

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands

HOW TO HELP OTHERS CHANGE



PAUL DAVID TRIPP

STUDY GUIDE

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Paul David Tripp

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Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: How to Help Others Change
Study Guide

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A Word of Welcome

Welcome to *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. We are thankful for you and your desire to be effective for Christ. Our prayer is that this course will produce a wonderful harvest of lasting change in you and in those you reach.

Perhaps a few words would be helpful about the course you are about to take.

1. Our goal in this course is to equip you for personal growth and ministry. What is here has been carefully and prayerfully included and tested in churches throughout the country.
2. We use the word *counseling* throughout this course, but by no means do we limit its definition to the more formal, professional meaning. When the course talks about *counseling*, it means “personal ministry.” It’s talking about getting alongside people to serve them—to assist them in making the changes God wants them to make. This kind of counseling is not only a formal ministry of the church; it’s meant to be the lifestyle of every believer. The principles of this course should be lived out in the hallways, family rooms, and minivans of everyday life.
3. As you experience God changing your heart, you will bring integrity and enthusiasm to personal ministry that cannot be found any other way. Ask God to reveal things to you and to change you as you seek to be his instrument of change.
4. Although this course “systematizes” personal ministry, biblical counseling is much more than a system of change. In reality, the most radical difference between biblical counseling and everything else is the belief that people need more than a system of redemption; they need a redeemer! Our real goal is to encourage you to get to know the Lord so that you:
 - Rest in God’s sovereignty
 - Rely on the resources of his grace
 - Practically do his will

This curriculum is intensely Christ-centered because we believe that in him are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). Look for this emphasis in every lesson.

Let me say again that we are excited that you are embarking on this journey. Remember, we are here to help and support you in any way we can. Our hope is that this course will be just the beginning of a long ministry partnership between CCEF and your church or ministry.

In Christ,

Paul David Tripp
Timothy S. Lane

Acknowledgments

It would be impossible to acknowledge the host of people who have contributed to the content and development of this curriculum over the years. However, I must mention a few. Thanks to Sue Lutz, whose editorial work has made this a much better training tool. Jayne Clark contributed her organizational skill and made a dream a doable project. Karen Barnard typed and retyped draft after draft until the job was done. The faculty of CCEF encouraged and supported me throughout the design and writing of the curriculum, and contributed to its content. The entire staff of CCEF has touched this project in some way. Thanks to all of you.

We want to offer special thanks to all the churches around the country that were willing to test this course. You have encouraged us and sharpened the curriculum. Your work has been a very important step in creating the final product.

Our particular gratitude goes to the churches and individuals who gave sacrificially to support the development of this curriculum. This is the most costly and time-consuming project CCEF has ever done, and we could not have completed it without your help. Your partnership has not only enabled us to continue, but it has encouraged us along the way. On behalf of the churches around the world that will use this material and the myriad of people who will grow and change as a result, we say thank you.

Few things in ministry have so clearly depicted to us what Paul says about the church in Ephesians 4:16: “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

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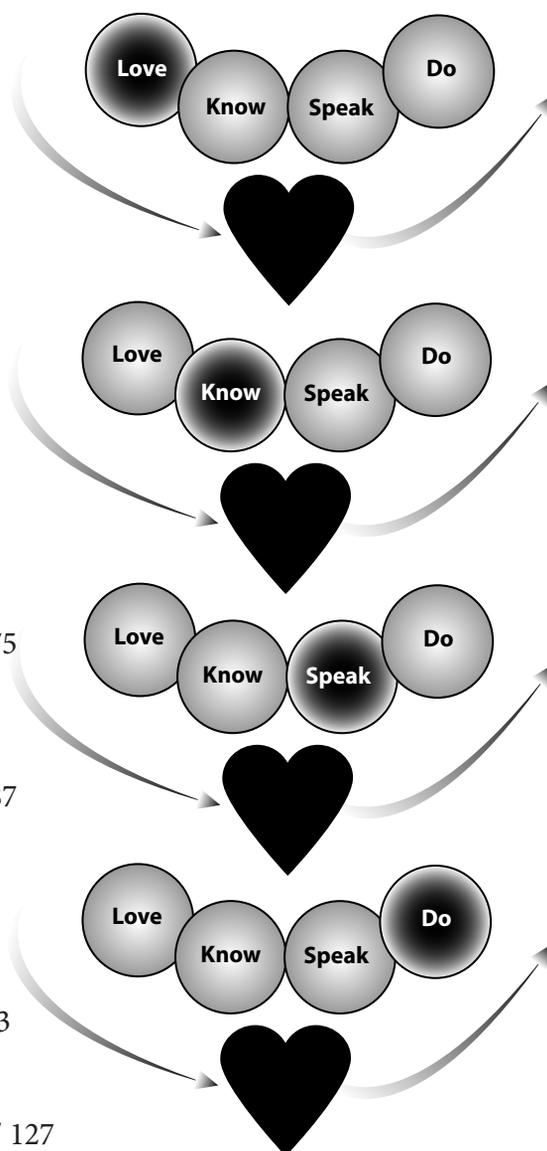
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LESSON 1

Do We Really Need Help?

DISCUSS HOMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Let's first become familiar with your workbooks. As you open them you'll see that there are only a few sections. We'll briefly look at each section so that you can easily find your way.

The first thing to notice is the page at the end of this book that summarizes the course. It is entitled "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: At a Glance." We'll be referring to this page often, which is why it is in a place that is easily located. This page gives you a quick preview of the model of growth and ministry that we will be learning: Love-Know-Speak-Do. We will explore in depth these four main elements. The numbers in the diagram indicate the lesson that covers the topic. "Course Outline" in the front of the book lists each lesson that we'll cover in this course. Next, turn to "Word of Welcome" at the beginning of the workbook. Take some time later to read this on your own.

