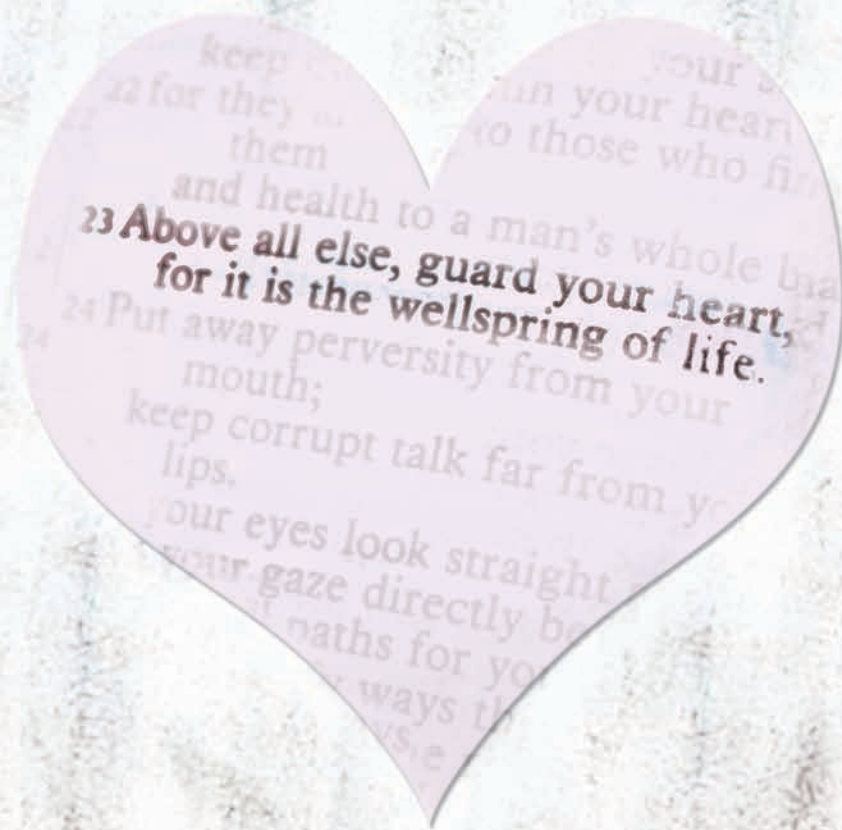


Developing a Discerning Heart



Workbook

Developing a Discerning Heart

*Therefore let us leave the elementary
teachings . . . and go on to maturity.
Hebrews 6:1a*



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Preface

We begin this course with the hope that each participant will be encouraged to grow toward Jesus Christ in significant ways. And as we become more conformed to the image of our Savior, we hope to be more able to deeply comfort, help, and encourage others in the same process. Therefore, this course will explore, first of all, our own personal sanctification.

To become an effective people helper, we must first examine our own lives before God. For our own sakes and for the sake of others, it is crucial that we understand the truth that the Scripture teaches about who we really are in Christ as we explore the realities of our experience in walking with Him—past, present, and future. Beginning our studies with a reminder of our identity as children of God, made new in Christ, will give us a solid framework for developing our later discussions.

Second, as a genuine outflow of our own relationship with God, we hope to develop our abilities to help others look at their lives biblically. This course is NOT intended, nor is it at all adequate, to produce professional counselors. It cannot answer all of our questions and situations specifically, but it can give us a consistent, helpful framework for evaluating them. The course aims to encourage godly women to help other women most effectively in peer relationships, thus strengthening the rich resource of the community of God’s people as they are available to one another. The greatest assets possessed by a woman of wisdom are knowing well the character of God and the Scriptures, and having a heart that is sensitive and obedient to Him.

The greatest assets for a woman of wisdom are knowing the character of God and the Scriptures well, and keeping her heart sensitive and obedient to Him.

We would like to give special thanks to Gwynne Johnson, the primary author of this material, for her years of work assimilating and producing these concepts in a helpful, transferable form. Gwynne is a faithful, active board member of Entrust, committed to what God is doing in the lives of women all over the world. The following is her own acknowledgment for this material: “Beginning in 1984 with my first exposure to the Institute of Biblical Counseling and the

work of Dr. Larry Crabb and Dr. Dan Allender, my life and heart have been deeply altered. The core concepts of this course are derived from their work and although I have attempted to give specific references when I quote them verbatim, much of what they have taught and written is simply now a part of my own thinking and difficult to footnote! Suffice it to say that I will be eternally appreciative for their investment in my life. I also want to thank my friend, Wendy Wilson, for her confidence in me and her encouragement in shepherding us all through to completion of this course.”

