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A young man is leaving to go off to war. With his last kiss to his wife and love she asked, "But why must you do this?" He explains, "I could not love thee, dear, as much if loved I not honor more."

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## **Chapter Eighteen**

### **Betrayal Against The Heart**

Insight #18 If we choose to turn away from the Creator--and away from the gift of love--we decrease our capacity to love, and increase the power to hate. What we use is added upon, but what we abuse is taken away--by our own choice.

There are lessons of life to be learned from chickens. Several years ago, our Rhode Island Red hen laid eggs in the ivy, and sat on them faithfully for weeks. Then one day we noticed she was out and about again, with a dozen or so yellow baby chicks following her around.

Our family loved watching the mother hen with her brood following close behind, but if we approached them to get a better view of the baby chicks, the feisty mother hen would stop, look sternly as if to say, "Stay away!" Then she would fluff up her feathers into an umbrella-like fan, and all the baby chicks would immediately run and hide under her protective wings. When all of them were nestled safely beneath her wings and completely hidden from view, she looked like a huge, fat chicken.

In time, the baby chicks grew to become as large as their mother--some even larger, but they still followed her around the yard, brushing aside leaves and pecking for bits of this and bites of that.

One early evening, I watched the mother hen and her brood as they prepared themselves for the night. You've probably heard the expression, "going to bed with the chickens". Chickens retire for the night with the first shadows of the evening--sometimes as early as three or four in the afternoon. They like to roost high in a tree or atop a structure to feel safe and protected. The mother hen and her brood climbed to the top of a peaked roof out building to roost for

the night.

Once she settled into a spot, she spread her wings out to snuggle her chicks, but since they were now grown, and since they were on top of a roof, there were only two spots next to mother--one on the right and one on the left. I stood watching them for several minutes as the almost fully grown chickens challenged each other for the two prized spots next to mother. Two would settle next to her, then others would push them aside and take their places. The chickens would tumble down the roof, and then climb back up again. This happened over and over. When I was wondering if they would spend the whole night in this tussle--fighting and struggling for position--it was over. Two, probably the strongest and most determined, secured themselves next to mother, and the others surrendered to being in second, or third, or fourth spot. The mother hen tried to compensate by reaching out her wings to touch them all.

### **Why Casual and Exploitive Sex Damages the Heart**

Love and a protective spirit are an endowment from the Creator--to animals and humans alike, but only humans have the agency to reject these gifts. We can choose whether to reach out in love and protection to the family of God, or we can choose not to love, and not to protect, and eventually feel nothing at all.

The heart is damaged in several ways when it's used to play love games or as a pawn for exploitation (for actual sexual conquest or for a vanity conquest): by turning off feelings of love and sympathy that would hinder the conquest, by faking feelings of love to gain conquest, and by surrendering to the forces of the undercurrent--consequently, increasing the ability to hate. (Actually, there is one other way that the heart is affected: those who have been victimized become resistant to love, naturally suspicious and cynical of anyone who says, "I love you.")

This is the most damaging consequence to twisting the powers to love and bond into powers for pleasure and sport--or worse for the hunt. *When the natural functions of the heart are shut down in order to take advantage of another, caring turns to indifference, compassion turns to callousness, goodwill turns to ill will.*

### **The Intent of the Heart**

The motives of the heart determines whether an act is merely

mischievous or malicious. It is possible to do harm to another unintentionally. As we mentioned before, our justice system is set up to determine the crime itself and the premeditation--or intent of the heart--that went before the crime. To forget to return a borrowed book is a case of neglect, or irresponsibility, but not a hateful act. But when the passion to love and bond together is recreated for the game--sex for sport, sex to exploit, sex for pride, sex for vanity, sex for sex--the heart becomes damaged. Such intentional harm to oneself and others inflicts a disease upon the heart.

The damaged heart--one that no longer feels love or sympathy--then proceeds with malicious acts with a "so what and who cares" attitude. The heart that no longer cares and longer loves is the *cause* of hurting others, and the *result* of hurting others.

We call those who commit crime without remorse "hardened criminals". In other words, their hearts have become so hardened--without softness, without compassion--that they no longer care. We read their comments in the newspaper, "Do it to them before they do it to you. . .He deserved what he got. . .Why should I care?. . She was just an ol' lady. . .You either take or be taken. . .She was askin' for it."

