

## *Shepherding A Child's Heart*

### Session 1: Getting to the Heart of Behavior

#### **Main Idea:**

The heart is the control center of life. All behavior flows from the heart. This is why Jesus says “For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45). What comes out in the words and actions of your children reflect the abundance of their hearts. Correction and discipline, therefore, must be concerned with heart issues. Your concern is to unmask your child’s sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. Correction provides opportunities to show the glories of God who sent His Son to change hearts and free people enslaved to sin.

#### **Warm-Up:**

1. Why is the outcome of good behavior not an adequate goal for raising children?
2. What are some of the dangers of behaviorism (controlling or modifying behavior by offering positive or negative consequences)?
3. Why are we easily tempted to get sidetracked with behavior as parents and disciplers of children?

#### **Video** (notes below)

##### **1. We live out of our hearts (Proverbs 4:23)**

- a. The heart sets the course of life
- b. All behaviors have their origins in the heart

##### **2. The Bible uses the term *heart* much differently than our contemporary culture does**

- a. Culture – *heart* refers to our soft, emotional side.
- b. Bible – *heart* refers to all of the immaterial part of humans, uses terms like *soul, spirit, mind, inner man* as well as *heart*.
- c. 700 passages refer to *heart*.
- d. *Heart* is about thinking, remember, knowing and other cognitive activities.

##### **3. *Heart* is a major theme in the ministry of Christ recorded in the Gospels**

- a. Law is applied in terms of the heart
  - i. For example: adultery and murder
- b. Christ does not draw behavior lines but says that your sin is in your heart.
  - i. Note Matthew 7
  - ii. Nothing that enters a man can make him unclean; rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean
  - iii. Concerns about fairness, deceit, and slander are heart issues

#### **4. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks**

- a. Trees are recognized by their fruit.
  - i. Note the illustration about hanging apples
  - ii. Watch for monofilament apples in your child's behavior
  - iii. Real fruit is not produced by manipulation and behavior modification
  - iv. Manipulation does not address the real need of the heart.
- b. Behaviorism presents a false basis for ethics.
  - i. Behaviorism trains the heart in wrong ways—whatever parents use to motivate their children will ultimately train their hearts
  - ii. Relying on behavior means the gospel will never be central—you can't tag the gospel onto the end of a threat
  - iii. Behaviorism shows the idols of our hearts

#### **5. See graphic on Ungodly Attitudes and Godly Attitudes**

- a. No one has better resources for understanding children than the Christian who has the word of God
- b. It is the attitudes of the heart that push and pull behavior
- c. Behaviorism can produce right behavior for the moment, but ultimately these behaviors will wither and die, just like the apples hanging on the tree by monofilament line.
- d. When training a two-year-old, begin with using the language of the heart

#### **6. Tremendous benefits of focusing on the heart.**

- a. Keeps attention on the heart, not just behavior—looking for the sin under the sin
  - i. Behavior shows the overflow of the heart
  - ii. Family photo at Niagara Falls demonstrated a failure to understand heart issues
- b. If we focus on the heart our focus will be on the gospel
- c. The most important benefit is to engage our children, not just reprove them

#### **7. The word of God gives us sufficient resources to understand our children**

- a. We need to dig deeply into the word of God and live richly out of the word of God.

#### **Q&A**

##### **Reflection:**

1. What are some of the ways that you have been a behaviorist rather than a shepherd of the heart of children?
2. How would identifying the thoughts and intentions of the heart help you to train your children with a more Christ-centered focus?
3. What questions can you develop (not simple "yes" or "no") that will help you draw your children out in ways that focus your correction and discipline on heart issues rather than just behavior?