We are also grateful to other Entrust staff members for their significant contributions toward the final production of this long-awaited course: Jackie Cunliffe (content contributions), Gae Cusbert (formatting and graphics), Lorraine Schukar (writing of the

Leader's Guide), Leslie Smith and Jan Rodger (editing), and Wendy Wilson (content contributions, editing, and project coordination). This course was produced with our sisters in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in mind, in response to many years of requests from them for training in this particular area. It is especially dedicated to them for their lives and ministries, with great love and appreciation.

As we grow together in the process described in this course, it is the hope and joy of our hearts that each of us will appreciate more deeply the love, grace, and committed strength of God in our lives—and that we may be a reflection of them to each other!

With great love and respect for each of you,
The Women to Women Leadership Training Staff of Entrust
(Entrust, P.O. Box 25520, Colorado Springs, CO 80936-5520, USA)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction	7
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Understanding Who I Am

Chapter 2	My Identity in Christ	25
Chapter 3	Design and Damage	49
Chapter 4	The Thirst of Our Hearts	75
Chapter 5	The Mind	101
Chapter 6	The Will	123
Chapter 7	The Emotions	149

Understanding Where I Am Going

Chapter 8	Every Life Has a Story	167
	Part 1: Gathering Data	173
	Part 2: Understanding My Story	189
Chapter 9	My Resources and Opposition	201
Chapter 10	Understanding the Stories of Others	227
	Part 1: Peer-Helping Skills	229
	Part 2: Sharpening Our Skills	249
	Course Vocabulary	259
	Blank Charts	261
	Select Bibliography	268

Chapter 1 Outline

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but a person of understanding draws them out. (Proverbs 20:5)

Aim: The student shall be challenged from the Scripture, by the facilitator's personal story, and through various illustrations, that mature women can be equipped to help other women grow toward God through their problems.

I. The Author's Story

- A. A Tool for Helping Others
- B. Confirmed by the Bible

II. Becoming an Effective People Helper

- A. Biblical Injunctions
- B. The Jigsaw Puzzle
- C. An Essential Commitment: Matthew 7:5
- D. Prayerful Submission to the Holy Spirit

III. Safeguards for This Study

- A. Confidentiality and Discretion
- B. Informality
- C. Test by the Scriptures
- D. The Need for Spiritual Mentors

IV. The Heart and Its Capacities Introduced

- A. The Importance of the Heart
- B. Core Thirst or Need
- C. Mind or Thinking
- D. Will or Choosing
- E. Emotions or Feelings

V. Course Overview

- A. Goals for this Course
- B. Putting It Together

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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Aim: The student shall be challenged from the Scripture, by the facilitator's personal story, and through various illustrations, that mature women can be equipped to help other women grow toward God through their problems.

THE AUTHOR'S STORY

I hung up the phone, both saddened and frustrated after two hours in conversation with a committed Christian woman in an extremely painful and difficult marriage situation. From my own experience and from deep personal conviction I was convinced God has significant help, comfort, and direction for women with problems such as these. I repeatedly had seen God answer many prayers and heal broken relationships. There was no doubt God could make a difference in situations just like this present one. However, I became inwardly frustrated as I tried to encourage this woman toward meaningful contact with God. He alone knew all the details and could truly comfort her. She was experiencing such great pain and I did not want to seem totally insensitive by offering her platitudes and an easy solution. Yet God and His provisions were the answer!

*The promise of
Philippians that "I
can do all things
through Christ" is
not an empty one.*

For over eight years I had been teaching the Bible weekly to a large group of women. Throughout those eight years I saw God change my life and the lives of others significantly. Because I was teaching the Bible, women came to me seeking God's direction and truth regarding the practical problems in their lives. Was God's Word relevant to their most pressing and practical problems? I was and am convinced that it is. However, their questions drove me to read all that I could find on counseling. Much of what I read was helpful. I learned about active listening, reflective listening, empathy, etc. But as I read, I often sensed a significant hesitation in my spirit. Some writings tended to provide excuses for behaviors (based on the person's past) that the Bible clearly defines as sin.

From teaching the Scripture, I firmly believe that God holds each woman accountable for the choices she makes, regardless of what shaped her life in the past. I also believe that the promise in Philippians 4:13 that "I can do all things through Christ" is not an empty one, but a truth filled with power available to all believers through the Holy Spirit for living true life.

This particular phone call led me that day to a God-appointed conversation with another woman, another Bible teacher. As I shared my frustration, she suggested a class just beginning, taught by her pastor. He was teaching for twelve weeks about better understanding people and how to help them connect with God in practical ways as they encountered personal difficulties. As that series developed and the pastor illustrated the concepts, several of his illustrations spoke directly to me. I saw in his examples reflections of how God had *already* worked in significant ways in my own life.

