

The Heart of Change

An Exposition of James 4:1-10

BRENT ASTOR

STUDY EXAMINATIONS
- WANT TO KNOW

Cause of Conflict—Pursuing the lusts of our hearts instead of lusting after God.

(NASB) James 4:1
WHAT is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Consequence of Conflict—Setting ourselves in opposition to God with our lusts.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of

Notes

YOU DO WHAT YOU DO, BECAUSE OF THE DESIRES YOU WANT. YOU WANT WHAT YOU WANT

vs 1 ~~BEHAVIOR~~ BEHAVIOR (SINFUL) FEATURES



HEBREWS 4:12

vs 2 LUST - INTENSE DESIRE

ENVIY - COVETOUS - WHAT YOU WANT

SIN TO GET RESPONSE SINFULLY WHEN

WHAT YOU WANT

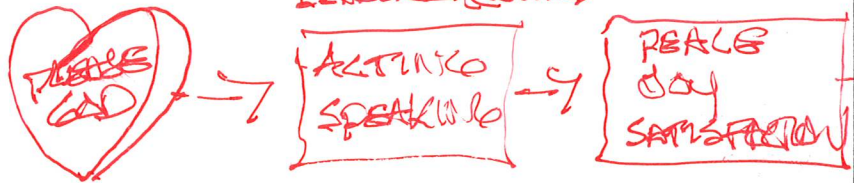
DESIRE TO PLEASE GOD

Ps 73 - DESIRE A

EPH 4:22 - DECEPTFUL DESIRES; PROMISE WHAT THEY CANNOT DELIVER

TITUS 3:3 - ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUST (INSTABLE)

2TIM 2:22 - YOUTHFUL LUSTS - CHILDISH - IMMATURE BEHAVIOR (LOVING)



2. GOES OUTSIDE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TO FIND TO FIND YOUR SATISFACTION.

PACKED TO PRAY: PUT IS SMALL WITHIN ME
HUMILITY
PUT YOURSELF DOWN
- WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY - WHAT

SUFFERING OF PRESENTATIONS DOES NOT MEAN

* EARS HAVE NOT HEARD
EARS HAVE NOT HEARD
ps 37:5-7 DAN 12:14

NOW BLESS

STERILITY SUFFERING OF PRESSURE

HE WILL SMILE

CRISTIANES TENDEN ENAMORAR SE DE SI MISMO

9:57:2 MARCH 17

the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? (NIV-- Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?) 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Notes

