

# The Biblical Heart (Part 7)

By Wendy Wood



In part seven of understanding the biblical heart, we will examine how to help a counselee repent of their heart idols. It is important that the counselee (and the counselor!) repent not only of the actions and words that come as a result of sinning to get the idol, but the actual idol itself.

**Jonah 2:8 says, “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs”**

We are blind to those idols. We must pray, and we must have our counselees pray,

**Psalm 139:23-24 “Search me O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts; and see if there is any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”**

The struggle journal questions are extremely helpful in determining idols in both your heart and in your counselee’s heart. (See part 6 for these questions).

As you gather data over several weeks, you will see themes under the heading “what were you wanting?” The repetition of “I just wanted a relaxing evening” or “I just wanted

things to go as planned” or “I want my ideas to matter” are revealing the heart.

“I just want a relaxing evening” reveals an idol of comfort.

“I just want things to go my way” reveals an idol of control.

“I just want my ideas to matter” reveals an idol of respect or fear of man.

In order to address the root issues of the heart, we need to see the idols that consistently drive our behavior.

This is the core of biblical counseling. For genuine heart change and life transformation to happen, we must help our counselees identify and repent of their idols.

The love of comfort, control, power, or approval must be replaced with a greater love for God and His purposes in life.

There are secondary idols that we think of more commonly but they are often rooted in the primary idols.

For example,

For some, the idolatrous desire to be married or be in a relationship may be rooted in the desire of fear of man. The desire to be loved and cherished falls into this category. But for another person, the idolatrous desire to be married or in a relationship could be a status symbol of feeling important because they have a significant other. Yet another person may have an idolatrous desire to be married or in a relationship because it is a comfort to not have to go places alone. These different desire of love, respect, status, and comfort may all manifested by desiring marriage.

For some people, a material thing like a car, a house, or clothes might be rooted in success or achievement. They may feel in control of their life when they have enough money to buy what they desire. For another person, it might be fear of man and wanting to be respected or admired for having the right thing.

For some people, recreation like video games, phone usage, fishing, or reading is probably rooted in comfort. They may like the escape from dealing with work or family and they turn to a hobby for a time of distraction and ease. For another person, recreation may be a way to control something when the rest of life seems out of control. When playing a video game, the person who desires control can restart their game and see immediate results in winning or improving.

**We worship our way into sin, by loving our sin. And we worship our**

## **way out of sin by loving God and desiring to bring him glory in the way we live.**

After using the Struggle Journal and weeks of data gathering, you should have a good idea of what your counselee's idols are.

**Ephesians 4:22-24** shows us how God has ordained transformational change to happen in the lives of His children. Throughout the rest of counseling, you are prayerfully helping them see the futility of continuing to live for their idol, helping them repent and turn from their idol to loving God and wanting to glorify Him more than they want to get their idol. This involves renewing the mind and thinking differently. The transformation is complete when they are consistently living out denying their sinful desire to please God.

**“to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”**

Here are some steps to work through with your counselee as you address all three stages of change.

Step 1 is putting off old self.

Step 2 is being renewed in the spirit of your mind

Step 3 is putting on Christlike attitude and actions

We worship our way into sin and we worship our way out of sin. Transformation is a change of what you worship from loving worldly, selfish pleasures to loving God with your whole heart.

To begin this transformational change, as early as week one of counseling, begin the mind renewal process. The mind renewal process is thinking rightly about who God is and what He has done. You are working to build a high, accurate view of God Himself.

1. Have your counselee study the attributes of God. Use a book or study that guides your counselee to learn about the very nature of God. Have your counselee meditate on scriptures that describe God's attributes and ponder and consider what implications these truths have on daily life.

For example, as your counselee studies God's wisdom and maybe meditates on **Romans 11:33**, have your counselee journal what God's unsearchable ways and

judgments have on how your counselee views the circumstances of their own life. How does God being infinitely and holy wise change the way we should think about our circumstances? Work through 15 or so different attributes of God where your counselee is seeing how awesome and worthy of worship and love God is.

2. Have your counselee study passages of scripture that paint a clear picture of God and His nature and work. Passages like:
  - a. **Romans 8**
  - b. **Ephesians 1, 2, and 3**
  - c. **Isaiah 40**
  - d. **Psalms 139**

Have your counselee read one of these chapters every day for a week. Have them meditate on one verse each day. As they meditate on the truth about God revealed in that verse, have them examine what that means to how they think about God and their circumstances.

For example, your counselee reads **Isaiah 40** six times during the week. On one of those days, your counselee chooses verse 12 to study.

**“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?” (Isaiah 40:12)**

Have your counselee journal what attributes they see about God. He is immense! He measures all the waters with ease and is so gigantic compared to the universe the heavens are measured between a figurative thumb and pinky span. He is all-powerful and could pick up the mountains to “weigh” them. As your counselee considers God in this way, how does this change their thinking about God, or remind them how awesome God is. Maybe your counselee has been so consumed with their own problems, God has shrunk down in their thinking to be smaller than the problem! Use scripture to reveal God to your counselees and to correct the wrong, small thinking they have fallen into.

3. Have your counselees look at what God has accomplished for them in Christ. Preach the gospel to your counselee. Remind your counselee of what it means to be justified with God. Use scripture to reaffirm that your counselee was
  - a. Chosen by God before the foundation of the world
  - b. Reconciled to God
  - c. Adopted as a child of God
  - d. Set from being a slave to sin
  - e. God’s wrath has been removed from them

Allow your counselee to be amazed at all God has done for them in Christ by His free

gift of grace! Daily have them study what it means to a recipient of God's grace and mercy and the on-going work of God's grace in their lives to train them to say no to ungodliness and to say yes to holiness and purity.

4. You may assign sermons or additional reading to grow your counselee's love for God by using material that teaches God's attributes and works.

We should never stop studying God. We can always grow in being awed and amazed by who God is. This is not a concept that will be completed in counseling in a few weeks and then move on. This is a life-long journey of learning to love God more and you study and learn more about him.

Transformational change involves putting off the old self. This putting off is part of the repentance process. We want our counselees to see their sin first and foremost against God. **Jeremiah 2:11-13**

**Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?**

**But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.**

**Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils:**

**(#1) they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and**

**(#2) hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

We want our counselees to see that before they clung to their idol of comfort, control or approval, they first had to forsake God. **The first step was essentially telling God, "you are not enough"**. We want them to understand how offensive that is to God. As they have studied the Most High God, to forsake God and turn away from His Lordship is grievous sin. Give your counselee time to contemplate their sin before God.

Here is an overview of the process that will help your counselee repent of their sin. I'll briefly give the steps of this process and then discuss the steps in more detail in the next blog.

1. **What is the sin?**
2. **Bible references:**
3. **What do you learn from the scriptures?**
4. **How have I failed to live as God commands? Or how has this sin showed up in my life?**
5. **What needs to change in my thinking and believing about God and myself?**
6. **What specific changes do I need to make? (Being specific is key to really being able to implement change.)**

The next blog will continue the process of repentance and change.