A Tool for Helping Others

Before my exposure to this class on understanding people, I dragged everyone I knew to my Bible study class. God used this group Bible study as His instrument in my life to give me a fresh awareness of Him and His goodness, and God has used this wonderful study of His Word in the lives of many others also. However, as I now began to learn this simple model of understanding people, I realized how very helpful this tool could be. It would assist me to bring that same power of God to bear in the lives of others in other settings. I could see how and what God used from my experience in Bible study to call me to trust and obey Him more completely. I could also see how others, gently nudged out of their own comfort zones, experienced God's faithfulness for themselves. Since that training class in understanding people over twenty years ago, I have been working with this material to adapt and personalize it especially for women. I discovered these principles to be powerful in my own life as I experience both joy and sorrow. Understanding these principles equipped me to respond more effectively to the questions and difficulties in the lives of others. I enjoy a much greater opportunity to help turn their hearts toward God and commit to live a life that brings Him glory.

Confirmed by the Bible

As I developed this study, I also continued to teach the Bible weekly to women in an expositional way. I am convinced God didn't wait for the modern discovery of psychology to help people! Some psychology is effective simply because it illuminates truths of the Bible forgotten or frequently neglected. I discovered each of these truths repeated and emphasized consistently in the biblical narratives. The Bible is a book about people—real people—who faced the same kinds of problems people face today. They encountered problems such as difficult relationships, difficult economic problems, temptations to sin, etc. The same God who was available to them is also available to us today as well. The Bible provides the best instruction for understanding people and how they can live in Christ. No surprise since the author is the very God who designed, created and sustains them!

No literature is more realistic and honest in facing the harsh facts of life than the Bible. At no time is there the faintest suggestion that the life of faith exempts us from difficulties. What it promises is preservation from all the evil in them. . . . All the water in the oceans cannot sink a ship unless it gets inside. Nor can all the trouble in the world harm us unless it gets within us. That is the promise of Psalm 121: The Lord will keep you from all evil.¹

¹ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), p.39.

BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE PEOPLE HELPER

Biblical Injunctions

Each of you has had already many life experiences. God has already worked in you and on your behalf. The Bible clearly teaches that we *are* able to help others “with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor 1:4b). And we *are* exhorted to “carry each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2a). The theme verse for our course reads, “The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but a person of understanding draws them out” (Prov 20:5). The more we gain a better understanding of what some might term a biblical anthropology (how people are made), the more God can expand our effectiveness. He can use the difficult and joyful situations of our lives to allow us to come to know and love Him more. First, we will experience this personally, and then that love and understanding will equip us to better love, comfort, and serve others as well.

*“The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but a person of understanding draws them out.”
Proverbs 20:5*

MAKING IT YOUR OWN: Exercise #1:1

Take five minutes and jot down two or three life experiences where you experienced comfort from God and others. What did you learn about God as a result? What did you learn about yourself? What comfort might you have to offer to someone else as a result?

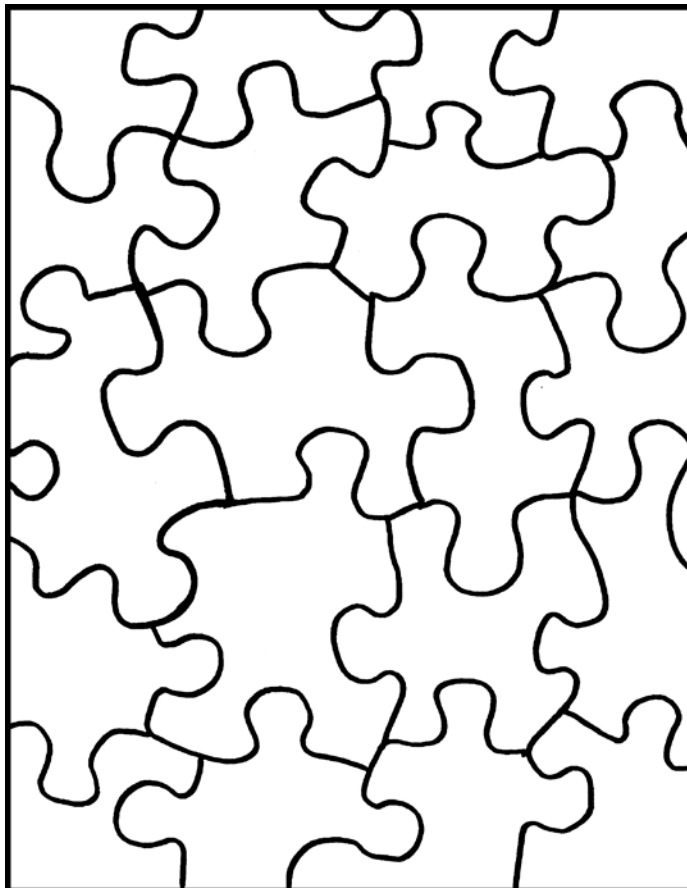
There is debate about the value of learning more about our personal, inner world, ranging from denunciation of secular psychology to testimonies of God's grace received through the godly and effective counsel of others. Is there a place in the life of a believer to better understand our inner, intangible world? Or is that pursuit simply a meaningless and misdirected attempt to avoid obedience and to excuse sin? Can an understanding of our inner world lead to a deeper and richer relationship with God, or does it lead a person to become self-centered and distracted from worship, faithfulness, and responsibility?

