

Enemies of the Heart: Guilt, Greed, Anger, Jealousy

Lesson 1- Guilt

For the next four weeks we are going to do a check up on our hearts.

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. (NKJV)

The message Bible translates it this way, “ Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that’s where life starts.” (Message)

How are things with your heart?

Not your career, your family, or your finances. Your heart.”

1. What comes out of your mouth reveals what is in your heart.

Matthew 15:1–20 tells the story of Jesus getting into a debate with some Pharisees. The issue was over the fact that the disciples had eaten something without washing their hands. Here they are, standing in the presence of a man who heals the sick and calms the seas with his words, and they’re in a tizzy over the fact that he doesn’t wash his hands before meals. After an exchange of words Jesus says, “**Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? (verse 17) But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. (verse 18)**

His point? God isn’t nearly as concerned about what goes in our mouths as he is about what comes out of our mouths. The things that come out of our heart, defile us!

A. Evidence of an internal battle are statements like:

“I can’t believe I just said that.”

“I don’t know where that came from.”

“I can’t believe I did that.”

“That’s not like me.”

1. Has this ever happened to you?

You say something that’s entirely out of character for you and you cover your mouth as if to say, “I can’t believe I said that.” Perhaps you even say, “Where did that come from?” People look at you like, “Yikes! Where did that come from?” So where did that come from? Don’t know?”

B. But it's *not just our words* that surprise us, is it? How many times have you caught yourself *doing something you know you shouldn't do*?

Something you're fundamentally against. Something you would readily condemn if somebody else did it.

C. So where did that come from? What's the source?

Did the devil make you do it? Now there's an idea. Maybe it was the devil! Maybe we're not really responsible, or at least not completely responsible, for our actions. Maybe there is someone else to blame after all."

D. The people closest to you routinely catch the flack thrown off by the explosive stuff you normally work so hard to keep hidden from the public. That's when the heart exposes itself in the most negative ways to the people you love the most. That's when we let our guard down and our real heart is exposed.

E. There are four primary enemies of the heart -four life-blocking agents that become lodged in the heart, poisoning our relationships, our faith, and our character. These corrosive forces gain strength from the darkness. Secrecy is their greatest ally. Here they are: **Guilt, Greed, Anger and Jealousy.**

F. The Debt –To-Debtor Dynamic

All of these issues are dangerous because they all have to do with debt that we feel must be paid. This debt-to-debtor dynamic will always cause an imbalance in your relationships.

Guilt: I Owe You.

Anger: You owe me.

Greed: I owe me.

Jealousy: God owes me.

2. Guilt – "I owe you."

Guilt is the result of having done something we perceived as wrong. Every wrong we do can be restated as an act of theft. If I steal from you, I owe you. So the message from a heart laden with guilt is, "I

owe you, because I took something from you!”

A. We say, “I owe her an apology.” Why do we “owe” people an apology? Because our hearts tell us we took something, that we’re now debtors in some fashion. Consequently, the only way to make things right is to pay up.”

1. People who feel this type of guilt handle it in a variety of ways:
 - a. I’ll buy you something. Isn’t that how we pay a debt.
 - b. I’ll give you something.
 - c. Or, since I can never repay this debt, I’ll just ignore you completely.

C. **Proverbs 22:7 says the “borrower is slave to the lender.”** In other words, authority belongs to those who are owed, not those who owe.

1. So the man says, “I owe you” – he is feeling guilt.
2. The child is saying, “You owe me” – their emotion is anger.
3. Unfortunately, there is not way to completely pay this debt.

D. Nothing less than paying that debt will relieve a guilty heart of its burden of guilt. People try to work it off, serve it off, give it off, and even pray it off. But no amount of good deeds, community service, charitable giving, or Sundays in a pew can relieve the guilt. It’s a debt. And it must be paid or canceled for a guilty heart to experience relief.”

3. Confronting Guilt

A. Confession- Secrets lose their power when exposed to light.

The light that exposes our secrets and frees the heart from the oppressive power of guilt is confession.

1. John 3:20-21 (NKJV)

20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

2. One of the first Bible verses I memorized as a child was **1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (KJV)**

- a. This was too good to be true. I mess up, I admit it, God forgives me, I move on. At night I would add to my prayer, “And forgive me for anything I did unknowingly.” I went to sleep knowing my sin bucket was empty.
- c. We weren’t confessing as a step toward changing. We were just confessing to relieve our guilt.

3. We play the confession game because somewhere along the way we were taught that the purpose of confession was conscience relief.

- a. In the early days of Catholicism, you weren’t allowed to confess the same sins over and over. Only once. Because after you did your penance, change was expected. The word “penance” comes from repentance.

- b. Jewish repentance wasn’t about feeling better, it was about change. Repentance means to turn and walk in the opposite direction.

- c. Zacchaeus confessed his sins to Jesus, but he knew it wasn’t enough to confess, he also had to change. **Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. (Luke 19:8)**

- d. **And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:15–16)**

1. James calls for confession to one another as part of our healing.
2. James seems to indicate here that illness is sometimes caused by hidden sin.

B. Reconciliation

Jesus shocked his listeners with this bit of instruction:

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember

that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23–24)

1. You want me to tie up my lamb or hand my pigeon off to someone else, just to make peace with someone who's mad at me?
2. In effect he says our relationship with God hinges on our relationship with other people, that the two are inseparable. He seems to imply that our ability to worship God sincerely and fellowship with him is contingent upon the status of our relationships with others.
3. **Matthew 6:15, says, that if you will not forgive others for the sins they committed against you, that God will not forgive you for the sins you committed.**
4. Part of walking with God is making that call you dread making; setting up that appointment you know will be incredibly "awkward; writing that letter that you should have written long ago. It means humbling yourself, owning up to your part of the problem, and doing everything within your power to make those relationships right.
5. And when you swallow your pride and take that extra step, something remarkable happens. Guilt loses its foothold in your heart, and the power of sin is broken in your life.
6. Just telling God you're sorry doesn't resolve your guilt because God wasn't the only offended party.
7. Forgiveness from God doesn't erase our need to take responsibility for what we've done. In fact, forgiveness should drive our confession.
8. We're kidding ourselves, as well, if we think we're not responsible for making restitution. The grace that was showered on us at salvation did not provide us with an escape hatch from our responsibility to others. On the contrary, that very grace should compel us to make restitution to those we've wronged.

9. Christ paid a debt he didn't owe and one we couldn't pay.
That kind of love should motivate us to pay those debts we can pay to those we do owe.

Most of the pain we chose to live in comes from the fact that we are afraid of having a hard conversation. We live in years of distress when we could end the pain with a few conversations.