

# The Biblical Heart Part 8

By Wendy Wood



If you haven't read *The Biblical Heart Part 7*, please go back and do that now. This blog is a continuation of the repentance process started in the previous blog.

In the process of repentance and change, only genuine heart change at the level of desires has eternal value. We aren't after just behavior change. If the change of behavior isn't coming from a change in what is loved most, the change is temporary and has no eternal value. Only a greater love and fear of God brings genuine, God-glorifying change.

**The first step of repentance is contemplation:**

**How has a holy, holy, holy God thought about their sin?**

What attributes of God have been dismissed or disregarded as your counselee has pursued sin?

What lies have they believed about God in pursuing their sin?

**Contemplate:**

How has my idol forsaken God?

How has my idol been a broken cistern in my life?

For example, someone who seeks pleasure in pornography or excessive eating, is saying "God's comfort is not enough, I have to get comfort somewhere else". This person may be doubting God's goodness in the circumstances of their life or doubting God's wisdom as he withholds something that they want.

Someone who sinfully desires control is telling God his sovereignty and plan for the universe isn't as good as their own plan is! They are doubting God's power, goodness, faithfulness, wisdom, and love at the very least.

As our counselees think about what their sin really is revealing about their beliefs about God and how much they distrust Him. This leads to a more complete repentance and a hating of sin.

**Then Jeremiah 2 tells us that next our counselees made idols for themselves. They were leaky, insufficient, unsatisfying and unlasting idols, but that is what they did.** They looked to earthly comforts of social media, food, alcohol, shopping, or even church activities to make them feel good. They turned to yelling and being harsh in an attempt to gain a false sense of control rather than trust in the God who is sovereign. We want our counselees to ponder and consider how their idols have been sin against God Himself.

Hopefully after spending time renewing their minds about God, they are seeing more clearly the foolishness of treasuring, desiring, and worshiping anything other than God. They need to spend time with God confessing their idolatry and asking God for forgiveness and cleansing.

**Repentance also needs to include contemplating the thoughts, words, and actions that were sinfully used to try to get their idol.**

**Contemplate your sin against others:**

What thoughts, words and actions have been sinful as I have sought my idol?

Maybe your counselee has yelled at their family when interrupted from a comfortable evening. Your counselee needs to see the connection between desiring comfort and being willing to sin against family members to obtain that idol.

The counselee needs to contemplate how that sin has impacted each family member.

So maybe on their Ephesians 4:22-24 worksheet that first section looks like this:

**What is my idol?**

I have loved comfort more than God.

**How has this manifested in my life?**

I have yelled at my children when they interrupt me.  
I have selfishly sat and done my hobbies rather than engage my family.  
I have wasted time that I could have served my friends and family  
I have wasted money on food, clothing, games to increase my comfort.

As they have thought through their sin, now they look at their wrong thinking. In order to “renew their minds”, they need to identify what thoughts they have that don’t line up with Biblical thinking. What are the lies they tell themselves that lead to sinful desires.

### **Wrong thinking/believing:**

I deserve a break when I get home from work. I should have time to relax and enjoy myself.

I should not have to repeat myself. My children should just obey!

God has withheld what I need. This isn’t fair.

Once they have their wrong thinking identified, they can begin to renew their mind in truth. You will want to choose scriptures that encourage a high view of God and verses that deal directly with the idol and sin involved.

It may be helpful at this point to have your counselee renew their mind about specific commands and promises of God also.

If their idol has been **approval**, it may be helpful to study **Proverbs 29:25** and **Galatians 1:10** or read about biblical characters who struggled with fear of man and the consequences suffered for their idol.

It may be helpful to study how God calls us to speak truth in love to others even if the other person becomes upset with us.

If the idol has been control, it may be helpful for your counselee to study scriptures about trusting God and the practical implications of faith.

You want them to have “renewed thinking” about God and how He calls them to live out practically the truth He is God and there is None like Him.

### **Scriptures to Renew Mind:**

Assign scriptures that address the idol and specific areas of sin your counselee struggles with.

Psalms 139:16

1 Corinthians 10:31

Job 42:2  
Proverbs 6:6-11  
2 Corinthians 1:3-5  
John 3:30

Matthew 22:37-39  
Philippians 2:3-4  
Philippians 4:19

Counselees should have a list of 6-10 verses to meditate on. Meditation is its own full teaching so please check out our website for homework assignments and articles on "Thoughts".

Our counselees should consider what the verses say about God, themselves and their sin.

We want to guide counselees to grow in their love and fear of God.  
We want them to consider how they have failed to live up to God's standard,  
And what specifically they need to change in their lives.

Then they are ready to work on New Thoughts.

I want them to quote what new thoughts they will rehearse in their minds based on the scriptures studied.

They should also commit a few verses to memory.

### **New thinking (Quote new thoughts)**

God does not promise me an easy, comfortable life. I am called to shepherd my family, even when it's not convenient.

Conflict in my home is a window into my heart. I will examine my desires when I am tempted to yell at my children.

God's plan for my life is perfect in his wisdom and timing.

I am called to serve others as Christ humbled himself to serve sinners.

At this point, we want our counselees to plan to act on their growing love for God and the new, biblical thinking they have.

Change won't happen if it's not specific. The idea to "be kinder to my family" will not produce much change. The more specific the action can be, the better. This is preparing our counselees for the moment of temptation that will come. It is in that moment that they need to stop and pray, and ask God for help to obey Him and honor Him in their response.

After sin has been contemplated. The sin must be confessed, first to God and then to people who have been sinned against. The offender should be clear about what their

sin was, how it was offensive to God and how it affected other people. It is helpful to include how the offender is committing to acting in the future. Confession should end with "will you please forgive me?" Forgiveness is transactional. One person asks for forgiveness, and the other must extend forgiveness.

Let's use the prodigal son as an example of this change process. He is off in a foreign land working on a pig farm.

**The Prodigal son contemplates first.** He realizes he has blown all his money. He thinks about how he is feeding pigs and would be better off if he could eat the food himself. Scripture says, "when he came to himself". He has thought through his sin and is ready to go make a confession of his sin.

**The prodigal goes home to confess.** He starts with admitting he has sinned against God, then he sinned against his father.

In the prodigal son example, the Prodigal says "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Confession will lead to restitution.

Restitution is making things right in ways you have been wrong before.

The prodigal makes restitution by saying, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." "Treat me as one of your hired servants"

He is saying, "I accept the consequences for my sin. I am willing to pay a price for how I have sinned against you, taken your money, and dishonored you. I will accept the consequences for my sin"

**Repentance must include contemplation, confession and change.**

Contemplation should bring remorse and godly sorrow over sin. Confession should lead to restitution and making things right with the people who have been sinned against. The goal is reconciliation as change becomes evident in the life of our counselees. Repentance should be not only the fruit of words and behavior, but of the very heart idol that led to the sinful behavior.

**The final step of transformational change is putting on Christlikeness.**

**New Actions:**

I will recite 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 each day and pray that I will trust God's comfort and I will recite Job 42:2 when tempted to get comfort my own way.

I will not pick up my phone when I walk through the door until my kids go to bed.

I will spend time each day asking my wife and children questions about their day and how they are doing.

I will not buy comfort items impulsively. I will stop and pray about my heart and motive.

I will speak words of encouragement to my children and wife each day.

I will pray with my wife and kids before bed each night.

We want our counselees to be prepared with practical ways to apply God's word and the truths about God they have learned in counseling. We want them to spend several weeks in counseling putting these action plans into place. We are helping them form new habits of responding in ways that honor God and their love for God grows.

**The goal of repentance is reconciliation.** Just as our contemplation of sin and confession to God results in His forgiveness and a reconciled relationship with Him, we want human relationships to be reconciled as well.

The prodigal son goes home and reconciles with his father. The relationship is restored and reconciled as they celebrate a feast together.

Repenting of idols and sinful behavior will lead to reconciliation with God, both initially and on-going fellowship with God. And, it should lead to on-going Godly relationships with others. We cannot guarantee that human reconciliation will be complete. The older brother in the story of the prodigal son does not welcome his brother home or offer forgiveness. The story ends with the older brother refusing to go into the party and celebrate. Our counselees may ask for forgiveness from those they have sinned against and they may not receive the human forgiveness they are seeking. But our counselees can take comfort in honoring God in their own hearts by repenting and obeying God's commands.

Some counselees will need to work through several action plans for different idols or patterns of sin in their lives. They will be ready to graduate when they are consistently making choices to honor God, are quick to repent and seek forgiveness when they stumble back into old ways, and are continuing to pursue a greater love for God on their own and in community with fellow believers.

**Our counselees have worshiped their way into their idol and need to worship their way out of their idol.**

**Only a greater love for God will replace the love of an idol.**