We will spend most of our time in the section entitled "Lesson Content" (p. 3). You will be using these pages to take notes. The intention of those who developed this course is to minimize the amount of notes you need to take. For those who need and are happiest taking more extensive notes, space has been provided.

The last section, "Make It Real," includes your assignments. Yes, that's right, there will be homework—but relax, it won't be collected or graded. This section will help you interact with the content of each lesson so that you can begin to make it a part of your daily life. This may be the most important section of your workbook because

it is the place where you will make the course material your own. You are strongly encouraged to do the assignments so that:

- You will begin to understand the Christian life better (who you are and who you are before God)
- You will begin to think biblically about the issues of living
- You will improve your ministry skills

Now let's begin our first lesson by taking a look at ourselves and remembering an important truth. All of us are both people in need of help and people who have been positioned by God to provide his help to others. We always carry both identities. The one who needs help is struggling with the issues of living and asking important questions. The helper needs to have a firm understanding of the process of biblical change. That is where we will begin in this lesson.

The section below entitled "Concepts and Objectives" is meant to function like a map for each lesson. It will give you a sense of where we're going. Perhaps you've noticed that this section is divided into three parts. *Concepts* lists the truths from this lesson that you need to know and remember. *Personalized* summarizes how those truths need to be applied to your own life. And *Related to Others* points to how each truth sets the agenda for your relationships and for ministry. The initials of these three parts, *CPR*, give us a way of remembering that we are focusing on heart change. By "changing hearts," God is "changing lives"—your own and those you serve.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

Concept: Our need for help is not the result of the Fall but the result of being human.

Personalized: I need truth from outside myself to make sense out of life.

Related to others: I need to learn how to be one of God's instruments of change in the lives of others.

LESSON CONTENT

We all come across situations in our own lives or in ministry where we don't know what to do or say. It is in these moments that we are confronted with the reality that God hasn't given us a neat system of change that our own wisdom can figure out. Our hope for ourselves and for others can only be found in the presence and work of Jesus the Redeemer. Both the helper and the person in need depend on his wisdom and his power for change.

A Firm Foundation

As we think about our own growth and about serving as God's instruments of change, we must build a firm biblical foundation for understanding people, their need for help, and how change takes place.

If you were asked to write down a distinctly biblical definition of *discipleship* or *personal ministry*, what would you write?

Our culture tends to view personal change as something that requires the help of a professional. But the Bible has a much fuller and more hopeful perspective. The Bible teaches that personal transformation takes place as our hearts are changed and our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit. And the two instruments that the Holy Spirit uses are the Word of God and the people of God.

Turn to Isaiah 55:10–13. This is a beautiful word picture of God's plan to bless us and glorify himself through the changes his Word accomplishes in us. In fact, those changes are a sign of his covenant relationship with us (v. 13).

Turn next to Ephesians 4:11–16. Here we see that God has given us one another to help us grow to spiritual maturity. Think of all the intricate interdependencies implied by the image of the church as Christ’s body. Both of these passages make it clear that God intends to do a powerful work in us. This means that personal change and growth—including radical change of the deepest kind—can take place

- When we allow the Holy Spirit to apply God’s Word to our hearts
- When we allow God’s people to encourage, guide, support, pray for, and challenge us in biblical ways

Few of us have fully tapped the potential for growth and ministry that God has given us with these two resources, but this has been God’s plan for us from the beginning. We need a fresh understanding of what the Bible says about this world of personal transformation. We will begin by looking at personal growth and ministry from the vantage point of creation, the Fall, and redemption.

Our Need as Seen in Creation

Follow along with your leader to read Genesis 1:26–28. Here we see human need in the broadest sense of the term. God knew that even though Adam and Eve were perfect people living in a perfect world in a perfect relationship with God, they could not figure life out on their own. They could not live independent of God’s counsel.

God had to explain who they were and what they were to do with their lives and their surroundings. Adam and Eve’s need for help was not the result of sin’s entrance into the world. They needed God’s help because they were human. To be human is to need help outside of oneself in order to understand and live life.

Adam and Eve had this need because there were three things that separated them from the rest of creation:

1. They were created by God to be revelation receivers.
2. They were created by God to be interpreters.
3. They were created by God to be worshippers.

We all are actively interpreting life, and we all share our interpretations with one another. None of us live life based on the facts, but based on our interpretation of the facts. So, to be human is to need truth outside ourselves in order to make sense out of life. The first instance of help was not person-to-person, but the Wonderful Counselor explaining life to the people he made in his own image.

As we interpret life, we are always expressing some sense of identity. We speak to one another out of some sense of purpose and meaning. We are constantly interpreting life out of a sense of who we are and what we are supposed to be doing, and we are always sharing our interpretations with one another. We all interpret. We are all people of influence.

Our Need as Seen in the Fall

Now turn to Genesis 3:1–7. Something very dramatic takes place in this passage. For the very first time in human history, we see the entrance of another voice. This new speaker takes the very same set of facts (discussed by God in Genesis 1 and 2) and gives them a very different interpretation.

If Adam and Eve decide to believe the interpretation of this new speaker, it would be stupid to continue to obey God. Notice that our interpretations, our advice giving, are always agenda-setting. If we reject the words of God and follow the words of the serpent, we will not think about God, ourselves, or life in the same way, and we will not continue to do the same things.

What are the principles we can draw out of this passage to develop a biblical understanding of personal growth and ministry?