Can an understanding of our inner world lead to a deeper and richer relationship with God?

These are important and difficult questions, and most of us have observed examples of each in people we know. Some people who begin to explore their inner world of emotions and past experiences seem to get "stuck" there. Others, guided by godly and effective counsel, are able to put the past behind them and enter into new and richer fellowship with God. It is our purpose to encourage this deeper fellowship with God in our own experience and so develop our ability to lead others closer to God as well.

The Jigsaw Puzzle

When a woman opens her heart to you and begins to pour out the various aspects of a difficult life problem, it sometimes feels as if she has dumped a ten-thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle in your lap. And now she wants you to unscramble the confusing picture! You have



this large pile of bits and pieces of information, emotion, circumstances, and decisions! How do you begin to sort it all out? You hardly know where to begin! But usually, the first thing you do with a jigsaw puzzle is to place the box top in a convenient, visible place. You take a long look at the picture on it. Then, after you turn the many pieces right side up, you begin to sort through them in light of the box-top picture. Don't you usually look for the pieces that have a straight edge because you have learned from experience that those pieces at least form the outer rim of the puzzle? You may also sort them into colors. These categories give you a place to begin to put the rest of the puzzle together.

Developing the Biblical Puzzle Picture

Our hope is that, as we complete this course, we will develop a clearer and biblical picture of how people were designed by God before the fall (the puzzle box-top picture) and some sense of the kinds of straight edges, or categories, you to look for as you sort through the many confusing details of a person's problem. As we develop an understanding from the Bible of how people are designed, we can be assured we have a divinely authoritative direction for entering the sanctuary of people's hearts. Certainly we would not expect to become professional counselors after such a brief study. However, I believe that we can learn how to more effectively enter into people's lives, peer to peer, and direct them to God as we deal with the normal challenges of life.

An Essential Commitment: Matthew 7:5

“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will **see clearly** to remove the speck from your sister's eye.”

Matthew 7:5

Often as we reflect on God's past work in our own lives, we become better equipped to help others. Indeed, God promises in Matthew 7:5 that we will “**see clearly**” how to help others. However, that promise is contingent on the exhortation to “*first* take the plank out of your own eye, and *then* you will see clearly to remove the speck from your sister's eye” (Matt 7:5, *emphasis mine*).

It is often not particularly comfortable or pleasant to look honestly at our own lives. However, if we are going to ask others to trust us with their most intimate thoughts and feelings, we must be willing to examine our own hearts with honesty and integrity. That will, perhaps, be the most challenging aspect of this course, but it will make all the difference. Therefore, do not be surprised if, even now, you are feeling some anxiety as you consider these words. Let me see if I can allay some needless apprehension by giving some guidelines for our time together.

Prayerful Submission to the Holy Spirit

First, please complete the various exercises in this way. Find a time where you can be quiet before God. Prayerfully submit the completion of that exercise to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself enough time and quiet to listen carefully to God's leading, responding to Him with as much honesty and light as God allows you at the moment. You do not need to dig up examples; let God's Spirit remind you of significant milestones you have already passed. Trust Him to do this! Personal sanctification is God's joy to complete in us, and He will do it at the right pace and in the right timing for each precious individual. Do not create situations but deal honestly with whatever God might bring to your mind.

This same principle is involved in the preparation of homework. In order to cover most effectively the broad scope of this material, it will be necessary that much of the biblical study be done personally and at home. If you skip this personal and quiet study, you will not

derive the greatest benefit from the course. Each session will draw solid, biblical principles from God's teaching in the various narratives.

