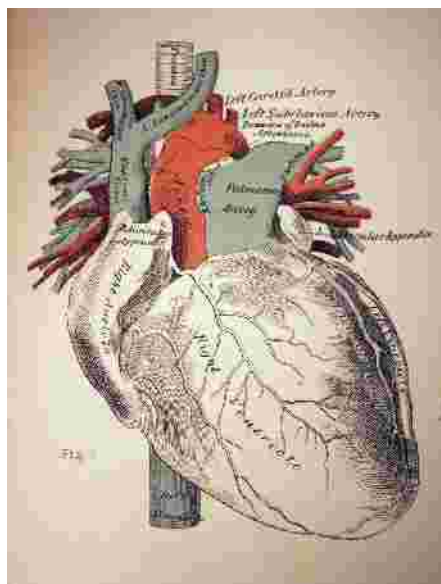


How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb

A Guide to Authentic Heart Change

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23



Why is Vigilance in Keeping Your Heart So Important?

- § Not to be made right with God.
 - The Gospel shows me: “I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dared believe” – and – “I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope”
 - The Gospel gives us the desire to have a heart that truly loves God and others – and – the security to look honestly at how far our heart falls short of that love.
- § “From it flow the springs of life” – Many of our actions ([Pro 4:24-27](#)), thoughts, emotions and attitudes flow “automatically” from our hearts. [Matt 12:34](#)
- § Your heart is always being formed for the better or for the worse over the long term – ex: Solomon, Peter
- § True freedom is having a heart that is free from slavery to idols and able to live a loving, authentic life from a good heart.
- § God cares about whether we have an authentic heart of love for Him and others – I Sam 16:7, Matt 5:28, Matt 18:35, Matt 22:37, Mark 3:5, Mark 7:6 – and he should care about it!
- § Chances are if you are a Christian you already desire a good heart, but how exactly do you pursue true change in the heart?

1.) A Biblical Vision for Change

Real Change is Possible for You

- § Jesus clearly intends that we would become the kind of people who actually learn to do all the things that he has commanded from a heart that truly loves God and others. [Luke 11:39-40](#)
- § A lack of authentic change in some part of a believer’s heart could only be due to: 1.) Ignorance of the heart issue, or 2.) Ignorance of the biblical means of change, or 3.) A stubborn refusal to change. It is not because such change is not possible for you.

Real Change Can Only be Done By God, but You are Responsible to be Vigilant in the Process. [Phil 1:6](#), [Pro 4:23](#)

- § “Spiritual formation is something we human beings can and must undertake – as individuals and in fellowship with other apprentices of Jesus – while it is simultaneously a profound manifestation of God’s gracious action through his Word and Spirit, it is also something we are responsible for before God and can set about achieving in a sensible systematic manner.” Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* p. 25

Real Change Must Begin in the Heart

- § Changing only in actions is what it meant to be a Pharisee and left them worse off. God wants our hearts.
- § Jesus promised an “easy yoke” (Matt 11:30) and that we would “never thirst again” (John 4:14 – ie. be driven by desires that aren’t satisfied) – hearts that desire what he desires. Not to aim at the heart is to make living the way of Jesus very hard.

2.) A True Intention to Change: Seeking A Desirable Vision

- § “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” [1 John 5:3](#)
- § Look at the vision God has laid out for what it means to be an apprentice of Jesus. Look at the commands of God as a catalog of possibilities not a list of burdensome demands.
- § For example: Who would not want to be the kind of person who naturally exhibited love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control from the heart? [Gal 5:22-23](#)
- § Where would you like to see substantial change in your heart this year?
- § By the end of the year I would like to be the kind of person whose heart naturally _____ not who naturally _____

3.) A Gospel-Centered Means for Real Heart Change

Identifying Where Change is Needed: Symptoms of Idolatry – Asking the “James 4:1 Question”

- § Anxiety, bitterness, anger, lust, covetousness, depression are symptoms of an underlying idolatry. [James 4:1-2](#)
- § Identify the core idolatry that is the cause of your anxiety, bitterness, lust, covetousness, depression, etc. - the sin beneath the sin.
- § Core idols would be things that we are valuing more than what we have in Jesus (Gospel).
- § Common core idols are: approval, pleasure (comfort), power (influence), control
- § Ask the “James 4:1 Question”: “I am bitter (or anxious or depressed, etc.) but why?” [Psalm 42:5](#)

- § Every idol promises a kind of salvation – it makes you think you can't live without it (a kind of Hell) – that you will die unless your idol (a kind of savior) it saves you. Isaiah 57:13
- § Interact with God in Prayer: Ask God to search your heart. Psalms 139:23-24
 - What symptoms of idolatry (anxiety, bitterness, anger, lust, covetousness, depression) are currently suffering from?
 - What is the core idol (approval, pleasure/comfort, power/influence, control) – the sin beneath the sin – that is trying to control your heart?

