have been crucified with Christ (v. 24; Romans 6:1-14).
2. We have been given the Warrior Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18).

The Big Question: As you deal with your daily situations and relationships, what things tend to control your heart?

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Concepts

1. What a person does and says is not caused by the people and situations around him.
2. A person's behavior is always controlled by the desires that rule his heart.
3. We have been united with Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit so that we can say no to the passions and desires of the sinful nature.

Personalized

1. When attempting to understand my emotions, words, and actions, I must always examine my own heart.
2. I must learn to ask myself what emotions and desires control me in the various relationships and situations of daily life.
3. I must learn to affirm my identity in Christ and rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit as I seek to serve others in love.

Related to Others

1. I must not blame people or circumstances for my emotions, words, and actions.
2. I must always remember that the desires that rule my heart will shape the way I relate to the people in my life. I must constantly ask myself if those relationships are characterized by demanding or serving.
3. I must be committed to helping people remember who they are in Christ as they struggle with temptations to indulge the sinful nature.

Make It Real

1. Study the following passages to see how Jesus looked beyond the external behavior to the heart.

Passage	Situation	What Jesus discerned about the heart
Matt. 8:23-27	Disciples in boat with Jesus	
Matt. 12:28-39	Pharisees request a sign	
Matt. 16:21-23	Peter rejects the idea of Jesus' suffering	
Matt. 22:15-22	Pharisees try to trap Jesus.	
Mark 7:1-23	Pharisees and "unclean" hands	
Mark 10:17-23	Rich young man	
Luke 9:46-48	Dispute over who is greatest	
Luke 10:38-42	Mary and Martha	
Luke 15:1-2, 11-32	Parable of the Lost Son	
John 4:1-26	Woman at the well	
John 6:1-14, 25-28	Feeding of the five thousand	
John 8:1-11	Woman caught in adultery	
John 13:1-17	Jesus washes disciples' feet	
John 21:15-19	Jesus reinstates Peter	

2. Examine your heart in the light of these passages. If Christ were talking to you, what would he seek to expose? Where is he calling you to fundamental heart change? Pray about these things.