SAFEGUARDS FOR THIS STUDY

Confidentiality and Discretion

It is important that our study together be confidential and that anything shared together in discussion not be shared outside the group. No one is required to share anything they do not desire, and we must safeguard this environment. As the facilitator shares with you how God has used this material in her own life, she will be honest and vulnerable. Please do not share her stories with others, just as she does not plan to share what you may choose to say. Even so, whatever is shared will be discreet. This study will not be a time of indiscriminate gossip or personal venting of grievances. I believe that we can experience together how to share significantly and discreetly and still maintain loyalty to our significant relationships. Our aim will be to learn from life experiences, not to assign blame for them to others.

Informality

Second, our sessions together will be informal and conversational. Please feel free to ask questions and make observations as we cover the various principles. No question is too small, and the only dumb question is the one that does not get asked when there is a point of confusion! Often the point in need of clarification in your mind is confusing for others as well. If you raise the question, we will all interact, remembering that our goal is better understanding. And be diligent to pray and interact regarding *your own life*, not keeping someone else "who really needs this material" at the forefront of your mind.

Test by the Scriptures

Third, please process the things we discuss from your own experience with God and your personal understanding of the Bible, not from any authority in the facilitator. She is only a helper. Test the truths and principles from the Bible, and together we will attempt to discern God's truth as it applies to the various situations we discuss.

The Need for Spiritual Mentors

Fourth, God desires to use available, mature, and godly women to train and teach younger women how to live their lives in a way that pleases and glorifies Him. God gives us a window to view the important issues for a woman to consider in Paul's instructions to Titus, the young pastor in the early church.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:3-5).

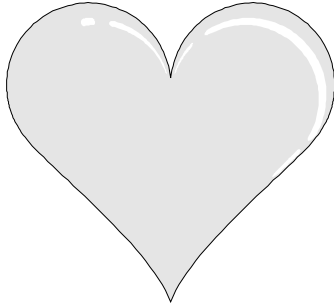
Here Paul describes the character of a mature, godly woman who can help and train younger women. God designed this method for the church and family. This woman is not a perfect woman, but she is a woman who has accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior, has committed her life to following Him, and is willing to obey Him and His Word. These are the basics of the Christian life. The woman called to help others has moved beyond the basics and is willing to move on toward maturity, beyond discipleship.

The need for this kind of spiritual mentoring is obvious today. Not only does it benefit younger women, it brings great delight and satisfaction to mature women as well. Younger women need the experience and wisdom of the older women, and older women need the energy and enthusiasm of the younger women. This course will simply build on past and present life experiences and equip you further to help other women. Seeing them discover real joy and satisfaction in following God and His ways will fill your own heart with great joy. If this is God's plan for developing women, we need not fear what He uses to teach us!

MAKING IT YOUR OWN: Exercise #1:2

Think of several older women in your personal experience, Christians or not, who have already impacted your life. How would you describe them—their personalities, their actions, their impact on you?

THE HEART AND ITS CAPACITIES INTRODUCED



The Importance of the Heart

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Clearly, the heart is of supreme importance to God. Over five hundred and forty times, from Genesis to Revelation, the Scripture describes different aspects of the hearts of men and women. God instructs Samuel the prophet that “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7b). What is this “heart” and how are we to understand its different aspects from the Scripture? The word is used to reflect aspects of several capacities, all of which are internal. Let’s consider those capacities.²

First, the heart’s capacity to think is highlighted in Genesis 6:5: “The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the *thoughts of his heart* was only evil all the time” (the emphases here and in the following selections are mine). Again, in Job 22:22b we are commanded to “lay up his words *in your heart*.” The mind is the capacity referred to in Psalm 15:2: “he whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth *from his heart*.”

In addition, the heart’s capacity to choose and direct our will is emphasized frequently in such passages as Exodus 8:32: “Pharaoh *hardened his heart* and would not let the people go.” Pharaoh chose to refuse God’s warnings, and it cost him and his nation dearly. In Deuteronomy 29:18, the choice to turn from God is highlighted: “Make sure there is no man or woman . . . whose *heart turns away* from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations . . .”

Our heart’s capacity to feel and experience emotions is frequently referenced in Scripture. This is seen in passages such as Leviticus 19:17a: “Do not *hate your brother in your heart*,” and “he sent the people to their homes, *joyful and glad in heart* for the good things the LORD had done” (2 Chr 7:10b). Again, examples are found in Job 29:13: “I made the *widow’s heart sing*,” and “you have *filled my heart with greater joy* than when their grain and new wine abound” (Ps 4:7).

Over five hundred and forty times, from Genesis to Revelation, the Scripture describes different aspects of the heart of humanity.

