

## Session 2

# Reaching Deep into a Child's Heart

### **The heart is..**

... mentioned 750 times in the Bible.

... the place where we process **information** and come to conclusions about life.

... the place where we wrestle with feelings and where convictions are born.

Children's beliefs affect their behavior and can create problems in your family life.

Proverbs 23:7

What children believe in their hearts is important because it affects how we **respond**.

Matthew 12:34

The belief system in our hearts governs our behavior.

### **Children Talk in Their Hearts**

"He said in his heart..." is mentioned over 25 times in Scripture

"The fool says in his heart that there is no God..."

"Esau said in his heart, I will kill Jacob..."

"Hannah speaking in her heart..."

"Mary pondered these things in her heart..."

What is in our HEAD includes facts and information (these may be erroneous or incomplete).

What is in our HEART are the decisions we make about those facts and information.

A child has to move the fact and information from the HEAD down to the HEART.

Sometimes a child has to adjust what is in their HEART.

For example, if a child is angry, he may believe that he has a right to be angry because my brother is so annoying, or it is not my fault.

If a child is procrastinating, he may believe that if he doesn't do it, someone else will or he will have more energy tomorrow.

Clothing Styles: If a child thinks she *needs* new clothes, remind her that her, "Your thinking is wrong. You don't *need* new clothes, new earrings, etc., you need food,..."

### **What Children Meditate on Affects How They Live**

Sometimes a child meditates on their anger, etc.

Wrong attitude comes from meditating on the wrong things.

Ps 19:14 says, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Teach children to meditate on the right kinds of things

Motivate your child to meditate in God's word and that will affect how he lives

Make child uncomfortable when he meditates on the wrong things-that will give him motive to change

Parents need to be sensitive (aware of what our children are meditating on).

### **Children Process Things in Different Ways**

- 1) External Processor—you know what they think, they think out loud, they act out, rebellious.  
Parents may spend lots of time with this child, to the exclusion of less ‘external’ children.  
Luke 15: 11-32—younger son who left was an external processor
- 2) Internal Processor—you may not know what they are thinking, seem compliant, be careful not to overlook this child  
Luke 15:11-32—the older son who stayed home was an internal processor and the father soon found out that this child also had a heart issue

***Question: What is God’s role in this?***

Isn’t God the one who changes a person’s heart?

The supreme work of a change of heart in a person is **salvation**.

Romans 10:9 says, “That you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

When God comes into our heart, it makes our heart more **acceptable** and **successful**.

**How God Changes a Child’s Heart**

***\*Parents’ role in dealing with the heart.***

Proverbs 6:20-21 says, “My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck.”

God uses **parents** to touch a child’s heart.

Parents need to get down to what the child **believes**.

Parents need to be sensitive to the heart work that needs to be done

***\*Scripture—powerful method to change hearts***

Use Scripture in child training.

Show the child that the Bible is practical to them.

Show him how the Bible applies to him.

Tell him Bible stories.

Memorize Scripture.

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrows; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

***\*Prayer for our child***

Pray for our children.

God changes **us** as we pray for our children.

As we ask for wisdom (James 1:5) God makes us sensitive to our child’s heart.

Pray to have a **soft** heart towards our child.

**Important Things to Remember**

***\*Focus on the heart, not just behavior.***

Change from Behavior Modification Approach to Heart Modification Approach

Think about the heart of the child, not just the behavior

Use your anger as a flag -- don’t react **quickly**.

Let the behavior be a **flag** of warning about the heart problem

Is the problem a **character quality** missing in our child?

Is the problem a **thinking error**?

Ask heart questions

If your child says something that makes you angry, don't respond in anger. Instead walk away for a few seconds and then return to the child.

Better to say, "It makes my heart sad when you say something like that. It is disappointing. It makes me think you do not appreciate what I am doing." Then walk away again. Don't get into a confrontation or argument. Allow child to 'meditate' on what you've said.

***\*Use sorrow instead of anger to touch a child's heart.***

Anger shuts a child down.

Anger fosters resistance.

Anger builds walls.

Anger is good for **identifying** problems but not for **solving** them.

Sorrow opens up a child's heart and brings **repentance**.

Sorrow changes our reaction.

***\*Track thinking errors***

You may need to avoid the temptation to solve **the behavior problem** right away.

Take time for **emotion** to subside.

Think...what is the real problem and how can I help my child to adjust?

Take time to **plan**.

**Journal** over a period of time to see what is leading and feeding that behavior.

What does the child believe that causes him to think that way?

For example, if a child is lazy...make a plan for a child to see the benefit of work.

Parent must develop a plan to change the way a child is meditating or processing incorrectly.

***\*Be patient***

Changing what a child believes takes **time**.

A parent can't force what a child believes.

Genesis 17:17 says, "Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to **himself**, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?'" God had to change Abraham's heart.

In John 21: 15-18 Jesus asked Peter three times "...do you truly love me?" Jesus was trying to communicate a truth to Peter. Repetition will often be required.

In Luke 24:25 on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said, "...How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." –it takes time for adults!

Luke 24:32 says, "They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'" –sometimes we have to wait for our child's heart to burn before a heart change.