

DOXOLOGICAL COUNSELING

Instructing Worshipers to the Praise and Glory of God

CLASS 6 - SANCTIFICATION'S SINCERITY (PART 2): HEART SHEPHERDING AS WORSHIP

1A. Foundational Considerations for Heart-Shepherding:

1B. **A Definition:** Heart-shepherding is the practice of causing my thoughts, attitudes, actions, words, will, emotions, affections, and/or desires to submit to the truth of God's word.

2B. **A Clarification:** Heart-shepherding is *not* reading the Bible, praying, practicing spiritual disciplines, attending Sunday services, or serving the church and others. Learning about heart-shepherding and discussing heart-shepherding is also not the same as actually shepherding the heart (see Pro. 4:23; 23:19; Heb. 2:1; 3:12-15). *You're not shepherding your heart until you're shepherding your heart!* In other words, you're not shepherding your heart until you are causing your thoughts, attitudes, actions, words, will, emotions, affections, and/or desires to submit to the truth of God's word.

"True grace makes a man most careful, and most fearful of his own heart. It makes him most studious about his own heart, informing that, examining that, and watching over that." — Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*

3B. **The Intention:** The goal of heart-shepherding is worship. We worship God when we respond rightly to whatever God says in His word. No one, before or after salvation, worships God effortlessly. Bringing any and all of our faculties into submission to God requires constant, Spirit-empowered and Spirit-dependent effort. Therefore, heart-shepherding is the means by which we become better worshipers of God.

In counseling, the counselor's task can be summarized as *helping the counselee worship God more effectively by helping them improve their ability to shepherd their heart with the truth of God's word.*

"A spiritual worshiper performs not worship for some hopes of carnal advantage; he uses ordinances as means to bring God and his soul together, to be more fitted to honor God in the world, in his particular place." — Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*

4B. **The Question:** How do I change at the heart level with God's word by the power of God's Spirit for the glory of God?

2A. Formidable Categories for Heart Shepherding:

- All of Scripture is necessary and useful for heart-shepherding (Ps. 19:7-11; Matt. 4:4; Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 10:11; 2Tim. 3:16-17).

"When we strive in the disciplines of His grace, it is an act of faith and humble obedience... If we seek to grow apart from the means God has given, we will be striving in our own efforts, despite labeling it grace. You can't claim to revel in the glorious grace of God and reject the means by which He bestows that grace. When we detach ourselves from the disciplines God commanded and promised to bless, we are seeking sanctification on our terms." — Jerry Wragg & Paul Shirley, *Free to Be Holy*

"Light in the understanding produces heat of love in the affections. In the measure that the sanctified understanding sees a thing to be true or good, in that measure the will embraces it. Weak light produces weak inclinations, strong light, strong inclinations." - Richards Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*

1B. A Great God

"Be much in thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him. Many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and excellency of God, he is filled with self-aborrancy and is pressed to humiliation (Job 42:5, 6)... Be much in thoughts of this nature, to abase the pride of thy heart, and to keep thy soul humble within thee. There is nothing will create in thee a great indisposition to be imposed on by the deceits of sin, than such a frame of heart. Think greatly of the greatness of God." — John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

"There is nothing that will contribute so much to the keeping out of vain thoughts, as to look upon God as an omniscient God, an omnipresent God, an omnipotent God, a God full of all glorious perfections, a God whose majesty, purity, and glory will not suffer him to behold the least iniquity. The reason why the blessed saints and glorious angels in heaven have not so much as one vain thought is, because they are greatly affected with the greatness, holiness, majesty, purity, and glory of God." — Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*

- 1C. God is worthy of my worship (Ex. 34:8).
- 2C. What am I not believing about God when I sin in this way (Jer. 2:5)?
- 3C. What must I be saying about God in my heart, that I would sin in this way (Ps. 10:4, ?)
- 4C. How should God's [insert an attribute of God] motivate me to obey Him (2Pet. 2:1-3)?
- 5C. How should God's [insert an attribute of God] give me hope to fight this sin (Rom. 6:12-14)?
- 6C. What about God's character should I be fearing (Pro. 1:7)?
- 7C. What does this sin reveal that I am failing to fear about God (Pro. 3:7)?
- 8C. Am I thinking rightly about God's attributes?
- 9C. Are there characteristics of God that I am failing to consider?
- 10C. Have I sufficiently meditated on God's greatness that my heart is moved to awe, praise, thanksgiving, rejoicing, and singing (Ps. 96:1-6)?

2B. A Good Gospel

- 1C. How is God's [insert attribute of God] displayed in the gospel (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9)?
- 2C. What has Christ accomplished for me in the gospel (Titus 3:3-7)?
- 3C. What does God say about my new identity in Christ (1Cor. 1:2, 30)?
- 4C. How should the gospel shape my thinking in this situation (Mt. 18:21-35; Eph. 4:32; 5:22-33)?
- 5C. Am I remembering God's complete forgiveness of this sin (Rom. 8:1)?
- 6C. Am I willing to forsake this sin and submit to Christ's lordship (Matt. 11:28-30)?
- 7C. What does an unwillingness to submit to Jesus imply about my profession of faith (Jas. 2:17)?
- 8C. Am I preaching half a gospel to my heart regarding this sin or am I remembering that the gospel calls me to both repent *and* believe (Mk. 1:15)?
- 9C. What is the end of those who do not love God (1Cor. 16:22; Eph. 6:24)?