In addition to the capacities of thinking, choosing, and feeling, the heart is also described as capable of yearning, desiring, or thirsting: Job 19:27; “I myself will see him with my own eyes. . . . How *my heart yearns within me*,” Psalm 20:4; “May he give you the *desire of your heart* and make all your plans succeed,” Psalm 37:4; “Delight yourself in the LORD and he

² R.K. Harrison, ed., *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, rev. and updated ed., (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), p. 544.

will give you the *desires of your heart*.” John 7:37-38 reminds us, “If anyone is thirsty, let her come to me and drink . . . streams of living water will flow from within her.”

A thorough study of *heart* reveals that many times the Bible speaks of the heart as inclusive of all these capacities, summing them up as representing our entire inner, intangible world. At other times the Bible refers, as noted above, to one or more of the specific aspects of thirst, mind, will, or emotion. **The inescapable fact is that God places ultimate**

The heart describes that inner self that either worships and serves God or turns away from God to pursue its own selfish and self-centered directions.

importance upon the condition and direction of the heart. God *searches every heart* (1 Chr 28:9) and *tests every heart* (1 Chr 29:17) to reveal its motives and directions. The first of the ten commandments (and the “greatest” commandment described by Jesus) is to “love the Lord with all your *heart*. . . .” Understanding our hearts is not optional, but essential.

The heart describes that inner self that either worships and serves God or turns away from God to pursue selfish and self-centered directions. It is said to be *responsive and humble* (2 Chr 34:27), as contrasted with *stubborn and hard* (2 Chr 36:13). It seems, therefore, that as we better understand our hearts (our inner world), we can bring them before God more completely as we grow to understand His ways.

For the purposes of study we will separate and discuss these capacities in order to clarify and understand them. However, we need to realize that because each of these aspects is so intimately intertwined with the other, it is difficult (if not impossible) to truly separate them. They do not fall so neatly into categories in our experiences of daily living.

In some major ways, after having studied each part individually, it is important to simply allow the Holy Spirit to draw out the different aspects that would be meaningful, or helpful, in His time and in any particular situation. In this study, let each of us present our own heart to God so He might continue to transform us in more profound ways.

**ABOVE ALL ELSE, GUARD YOUR HEART,
FOR IT IS THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE.**

Proverbs 4:23

MAKING IT YOUR OWN: Exercise #1:3

Please look up the following verses, and note beside each one which of the four aspects—thirsting, thinking, choosing, or feeling—may be referred to in the verse. Sometimes more than one may be suggested in a given verse.

Psalms 40:8, 10, 12 _____

Psalms 73:26 _____

Proverbs 12:25 _____

Proverbs 14:10 _____

Proverbs 25:20 _____

Isaiah 6:10 _____

Isaiah 65:14 _____

Jeremiah 2:13 _____

Jeremiah 5:23-24 _____

Jeremiah 16:12 _____

Mark 7:21 _____

Luke 2:19 _____

Acts 16:14 _____

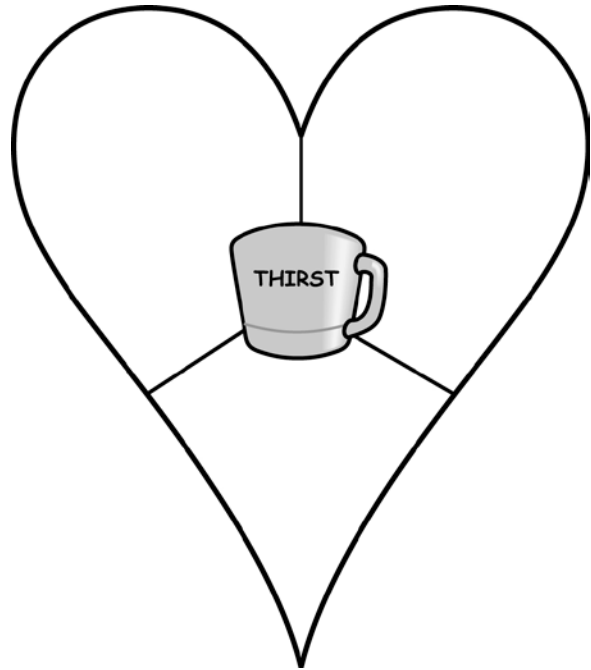
Romans 1:21 _____

Together in this study we will discover from the Bible how people, created by God, share at least four distinct and human capacities. God created Adam and Eve in perfection, with each of these four capacities. Though the sin of Adam marred and affected these capacities, they are still evident in great measure in all people and signify great dignity and worth, even in our fallen condition. C. S. Lewis described a human as “a glorious ruin.” Jesus’ life perfectly illustrates how God intended these four capacities to interrelate. These capacities, as well as other key concepts, are defined in the vocabulary section at the end of the course.