Realize the Evil of Your Idol

- § We are essentially saying, "Jesus, you're not enough I also need _____" (insert your underlying idol) when we are driven to despair, anger, bitterness or covetousness by our idolatry.
- § In fact when you find it hard to repent see if you can say that sentence out loud in prayer. That will usually melt my hard heart and bring me to repentance.
- § See your idol – your attempt to find salvation in something other than Jesus – for what it is.
 - It is weak – it consistently fails to give you the salvation it promises. Psalms 96:5, Isaiah 57:13
 - It is destructive – it consistently leaves you worse off than you started. James 4:1-2
 - It is an offense to Christ – you are saying he is not enough, you also need salvation from your idol – it belittles Christ's worth. Jer 2:12-13
- § Interact With God in Prayer: How is the idol you named above weak (fails you), destructive (makes you and other miserable), and evil (an offensive belittling of Christ)?

Apply the Gospel – See the One Who Never Bowed

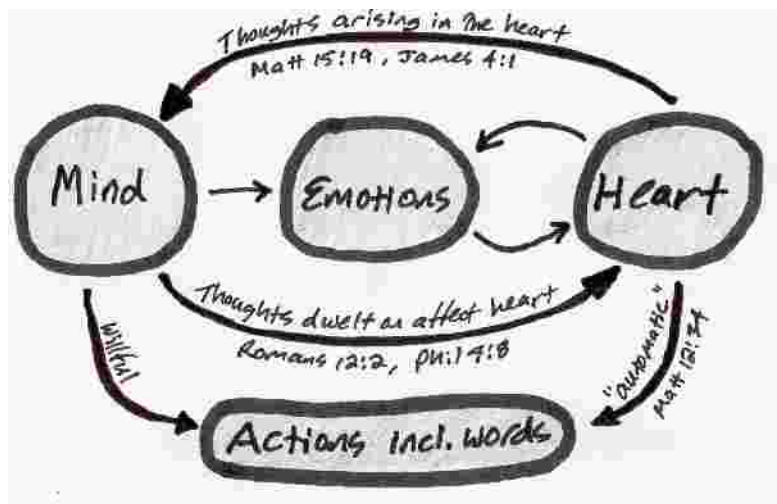
- § Don't stay wallowing in the failure of your idolatry.
- § Repentance is to realize the evil of your idol, turn away from it and turn to trust in the Gospel.
- § See Jesus who never bowed to the idol that had your heart. The Father was enough for him. He has lived a life free of this idol in your place and has credited that life to you as a gift. He has also died the death your idolatry deserves. 1 Cor 5:21
- § Interact With God in Prayer: Think of instances in Christ's life where he was tempted to the idol you have worshiped but he didn't – thank him for crediting his perfect life to you.
- § It is by going to the cross in this way many times a day that your heart will change – transformed by the Gospel.

You Can't Change Your Heart by Direct Effort – Heart Change Will Occur Gradually as You Repent in Your Thoughts (your emotions will follow). Romans 12:2, Phil 4:8

- § "What we feel and think is (or can and should be) to a very large degree a matter of choice in competent adult persons, who will be very careful about what they allow their minds to dwell upon or what they allow themselves to feel." Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* p. 34

No Change Without Repentance

- § Repentance is not just for the occasional sin crisis. It is for every hour. Bible reading, occasional prayer, and church fellowship will not lead to substantial heart change. Heart change will occur only if these things are accompanied by specific, frequent repentance of thoughts and emotions that are not in line with the heart of God.
- § It will be by repenting and pleading with God to change your thoughts throughout the day that your heart will change over time. It will be 1000's of little repentances and pleadings prayer.
 - With time you will start catching these thoughts earlier, so that you repent before you have thought too long in sin.
- § Our hearts are always being formed (for the better or for the worse). Your heart will be formed after the beauty of Christ's heart as you continually seek to align your thoughts with the realities of Jesus. Every day that you are prayerfully vigilant over your heart (repenting at the level of the mind and emotions) God will use to purify your heart.



You Need a New Heart Before You Can Seek to Have a Good Heart

- § Jesus has been pierced through the heart instead of you (John 19:34), taking your punishment, for the evil in your heart. He now offers you full forgiveness and new heart.
- § Admit you have not loved God in your heart and therefore do not deserve to have a relationship with him.
- § Call upon God to forgive you and give you a heart that can truly love him and others.

True Heart Change is Possible – Many Have Walked in It – You Can Too!