FTF Week 3: Anatomy of the Heart

What is ruling my choices?

Primary texts: Luke 6:43–45; Proverbs 4:23. Supporting text: James 4:1–3.

Big idea: Our words and actions reveal the desires, beliefs, and treasures of the heart.

Opening picture and Scripture reading

Read Luke 6:43–45 aloud.

"*"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. "For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a bramble bush. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart.*" (Luke 6:43–45, LSB)

Picture an apple tree with rotten fruit. Attaching healthy apples to its branches might improve its appearance for a moment, but it cannot make the tree healthy. In recovery transformation, changed routines and honest accountability matter; but Jesus directs us to the SOURCE from which our responses grow.

Ask: "When you think about change, do you mostly think about what you need to stop doing?" Take one brief response.

Explain: Tonight we will name the fruit, explore what is ruling the heart, and practice responding to God.

The Heart is the **INNER** person, not merely our emotions.

Read Proverbs 4:23 aloud: "*Guard your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*" (Proverbs 4:23

The Heart is the **CONTROL** Center of our life.

The Heart is the seat of our attention, thoughts, speech, desires, passions, & actions.

"Tell me what you think, I'll tell you who you are."

What you think **IS** what you are.

"*For as he calculates in his soul, so he is…*" (Pr. 23:7) (calculates=to reckon, reason out, estimate…really think)

THE KEY: REAL LASTING CHANGE ONLY COMES FROM **HEART** CHANGE.

Read Luke 6:43-45 aloud: "*"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. "For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a bramble bush. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart.*" (Luke 6:43–45, LSB)

Jesus moves from a tree recognized by its fruit to a person whose speech comes from the heart. The heart is the inner person, not merely our emotions.

Lasting change requires God's work within us as well as our changed **BEHAVIOR**.

Point 1: EXAMINE THE FRUIT.

Read Luke 6:43-44 again

OBSERVE what actually happened: actions, words, secrecy, and neglected responsibilities. Look for repeated patterns rather than vague impressions.

REPLACE "I had a bad week" with "I lied about my spending," "I hit the bottle," or "I ignored my children while pursuing escape, I looked at porn, I did meth again."

Specific **CONFESSION** makes specific obedience possible.

SEPARATE the circumstance from the response: "My spouse questioned the charge" describes the event. "I shouted and concealed the receipt" describes my choice.

Ask: "What did I say or do? What did I conceal? What responsibility did I neglect?" Allow 20 seconds for private writing. Do not require public disclosure.

Transition: Naming the fruit is essential. Now ask what was happening in the person who produced it.

Point 2: EXPLORE THE ROOT.

Read: "*"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart.*" (Luke 6:45, LSB)

Read: "*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*" (James 4:1–3, LSB)

Explain: Jesus locates the source of speech in what the heart stores up. James exposes desires at war within us that express themselves in quarrels and self-serving requests. The circumstances are real, but they do not remove our responsibility for our responses.

The heart includes our thinking, desires, purposes, and commitments. Ask what I wanted, believed, feared, or demanded–not only what I felt.

Possible ruling desires include comfort, approval, pleasure, revenge, and control. These are starting questions, not diagnoses to impose on another person.

The same outward response can grow from different motives. One person lies to protect approval; another lies to preserve access to pleasure. Let the person describe what he or she was pursuing.

Four questions that UNCOVER a demand:

What did I want so much in that moment?
What was I telling myself I needed in order to be okay?
What did I fear losing, or believe I could not live without?
When I did not get it, what did I become willing to do?

A desire for rest, respect, or relief is not automatically sinful. It becomes a ruling demand when I insist on having it and become willing to disobey God to obtain or protect it.

My response to frustration often exposes what I am treating as necessary.

Transition: Once a demand is exposed, we need more than an explanation. We need to turn toward God and take a different next step.

POINT 3. GUARD YOUR HEART

Read "*Guard your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*" (Proverbs 4:23)

Explain: In the surrounding verses, wisdom addresses our attention, speech, eyes, and paths. Guarding the heart means attending to what shapes our inner life and directing our steps by God's wisdom. It includes both inward repentance and outward obedience.