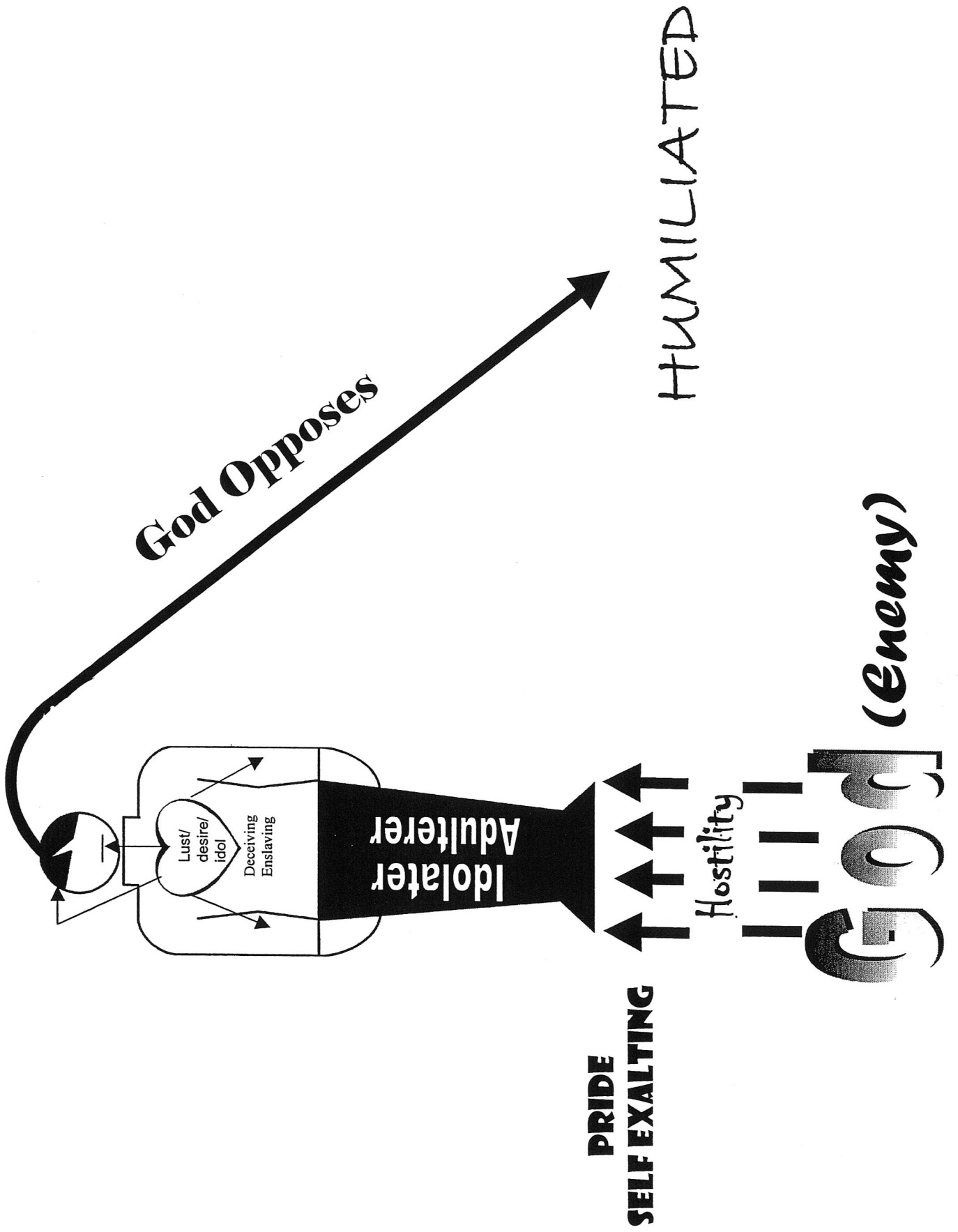
**Cure for Conflict—
Humbling
ourselves to mold
our desires to be
more like God's.**

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

MT 23:12
LUCAS 14:23

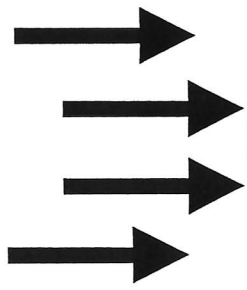
1/28/87

THINK + PUT YOURSELF UNDER
SINNERS / THE UGLIERS / PRIESTS
LUCAS 14:23 (I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST THAT I SHOULD BE)
DRAW NEAR TO GOD THROUGH HIS WORD - AS HIS CREATOR
- COMES NEAR TO
DRAW NEAR
SO THAT WE CAN RELATE WITH HIM

