



# Lesson 3

*Penetrating Hearts*  
*Ezekiel 14; Hebrews 4:12-13*

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*Desperately wicked and blinded hearts are open to God and His Word*

## Summary

While our hearts are desperately wicked, deceived and inscrutable, God knows our hearts and tests what guides our actions and emotions. God is working toward heart transformation through His work and through His Word.

## Examining Our Bad R o o t s

### ***Biblical Models and Themes***

#### I d o l s

1 John 5:21; Ezek 14:1-7; Rom 1:18-32; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5;  
Phil 3:19

#### Ruling D e s i r e s

Eph 2:3; 4:22; James 1:13-15; 4:1-3; Gal 5:16-17; 1 Peter  
2:11; 4:2; 1 John 2:16-17; Exodus 20:17; Rom 1:24-27;  
7:7-11,14-25; 8:1-17

#### M a s t e r s

Matt 6:24; Rom 6:15-23; Gen 4:6-7; Psalm 119:133

#### T r e a s u r e s



Matt 6:19-21; Matt 13:44-45; 1 Tim 6:19; Heb 11:26;  
Psalm 119:72, 127

Good or bad r o o t s with good or bad fruit.

Luke 6:43-45

What/whom we l o v e.

2 Tim 3:1-5; John 21:15-17; 1 John 2:15

E x p e c t a t i o n

Luke 24:17-21; 1 Timothy 6:17; Psalm 42-43; 71

In what/whom we t r u s t.

Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 20:7-8; Proverbs 3:5

What/whom we f e a r.

Matt 10:28; 1 Pet 3:13-15; Eccl 12:13

F o u n d a t i o n

Matt 7:24-27; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Heb 12:27-28

What/whom we h a l l o w.

Matthew 6:9

## **I d o l s of the Heart**

### ***Heart Idols in L e a d e r s***

***Ezekiel 14:1-7***

Who are these idolaters?

What sins does the Lord expose?

What is the Lord's goal?

(v.5) To r e c a p t u r e their hearts

What is the Lord's command?

Principles from the Text

Idolatry is a problem for everyone, even r e l i g i o u s people.

Idolatry is rooted in our h e a r t s.

Our idols exert an inescapable, r u l i n g influence on us.

Transformation must occur at the h e a r t level.

Transformation involves turning from i d o l s to the L o r d.

### ***Heart Idols in B e l i e v e r s***

***1 John 5:21***

Idolatry is any s u b s t i t u t e for the living God.

### ***Heart Idols in C u l t u r e***

***Romans 1:18-32***

18-23 The e x c h a n g e that operates as lies in the realm of heart



idols.

- Exchange the eternal g l o r y of God for the mortal creatures (v.23).
- Exchange the t r u t h of God for a lie (v.25a).
- Exchange worship and service of God for the c r e a t u r e (v.25b).
- Exchange o b e d i e n c e to God for pleasure (v.26).

24-25 Given over to l u s t s because of embracing l i e s.

26-28 P u n i s h e d by being given over to the flesh

- As d e g r a d i n g passions (v.26-27)
- As d e p r a v e d minds (v.28)

29-32 Y i e l d i n g fruits and harvests of ever more dominating sins

### **Examples of Idol Clusters**

#### *Greed*

*Ephesians 5:5 // Colossians 3:5*

Greed is idolatry – ruled by wanting what we ought not have so that it rules us and masters us into disobedience. This is a primary category for idolatry today. The desire for what is thought of as “wealth” becomes a ruling desire of greed and coveting. Thinking of it this way allows this category to be trans-cultural.

#### *Fear of man, acceptance, approval*

Proverbs 29:25

John 12:42-43

Galatians 2:11-13

### *Success, power, control*

1 Sam 13:8-14

Luke 22:24-27

3 John 1:9-10

Isaiah 30:1-2

### *Comfort, convenience, tranquility, ease*

Luke 9:23-24,57-62

Will often be used to excuse from immediate obedience and sacrificial ministry. Is exposed by a call to discipleship and challenged by the cross

### *Money, possessions, coveting*

Matt 6:19-24

Luke 12:15; 16:13-15

1 Tim 6:9-10,17

2 Tim 3:2

### *Sensual pleasure*

2 Samuel 11:2-4; 13:1-14

Philippians 3:19

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

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*What does it mean, then, to allow Jesus to be Lord of our lives? What does it mean that anything is the lord of our life? Just this: Whatever controls us is lord. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our life. If Jesus is our Lord, then he is the one who controls, he has the ultimate power.”*

*(Rebecca Pippert, Out of the Saltshaker, p. 53)*



## Summary about Heart Idols:

**Heart idols are the f a l s e gods we erect in our hearts in competition with the true and living God.**

**We choose to obey them and trust them to bring us the b l e s s i n g s we want**

**In turn, they rule and drive us. We are both willful choosers and helpless s l a v e s to our idols.**

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*“The fallen human heart cannot see beauty in holiness, but finds pleasure in that which ultimately brings ruin.” (Thomas E. McComiskey, Hosea, on Hosea 11:5)*

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*Idolatry: “When we act as if something below God could make us happy without God, or that God cannot make us happy without the addition of something else.” (Stephen Charnock)*



## The Difficulty Examining the Heart      Jeremiah 17:5-10

### ***The Severe C h a s t e n i n g of God's People***

#### ***The M o d e l for Interpreting God's Providences (v.5-8)***

The primary contrast is between those who trust in the f l e s h and those who trust in the L o r d.

The Thorn Bush (v.5-6)

The Fruitful Tree (v.7-8)

#### ***The T r o u b l e with the Heart (v.9-10)***

Its D e p r a v i t y (v.9)

Its O b s c u r i t y (v.9)

Its S e a r c h a b i l i t y (v.10)

*Not impossible to know*

*Searched by the Lord*

*Evidenced by fruit and ways (v.10)*

God deals with what is actually going on in the heart and brings about circumstances that will expose it to us.

## **The Power to Penetrate the Heart Hebrews 4:12-16**

The issue is a lack of faith (entering into the rest) that results in disobedience.

**The Characteristics of the Word (v.12)**

In its A t t r i b u t e s

In its A b i l i t i e s

*The Word p e n e t r a t e s the heart's hardness.*

*The Word e x p o s e s the heart's functions.*

**Our E x p o s u r e to the Lord (v.13)**

**The Exhortations for the Christian (v.14-16)**

Continue to C o n f e s s Truth (v.14)

D r a w N e a r to God with Confidence (v.16)

E x p e c t i n g the Mercies of Christ (v15)

**Lessons for Living**

***God is working to show you what you t r u s t in.***

***Know that your heart is d e c e i t f u l and d i f f i c u l t. It is not easy to "read" or "hear".***

***God p e r c e i v e s our hearts and the Word p e n e t r a t e s our hearts.***

***Our merciful and faithful high priest will show us mercy and give us g r a c e in our time of need.***



## **Questions for Discussion**

**Is the inner man, the heart, totally hidden from us? From God?**

**How do we respond to people who say, “No one but God knows what is going on in the heart?”**

**What are the hard times (and sometimes the good times) doing for us?**

**What tool has God given us so that we can “see” our hearts?**

**What are the great dangers to us (in Hebrews 4)?**

**What does God expect from us if Jesus is a merciful High Priest?**

**What do we expect from God if we do the above?**



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## Notes