

# Session 2 : Intro

LOOKING AT THE HEART



It may have come as a surprise as we talked last time about our role as Leaders being one involving both being needy and being needed. We may say 'I don't want my leader to be needy' or 'I don't want to see too much struggle'.

Obviously we need to use appropriate boundaries – we don't have to share everything with everyone. But we do need to beware the leader / follower conspiracy – *'Don't show me your weakness and I'll*

*believe you don't have any'*. This would give an inaccurate picture of the Christian life with wrong expectations, leading to disappointment and possibly people walking away from Christ.

My discipleship consists in successfully following all God's commands – this is WRONG.

My discipleship consists in a life of humble dependence on a gracious God who sees my sin but loves me still – this is CORRECT.

This is potentially a significant culture change as we lead out of weakness rather than our strength.

Inspired by and using some material from Side by Side by Edward T Welch: pub Crossway

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Last time we met, we looked at this biblical x-ray showing the different circumstances in which we live our Christian lives. In some ways, it may seem obvious – but do we remember all of them?

For example, if we are going through a difficult period at work and our relationship with our boss is breaking down, we may forget that this could be a spiritual conflict – instead of two neutral and autonomous human beings who exist outside of this realm. Or we may forget that our bodies reflect stress – we have no patience because we are exhausted!



**It is easy to draw a diagram of our life's circumstances, but it's at the centre of who we are - our heart - that it gets more complicated.**

**Our hearts guide our thoughts and actions as we interact with all our circumstances. It is in the heart that we find the very essence of who we are.**

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# Session 2

## LOOKING AT THE HEART



Today we will be taking a journey into the heart. We will see that sometimes we express what is in our heart through **our emotions** - sometimes it comes out through the **good and bad** that we do. At the very core of our being is our **connection to God**.

### THE BIBLE HAS MANY WORDS FOR THE HEART:

*Spirit, soul, heart, mind, inner person, conscience*

Each word describes our spiritual centre - how we are connected to God, whether we are thinking about that connection or not.



### FOR DISCUSSION:

Look at these references to find Scriptural pictures for the heart. Think about what you learn from each picture.

- Proverbs 4 v 23 (Matt 12 v 34)
- Proverbs 20 v 5 (John 7 v 38)
- Jeremiah 17 vv 5-8
- Matthew 6 vv 19-21



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Our hearts lead us, quietly determining the course of our lives. Our Christian framework sees us as more than physical actors. We are more than just the output / actions.

**Our hearts really matter.**

Mark 7:6 'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'.

## THEREFORE:

- We need to know our own hearts
- As we disciple others we need to help them / encourage them to engage with their hearts.

## BUT HOW?

As we seek to examine what is in our hearts, one of the ways we can do so is **by following our emotions.**

## Our emotions show us what is important to us.

- when we are happy, we are in possession of something we love
- when we are anxious, something we love is under threat
- when we are downcast, something we love has gone missing
- when we are angry, something we love is being taken away from us



# Session 2

## LOOKING AT THE HEART



**What is most important to us? What do we love? What is most dear to us?**

These are questions that get to the heart of who we are - but they also show us where we are headed.

The roads we choose to take reveal our relationship with God. Do we love what he loves?

As good Christians, we know what we should say....but the true answer is one reflected by our emotions, so it is vital to learn to read them appropriately.