3B. A Godly Grief

- 1C. Why is this sin sinful (1Jn. 3:4; 5:10)?
- 2C. What does committing this sin say that I believe about God in those moments (1Sam. 2:27-30)?
- 3C. What am I desiring most in those moments when I sin (Num. 11:1-6; Jn. 5:44; 11:48)?
- 4C. What does this sin reveal that I am valuing more than fellowship with God (Jn. 14:23)?
- 5C. Why should I fear committing this sin (1Cor. 10:1-5)?
- 6C. How would earnestness look in this situation (2Cor. 7:11)?
- 7C. How can I clear myself of this sin (2Cor. 7:11)?
- 8C. Why should I hate this sin (2Cor. 7:11)?
- 9C. Why should I fear God if I continue in this sin (Matt. 10:38)?
- 10C. Where must my fear of God increase so that I stop sinning in this way (2Cor. 7:11)?
- 11C. Do I long to turn from this sinful practice? Why or why not (2Cor. 7:11)?
- 12C. How should zeal for holiness manifest itself in my life (2Cor. 7:11; Titus 2:14)?
- 13C. What consequences of committing this sin must I be willing to endure (2Cor. 7:11)?

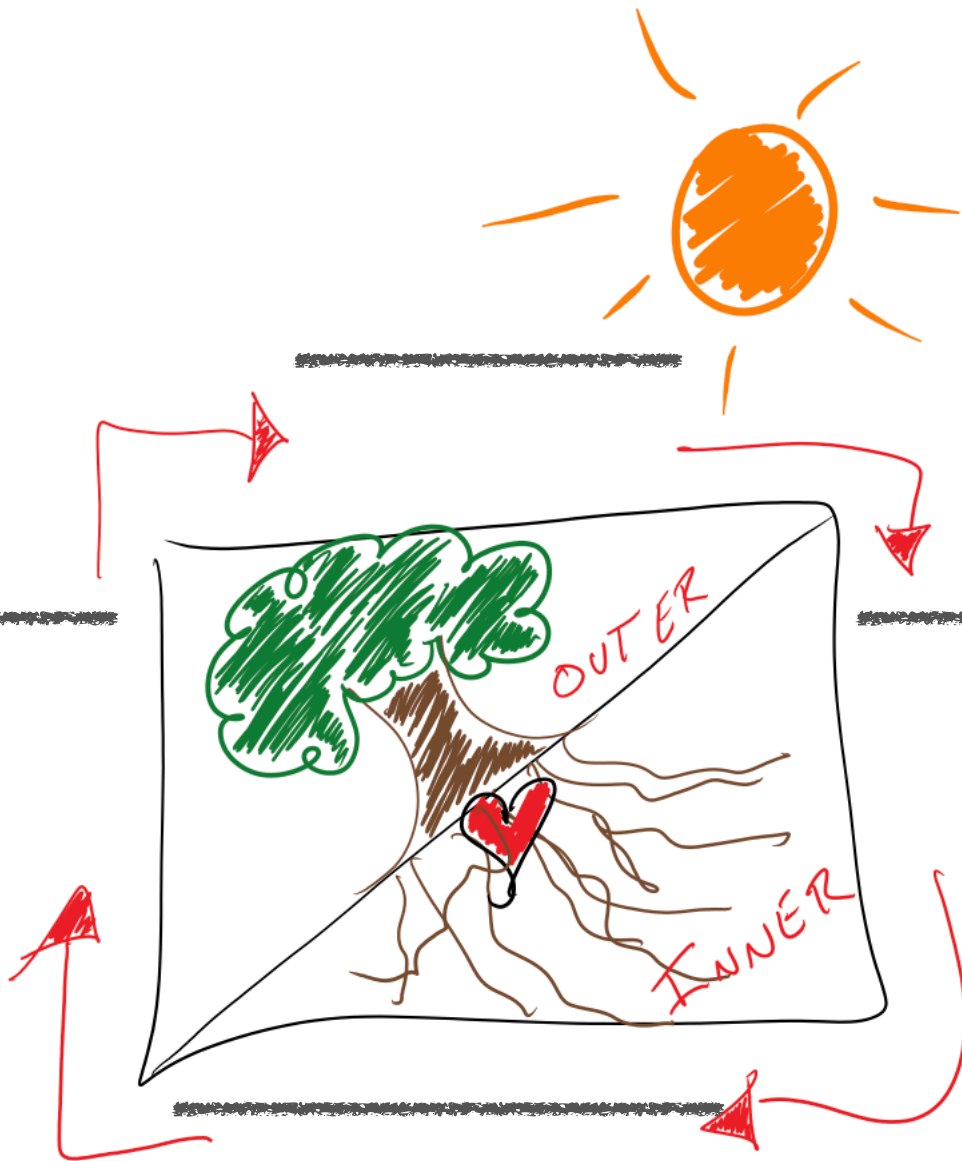
4B. A Glorious Goal

"All worship must be for some end; the worship of God must be for God." — Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*

- 1C. Why did God create me (Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16)?
- 2C. Why did God save me (Jn. 17:3; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14)?
- 3C. Do I believe that God will receive His due glory from my fight against this sin (Ps. 95:6; 96:8)?
- 4C. Am I using God's means of grace (Bible intake, prayer, serving, fellowship, ordinances) for some end other than God's glory (Jn. 5:39a)?
- 5C. What am I requiring God to give me, that I must have in order to be content (Gen. 30:1-2)?
- 6C. I would be satisfied with life if _____ (Phil. 4:11-13; 1Tim. 6:6-8).

The Box Diagram: A Heart-Shepherding Tool

The Box Diagram is a tool that can be used in counseling to help practically apply Proverbs 20:5, "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep waters, but a man of understanding will draw it out." (See also Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 18; Mark 7:21-23).



Examples of completed Box Diagrams:

