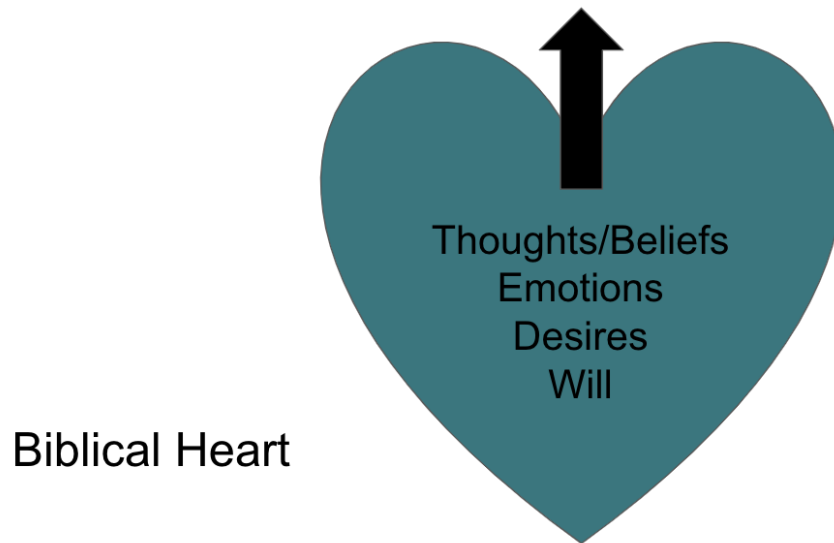


# The Biblical Heart (Part 4)

## By Wendy Wood



So far in this blog series we have seen that the heart is the immaterial part of a person. The heart is the control center from which every thought, intention, emotion, desire, motivation comes from and it is out of the heart that a person takes action.

Even for believers, the heart is deceitful and we can be fooled and blinded by our own sinful desires and motivations.

This video will take an indepth look at how the heart functions as a person deals with situations and circumstances each day.

The heart basically consists of the **thoughts, emotions, and desires** of a person and then the **will** is the drive to act on those three components.

Let's look at a couple of examples from scripture that will help you understand how the emotions, thoughts, desires and will work together in all decisions and actions that we take. We will compare Eve's heart and Jesus' heart from two different passages in scripture.

**Genesis 3:6** "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her."

Let's start with Eve's **emotions**. She is delighted by what she sees. The fruit looks good to eat and Satan has promised her that she will gain special knowledge through eating it. This produces the positive emotion of delight.

We see Eve's **desires**. She wants to be wise like God. She desires to get what she wants - to be wise like God and to rule herself.

Eve's **thoughts** are revealed by her emotions and desires. She doesn't stop to think about what she knows to be true of God - that He created her, that He loves her and is always with her, that He provides everything she needs. Instead, she is led by her emotions and she chooses to think God is withholding from her. She thinks God is preventing her from having something that would be good for her. Her emotions lead her to think lies about God and His character.

Part of her heart is her **will**. The will is what moves us to action. God has granted us a will so that we decide how we will respond to our circumstances. We have choices to make. We do what we do because we want what we want.

When Eve decides to sin - to take the fruit and eat it - she shows her **ruling desire** is to get what she wants. She loves herself more than she loves God at this moment because she wants what she wants - wisdom and self-rule, over what God wants - to be in perfect relationship with her and protect her from knowing evil. She allows her thinking to go wrong and her emotions regarding her sinful desire for autonomy to rule her as she chooses to sin.

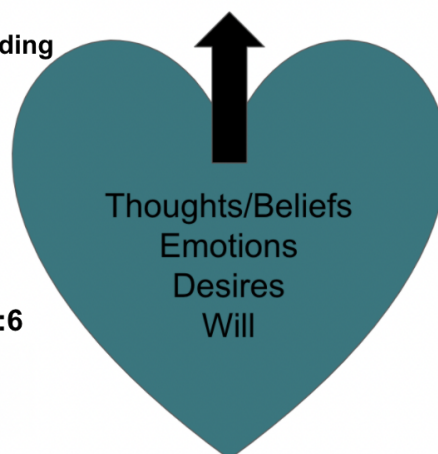
**Emotions: Delight**

**Desire: Be wise like God**

**Thoughts: God is withholding**

**Will: Eats fruit and sins**

**Eve's Heart: Genesis 3:6**



Let's compare that to Jesus' response to His circumstance in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Mark 14:32-26 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."**

First - we see Jesus' **emotions**. He is sorrowful, even to death. He is troubled. Jesus is distressed. He knows he is facing a horrible death of suffering. He knows he is about to experience the sin of the world on him as he dies on the cross. He is understandably emotionally upset.