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## LOOKING AT THE HEART

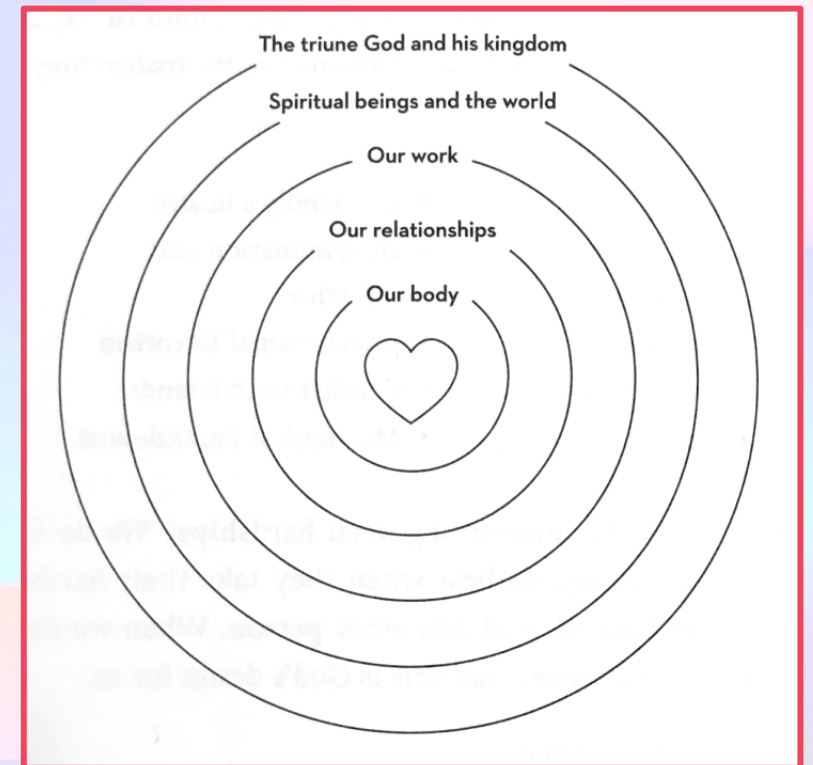


### Looking at the x-ray diagram again:

Our emotions come from our hearts; are expressed by our bodies\*\*; show the depth of our relationships; reflect both the goodness or the meaningless of work; give an idea of how we get on when it comes to spiritual battle; and show how we connect to God.

**\*\*It's important to say at this point that our emotions usually reflect what is happening in our hearts, but can also be something that reflects a chaotic situation in our body or brain.**

**Sometimes, for example with depression, it is not our hearts telling us something but our bodies showing that there is suffering which needs spiritual encouragement.**



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# Session 2 : Going Deeper

LOOKING AT THE HEART

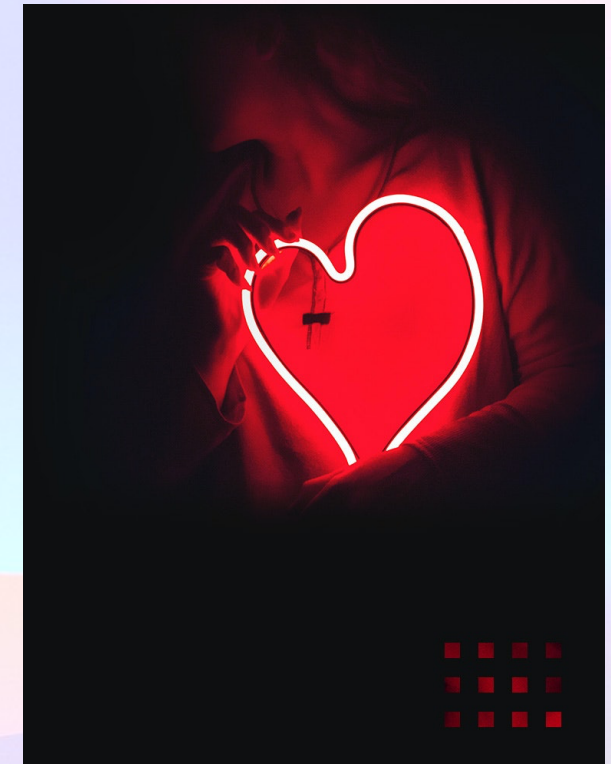


By reading the EMOTIONS -> we can go deeper.

If we go a little deeper into the heart: our emotions are on the surface and usually fairly easy and obvious to read. But further in we have our desires - good and bad.

The good in our hearts expresses what we love and desire. It also points to God. If we think about it, every human has good in them, and through the good we see in other people, we see the reflection of God. *(e.g. Neighbours help each other; strangers return lost wallets; spouses say sorry to each other; a car mechanic is honest about the bill)*

As Christians, when we respond to Jesus with good, we may call it faith or obedience - it can be very beautiful to see, for example in someone who is determined to hold on to their faith through tough times.



Noticing God's reflected goodness is important in the way we help others - seeing what is good in another person - and we'll come back to this in a later session.

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# Session 2 : Going Deeper

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**But of course we also have bad in us.**

We can be good and bad at the same time!  
We don't like to talk about the bad quite as much.

It's there on the outside: We may gossip; tear down our kids; watch pornography; be 'economical with the truth'. We all agree with this,

But it's there on the inside too.

**Jesus says there is some source of bad inside. It's harder for people to acknowledge that the bad in us is sin if we are not deliberately doing it. How can it be sin?**

**Because our badness is primarily directed against God - even when we aren't thinking about him, we may find ourselves longing for things that just aren't worthy of that kind of longing, or find ourselves wanting to hold on to ownership of our lives, rather than submitting what we desire or ownership of ourselves to God.**

**Mark 7 v 18:**

**And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.**

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# Session 2 : Going Deeper Still

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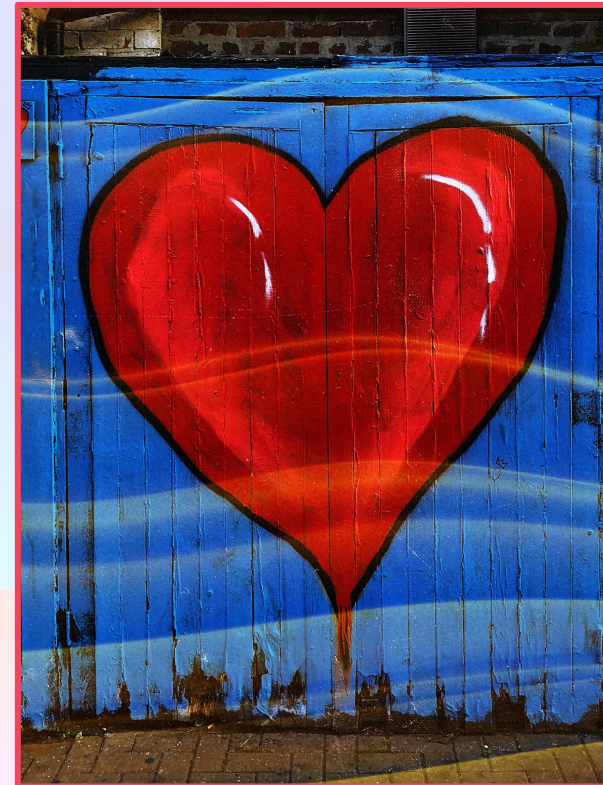


**Right at the centre of our hearts is our connection to God.**

This is manifested through worship - of the real God or of false gods. We go from the premise that we all worship something.

## **OUR HEARTS:**

- recognise God's voice and reflect his character (love, justice)
- have the 'work of the law' written on them and we have a conscience
- are never fully at rest until they rest in him
- are at their best when we love, worship and obey God



**What does today's thinking about the heart mean for us as we seek to grow in our discipling role as small group leaders?**

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# Session 2 : Going Deeper Still

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**What does today's thinking about the heart mean for us as we seek to grow in our discipling role as small group leaders?**

**As we've just seen - the deepest need of our hearts is God - to know him intimately and follow him wholeheartedly.**

**Therefore as leaders and disciplers, we will always be aiming for this, if we want to grow ourselves, and truly help others.**

In his grace, God moves to meet us, and ripples of grace spread throughout the body of Christ.

In the same way that God moves towards us, we make it our aim to move towards others. We aren't just moving towards our friendship groups, but towards all those in our church.

**Who does the Bible ask us to make a special effort with?**

- The visitor / the foreigner / the refugee
- Those who are less popular, the marginalised, those who are sitting on their own
- Children

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# Session 2 :

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## FOR DISCUSSION:

We see intentional relationship-building as part of what we do as believers because of our relational God.

- How has God moved towards you / how does God move towards you?
- How might you plan to act on the call to move towards others?

### Let's try:

- to have more intentional conversations with people. We aren't trying to solve someone's problems for them. We are merely getting to know someone because we want to.
- to move beyond a shallow conversation by listening to what someone is expressing from their heart.
- How has God moved towards you?
- How might you begin to act on the call to move towards others?

- We listen to what makes someone tick - to what they love, what they fear, what they find difficult.
- We listen for signs and we follow their affections to hear what they find exciting, and what they find hard.
- We listen for what they like and dislike - we listen for feelings and emotions because they show hopes and fears - and we look for how God is connected in it all.

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# Session 2 : Conclusion

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## What does this look like in the life of our church?

- We seek to grow deeper to those we connect with in our small groups. We want to learn about the things that move them.
- Then we pray for them or ask how we can pray for them.
- Then they are in our hearts and we can follow up and we can enter into a deeper relationship with them - walking side by side.

**When we know someone well enough that we can pray for them, we give help at both its most basic and also its best. This may seem minimal.**

**BUT FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE EVEN THIS FROM SOMEONE, IT IS A POINT OF CONNECTION AND BLESSING.**



Pray to learn from each other as we walk together as leaders. Ask God to show you how you can reach out to someone who may need it this week - a phone call, an email, a walk.

Ask God to show you who to confide in if you need to share your heart with someone yourself.

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