"The longer we continue to make the wrong decisions," Eric Fromm said, "the more our heart hardens; the more often we make the right decisions, the more our heart softens--or better perhaps, comes alive. . . each act of surrender and cowardice weakens me, opens the path for more acts of surrender, and eventually freedom is lost. Most people fail in the art of living not because they are inherently bad or so without will that they cannot lead a better life; they fail because they do not wake up and see when they stand at a fork in the road and have to decide." (The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil, pp. 173-178)

### **Behind the Mask of Love**

Sexual seduction is particularly harmful to the heart because it must begin with the mask of love and involves the most deceptive and cunning of strategy. Even those who have reduced sex to a graduated form of masturbation are aware that *love cannot be dismissed*. For example, a man is obsessed with lust for a woman at the office. If he says bluntly, "I think you're beautiful and I would like to use your body," he is likely to get a slap in the face and a lawsuit for sexual harassment. But if the man fakes "love," it may open the

emotional doors to her heart, and thus to her bed. Women were not created to surrender sexually without believing that they are loved and cherished. Men are not created to comfortably launch into the sex act without feelings of love. So whether the motive is sex, vanity, power, or pain, the empty word of love is still used--*making the abuse all the more abusive.*

Someone may steal your car, and the motive is clear--greed and ill will. They want what you have. Someone may slander your name and the motive is clear--ill will. They want to put you down. In exploiting another sexually however, the real motives are disguised. We have all seen the woman who flatters in order to flatter herself, the smile that entices only to win another heart. We have also seen the man who gives thoughtful gifts--of flowers, of cards--in order take sexual advantage. The flattery, love words and love acts mask the real motives of the heart. Stealing doesn't require the fake--the malice begins and ends the act. At least there's an honesty about the motives, but almost always sexual seduction begins with a false front--dishonesty, deception and a mask of love.

The mask says, "I love you." Behind the mask, "I want to use you."

The mask says, "I think you are the most beautiful woman or handsome man I have ever met." Behind the mask, "I think you would make a great challenge to add to my trophy case of beautiful women that I have seduced. The guys will be impressed when they see me with you." The mask says, "I'll always be faithful to you," but behind the mask, "Hey, right now it sounds good, but who can tell what will happen tomorrow? Actually, I plan to move on as soon as it gets old, which is usually about two weeks." The mask says, "You're the only one who has ever made me feel this way." Behind the mask, "At least this week. Actually I said the same thing to someone else last week."

### **Turning Off Feelings of Sympathy and Compassion**

A thief doesn't feel for his victims--otherwise he likely would not steal at all. If he thought, "Oh, gosh, what will he think when he wakes up in the morning to find that I have stolen his car? He probably won't be able to go to work. Maybe he doesn't have the money to buy another one. I just hate to think of how he's going to feel!" Such feelings of sympathy would likely eliminate the desire to steal. In this same way those who are stalking for sex, or to win a heart for vanity, must turn off feelings of sympathy in order to

proceed. Turning feelings off to take advantage eventually shuts down any feelings at all.

If the predator--either to win heart or body--were to think, "She is such a sweet girl; and she's so happily married. How can I do this to her? She is such a good friend to me, and I would ruin that friendship if I took advantage of her," such thoughts would hinder the act--so they are intentionally dismissed. And when the heart is being instructed--even commanded--to turn off, it eventually does just that.

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### **The Heart, Center of Happiness**

Damaging the feelings of the heart is to the soul, like a heart attack is to the physical body. It affects everything. We can damage a leg, even have it amputated, and still be who we are. We can become completely paralyzed and still be ourselves, but when we damage the heart's ability to love, the entire identity is altered: feelings, ambitions, motives, personality, character, sense of humor, conversation, everything!

Just as the heart is the key vital organ of the body, so the feelings of the heart are the key vital part of our soul. All that makes us warm human beings comes from feelings of love, sympathy, empathy, compassion, kindness, thoughtfulness, etc. The heart--love--is the source of all virtue, of all internal peace, of all true happiness.

Jesus Christ taught a simple formula for happiness here and hereafter when the lawyer asked him, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" He answered simply, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (St. Matthew 22: 36-40) So simple, but so all-encompassing.

Those who love will not have the *heart* to harm others. In other words a person with a healthy heart--healthy emotionally--will naturally do those things that are kind and virtuous.

