

Discipline: Engaging the Heart

“The soul is so constituted that it craves fulfillment from things outside itself and will embrace earthly joys for satisfaction when it cannot reach spiritual ones. The believer is in spiritual danger if he allows himself to go for any length of time without basking in the love of Christ and savoring the felt comforts of a Savior’s presence. When Christ ceases to fill the heart with satisfaction, our souls will go in silent search of other lovers.”
- John Flavel

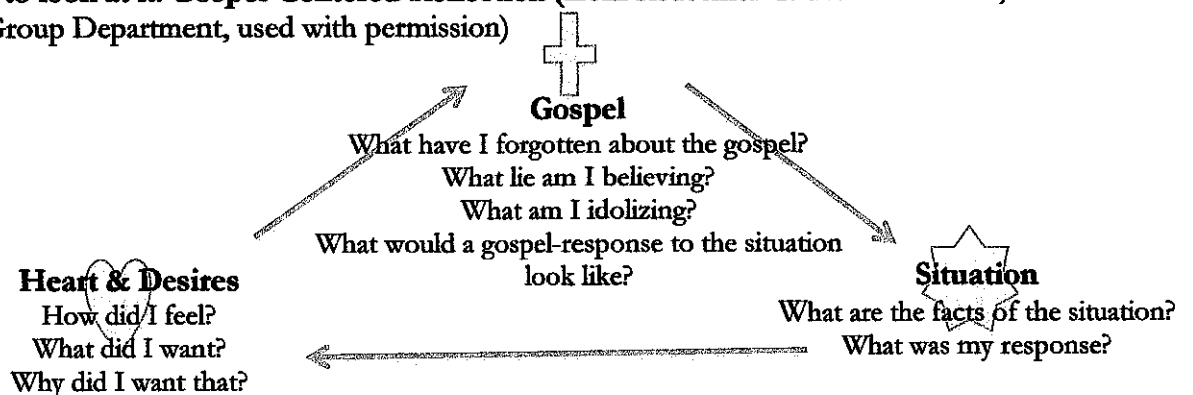
Walking with God – How we listen to Him

- Accept His invitation to be in relationship with Him
- Learn to recognize His leading

Discerning the Heart - It’s a tricky business!

- What are the specifics of the situation and the behavior that’s playing out? [Behavior]
- What else is the child saying/doing in this situation? Is there additional context that seems significant? Is this new, or a repeated response? What have I already learned about this child that might help inform what’s going on underneath the surface? Is there anything here that might add insight to previous places of mystery? [Overflow of the heart – Luke 6:45]
- How is my child’s need for God being exposed in this moment? What truths are getting obscured? What encouragement might be needed? How does scripture speak to this situation? [What scripture says]
- What would more deeply rooted faith look like in this situation? How would it look different than what’s playing out now? What would the child be freed to do/think? [Heart full of grace]
- How can I probe the heart? Seeing child’s need through child’s eyes – How do I invite child into the process of looking at own heart and identifying need? How do I bring this child to Jesus? [Drawing out deep waters – Prov. 20:5]
- What’s the state of my own heart through this interaction? Where is my own need for Jesus being exposed? How am I drawing near to Jesus for what I need? Where am I resisting His probing work in my own heart? [Parent’s response]

Another way to look at it: Gospel-Centered Reflection (from Redeemer Church New York, Community Group Department, used with permission)



Engaging, even Confronting the Heart - How God deals with His People

- **Love relationship/covenant** (Gen. 1:26-31; Gen. 15; Ex. 6:6-8; Is. 42:6; Rom. 5:8-10, Col. 1:15-23; Rev. 21:5): the context for everything else. When it's needed – ALL THE TIME! Important to keep tending to and expressing this. This is the foundation and driving motivation for everything else.
- **Instruction/teaching** (Pr. 6:20-23; Mark 4; Ps. 119: 98-100,104; Matt. 5:2-17; Ps.19:7-8; 119:18): imparting knowledge; preemptive or prescriptive (when need is evident). When it's needed - when learning how to do something new (developing); when they need to know something; ignorance/immaturity/inexperience are the issue; they don't know any better.
- **Encouragement/affirmation** (Ps.103: 8, Is. 30:18, 40:11, Mt. 11:28-30; Phil. 1:6; Isaiah 43:1-5): inspires, fills with hope and courage; supports, confirms right direction/action. When it's needed - see sin but discouraged by it; afraid to face sin (highly defensive, abrasive); making attempts but facing failure; when change is happening (celebrate successes), or when change seems far off.
- **Entreaty** (Cor. 6:18-20; Pr. 4:20-27; 23:19-23): earnest intense plea, urging; appeals to the other's will; seeks to influence, acknowledging limits of control. When it's needed - when the decision really is theirs to make (how to spend money, use of free time, choice of friends, type of dress, etc.)
- **Warning** (Acts 5:1-11; Ps. 19:9-11; Pr. 12:24; 13:18; 15:1; 16:18; 17:19; 19:15): alerts to a danger/consequence that can still be averted. When it's needed - when boundaries are going to be crossed; when headed toward danger (leaving place of safety)
- **Correction** (Prov. 17:14; 15: 5; 12:14; 10:19; John 4:19-24; Ephes. 4:25; Phil 2:4): remedying an error or inaccuracy. When it's needed - first time offenses, minor, or clear that ignorance is a significant factor.
- **Admonish/Rebuke** (Pr. 15:31; 12:19, 22; Ephes. 4:29; Matt. 16:21-23; 2 Sam. 12:1-14): sharp disapproval. When it's needed - for more grievous offenses (physical harm, relational damage).
- **Command/training** (Deut. 4:1-2; 5:6-21; 6:4-9; Ex. 20:17; Matt. 10): an authoritative order; direction and practice in an area of inexperience. When it's needed – when habits/responses need to be acted upon before understanding is fully in place.
- **Exile/cast out** (Gen. 3:22-24; 2 Chron. 36:15-23; Ps. 51): removal from current way of life/situation. When it's needed – to signal the need for a break in current direction; to provide protection from further harm; reality check on “I can live this way and life can continue as is”.
- **Testing/trials** (Gen. 22:1-19; Ex. 14:1-18; 15:22-27; Deut. 8:1-5, 11-16): measures to check the quality, performance or reliability of something (new skill/ability/faith being acquired). When it's needed - for the strengthening of that new skill/ability/faith; foundations are in place, not it's time to build on that.
- **Blessings/benefits** (Gen. 1:20-22, 26-2:3; Deut. 6:1-3; 8:1-10; Prov. 2:1-12; Gal. 5:22-23): positive, desirable outcomes connected to action (obedience). When it's needed – for connecting concrete to more abstract and extrinsic to intrinsic. Models “reaping>sowing” principle. Gives small taste of fruit of right living.

- **Curses/consequences** (Gen. 2:15-17; Deut. 8:11-20; Ex. 16:16-20; Num. 14:20-25; Gal. 6:7-8): negative, undesirable outcomes connected to action (disobedience). When it's needed – for connecting concrete to more abstract and extrinsic to intrinsic. Models “reaping>sowing” principle. Gives small taste of cost of choice made.
- **Giving over/letting-go** (Luke 15:11-24; Rom. 1:18-32, Matt. 13:24-30): the removal or ceasing of intervention to bring about change and allowing situation/behavior to continue to play out for a time. When it's used – to allow space/time to live out implications of choices; natural consequences; sometimes problems have to get bigger before person is ready to address them.
- **The Rod** [next week] (Ps. 89:30-34; Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14; Ezek. 20:33-44, Num. 21:4-8, John 2:12-17)

Questions for Reflection:

1. Which if these come more readily for you? Under what circumstances? To what benefit?
2. Which ones do you shy away from? Why is that? What might you be missing in doing so?
3. What steps toward more faithful engagement of your children might the Lord be calling you to?
4. Where is he inviting you to soften toward his probing work in your own heart as you seek to discipline your child?

Reminder:

Turn in questions for next week's panel discussion today, or by Monday (to Heidi <hlemmerh@umich.edu> or any teaching team member).

“To love you as I should, I must worship God as Creator. When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.”

- C.S. Lewis letter