



WEEK 4 – “The Heart of the Matter”

INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learned how God has placed children under parental *authority*. Parenting is a God-given, delegated responsibility which means parents are not free to do with their children as they please. Parents must implement *controls* that align with the word of God. Tonight, we will focus on the **HEARTS** of the children. God requires so much more of us than just teaching our children the facts and academic skills to move from kindergarten to graduation. God directs us to teach our children to **FEAR** Him, to **KNOW** Him, and to *walk* in His ways. Life flows from the heart! As usual and as God’s little children, all Christians will benefit from this study.

1. *The Importance of the Heart*

- ✓ The word “*heart*” is found **830** times in 762 verses in *the word of God*.

Genesis 6:5 – *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 6:6 – *And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved him at his heart.***

NOTE The *First Mention* of “*heart*” in the Bible sets the pattern for man throughout the Book! There is a direct connection between our **THOUGHTS** and our HEART.

The *Second Mention* of “*heart*” in the Bible is God’s heart – He was grieved by man’s continually sinful heart. What a gracious and merciful God we serve!

- ✓ Consider these verses...

Deuteronomy 5:29 – *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me...*

Jeremiah 17:9 – *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*

Proverbs 4:23 – *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Mark 7:21 – *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts...*

Luke 6:45 – *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that... good...*

NOTE We must realize that our children’s struggles come from the heart. If outward behavior changes but the heart does not change, there is little profit because the sin and rebellion is still there and is waiting to come out at a later time! All behaviors and conduct are linked to some heart attitude. Therefore, a parent’s primary task is to train the **HEARTS** of children according to *the word of God*.

2. The Problems of the Heart

- ✓ Our children must understand they have **SINFUL** hearts prone to sin against God.

Proverbs 9:10 – *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

NOTE From birth, we must discuss with them their sinful hearts and need for salvation. We must teach them from early on they are sinners in need of a Saviour. At salvation, we begin a process of sanctification – being cleansed from sin. The process of our Christian lives is that God, over time, is making us more holy like Him. Our parenting should help to accomplish this in the hearts of our children.

Train your child to understand temptation and resist it because sins such as being lazy, being selfish, wanting something God has not given them, being greedy, etc. dishonor God and please a sinful heart.

Discipline for the sin but TEACH that the **HEART** is the PROBLEM.

Sinful, unsaved, unsanctified children are ruled by the same exact desires that rule sinful, unsaved adults! Unsaved children are ruled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. They are selfish, self-centered, and they want everything they can see... **NOW!** Satan repeats these 3 temptations.

Correct them not because we are offended, irritated, and frustrated because that is just anger and vengeance. Correct them so that they realize that they are offending a holy God. However, you must also remind them that God seeks reconciliation with them through trust in Jesus Christ. Keep pointing to Jesus.

This is the goal of all parenting – salvation of a sinful **HEART!**

3. The Training of the Heart

- ✓ Everything in **LIFE** is a classroom to draw them to God.

Ephesians 3:16-17 – *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love...*

NOTE The heart drives a person but can be redirected. The heart must be constantly conformed to the will of Jesus Christ. As parents, we must acknowledge that only God can perform the work of salvation in a child's heart, but we must also know that the family is specifically designed to be God's first and most effective earthly instrument for preparing a child's heart to receive Christ. *Amen. Amen.*

- ✓ Training the heart requires knowing what kind of heart the Lord **DESIRES**.

Philippians 2:3-5 – *Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:***

NOTE True humility, loving obedience, complete submission to God's will, deliberate trust that God is in control and that He knows best – these are the attitudes...

1 John 2:15-16
Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any many love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

which God desires for the hearts of His children. These attitudes are Christ-centered rather than self-centered. All of us are born self-centered and Christ can never be the center of our lives unless we deal with that **SINFUL** attitude.

Ungodly desires, thoughts and attitudes do not go away when a child grows up. Instead, they become habits that run deep into the hearts of our children, and they affect every area of their lives. We need to work diligently to teach our children to love and fear God, to help them know the difference between what they practice naturally and what God desires as righteous behavior, and to hold them accountable for what they already know.

Consider how parenting is like gardening...

1. **Prepare the soil** – we soften the soil of a child’s heart by teaching the Bible from their earliest days. The word of God is the tool that turns the soil.
 - **Daily Bible READING** – interactive reading to check understanding.
 - **PRAYER** – teach the children to pray at different times for struggles with a bad attitude or if they get hurt – not just bedtime and meals.
 - Teach **THANKFULNESS** – bring good gifts from God into focus throughout each day. Talk about God’s goodness and protection.
 - **SING** unto the Lord – sing with the children while they are able to memorize so much so quickly! Sing songs with Bible truth in them.
2. **Plant the right kind of seeds...**
 - Teaching the word of God – lead by example.
 - Exposing them to godly influences rather than worldly ones.
 - Show them righteous behavior and consequences of sinful behavior.
 - Do not be careless – the Gardener of our souls is counting on you.
3. **Constantly water and attend to the seeds...**
 - Praying, loving nurturing, and teaching the word of God.
 - Check for weeds – small weeds are easier to pull than big ones!
4. **Diligently care for and protect those seeds...**

KEY Teach obedience to **PARENTS**... so they learn obedience to **GOD**. Amen.

The basic premise of our child training is that we want our children to obey us the way we want them to obey God when they are older – instantly, cheerfully, and completely. We are setting a standard for a lifetime of obedience to the Lord. Children are learning habits of obedience or rebellion which will often carry over into their adult lives. It is so much better to learn good habits of cheerful, wholehearted obedience that they can transfer to their loving heavenly Father as they come to know and understand Him. Amen!

4. Personal Application

- ✓ What are you going to do today to **CHANGE** for God’s glory? for your family?