

## Session 5 | Heat: God & Us in the Real World

Primary Passages: Psalm 88; James 1:1-15; I Peter 4:12-19

### Big Idea

Life is often hard and painful, full of sorrows and tensions. The truth is that we live in a fallen and frustrated world with people who are messed-up – including ourselves. When trying circumstances hit our lives, we often respond poorly. In these moments, our tendency is to avoid the reality of our sin by blaming the people and situations around us. But the fact of the matter is that this “heat” never causes us to respond in sinful ways; it simply exposes the thoughts and loves of our hearts that are already there. The call is for us to define joy the way that God does – as a life that abides in God. This affords us the opportunity to be honest yet hopeful about the true nature of our circumstances, the state of our own hearts, and the character of the God who is working through it all for his glory and our good.

### Definitions

- Heat is the person’s situation in daily life, with difficulties, blessings, and temptations.
- Biblical Realism is seeing the world for what it is through the honest yet hopeful lens of the Bible.
- Christian Stoicism is an anti-biblical response to frustrations in life that is functionally devoid of any real emotion.

### Reflections

What is Joy?

Absence of Pain

Fulfillment of Felt Desires

Life with God

Heat Reveals the Heart

It's Heating Up

Functional Theology & the Heart's Affections

Refreshingly Honest

The Real World

The Real Us

The Real God

Discussion Questions

1. When you experience sin and brokenness within and around you, are you surprised? complacent? angry? ready to engage?
2. How does the biblical vision of the world we live in fit with your actual experience?
3. Why is it hard for us to admit that the "heat" in our lives exposes our own sin?

Quote

Life is tough. All of us face challenging situations. Yours may be difficult family relationships or sickness or financial worries. It may be people who rile you up or a dead-end job. It may be singleness or a loveless marriage. Peer pressure may push you toward sin, or it may be the stress of having too much to do. We are messed-up people living in a messed-up world... [But] only when we understand the role of our hearts can we truly understand the role of our circumstances in sin. Our struggles and temptations often trigger sin, but they never cause it. The root cause is always the heart and its sinful desires. We choose how we respond to circumstances, and what determines our choices are the thinking and desires of our hearts. (Tim Chester, *You Can Change*, 61, 67)

## Session 6 | Thorns: The What and Why of Entanglement

### Primary Passages: Romans 7:13-25; James 4:1-10

#### Big Idea

In order to deal with the sin that still resides in our hearts, we must understand the geography that exists within our souls. What is actually going on internally when we sin? Or, to paraphrase Paul, why do we not do the good that we want, but the evil we do not want is what we keep on doing? (Rom 7:19) The fundamental problem is one of worship. People and things that we deem valuable operate as the organizing center of our lives. Money, time, conversation, energy – everything that we have control over becomes wielded to get (or get more of) the things that we truly want. So while there are many occasions for sin as well as contextual realities that help make sense of what is going on, what we truly need is reordered affections. We must begin to love what God loves, and in the same way that he does. We move along this process of transformation as we're honest about our struggles and take the time to identify the things that often govern our hearts. It is there that we find hope for deliverance in the gospel.

#### Definitions

- Thorns are the person's ungodly responses to the heat. It includes behavior, the heart driving that behavior, and the consequences that result.
- Idolatry is worshipping anything besides God.
- The cause of sin is the fundamental reason for and source of it – the person's heart.
- The occasion for sin is the context within which that sin is manifested – the person's situation and circumstances.

#### Reflections

##### Thorn Bush Responses

Denial & Avoidance

Over-Magnification

Hypersensitivity

Vengeance

Paralysis

Self-Righteous Excusal

## What is the Real Problem?

Other People

Family/Background

Hard Circumstances

Physiology/Psychology

Personality

Disordered Loves/Wrong Worship

## Gospel Transformation

Surface Sin

Underlying Motivation

Governing Idol

[Gospel Satisfaction in God Newness of Life]

## Discussion Questions

1. Turn to page 123 in the book. Pick a couple of the bulleted questions to ask around your table/group.
2. What are your tendencies when your thorns are revealed?
3. Pick a recent situation from your life where your sin was revealed and begin to walk through the Gospel Transformation Card with one or two other people.

## Quote

My problem is that a legitimate desire has taken over my heart and is now in control. This desire has so much power that it is no longer legitimate. It has become an inordinate, sinful desire, because it has grown to a position of authority over my heart. This authority belongs to God alone, who sent his Son to set up his kingdom there. The focus of... discussion is not evil desires (desires for the wrong things), but inordinate desires (desires that may be right in and of themselves, but must never rule my heart). It is not wrong [for example] to desire relaxation at the end of a long day. It is wrong to be ruled by relaxation in such a way that I am irritated with anyone who gets in the way. (Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 80)