- Thoughts, talk, opinions, advice, and relationships are always agenda setting. Even though we may be unaware of it, we daily tell one another what to desire, think, and do.
- Advice is always moral. It always is defining right and wrong, good and bad, true and false, or healthy and unhealthy. Advice always gives our situations and relationships a moral framework.
- We should hunger for the simple days of Genesis 1 when everything people thought, said, and did was based solely on the words of God. We, however, live in a world of much confusion,

where literally thousands of voices speak to us at the same time, each interpreting life and each competing for our hearts.

- We need Scripture to cut through the confusion and make sense out of life for us.

Our Need as Seen in Redemption

Many people have asked the question, “Do believers, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have the Word of God, really need personal ministry? Isn’t the cry for this a lack of faith in the Spirit and a lack of confidence in the Bible?” The final passage we will look at speaks in a powerful way to this question.

Let’s look at Hebrews 3:12–13. This passage is essentially a warning against falling away from the Lord. The falling away is presented as something that is progressive. Notice the steps:

Sinful (subtle patterns of sin I allow in my life)

Unbelieving (subtle excusing of my sin, backing away from the clear words of Scripture)

Turning away (a loss of my spiritual moorings)

Hardened (heart crusted over with the scabs of sin — no longer tender)

Now what you should ask is, “How could this ever happen to a believer?” This passage declares something about us that explains why this scary warning is necessary. It says that sin is deceitful. And guess who it deceives first? Us! We have no problem seeing the sin in others.

This is the theology of the passage: As long as sin still dwells within us, there will be some aspect of spiritual blindness in all of us. Yes, we can see the speck of dust in another’s eye while missing the log that is jutting out of our own (Matthew 7:1–5)! The passage is basically saying that all of us need help because until we are at home with the Lord, all of us will suffer from some degree of spiritual blindness. And, unlike physically blind people, spiritually blind people are often blind to their blindness.

So, what the writer of Hebrews says is that we need daily intervention. All of us are in the same place. There are no “haves” and “have

nots.” Each of us is in need of help and each is called to help, that is, to function daily as one of God’s instruments of change in the lives of others.

If this kind of mutual help is going to become a lifestyle, there are two qualities that each of us needs to have. First, we need the courage of honesty. We cannot be afraid of being lovingly honest. We have to love one another enough to break through the walls of spiritual blindness. Second, we need the humility of approachability. We need to be willing to listen and consider when people challenge us with things that alone we would not see. We need to humbly and joyfully embrace the help that God has provided for us.

Three Questions that Everyone Asks

If we live with and care for people, there are three questions that we have probably asked. These three questions form the basis of any system of growth and transformation. They are questions that we must answer in a distinctly biblical way.

1. Why do people do the things they do? To answer this question we need a biblical theology of human motivation. What does the Bible say causes people to think the things they think, to want what they want, or to do the things they do?
2. How does lasting change take place in a person’s life? If we see a person doing something that is wrong or destructive, we want to see change take place in his or her life. What does the Bible say leads to such change? We need a biblical theology of change.
The How People Change curriculum addresses these two questions in depth, beginning in lessons 2 and 3.
3. How can I be an instrument of change in the life of another person? To answer this question we need a biblical methodology of change.

These are the questions we will be addressing throughout this course. Our goal is that we will all be changed by God, ready to be his instruments of change wherever and with whomever he places us.

THE BIG QUESTION: Why do you need help?

CPR

Concepts

1. To be human is to need help outside of myself.
2. Influence always carries a moral agenda.
3. Everyone suffers from some degree of spiritual blindness.

Personalized

1. I need to receive truth outside of myself to make sense out of life.
2. I need to humbly examine why I do and say the things I do.
3. I need to recognize sin's deceitfulness and commit myself to being approachable.

Related to others

1. I need to learn how to be one of God's instruments of change in the lives of others.
2. I need to saturate myself with Scripture so that my interpretations and counsel to others are based on God's Word.
3. I need to recognize how I am influencing others in the relationships and situations of daily life.

Make It Real

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

2. Tell about a time in your life when you responded not to the facts of a situation but to your interpretation of the facts. Did you realize it at the time?

3. Describe a time when the Lord used a person or the Word of God to reveal your spiritual blindness. What did you learn about your need for such help? If you were helped by a person, what did he or she do to make it a positive or negative experience?

4. What things keep you from being approachable (being helped)?
What things keep you from reaching out (helping)? Ask the Lord
to help you in these areas and repent where appropriate.

INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS
LESSON 2

The Heart Is the Target

DISCUSS HOMEWORK

REVIEW

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

Let's begin by looking at one of the most important word pictures in the New Testament. This word picture is so important because it reveals Christ's perspective on how people function—that is, why they do the things they do. Turn in your Bibles to Luke 6:43–46.

Christ likens the way we function to a tree. If you plant apple seeds and they take root, you don't expect to see peaches or oranges growing. When you are dealing with a plant, you recognize that there is an organic connection between the roots of the plant and the fruit it produces. The same is true with people.

Let's unpack Christ's illustration. In his example, fruit equals behavior. The fruit (behavior) in this passage is speaking. Christ says something very powerful about our words. Our words are literally the heart overflowing. People don't make us say what we say. Situations don't make us say what we say. Our words are shaped and controlled by our hearts. Fruit is what the tree produces, just as our behavior is what our hearts produce. You and I recognize a tree by the kind of fruit it produces.

The second part of the word picture is equally important but not as obvious. In Christ's example, the roots of the tree equal the heart. This is what is underground. It is not as clearly seen or easily understood. The power of Christ's illustration is in the connection it makes between root and fruit. Christ is saying that the tree has the kind of fruit it does because of the kind of roots it has. The application to us is this: we speak and act the way we do because of what is in our hearts. There may be no more important thing we can say about people and how they function.

