

# Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands

*How to Help Others Change*

---

STUDY GUIDE

---

**Paul David Tripp**

**Timothy S. Lane, Contributor**



[www.newgrowthpress.com](http://www.newgrowthpress.com)



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

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27429  
Copyright © 2000 by Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation  
Copyright © 2005, 2010 by New Growth Press  
Published in 2005 as *Helping Others Change*  
All rights reserved.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Cover Design: faceoutbooks, Nate Saliccioli and Jeff Miller,  
[www.faceoutbooks.com](http://www.faceoutbooks.com)

Typesetting: Lisa Parnell

ISBN-13: 978-1-935273-04-2  
ISBN-10: 1-935273-04-3

Printed in Canada

17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10      1 2 3 4 5

# 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.”

# Course Outline

## *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*

### LESSON 1

Do We Really Need Help? / 1

### LESSON 2

The Heart Is the Target / 13

### LESSON 3

Understanding Your Heart Struggle / 25

### LESSON 4

Following the Wonderful Counselor / 37

### LESSON 5

Love I: Building Relationships in  
Which God's Work Will Thrive / 49

### LESSON 6

Love II: Building Relationships in  
Which God's Work Will Thrive / 63

### LESSON 7

Know I: Getting to Know People;  
Discovering Where Change Is Needed / 75

### LESSON 8

Know II: Getting to Know People;  
Discovering Where Change Is Needed / 87

### LESSON 9

Speak I: Speaking the Truth in Love / 103

### LESSON 10

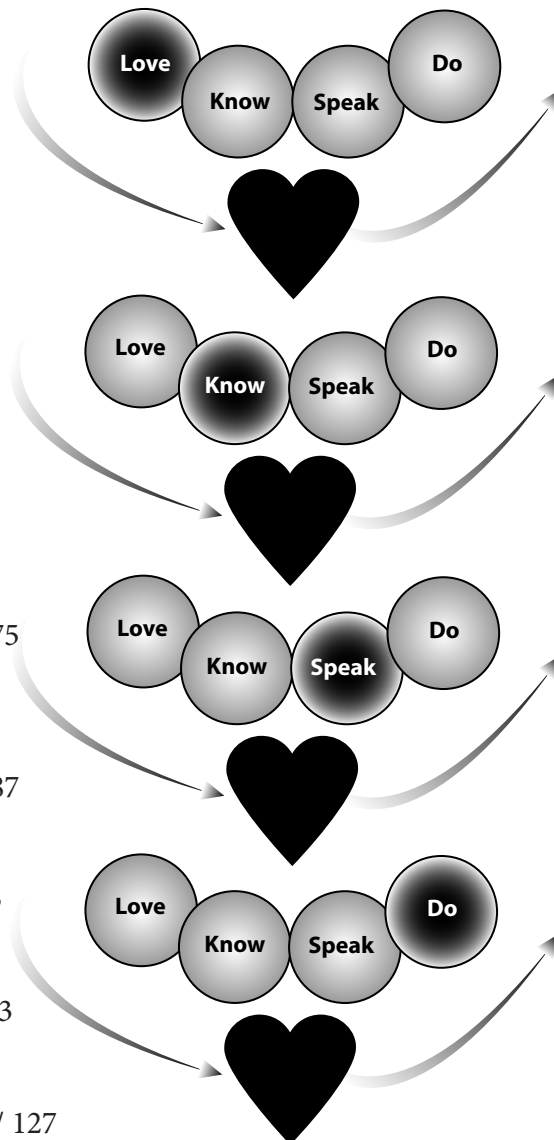
Speak II: Speaking the Truth in Love / 113

### LESSON 11

Do I: Applying Change to Everyday Life / 127

### LESSON 12

Do II: Applying Change to Everyday Life / 143



## 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.