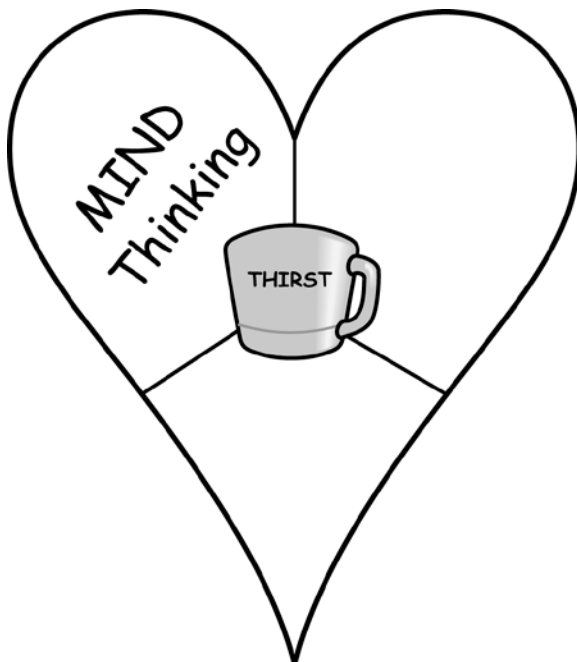
C. S. Lewis described a human as “a glorious ruin.”

Core Thirst or Need

First, we are all primarily motivated by a *deep core need for God that attests to our dependent design. We were made to need Him.* We will call this core need “thirst” for the purposes of this course. This thirst speaks of a need in our deepest heart that requires us to be dependent on something or someone outside of ourselves. All people have been created with “eternity in their hearts” (Eccl 3:11). There is an innate awareness that we were made for something bigger than ourselves, and as Augustine said, “Thou has made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.” *This core thirst is the motivational impetus that drives the other three capacities to find satisfaction for it.* This thirst can be quenched superficially, through substitutes, and so can temporarily keep our hearts from seeking and finding true satisfaction in God. Let’s represent this capacity with a cup.



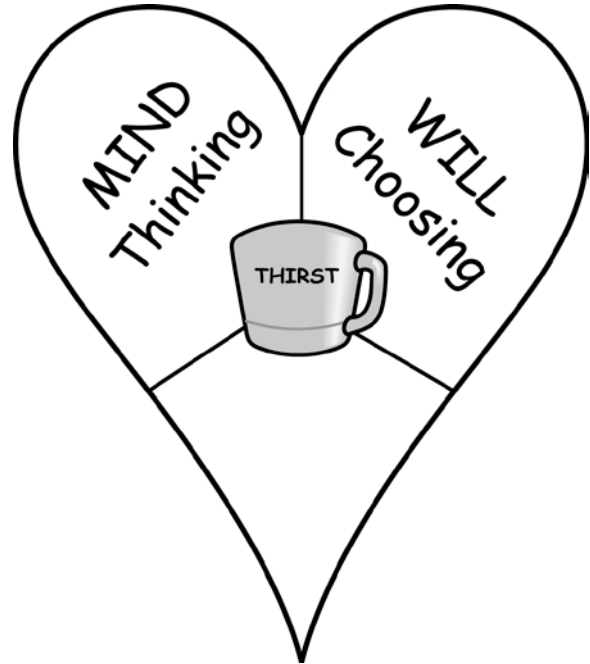
Mind or Thinking



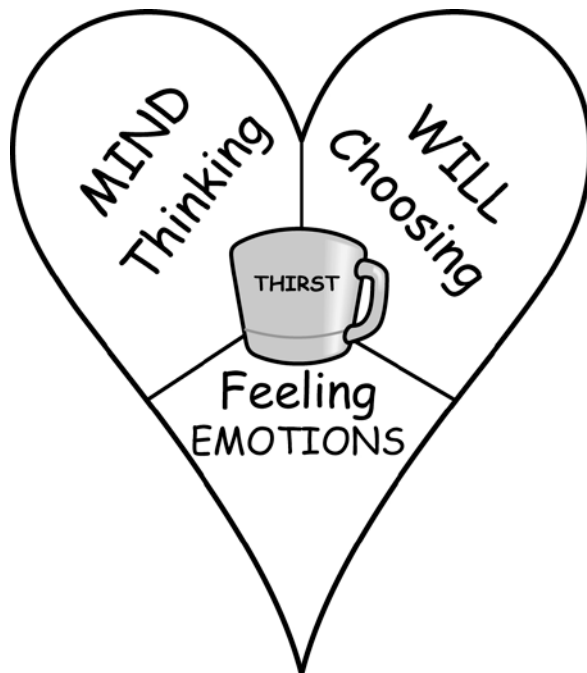
Second, we will consider the rational capacity of our hearts: the mind or thinking. Human beings have been designed with the unique ability to gather information, form conclusions, develop personal beliefs, and think rationally about that information and those beliefs. This capacity has been darkened by the fall. However, in Christ we have been given the potential to transform our minds, (Rom 12:2) with the opportunity to learn and be directed by actual truth. It is the mind that develops beliefs about how the thirst is met in our lives.