You may be asking, “What does all of this have to do with personal growth and ministry?” Christ’s word picture sets the direction for both. Let me expand and apply the word picture for you.

Pretend that I have an apple tree in my backyard. Each year it buds and grows apples, but when the apples mature, they are dry, wrinkled, brown, and pulpy. After several years I decide that it is silly to have an apple tree and never be able to eat its fruit. So I decide that I must do something to “fix” the tree.

One Saturday afternoon you look out your window to see me carrying branch cutters, a staple gun, a stepladder, and two bushels of Red Delicious apples into my backyard. You watch as I carefully cut off all the bad apples and staple beautiful red apples onto the branches of the tree. You come out and ask me what I am doing, and I say proudly, “I’ve finally fixed my apple tree!” What are you thinking about me at this point!?

It is clear that if the tree produces bad apples year after year, there is something wrong with the system of this tree, right down to its very roots. I won’t solve the problem by stapling apples onto the tree. What will happen to those new apples? They will rot also because they are not attached to the life-giving roots of the tree.

What does this have to do with personal growth and ministry? The problem with much of what we do to produce growth and change in ourselves and others is that it is nothing more than “fruit stapling.” It is a “sin is bad so don’t do it” view of change that does not examine the heart behind the behavior. Change that does not reach the heart rarely lasts; it is temporary and cosmetic.

Let’s explore the way this passage sets the direction for personal growth and ministry by considering the principles that flow out of it.

- 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

Maybe you are thinking, *I understand what the Bible says about the heart controlling our behavior, but I don't know what I'm looking for as I examine the heart.* Our next passage will help us here. Turn to Ezekiel 14:1–5.

Now, let me set the scene for you. The spiritual leaders of Israel have come to the prophet because they have questions that they want to ask God. But as they approach God, he recognizes that something is wrong with them. Look at the passage again. What is wrong with these men?

What is wrong with these men is idolatry. Notice what kind of idolatry. The passage says that they have idols in their hearts. This is deeper and more fundamental than cultural or religious idolatry. An idol of the heart is anything that rules us other than God.

Now, notice God's response. He says that because these men have idols in their hearts, he is going to answer them "in keeping with their great idolatry." God is saying, "Because you have idols in your hearts, the only thing I want to talk about is your idolatry." Why? Maybe they had important questions to ask God. Why would he refuse to talk about anything but the idols?

There is a phrase here that explains God's reaction to these men and explains much to us about how the heart functions. The passage says, "These men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces" (see v. 3).

Let me illustrate the principle for you. Put your hand up to your face so that you are looking through your fingers. What is happening to your vision? It is obstructed. The only way for your vision to be clear is for your hand to be removed. Here is the unbreakable connection:

idol in the heart → stumbling block before the face

Now let me give you the core principle of this passage. It is the principle of inescapable influence. Whatever rules the heart will exercise inescapable influence over a person's life and behavior.

How does this relate to personal growth and ministry? Let's say you are trying to help a very controlling man who has damaged many

relationships in his quest for power. You will not solve his problem by giving him good biblical instruction in communication and conflict resolution. Why? Because as long as the desire for control rules his heart, he will use whatever principles and skills he learns to establish even greater control over the people around him.

If we do not deal with what rules our hearts, we will use even the principles of the Word of God to serve our idols!

Let's examine how the principles of this passage apply to personal growth and ministry.

- Our hearts are always being ruled by someone or something.
- The most important question to ask 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 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.

Let's consider two more passages that help us understand this issue. Turn to Romans 1:25.

Paul makes it very simple for us. He calls idolatry a great exchange. What Paul says here describes us all. We all tend to exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of the creation. What a simple way to explain idolatry! This is what sin is about. The roots of sin in the heart are that we want and love the creation more than the Creator. What really rules our hearts in the situations and relationships of daily living is not love for God but a craving for some other thing. This exchange (Creator for creation) can take place in any situation or relationship in life. When it does, we will not do what God has called us to do.

The Matter of Treasure

The second passage we want to consider is Matthew 6:19–24.

Here Christ uses the word *treasure* to describe what rules our hearts. A treasure is something valuable to us. We all live to gain, maintain, and enjoy our treasures. There are three treasure principles in this passage. The first is assumed, and the others are delineated quite clearly.

1. Everyone lives for some kind of treasure.
2. Whatever you treasure will control your heart. (“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”)
3. Whatever controls your heart will control your behavior. (“No one can serve two masters.”)

The Bible and the Heart

One final consideration is necessary. Maybe you are thinking, *I know that heart change is the goal, but it seems impossible to know the heart. I can only see a person’s behavior; I can’t look into the heart.* Does it seem as if we are discussing the impossible? Then turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 4:12–13.

This passage is about the Bible, and how God uses his Word in our lives. The writer of Hebrews says that the Bible is like God’s great scalpel. It is able to cut through all the layers of who we are and what we’re doing to expose our hearts. Hebrews says that the Bible reveals and judges our hearts’ thoughts and motives. These are the two most fundamental things our hearts do: our hearts think and our hearts purpose. They interpret and they desire.

What you and I do is always shaped by these thoughts and motives. They control what we do with the relationships and situations we encounter in daily life.

Here’s the encouragement of this passage: Although you cannot see a person’s heart, Scripture will expose it to you. The Bible by its very nature is heart-revealing. For that reason, Scripture must be our central tool in personal growth and ministry. It alone can expose and analyze where change needs to take place in our hearts. Remember, heart change *must* take place if we really want changes in our behavior to last.

THE BIG QUESTION: What is your biggest problem?

CPR

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.

INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

LESSON 3

Understanding Your Heart Struggle

DISCUSS HOMEWORK

REVIEW

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

This lesson focuses on two Scripture passages that are windows on the heart struggle of every human being. These passages show us how we end up worshipping and serving the creation rather than the Creator. They demonstrate that what rules the heart powerfully controls how we see and respond to what is around us.

Fights and Quarrels

Turn in your Bibles to James 4:1–10. This passage is a detailed illustration of the principles we considered in lesson 2. James starts with fruit and works down to roots in the heart.

The fruit that James wants us to examine is present in all of our lives. It is human conflict. All of us have a shocking amount of conflict in our lives. It may be fighting over who sits where in the car or who gets into the bathroom first or who eats the last chocolate chip cookie. It may be a discouraging disagreement between a husband and wife or a boss and a worker. James wants us to examine this fruit of conflict by asking, “What causes it?”

Notice that James calls us to do something very different from what we normally do when we are angry. We typically look outside ourselves to explain our anger. (“He makes me so angry!” “If you were the mother of these kids, you’d understand!” “This traffic drives me nuts!”) James tells us that if we want to understand our anger, we must examine our hearts.

James says that the “fights and quarrels” we have so constantly are rooted in the desires of our hearts. He says, “Don’t they come from the desires that battle within you?” In short, James says, “You fight because of what you want.” What a radical perspective this is! People and situations do not make us angry. They only provide the occasion for our anger to express itself.

It is important to understand what James says about the desires of our hearts.

- He does not say it is wrong to desire. When you quit desiring, you are dead! The capacity to desire is God-given and not wrong in itself.
- James does not say that these fights and quarrels are only caused by evil desires.

According to James, how do the desires of our hearts explain the conflicts in our lives? The key phrase is found after the word *desires*. James says that our fights and quarrels come from desires that are waging war within our hearts. What is the sole purpose of war? It is control. You see, it is not the fact that we desire that is the problem, but the fact that certain desires wage war in our hearts until they effectively and functionally rule us.

Consider this for a moment. If my heart is ruled by a certain desire, there are only two ways I can respond to you. If you are helping me get what I want, I will be very happy with you and our relationship. But, if you stand in the way of what I want, I will experience anger, frustration, and discouragement when I am with you. My problem is not you or the situation we are in together. My problem is that a legitimate desire has taken over my heart and now is in control. It has so much power that it is no longer legitimate. So my response to you is not shaped by God and what he says is best but by a certain desire that now controls my heart.

Scripture uses the term *idolatry* to describe a desire that rules my heart. My own idolatry is what causes me to be angry. You stand in the way of what I crave, so I lash out against you in anger. This battle over who or what will rule the heart goes on in all of us all the time. What controls the heart will control the behavior. There is no situation or relationship where this battle is not taking place because we all tend to “exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of the created thing.”

How Desires Take Control

Maybe you're thinking, *How do the normal desires of daily living take control of the heart?* Let's consider the steps:

1. Desire: "I want." Nothing wrong here yet.
2. Demand: "I must." The desire is no longer an expression of love for God and man, but something I crave for myself.
3. Need: "I will." Something desirable is now seen as essential. I am convinced that I cannot live without it.
4. Expectation: "You should." This is where my relationships begin to be affected. If I really believe that this is a need, then it seems right to expect that you will meet my need if you really love me.
5. Disappointment: "You didn't!" Here the anger breaks out and becomes personal. You are standing in the way of what rules my heart.
6. Punishment: "Because you didn't, I will" I respond to you in anger (silent treatment, hurtful words, vengeance, or violence).

It is important to understand the core principle of this passage, which is found in verse 4. When James says, "You adulterous people," he is not changing the subject. He is explaining why we all struggle with anger. Here is the central principle of this passage: Human conflict is rooted in spiritual adultery. My problem is not sinful people or difficult situations. My problem is that I give the love that belongs to God to someone or something else. My problem is idolatry.

Now, notice the turning point of the passage. Change does not start with trying to control my anger or being careful with my communication or remembering conflict resolution principles. James says that change begins as we "submit to God." Only as we confess and forsake our idolatry (desires that have come to rule us) will we live in peace with one another. We are called to "come near to God," and we are promised that he will in turn come near to us.

James says that change involves two things:

1. “Wash your hands.” This has to do with changes in our behavior.
2. “Purify your hearts.” This has to do with ridding our hearts of idols.

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of what this passage teaches. James is essentially saying that you cannot keep the Second Great Command (“Love your neighbor as yourself”) if you have not submitted to the First Great Command (“Love the Lord your God . . .”).

A Real Life Illustration

Powerful Emotions and Powerful Desires

Another passage explains how our hearts struggle and how that struggle shapes our response to people and situations. Turn to Galatians 5:13–26.

This passage falls into four sections: call, struggle, warning, and provision.

The call (v. 13) is that we would “serve one another in love.” Yet we all recognize how hard this is to do. From the argument over the last cookie to the couple who are convinced they can no longer live together, we find it hard to lovingly serve one another. It is easier for us to demand. It is easier for us to wait to be served. It seems more natural to fight for our place and our rights.

Why is serving others such a struggle? Why does it seem so hard? Why does it demand such sacrifice? Why do so few of us really go through life with an attitude of service?

To understand our difficulty with the call, we have to understand the struggle that lies behind it.

The struggle takes place in our hearts. It is our struggle with our own sinful nature. We struggle because God has not yet completed his work in us. Our struggle is with indwelling sin. In times when we are called to serve another, we indulge our sinful nature instead.

To indulge something means to give in to it or feed it. When you indulge your appetite, you eat. So, instead of giving in to God's call, we give in to the desires and demands of the sinful nature.