A. Bring the DESIRE into the light of Scripture

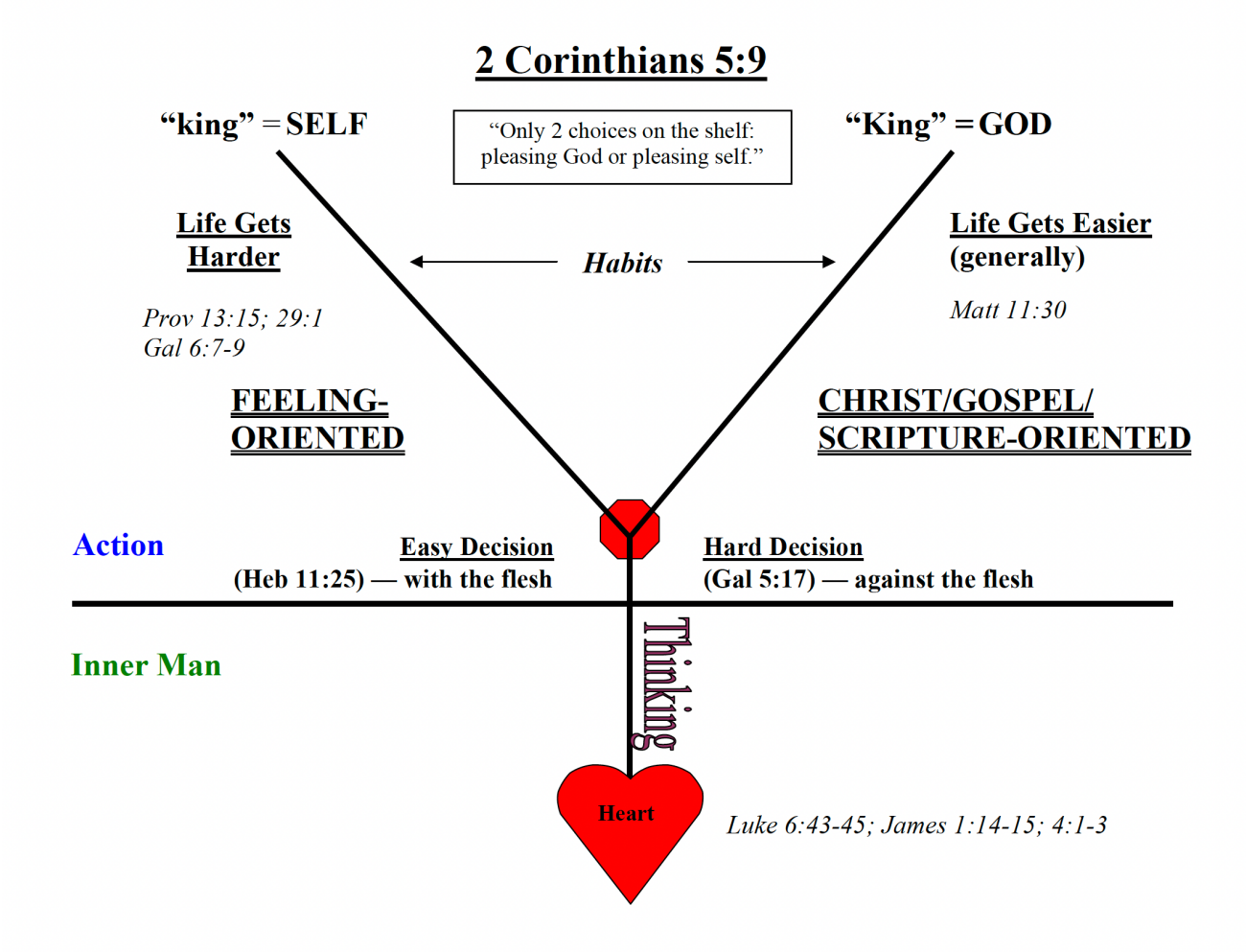
Name the desire honestly: "I wanted approval."
Test the demand: "Was I willing to lie or lash out to protect it?"
Know that Desire is not the final authority; God's **WORD** is.

B. **Confess the response & the elevated desire**:
"Father, I resented correction and spoke cruelly. I treated being admired as more important than obeying You."
"Father, I let the object of my lust replace your rightful place of honor. I objectified that woman"

C. **Receive the gospel**: Jesus died for sinners and rose again. Forgiveness is received through faith in Him, not earned by completing a worksheet. Believers fight sin through the Spirit's power (Romans 8:13).

"Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of thy sin." John Owen (Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers)

Looking to Christ is active dependence. Ask Him for help, believe His promises, and take the obedient step before you. Self-examination should lead us to Him rather than leave us circling our failures.



Practice a faithful Replacement

A. **Cultivate Gratitude**: name gifts God has already given instead of rehearsing only what you have been denied.
B. **Practice Trust**: "God knows my need. I can obey Him even while the desire remains unsatisfied." Pray for help before reacting.
C. **Act in Love**: listen to correction, speak truth, accept responsibility, make appropriate repair, and contact a trusted believer when tempted to hide.