Will or Choosing

Third, we discover that people have the capacity of will, or choosing, as volitional beings created to choose. To lead us to satisfaction our thirst, we choose what we believe will accomplish this and then we choose behavior that is based on those beliefs. This capacity to choose is frequently undermined in many cultures by a “victim mentality” that implies that experiences or genetics force a person to believe or behave in particular ways over which they have no control. Though personal history and experience affect our beliefs, and therefore impact our choices, the Bible teaches that each person will stand responsible before God for her own choices (2 Cor 5:10). God always gives the believer all that is necessary to choose obedience to glorify Him (2 Pet 1:3) in any situation. (1 Cor 10:13)



Emotions or Feelings



Fourth, emotions are the capacity to feel sensations that range from joy to sorrow in response to the experiences of life. Jesus was described as a “man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isa 53:3) and also as one anointed “with the oil of joy” (Heb 1:9). Jesus wept over Jerusalem and rejoiced with friends at a wedding. Our emotions, though expressed differently by different people, are a valuable dimension in our experience of intimacy with God and others. The experience of the full scope of emotions is often stunted in our lives because we close or harden our hearts to protect ourselves from the pain of sorrow. But in so doing, we also cut ourselves off from the exhilaration of joy because we limit the level of our involvement with God and others.

Though we will study all four aspects of our divine design separately, we remain one person with one unified identity. We'll study the parts individually to gain a better understanding of the whole. However, in the end we need to remember they all work together and impact one another in various inseparable ways.

MAKING IT YOUR OWN: Exercise #1:4

Read Ruth, chapter 1. List several things you can discern that Naomi might have been thirsting for, thinking, feeling, or choosing. What are some things that Ruth and Orpah were thinking and how did that affect their choices? What did they do? How might you describe the thirst that is motivating them (i.e., What did each one deeply desire?) What were they feeling?

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that these four human capacities are clearly revealed in most narrative passages.

COURSE OVERVIEW

We will study each of these capacities in detail. Then we will begin to combine the concepts in the sessions that follow to answer some of life's basic questions, such as how these capacities relate to why we are here and what directions to choose when we face various kinds of life experiences. Finally, we will consider together from the Bible what resources we have been given by God for holy living and what kinds of opposition we face as we seek to grow through challenges to a deeper appreciation of God.

Goals for this Course

It is our hope that by completing this course you will gain a clearer understanding of how God created people. This process begins with the individual. You will grasp what capacities make up your inner world and how both sin and redemption affect these capacities and the way you choose to live your life. As you personalize this material, you will hopefully be better prepared to help other women move toward God through the challenges of life.

Putting It Together

As we develop an understanding of the thirst of our souls and as we become familiar with identifying each of the three capacities of mind, will, and emotion, we will begin to see from Scripture and from our own lives how these interact as we face various kinds of difficulties. We will begin to learn together to discern how each one is affecting our experience of our present circumstances. From that understanding, we can experience an increase in our freedom to obey God, in the greater joy found in that obedience, and in a greater commitment to bringing Him glory. “I should” transforms into “I want to” from a heart that delights in the Lord. Understanding is a process, and hopefully the concepts we are exploring will become clearer as we progress through the course. Be patient . . . and diligent.

Because God promises to give us wisdom without reproach (Jas 1: 5), we can confidently expect to grow further toward becoming women of understanding. The better we understand ourselves and God, the more effective we can become in helping others come to know Him more fully as well. Jesus tells us Himself in John 17:3 that “this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Paul’s words near the end of his life reflect the same desire in Philippians 3:7-8: “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. . . .”

In the next chapter we will spend some time dwelling on the rich reality of who we are in Christ, so that as we explore our hearts, we have a firm foundation for the directions God desires to move us. As we come to know more and more by personal experience the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and who we are in Him, we will grow increasingly toward. . .

DEVELOPING A DISCERNING HEART

Chapter Flashback

- God intends His people to comfort one another.
- Being used of God to help requires personal honesty.
- God and His Word provide help in the confusing problems in life.
- God designed people in His image.
- The heart has four basic capacities that comprise our inner worlds,
 - Thirsting
 - Thinking
 - Choosing
 - Feeling
- Biblical Characters share our divine design and capacities.