Verse 24 explains what Paul means when he talks about indulging the sinful nature. It means that you give in to its passions and desires. This means that in certain relationships and situations my responses are not being controlled by the Lord and his will. Instead, I am being ruled by powerful emotions (passions) and powerful cravings (desires). So fear, anger, discouragement, the desire to belong, the desire to be affirmed, and so on, set the agenda for my behavior rather than the Lord.

This leads us to the warning in the passage. Paul warns us that we can destroy one another. We can smash another's hope. We can crush another's faith. We can break another's spirit. The fact is that our actions do make a difference. Our responses to one another are either productive or destructive. It is unbiblical to say that the unkind word, the thoughtless action, or the selfish initiative make no difference. We are always influencing one another, one way or the other.

God's Provisions for the Struggle

How will we ever defeat the sinful nature? How will we find the strength to fight its control? How can we say no to the powerful emotions and desires that rise up within us? The answer to these questions is not found in our strength but in God's provision.

Paul directs us to two things God gives so that we can say no to the passions and desires of the sinful nature and serve one another in love.

1. We have been crucified with Christ. (See v. 24.) Paul is calling us to remember our union with Christ. This union means that when Christ died, I died. When Christ rose, I, too, rose to a new life where sin's power over me has been forever broken. Now I have the power to resist its control.

This means that we do not have to be ruled by powerful emotions and desires. We can resist them and respond to one another in servant love.

2. We have been given the Warrior Spirit. (See Galatians 5:16–18.) Why this name? Because the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, fights on our behalf. Paul is literally saying here that the Spirit is an adversary who stands opposed to the sinful nature. God knew that our natures are so weak, and the conflict within so powerful, that he could not leave us to ourselves. He sent his Spirit to literally live inside us so that, by his power, we would be able to defeat the passions and desires of our sinful nature.

Because the power of sin has been broken and the Holy Spirit has been given, we can say no to powerful emotions and powerful desires and be free to serve one another in love.

THE BIG QUESTION: As you deal with your daily situations and relationships, what things tend to control your heart?

CPR

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 external behavior to the heart.

Passage	Situation	What Jesus discerned about the heart
Matt. 8:23–27	Disciples in boat with Jesus	
Matt. 12:38–39	Pharisees request a sign.	
Matt. 16:21–23	Peter rejects the idea that Jesus will suffer.	
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	

Passage	Situation	What Jesus discerned about the heart
John 6:1-14, 25-58	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.

INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

LESSON 4

Following the Wonderful Counselor

DISCUSS HOMEWORK

REVIEW

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

Concept: Effective personal ministry seeks to be part of what the Lord is doing in the lives of others by modeling the way he has worked in us.

Personalized: I must examine the way I seek to stimulate change in those around me. Are the things I do consistent with the example of the Wonderful Counselor?

Related to others: I must think redemptively about my relationships. That is, I always look for the opportunities he is giving me to be part of his work of change.

LESSON CONTENT

Have you ever known that a friend needed to change, but you simply did not know how to help? Have you ever tried to help and felt like you made things worse? Have you ever felt like you wanted to help someone, but you were in over your head?

When our culture thinks about helping a person change, it usually thinks in formal and professional terms. If you accept that model, you will probably conclude two things:

1. That the Bible doesn't say much about how to help a person change.
2. That the average Christian has no business trying to help someone change.

Many Christians have bought into the cultural model and, as a result, become passive and uninvolved in the needs that surround them. It's not that they don't care. It's that they don't know what to do, and if they did, they don't think they should do it.

Called to Be Ambassadors

Scripture gives us a very different model. First, it calls each of us to function as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:14–21). An ambassador is a representative. This is exactly what we are all called to be in all of our relationships. We are placed in these relationships not only so that our lives would be happy and satisfying, but more importantly so that we would represent the Lord as he is working change in others' lives.

The work of an ambassador includes three important points of focus. As an ambassador I will represent:

1. The message of the King. An ambassador is always asking, “What does my Lord want to communicate to this person in this situation?”
2. The methods of the King. This is the “how” of the ambassadorial calling. How does the Lord work change in our lives? What are his methods? I want to work as he has worked.
3. The character of the King. Here I am focusing on “why” the Lord does what he does. I want to faithfully represent his attitudes.

Happily, the second thing that Scripture does is to liberally display the work of the King for us. As we read the Bible, we hear his message over and over again (Matthew 5–7; Luke 15–18). As we read the Bible, we are confronted with his methods again and again (Luke 9:18–27; 10:25–37; John 3:1–21; 4:1–26). And the pages of Scripture are filled with the beauty of his character (Ephesians 4:29–5:2; Philippians 2:1–12; 1 Peter 2:23). These three things define how we can be useful instruments in the hands of Christ, our Model and our King. We accept our calling as ambassadors and faithfully seek to represent his message, methods, and character wherever and with whomever he places us.

See figure 4-1 on the next page. This illustration is meant to capture what it means to function as one of Christ’s ambassadors of change in someone’s life.