We also see Jesus' **desire**. His desire is that God remove the cup of suffering from him. Jesus knows the suffering will be great, and he has a desire to not suffer. No one wants to suffer!

Jesus' **thoughts** are that God is all powerful, and God can do anything. Jesus is thinking the truth. He knows God could remove the suffering from him.

And we also see His **ruling desire**. "Not what I will, but what you will". Jesus' ruling desire is to obey God because of His love for His Father. Jesus loves God whole-heartedly and submits his desire to God's will.

Jesus' **will** leads him to obedience. He goes to the cross and takes all the pain and suffering of sin on himself.

**Hebrews 12:2 tells us "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."**

Jesus' emotions lead Him to God. He goes to God in prayer when He experiences strong emotion and submits Himself to God's will. He recounts the truths about God. He knows God is all powerful and can do anything - even take away the suffering on the cross, But, He submits his emotions to truth, and submits His desire to God's better plan. He then acts obediently and ultimately experiences the "Joy set before Him" when He pleases His Father.

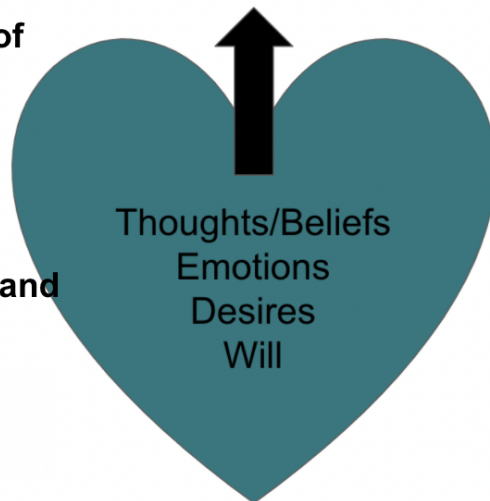
**Emotions: sorrowful,  
troubled**

**Desire: Remove cup of  
wrath**

**Thoughts: Nothing  
impossible for God**

**Will: Submits to God and  
obeys**

Jesus' Heart:  
Matthew 26:36-39  
Mark 14:34-36



Let's look at our hearts and how we respond to our situations.

Remember, the Heart is made up of our emotions, desires, thoughts and will.

We saw from Eve and Jesus that their responses to their circumstances revealed what they loved the most.

**Every response to temptation is an act of worship.**

Every choice that we make will either show we are worshiping God or worshiping self. And it all comes from our heart.

Let's review some specific scriptures that show all our words and actions come from the heart.

**Matthew 15:18-19 "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness and slander."**

This verse tells us that our thoughts, our actions and our words all come from within us.

**Luke 6:43-45 is a similar teaching. "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."**

Our words and actions reveal what we are worshiping. We either produce good fruit or bad fruit depending on what we love the most.

We are often tempted to blame others for our sin. We say things like “He made me so mad” or “I had to yell because that is the only way she listens.” No one can make us sin. Our sin comes from inside of us and our sin is always the result of worshiping ourselves rather than God.

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

This verse again says that all of our responses flow from the heart, but adds the importance of guarding our hearts. The world tells us to follow our hearts and to listen to our hearts. God tells us to guard our hearts because our hearts are deceitful, as we saw with Eve. We can easily deceive ourselves with our emotions and wrong thinking so we need to guard our hearts by always going back to God’s word for Truth.

We have decision making abilities. God has given us the ability to think and has provided us with Scripture and His Son so that we can respond in a way that pleases Him.

We make many decisions every day. The decisions that we make, the responses we give to temptations, reveal what is in our heart. We are either loving God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. Or, we are loving ourselves.

God has created us with a purpose.

**2 Corinthians 5:9 says, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him”.**

**Isaiah 43:7 says, “Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made”.**

We are alive and here on earth to please God and to glorify Him. To glorify God means to give Him the worship and honor that He is due. We are to live our lives in a way that shows the value and worth of God for who He is and what He has done for us in Christ. Our goal should be to live in such a way, to respond to every temptation, by making decisions that please God and display His goodness.

Every day we make many responses to temptations. Temptations to sin will always be around us while we are here on earth. When we get to the point where we need to make a decision, we need to think about Luke 9:23

**Luke 9:23 tells us “And He said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”.**

We have **wills** that allow us to decide how we will respond. We have formed habits in our

responses, but at the point of justification, when we repent and surrender to Christ for the first time, we are given the Holy Spirit and His power within us to choose to please God. We are set free from being slaves to sin and through the power of the Holy Spirit, are able to please God and become slaves to righteousness.

