

## Understanding the Heart

The word, “heart” is used 765 times in the King James Bible. From Scripture, it appears that the heart is comprised of three layers, going from the external to the internal. They are the volition, cognition, and affection.

### **Volition (choices, commitments, and action)**

Luke 6:45 – “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

### **Cognition (mind, thoughts, reason, belief, and unbelief)**

Genesis 6:5 – “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Matthew 9:3-4 – “And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?”

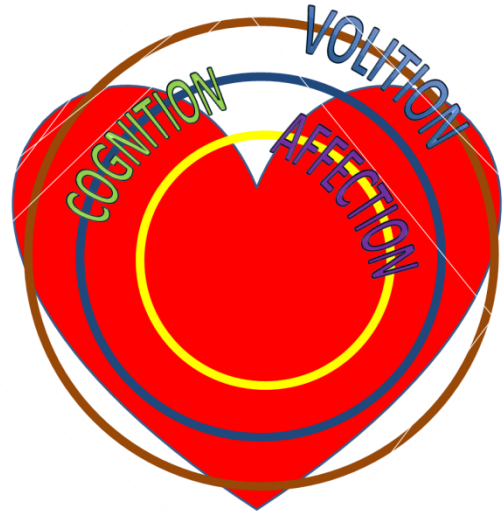
### **Affection (desires and emotions)**

Matthew 6:21 – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Proverbs 15:13 – “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”

Emotions are like a periscope to the heart. It doesn't afford a direct view, but provides us with an indication of what is going on.

Illus: Anger is a great warning light



## The Complex Heart

We must harmonize several Scriptures to develop a biblical understanding of the complex human heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 - “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” – seems almost fatalistic

Proverbs 28:26 - “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.” – trusting our heart is not a wise proposition

James 1:14-15 - "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." – **This is true for saved and lost. Deceit and sinful desires are hidden in our heart**

Ezekiel 36:26 - "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." – **Hope for those who are saved. Our heart has been remade by God. This is evidenced by the new affections you have after salvation.**

Psalms 51:10 - "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." – **God is the ultimate heart physician for saved and lost.**

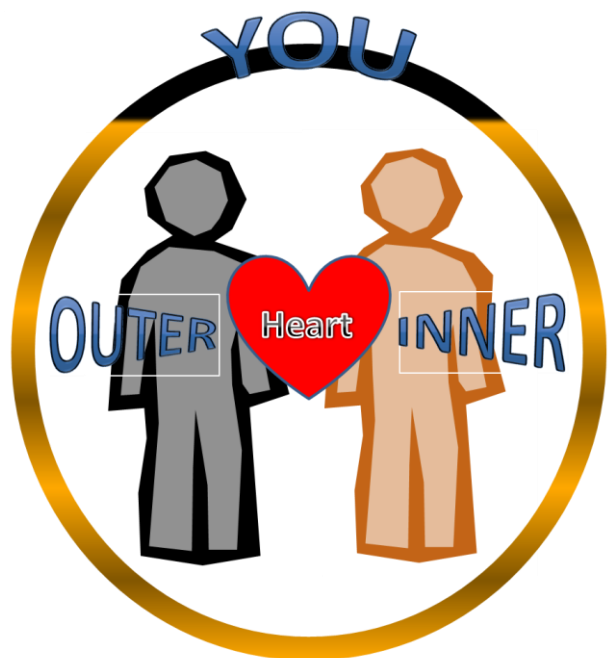
Ezekiel 18:30-32 - "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." – **God calls us to the table to participate in the renewal of our heart.**

James 4:8 - "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." – **Written to saints. We are called to participate in purifying our hearts.**

Psalms 139:23-24 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." – **We cannot view directly into our heart. Not only do we need God to change our heart, but we need Him to see our heart.**

1 Peter 1:22 - "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" - **Loving with a pure heart (sincere) is commanded and is achievable to some degree.**

In harmonizing these passages, we find that some are written to the lost; some are written to the saved. The lost have both an inner and outer man that are corrupt. Therefore their heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). The saved have a pure inner man and a corrupt outer man (Rom. 7:22-25). We find the heart appears to bridge the gap between the two (see illustration) in that it is affected by both the inner and outer man. Our heart is purified when we are born again (Ezek. 36:26), but we can still become deceived and hardened by sin and our heart needs to be purified again (James 4:8). It is therefore of utmost importance to guard our heart and to cooperate with God in purifying our hearts.



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## Guarding the Heart

Proverbs 4:20-27 – “... Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life...”

Everything from us comes from the heart. You cannot go around this.

Romans 12:2 - “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Illus: We can't just flip a switch and say, “I'll do better”. That doesn't touch the heart.

What is our role in this work of heart care? What are we called to do?

Eph. 4:22-32 – All of this can be characterized by the phrase, “putting off and putting on”. Note verse 23, “be renewed in the spirit of your mind”. This connects with Romans 12:2.

1 Timothy 4:7-16 – Paul exhorted Timothy to focus on two things: discerning truth and personal application.

Spiritual Disciplines – They do not change your heart, but they are our God-called role in participating in heart care.

### 1) Skillfully Applying the Word of God

Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Heart Journaling is a fantastic way to actually apply this principle.

- What am I doing (or not doing) that is causing a problem?
- What are my sinful thoughts that lead me to this behavior?
- What Scripture applies to my thoughts?
- What is God revealing to me about my true desires (idols)?

### 2) Cultivating Godly Friendships

Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

Consider David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:1-7a. What role did Nathan play in David's heart change? What were David's sinful desires/idols? Nathan was a true friend by confronting David's sin. He apparently contemplated how he could provoke David to good works (Hebrews 10:24). David's idols were revealed by his own mouth. He became so self-absorbed that he forgot mercy. He became unthankful, covetous, and shut off his love for others.

3) Meditating Upon the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Romans 1:15 – “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”

Christians need the gospel too! This is the way the epistles are written. They usually begin with deep spiritual truths and then move to application. In light of this truth, live this way.

4) Mourning over Sin

Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 – mourning over sin can work a positive change in our heart

This is a natural extension of having our idols revealed. We need to mourn that we have left our first love and went after another lover (Revelation 2:4-5).

5) Radical Surgery

Romans 13:14 – “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Matthew 5:29-30 – Cut out your eye or cut off your hand if it is necessary.

Radical change is needed in both directions: putting off the flesh AND putting on the Spirit.

6) Purposeful Prayer

Psalms 51:10 – “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

The revelation of our sinful thoughts and affections gives us very specific things to take before the Lord in prayer. It is the difference between telling someone to “be careful” when they leave and “watch out for moose and falling ice”. One is generic and the other specific, providing focused guidance on what we need to do.

7) Contemplating Eternity

1 John 3:1-3 – The reality of our eternal destiny with Christ is a call to purity

Colossians 3:1-4 – We are called to set our affection (the desire of our heart) upon the Lord and His return. It keeps us centered