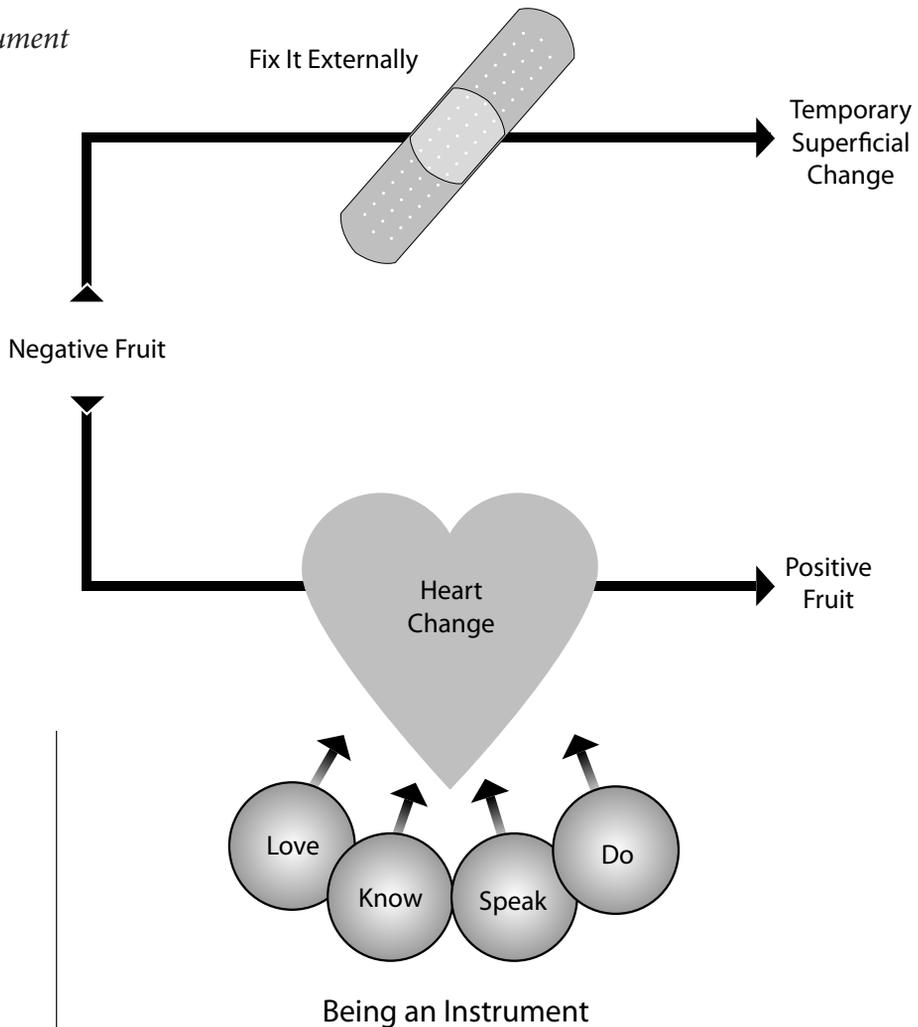
First, you will notice that on the left side of the page are the words “Negative Fruit.” This pictures the problems that get us involved in personal ministry. God opens our eyes to a harvest of bad fruit in a person’s life. It may be a broken relationship. It may be anger, fear, or discouragement. It may be an act of gossip or vengeance. God allows us to see someone thinking, behaving, or responding in a wrong way. Or perhaps a struggling person reveals these things to us and asks for our help. However it happens, we are exposed to a harvest of bad fruit in someone’s life.

On the right side of the diagram are the words “Positive Fruit.” This is our goal. Our purpose is to be used of God to produce a harvest

of good fruit in the person's life, even though he or she may remain in the exact same situation with the exact same people.

The bandage at the top middle of the diagram summarizes the goal most people have when they seek help. Yes, they want things to change, but they seldom have their hearts in view. They basically have an externalistic view of change. They want a change in their circumstances, a change in another person, or a change in their emotions. They think that if "things" would change, they would be much better. But the result, as the illustration shows, is seldom more than temporary and superficial change. It's true that there are often elements in a situation that need to be changed, but we

Figure 4-1.
*Serving as an Instrument
of Change*



cannot stop there. Our goal is to lead people to a deeper, fuller view of change. This is why the heart (with the arrows pointing to it) is at the bottom middle of the diagram. We believe that lasting change always takes place through the pathway of the heart. The heart is our target. Heart change is our goal.

We finally come to the four circles with the heading “Being an Instrument.” The four words in the circles—*Love, Know, Speak, Do*—describe God’s way of change. This is our model for functioning as an instrument of real heart change in a person’s life. This model takes seriously our need for heart change and our need to follow the example of Christ.

As you look at the diagram, don’t think that you are learning a four-step process. The four circles represent four aspects of a personal ministry relationship, four ways to get involved in someone’s life. As God gives you ministry opportunities, you will be doing all four things simultaneously.

Let’s examine each element separately.

Love

The *Love* function points out the importance of relationship to the process of change. You could argue biblically that change always takes place in the context of a relationship. Theologians call this a covenantal model of change. God comes and makes a covenant with us. He commits himself to being our God, and he takes us as his people. And in the context of that relationship, he accomplishes his work of radically changing us.

As we understand the work of God in our own lives, we realize that our relationship to him is not a luxury. It is a necessity. It provides the only context in which the lifelong process of change can take place in us. In the same way, we are called to build strong and godly relationships with one another. God’s purpose for these relationships is that they would be workrooms for him. It is important, therefore, that we learn how to build relationships in which his work of change can thrive.

Know

Know has to do with really getting acquainted with the people around us. Many of the people we think we know we really don’t know. We know facts about them (who their spouse is, where they

work, some likes and dislikes, their children, etc.), but we really don't know the person inside the skin. Our relationships are often trapped in the casual, and because of this, our opportunities to minister effectively are limited.

Knowing a person really means knowing the heart. When I say I am getting to know you better, I'm not gaining a more intimate understanding of your nose or arm! I mean that I know more about your beliefs and goals, your hopes and dreams, your values and desires. If I know you, I will be able to predict what you will think and how you will feel in a given situation. A friendship is really the connection of hearts.

Christ was so committed to an accurate knowledge of our hearts that he entered our world and lived here for thirty-three years. He faced everything we face so that we could come to him knowing that he understands our struggle (Hebrews 4:14–16).