So let's look at Luke 9:23 again. Jesus says twice, "if you want to come after me, or if you want to follow me" we must #1, deny ourselves and #2 take up our cross daily.

So what does it mean to "deny ourselves"? We have "two selves" when we become believers. We have the "old self" that we are to "put off" and we have the "new self" to "put on" that is made in the image of Christ in righteousness and holiness. To deny ourselves is to have the "new self" deny the "old self". Since we have the Holy Spirit within us, we can choose to please God through depending on God to help us form new habits in our responses. The new self can willfully choose to say "no" to selfish desires and say yes to God's desires. That is how we deny ourselves.

The second part is to take up our cross daily. The cross was for the worst criminals in society. The cross was for those who were guilty. Taking up our cross daily means that we see ourselves as standing before the judgment of God and we are guilty of breaking His moral law. We agree with God's assessment that we are guilty and know that we need God on a daily basis. We turn to Christ in repentance and faith and no longer rely on ourselves but on Christ.

The cross involves dying. It means we choose to die to our sinful nature. We must die to our selfish desires and live every day for Christ and His glory.

The cross involves suffering. We must endure trials and hurts in this world but we can trust God that He is good and has a good plan for us to become more like Christ through the trials and hardships.

Denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily type responses show an eternal perspective. Choosing to please God is trusting that we have a God who rewards those who seek Him. An eternal perspective keeps in mind that life on earth is short, we are just passing through life here on this earth until we die, and then real life begins where we will spend eternity in the presence of God. Denying yourself and taking up your cross daily involves trusting that God is who He says He is and all His promises are true. This is principle oriented living. Instead of being ruled by emotions, we choose to think about God's sacrifice for us in sending Jesus and out of love and gratitude, we want to live by God's principles.

If we deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, we will ultimately please God.

This is HARD at first. Denying ourselves and not responding as we are in the habit of doing, is hard. However, as we continually work at this, as we depend on God's Spirit, as we pursue holiness and pleasing God, it becomes easier because we are transforming into being more like Christ.

The blessing of choosing this path is seen in Matthew 11:28-30

**Matthew 11:28-30** “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Life becomes more peaceful and restful and joyful when we are pleasing God in our responses because that is how God created us and designed us to be. When we choose to please God, we are showing that our Ruling Desire is to do God’s will above our own. We are loving God from the heart.

**However**, we often do not deny ourselves when the decision point comes. Our old selves, the deceitful desires within our hearts, lead us to sin. This is the easy way to go. It is our sinful nature and the way we are in the habit of responding. When a temptation comes, we quickly respond based on our emotions, our wrong thinking, and our desires and choose to act selfishly. We want what we want, and are willing to sin to get it. We love ourselves more than we love God. This is a temporal way of thinking and responding. We get so caught up in our rights, our desires, our way, our needs, that we emphasize getting what we want right now. We are focused on the present, and don’t give thought to the promises God has made for us in eternity. This is a feeling oriented, short-sighted way to live.

Although this is the easy way to go, as we continue down that selfish path, we get further and further from God.

**Proverbs 13:15** says “**Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin**” Simply put, our sin, our treachery, makes life hard. We “ruin” life when we choose to worship ourselves. We end up with broken relationships, anger, anxiety, depression, frustration and other “bad fruit” when we love ourselves more than God.

A few verses later in **Proverbs 13:21** it says, “**Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.**”

God clearly shows us that choosing to sin is choosing to have a hard life. We are not ever guaranteed easy circumstances, but if we choose to please God in our response, we have the peace and rest that comes from knowing we have honored God and our souls find rest in that.