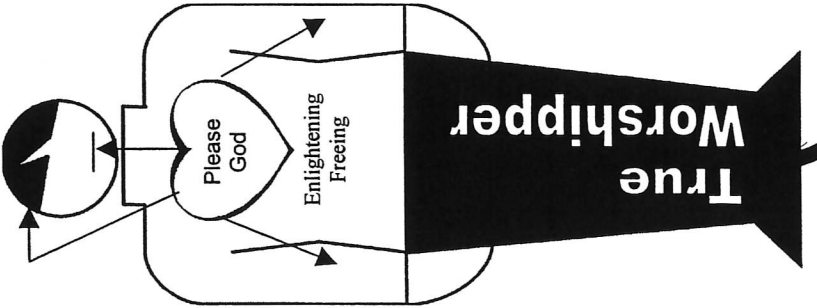


God

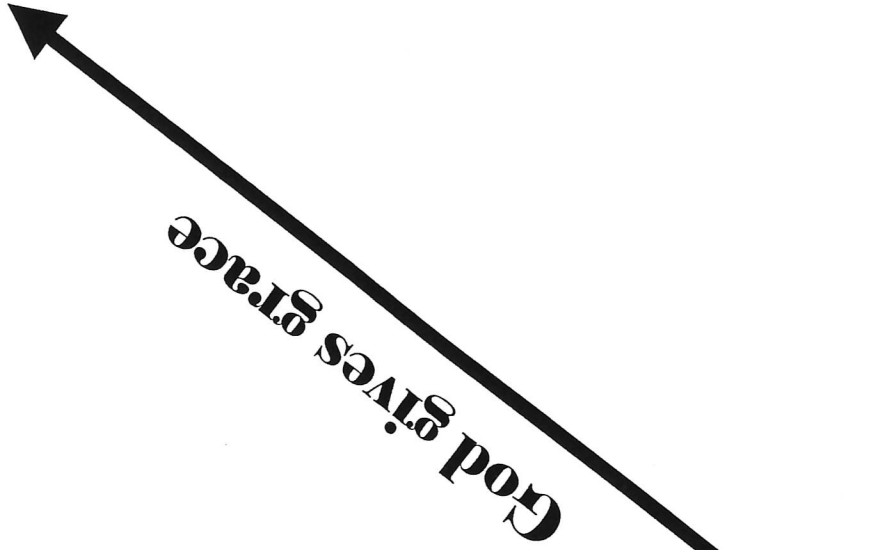
(Friend/Advocate)



HUMBLE



EXALTED



Humble Yourselves. . He will exalt you

Overall Process	Command From James 4	Meaning	Example	Immediate Consequence in text	Overall Consequence (timing is unspecified)
H U M B L I N G	Submit therefore to God.	Decision to place myself under the authority of God	"I'm going to think about God"		E x a l t a t i o n
	Resist the devil and he will flee from you.	Decision to actively oppose "Satanic" thought processes and lusts--Pride	"I will not think this way, I will not be prideful" Begin arguing with oneself	These influences will go away for the moment	
	Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.	Begin to inquire and listen to God. (Is 34:1, I Sam 14:36, Ec 5:1)	"I will begin remembering or learning what God says about my situation and my heart, and my responses	God will begin showing you and guiding you in truth	
	Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.	Decision to agree with God about your lusts (heart) and actions (behavior)	"God, my lusts were wrong and idolatrous. I have not loved you with all my heart. And my actions and speech were sinful"		
	Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.	Let the full weight of what God says about your sinful heart and action be realized. Then you will certainly not be laughing!	Remind your self of terms like "adulterer", "idolater", "enemy of God", "wicked heart", "sin"		

D R A W I N G N E A R

C O N F E S S I O N

The least. . shall be the greatest

CEOs in the mirror

The path chosen by the most successful will remind you of the Gospels

MY FRIEND STARTLED ME WITH HIS IMMODEST answer to my simple question. "Who," I had asked him, "would be on your list of the top five preachers in our denomination?" Quickly, he had mentioned a couple of obvious names. Then he squinted, looked out the window, and turned back to say to me, dead seriously: "You'd have to put me on that list, I think."

I didn't. Not that day, nor since. The fellow remains my friend, and he is a good preacher. But his self-aggrandizing effort to elbow his way to the top knocked him right off the very ladder he was trying so hard to climb. The leadership he so fervently sought has always eluded him.

That sad conversation took place 10 years ago. But I was reminded of it last week as I read *Good to Great*, a remarkable book on business management by Jim Collins and a research team he headed. My preacher friend should read *Good to Great*. So should anyone else who aspires to leadership and influence. Even folks who choose only to follow might read *Good to Great* with profit, in that it would help them identify the leaders they want to trail.

What sets *Good to Great* apart from most management books is that it is not merely the subjective wisdom of its author and his colleagues. It is instead the result of their having identified a handful of the 11 most effective companies in the United States over the last quarter century, and then rigorously asking the question: "What specifically makes these companies so different?"

The discipline of the process is impressive. The Collins group started by looking at nearly 1,500 different companies. Who among them, the group asked, averaged cumulative stock returns 6.9 times the general market over a 15-year period? That's how the 11 companies (Abbott, Circuit City, Fannie Mae, Gillette, Kimberly-Clark, Kroger, Nucor, Philip Morris, Pitney Bowes, Walgreens, and Wells Fargo) were selected. Then, just as severely, came the research about what produced these results. Along the way, the data forced Mr. Collins and his team to discard many of their own pet theories, and produced other explanations they had never dreamed of.