So, the Know function gets us below the surface of the casual. It teaches us how to gather the information necessary to know a person at the level of his heart. And as we get to know the person, we help him to know himself more accurately and clearly.

Speak

Speak involves bringing God's truth to bear on this person in this situation. To do this we need to ask, "What does God want this person to see that he or she is not seeing? How can I help him see it?"

The Gospels are full of brilliant examples of the way Christ helped people to see the truth. Through stories and questions, he broke through their spiritual blindness and helped them to see the reality of who they were and the glory of what he could do for them.

Speaking the truth in love does not mean making grand pronouncements. Rather, it means helping a person to see his life clearly. For lasting change to take place, a person must see himself accurately in the mirror of God's Word. It is also vital that he accurately sees God, and the resources for change he has provided.

Do

Finally, we must help the person to *Do* something with what he has learned—to apply the insights God has given to his or her daily life

and relationships. Insight alone is not change; it is the beginning of change. The insights God gives us about who we are, who he is, what he has provided for us, and what he has called us to do must be applied to practical, specific realities of everyday life.

Christ calls us not just to be hearers of his Word but to be active doers as well. As Christ's ambassadors, we are meant to help others respond in practical, personal ways to this call.

Something further needs to be said about the Love-Know-Speak-Do model of personal ministry. This is not only an aspect of the ministry of the local church but a lifestyle to which God has called each one of us. God has called us to be the life-changing instruments of his grace in each situation and in every relationship. This lifestyle will work in the formal counseling office as well as in an informal conversation with a struggling Christian friend. This ministry model can be easily adapted to whatever opportunities God gives you to function as one of his instruments of change.

THE BIG QUESTION: Right now, where has God positioned you to be one of his instruments of change?

CPR

Concepts

1. God calls us to be ambassadors, representing his message, methods, and character (2 Corinthians 5:14–21).
2. Ambassadors get from negative fruit to positive fruit not by fixing problems externally but by heart change.
3. The Love-Know-Speak-Do model follows Christ's example of how to do this (John 13:34).

Personalized

1. In all of my relationships, I must remember that I am Christ's ambassador.
2. I must examine my goals for my relationships. Am I solely motivated by my own personal happiness? Do I respond to

others with a desire to encourage God's work of change in their lives?

3. I must examine my commitment to the message, methods, and character of the King.

Related to others

1. I must learn to look at all of my relationships redemptively, keeping an eye out for God-given moments of ministry.
2. It is important to use the Love-Know-Speak-Do model as a way to examine the quality of the relationships God has given me.
3. In my relationships, I must always remember that I am called to be God's instrument. God alone changes people.

Make It Real

1. What are some reasons why external change is appealing to us as human beings? Why does God seek heart change?

2. How has God dealt with you according to the Love-Know-Speak-Do model? How have others done Love-Know-Speak-Do with you? Pick a specific instance.

3. Reflect (using this model) on two or three relationships in your life. Where are they weak? Where are they strong? Have you been functioning as an ambassador? Pray that God would use these truths to shape the way you serve in these relationships.

4. Personal Ministry Opportunity

Throughout the rest of *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, you will begin a process in which you will apply what you have learned about Love, Know, Speak, and Do. The Make It Real section of every lesson will help you to think about a specific personal setting where you can apply what you learn. We hope that you will find this challenging and exciting. Thinking about a particular ministry opportunity can spur you to make changes in your relationships in some everyday situation.

First, choose a setting where you want to concentrate your attention. You could choose a formal or an informal relationship, a 1:1 relationship, or a small group.

- You could choose a setting whose stated purpose is Christian nurture: a Sunday school class, a Bible study group, a discipling relationship, or a small group.
- You could choose a person you live with: a family member or roommate.
- You could choose a more casual setting: a friendship, a conversation after church or over coffee, conversations at work over lunch, contacts in your neighborhood or at an athletic event.
- You could choose a work group: a board of elders or deacons, the choir, a missions or worship committee, a team of Sunday school teachers, an evangelistic team, co-workers on a task force, or a study group at school.

Whatever you choose, seek to become more biblically intentional in your communication.

Second, describe and analyze the setting and the person or people involved. Who are the members (including you!)? What actually happens when you get together? What are the typical communication patterns? If you are focusing on a small group, what is its history? What are its stated or assumed purposes? What is the leadership structure, formal or informal? What roles do people fill? What agenda or goals—stated or unstated—operate in each person and in the group as a whole? What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the group from a biblical standpoint?

Third, as you work through the rest of the lessons, begin to strategize. Design a plan for ministry on the basis of what you have been studying and thinking. How will you bring about an increasingly biblical ministry? How will you act and speak differently? What does the Bible say about you and the relationship or group? Allow the teaching you will receive in lessons 5–12 to inform you as you take advantage of this ministry opportunity.

Fourth, pray! As you study each lesson, don't simply think of the truths as strategies for happier relationships. See them as a means to see your own need for change and your dependence upon Christ to live in a way that evidences him. You may want to ask two or three people to pray for you in this process. (This exercise was developed by David Powlison as a class assignment in "Counseling in Everyday Life." It has been adapted for this curriculum).

LESSON 5

Love I: Building Relationships in Which God's Work Will Thrive

DISCUSS HOMEWORK

1. What does the Bible say about how people change?
2. What four elements of the biblical model of personal ministry were presented in lesson 4? What did you learn about your strengths and weaknesses?

REVIEW

In lesson 1 we learned that we all need *help*:

1. Human beings need truth outside themselves to understand life.
2. Influence and advice always carry a moral agenda.
3. Spiritual blindness affects us all. We need to be willing to give help and receive it.