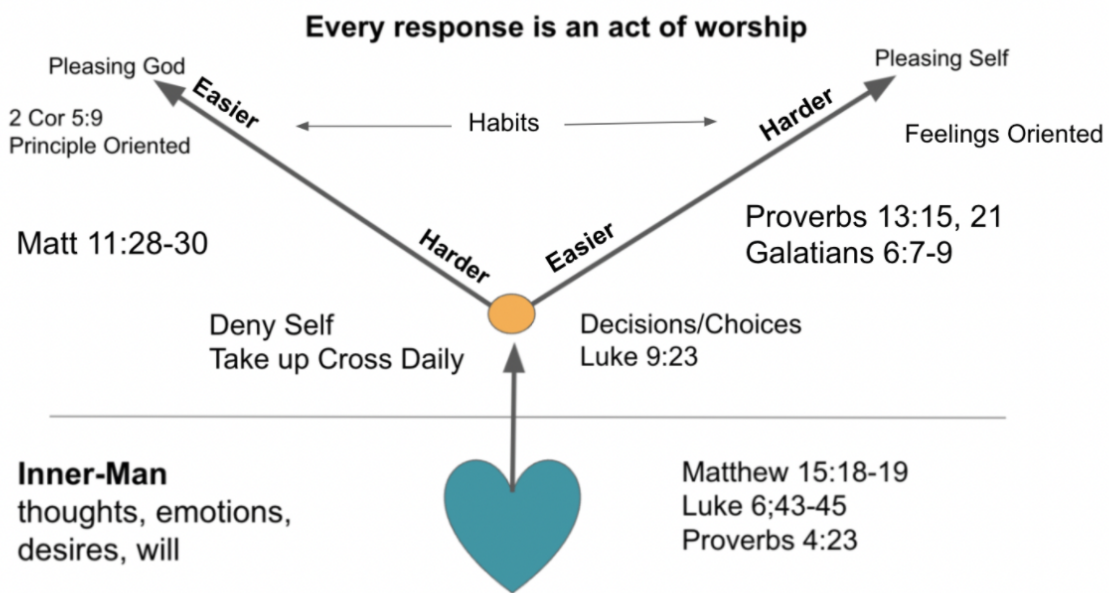
**Galatians 6:7-9** sums up this idea. “**Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own**

**flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”**

Choosing to please God leads to eternal life.

Choosing to please self leads to corruption and self destruction.

We have a will to choose how we respond. You are not stuck in your old life if you are a believer and have surrendered your life to Christ. You are a new creation and can choose to please God, whatever your circumstances may be.



This diagram was first created by Mark Dutton

Let's look at some specific examples of a typical day.

Let's say you are driving to work and another driver cuts you off in traffic. You are tempted to sin at this point.

You immediately feel the emotion of anger or frustration. You think about how no one should do that to you. You either forget about God or choose to think He is not interested in this situation. Your desire is to be respected by other drivers, to have others put you ahead of themselves. And as you honk your horn, think rude thoughts about the other driver, maybe even yell at them (even though they can't hear you) - you worship yourself. Your love for yourself becomes evident as you sin in response to this temptation. Your selfish desire is your ruling desire and God's will has been forgotten.



Or, if you are choosing to please God, you still feel the temptation to be angry and frustrated. But you stop and think - "God loves me and cares about me. He has promised to always be with me so He is here even now as I drive to work. He is all powerful and sovereign. He has chosen this commute for me and I can respond in a way that honors Him." You still desire for other drivers to be patient and respectful, but your ruling desire is to please God. You tap your brakes and leave room for the other driver. You set your mind on God and how He is patient with you and don't let the negative thoughts fester in your head. The choice to please God gives you peace in your soul and you can get to work and focus on more important things than a bad driver.

Here's another example. You arrive home and your spouse's first words are complaining and grumbling about something you forgot to do.

If you are pleasing yourself, you immediately give in to feeling hurt and angry. You start thinking about all the times your spouse has failed to do what you asked. God's goodness and love and patience with you never enters your mind. You desire a spouse who loves you and respects you and you set your mind to make that happen. Your response is to complain right back. You match your spouse's tone of voice and an argument has begun. You excuse your sin, blame your spouse, and spend the rest of the evening grumpy. Your selfish desire has ruled you and you have not pleased God.

Or, you could choose to please God. You still feel the tug to be angry and hurt. But you stop and think Truth. "I am a sinner but I have an even greater Savior. God wants me to continually become more holy like His Son. I can trust that God will use even this situation for my good to conform me to the image of Christ if I am humble and willing to trust Him." So you say, "You're right. I did forget to do that. That must be very frustrating to you. Will you please forgive me? I'll do that job right now." Or, it might be, "I don't remember promising to do that job. Did we talk about that? I'm happy to do it, but could you please speak to me kindly and respectfully even if I forget to do something." Your desire to be loved and respected is in submission to God's desire that we be gentle and kind, and you please God as you give a soft answer and turn away wrath.

### **Every response to temptation is an act of worship.**

Every choice that we make will either show we are worshiping God or worshiping self. And it all comes from our heart - our emotions, our desires, our thoughts, and our will.

Our hearts are deceitful as we see in Jeremiah 17:9-10. But God sees our hearts perfectly. God encourages us to pray and ask Him to help us see where our hearts need changing.

Psalm 139:23-24 says,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!