The very first thing Mr. Collins and his team point to as common to every one of the 11 companies they researched (and remember that this is a basically secular book) is the modesty of the various CEOs who led them. There is much

more, to be sure. But the starting point of a "great" company, these researchers tell us, is a humble leader.

Mr. Collins talks of windows and mirrors. When these successful CEOs do something right, he says, they walk you over to a window and point to all the reasons (and especially all the other people) "out there" contributing to the success. When they do something wrong, they walk to a mirror, and assume the blame themselves. Leaders of lesser companies do it just the other way around: When things go wrong, they point out the window for alibis and explanations;

when things go right, they go to the mirror to preen.

Make no mistake: The CEOs of these 11 successful companies are highly focused and even "fanatically driven" people. But their focus and their drive are never on themselves. The focus and drive are instead on the long-term good of the company. For example, American business history is full of high-achieving executives who nonetheless did little to make their successors successful. The 11 companies under the microscope in *Good to Great* remain strong because their leaders a decade ago were looking for more than immediate and personal fame.

"It wasn't just false modesty," writes Mr. Collins. "Those who worked with

or wrote about the good-to-great leaders continually used words like *quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understated, did not believe his own clippings*, and so forth." Ken Iverson of Nucor is described by one of his board members as "a very modest and humble man. I've never known a person as successful in doing what he's done that's as modest. . . . And that's true in his private life as well. The simplicity of him. I mean little things like he always gets his dogs at the local pound."

In the climate of Enron and WorldCom, it's fascinating to note where, according to the hard data, business success starts. And it's even more fascinating to see how that hard data backs up what Jesus said over and over again in the Gospels: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave." Jesus didn't condemn the motive to become great. He just outlined the path.

Funny that it takes the story of 11 great corporations, and their modest CEOs, to remind those of us in God's kingdom of such a critical insight. ☺



DRIVEN BUT MODEST: Nucor's Ken Iverson.

Idols of the Heart

Proverbs 4:23 *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."*

Consider what would happen if God gave you the "key" to human behavior—that key piece of information that enables you to understand why people do the things they do. What could you do with that kind of knowledge?

Understanding this concept helps an individual discern why he does the things he does and helps him walk more consistently in Christlikeness. He will be able to help others as well. Below is an illustration about how different people respond in different ways to the same set of circumstances. Ask yourself the following questions: "What is the 'key' to their behavior?" and "Why are these individuals responding the way they are?"

One January day, a family wakes up at six o'clock in the morning. As the alarm clocks start going off, individuals of this family start pulling themselves out of the bed and notice the 4-7 inches of white snow on the ground. The husband sees the snow and immediately turns the radio on and hears about the traffic tie-ups already beginning. He becomes anxious and worried. The wife gets up, looks out the window, and just sits a few moments in her bay window beholding the beauty of the snow. As she looks she smiles and reflects on the pleasure and the beauty of this event. The two school-aged children get up knowing that last night there was a predicted snowstorm. They leap out of bed and fling open the drapes excited about how deep the snow is. As Dad makes his way outside to his car and begins scraping off his car he notices his neighbor shoveling, grumbling, and mumbling under his breath obscenities about the snow.

Why do you think each individual in the previous story responded the way they did to the circumstance?

Biblical Keys to Human Behavior

A. James 4:1-2 *"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 commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."*

What does this passage say is the source of our behavior?

B. Matthew 15:19-20 *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."*

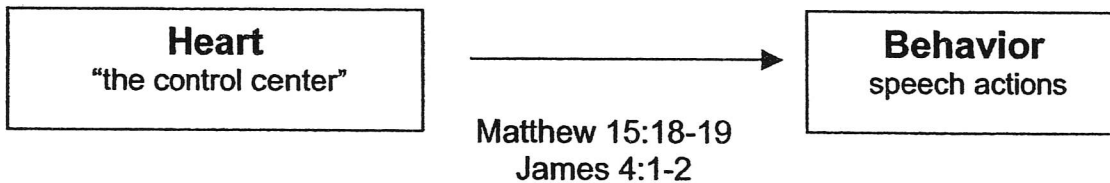
What does this passage say is the source of our behavior?

As we compare Matthew 15:19 with James 4:1-2 we notice that the *“pleasures within”* that James refers to are actually within the heart. Thus the heart is our “control center” that contains our desires, motivating us to do what we do. James 4:2 even speaks of these desires or pleasures as “lusts”. A lust is simply a strongly held desire for something good or bad.

C. Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

How does Hebrews 4:12 provide additional insight about what things make up the “heart”?

The Biblical concept of the “heart” is what motivates our behavior. At any and every given moment of time, you are acting upon your desires, your intentions in your heart. Now, here is what we have said up to this point: What’s in our heart leads to our behavior in speech and actions.



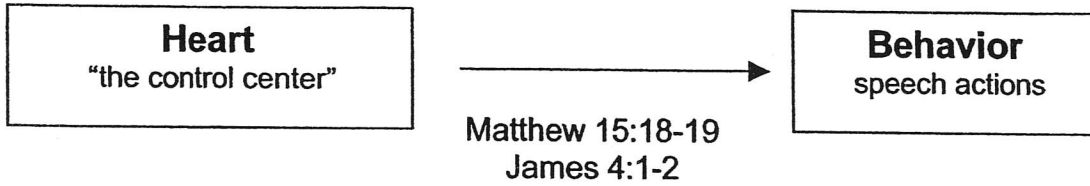
D. What should be in the heart? What should be the utmost desire(s) and value(s) of the heart according to 2 Corinthians 5:9?

E. Our heart’s desire should be to “please God”. Many times our desires are not this at all! Think about some times when you were behaving sinfully, anxiously, angrily, despairingly, fearfully etc. What did you want during those times (i.e. what was your heart’s desire)?

Idols of the Heart

Proverbs 4:23 "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

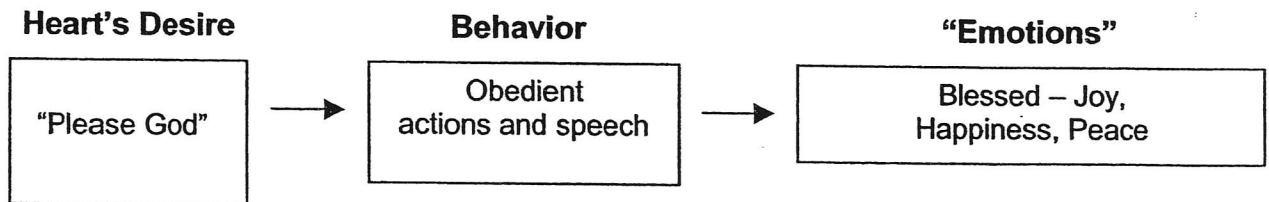
Below is the diagram we learned about.



Now we are going to add another aspect to this model of human behavior. When we have as our goal in our heart to please God and our speech and actions are obedient to God what does God do as a result according to the following verses?

John 13:17 _____
Philippians 4:9 _____

So, we can see that when our heart's goal is right and that is reflected in our outward behavior of obedience, God brings about a state of blessedness, which means joy, satisfaction, peace, or happiness. Some may call these "feelings" or "emotions."



Now, let's look at what happens when our heart's desire is not to "please God." On your lesson under letter 'E' you listed several desires/lusts that caused you to behave sinfully and be either anxious, angry, depressed, frustrated, etc. Maybe some of them were as shown below.



Now, as you observe some of these desires that we commonly want, we need to ask the question, "Are these desires wrong?" Or, "Is it okay for me to want these things?" The answer to this is no, unless these desires become too important to us. But how do we know when a legitimate desire has become wrong, sinful or a "lust"?

The two criteria that help us see when a legitimate desire becomes wrong are . . .

- 1) Am I willing to sin in order to get what I want?
and
- 2) Do I respond sinfully when I do get what I want?

How does James 4:2 illustrate the above two criteria?