### **A Diseased Heart**

I have found it fascinating that Jesus Christ pointed out the symptoms of a spiritually diseased heart the way a medical physician would point out the symptoms of a diseased body--symptoms that if untreated can be fatal. He said, "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. 5:28)

When I first read this I thought: "Wait a minute! That doesn't seem fair. Is he saying that just by looking at a woman a man has already committed adultery? Are we to be held accountable for our thoughts as well as our actions?" Then I started noticing that Jesus did not say that the man had committed adultery, but that he had committed adultery "in his heart." Also, the problem is not that the man looked upon the woman to admire her, to converse with her, or to befriend her, but that he looked "to lust after her." Now lusting is a whole different matter. To lust after someone means to have an intense sexual desire--to want them--to have an intense craving to use them for gratification.

It is as if to say, "This man's heart is diseased; it's in danger. He has already begun the dying process--from the inside out." In other words, sick actions that hurt self or others always begin with a sick heart or motives. This same idea shows up in the counsel, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matt. 5:22)

Some have interpreted this to mean that we are never to be angry--but Jesus displayed anger when he cleansed the temple. Anger isn't the problem; it's being angry "without a cause." In other words, when your heart is so sour that you go around getting angry with people for no reason, you've got a diseased heart--maybe even a heart that has become hardened by the brutal force.

The spiritually diseased heart has symptoms just like a physically diseased body: pride, vanity, jealousy, hatred, bitterness, lust, callousness, anger, malice, apathy, and hostility. Eventually, as

the feelings of the heart shut down, numbness takes over and the soul yearns to feel alive again--to feel anything again. This is when the comatose descend to a lower level of sexual exploitation in order to experience the excitement again--more explicit, more immoral, more shocking. They are crying out, "Oh, do something! Anything! But make me feel again. Am I alive?"

There's a path that leads into this darkness of life; it happens gradually: taking one step out of the light and another step into the darkness. We have the choice whether to love and protect or to recreate ourselves to neither love or protect.

I recently overheard one man say to another--with great pride, "Women are so easy. They want so desperately to believe that they are loved that when you tell them those magic words 'I love you' they believe it. It doesn't really matter how you treat them. Even if you treat them like dogs, they still believe they're loved if you say it. They're so easy. It's like putting crumbs on the ground to capture a bird. You just keep putting the crumbs down--the compliments--and they walk right into your lap."

He was showing symptoms of a spiritually diseased heart--even dead.

**"That's what every woman says."**

The predator's inability to feel for his victim, and the victim's resistance to feeling again are depicted beautifully in a scene from the novel, Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy.

Tess, a young, innocent woman, leaves her home and goes to work for a neighbor, Alec. He seduces her against her will. She eventually yields to an affair--a masquerade of love-- then comes to her senses and returns to her family--pregnant. The following scene takes place as he is driving her home--horse and carriage--and notices that she has begun to cry:

"What are you crying for?" he coldly asked.

"I was only thinking that I was born over there," murmured Tess.

"Well--we must all be born somewhere."

"I wish I had never been born--there or anywhere else!"

"Pooh! Well, if you didn't wish to come to Trantridge why did you come?"

She did not reply.

"You didn't come for love of me, that I'll swear," he says.

"Tis quite true. If I had gone for love o'you, if I had ever

sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now! . . .My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all.”

He shrugged his shoulders. She resumed--

“I didn’t understand your message till it was too late.”

“That’s what every woman says.”

“How can you dare to use such words!” she cried, turning impetuously upon him, her eyes flashing as the latent spirit (of which he was to see more some day) awoke in her. “My God! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women feel?” (pg. 94)

Later, Tess tells her mother that she is pregnant by Alec. Her mother, poor in money and integrity, scorns Tess--not for becoming pregnant--but for not getting Alec to marry her.

Tess is repulsed by the idea: [She]. . . “had never wholly cared for him, she did not at all care for him now. She had dreaded him, winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile: had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away. That was all. Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name’s sake she scarcely wished to marry him.”

“Oh, Mother, my mother!” cried the agonized girl, turning passionately upon her parent as if her poor heart would break. “How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn’t you warn me?” (pp. 94, 100)

## **Summary**

All life forms bloom and grow by turning to the light, not away from it. If we choose to turn away from the Creator and conscience and become spiritually weak, we eventually decrease our power to love, and increase the power to hate. What we use is added upon, but what we abuse is taken away--by our own choice.

If you’re sensing a desire for change in your life, the next chapter is for you. These writings may have awakened within you an uncomfortable awareness. The ideas inspire change; that’s exactly what they’re intended to do. They changed my life, and my hope is that they change yours.