James 4:2 *"You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."*

So it is not that we want things. It's that we want them too much! Then they become lusts or "idols" of the heart. Ezekiel 14:3 states: *"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity."* When we have "idols" or "lusts of the heart" it is as if that desire is the only thing we focus on. We have put it right before "our face" and when something is close to your face, consuming your view, you see nothing else! Not God! Not Others! Nothing but our selfish desire!

Why do you think we use the term "idol" of the heart to describe these desires/lusts? (cf. Exodus 20:3, Mark 12:29-30; Matthew 6:33)

Finally, let's ask this question: "What are the results of having idols of the heart and consequently behaving sinfully?" If having a heart that pleases God and behavior that is obedient to Him results in a "blessed" state, then what kind of state results from having idols of the heart and subsequent behavior that is sinful according to the following verses?

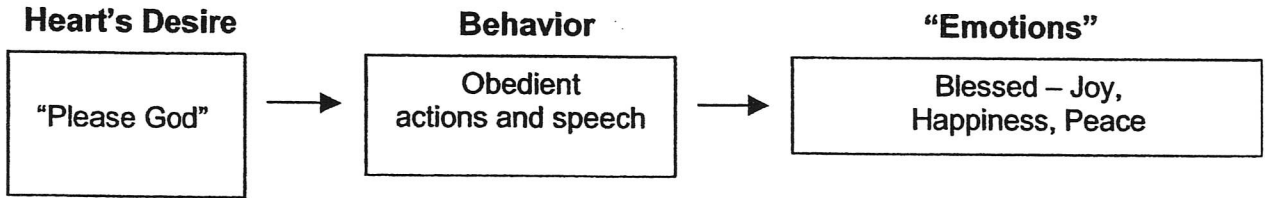
Psalms 32:10 *"Many are the sorrows of the wicked. . ."*

James 3:16 *"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."*

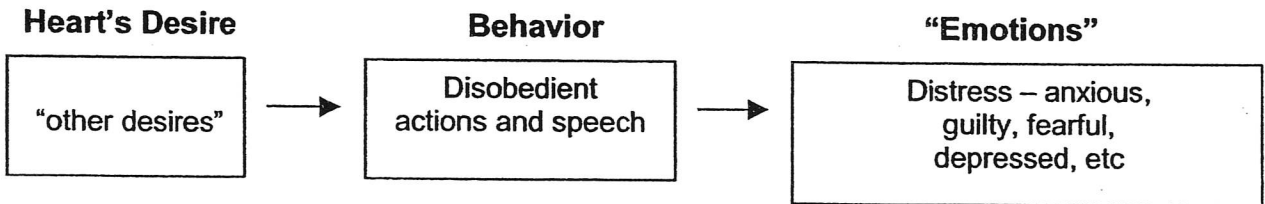
Romans 2:9 *"There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,"*

Psalm 32:3, 4, & 8 *“There is **no soundness** in my flesh because of thine indignation; There is **no health** in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a **heavy burden** they weigh too much for me....I am **benumbed and badly crushed**; I groan because of the **agitation of my heat.**”*

Summary: So, we can see that when our heart’s goal is right and is reflected in our outward behavior, God brings about a state of blessedness, joy, satisfaction, peace, and happiness.



When our heart’s goal is not right and is focused on other desires that we want too much and hence in our behavior are willing to commit sin or respond sinfully, then God allows us to experience not a state of blessedness but a state of “distress” .



If you understand these keys to human behavior, try to answer the following question. When I am distressed, anxious, guilty, fearful, or depressed, what is that telling me?

(Something potentially is going wrong in the heart –You are wanting something more than pleasing God and you need to repent and put on the desire to please God regardless of how you feel!)

Are you beginning to understand more what’s going on in your heart? Good!

Idols of the Heart

Proverbs 4:23 *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."*

Consider the following scenario:

You are an advertising specialist and you are going to make an advertising pitch to a major client. If the client likes your proposal, this will mean that you will get a multimillion-dollar project - the biggest one of your life. And, this will mean an incredible boost in your income. If the client doesn't like it you will lose a multi-million dollar project. . .You want this project really bad. However, the meeting is scheduled at noon, it's now 10 till noon, and you are still 20 miles away and haven't moved in traffic for 20 minutes. You respond something like this. . . (looking at watch constantly, punching radio buttons incessantly, throwing hands up in air constantly. . .)

"I can't believe this is happening, just when I'm about to make the biggest sale of my life. Look! Will you look at that! Those construction workers are just standing around! At least if you going to funnel two lanes of traffic into one, could you look like you're doing it for a reason? Those stupid department of transportation workers. Maybe I'll try to call and tell my clients I'm stuck in traffic. . ." (pulls out cell phone and realizes battery is dead) "Can you believe this!!!???" (throws cell phone across the car, as some one indicates they want in front of you) "Look at that guy, he's trying to squeeze in front of my car. NO YOU DON'T MAN, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET IN FRONT OF ME!!!! I'LL SHOW YOU, I'LL GET AS CLOSE AS I CAN TO THE CAR IN FRONT OF ME!!!!"

Below is a series of questions designed to help us deal biblically with our heart based upon the truths we have learned. We will walk through these questions considering the above scenario. You may want to remember these questions and review them frequently to help you as well.

1. **What is your situation?** God puts us in all kinds of various situations every day. In any given situation you will react /respond biblically or sinfully. But we first need to just stop and take a reality check and ask, "What is my situation?"

Summarize the situation for the salesman.

2. **How are you reacting?** This question probes your emotions, your behavior. Are you joyful, happy, peaceful, angry, distressed, arguing etc.?

Summarize how the salesman is responding.

9
Anxiety, fighting, quarreling, despair, and outbursts of anger are the birth product of lust (strong desires). These works of the flesh come from the lust of our flesh that we have talked about. They come from what I want/desire. My manner of life comes from the heart and that leads us to question three.

3. **What rules you? What do you expect, want, or desire?** This question gets at the heart. What do I want that has become so important to me that I am willing to sin to get it or respond sinfully when I don't get it?

Summarize what you think has become the salesman's utmost desire(s) or "idol(s) of the heart".

4. **What does God revealed in His Word relevant to your situation and yourself?** This question brings God into the situation. Ultimately we are asking, "What TRUTH from GOD do we know about the situation and about my response to the situation?"

What has God revealed in the Bible about the salesman's situation? What truth is relevant to the salesman at a time like this?

(some references could be Romans 8:28-29, Philipians 4:19, Psalm 49:7-20)

What has God revealed in the Bible about the salesman's response?

(cf. Ephesians 4:29-32, Galatians 5:19-20, Proverbs 14:29)

Why is it important to KNOW specific truths from Scripture in order for you to handle life?

Why do we feel anxious, fearful, or distressed in various situations including a simple traffic jam? Practically speaking we live many times as if we are functionally atheists. We forget truths, or more likely, choose not to believe truths, like the God of the universe is with me, He is in control and He is up to something good. This is a matter of functional Christianity as opposed to professed Christianity. We profess to know the God Who controls all things to His glory, a God with Whom there are no accidents, a God Who holds atoms together, Who spins galaxy in His hands. We profess that this is not an accidental world, and He is not a God Who is as remote as some galaxy, but is actively, intimately, and purposely involved in this world and up to something good. But then we fear, curse, and get angry in various situations. The question, "What has God revealed about you and your situation?", helps draw us back to God and His word. Then we need to ask. . .

5. What desires should rule you?

Again, what should be our desires in every circumstance according to the following verses?

1 Corinthians 10:31 *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*

Colossians 3:23 *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;"*

2 Corinthians 5:9 *"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."*

Once we reflect back on our goal and how our current response is not consistent with that goal, then we need to ask this question. . .

6. What should you do now?

What kinds of thinking and actions should the salesman do now? (if you need some help on this one consider 1 John 1:9, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philipians 2:4 in regard to the other people in traffic.)

So how do we deal with idols of the heart? Take yourself through the following questions and respond as specified in the last question.

1. What is my situation?
2. How am I responding?
3. What do I want/desire?
4. What has God revealed about my situation?
5. What should I want/desire?
6. What should I do now? (Then do it!)