

CollegeLife Life Group Discussion: "Getting the Heart of the Matter"

**From which "activities" below might Jesus ask a person to "repent"?
Without consulting your neighbor, circle all that apply:**

- Drunkenness "Quiet Times" Cussing Sarcasm
- Prayer Evangelism Smoking Teaching Bible Studies
- Accumulating Wealth Watching Movies w/a Sex Scene
- Studying Theology Consuming Alcohol Pornography
- Attending Church Eating Sweets Buying a new car
- Tithing Facebook/Twitter Exercise
- Getting Straight "A's" Playing Video Games Watching TV

Briefly explain why you chose to circle your given answers above:

CollegeLife Life Group Discussion: "Getting the Heart of the Matter"

On a computer, watch "Why I Love Jesus but Hate Religion" spoken word video and discuss the questions below.

1. What do you understand as being the main point that the poet is trying to make?
2. With what points do you agree and/or disagree? Why or why not?
3. What did the poet say, if anything, that you could personally relate to? Why?

Read each of the passages below out loud as a group and discuss.

Matthew 12:33-37

Luke 6:43-45

Mark 7:14-23

1. According to Jesus, what role does the "heart" play in our lives?
2. In each passage, Jesus is addressing the religious leaders of the day ("scribes" and/or "Pharisees") who were more *outwardly* obedient to religious traditions and rules than anyone. How would Jesus' teaching of bad fruit from bad trees apply to the seemingly "good" guys?

CollegeLife Life Group Discussion: "Getting the Heart of the Matter"

Read the following illustration out loud as a group and respond by discussing the questions below.

"Let's say I have an apple tree in my backyard. Each year its apples are dry, wrinkled, brown, and pulpy. After several seasons my wife says, 'It doesn't make any sense to have this huge tree and never be able to eat any apples. Can't you do something?' One day my wife looks out the window to see me in the yard, carrying branch cutters, an industrial grade staple gun, a ladder, and two bushels of apples.

I climb the ladder, cut off all the pulpy apples, and staple shiny, red apples onto every branch of the tree. From a distance our tree looks like it is full of a beautiful harvest. But if you were my wife, what would you be thinking of me at this moment?

If a tree produces bad apples year after year, there is something drastically wrong with its system, down to its very roots. I won't solve the problem by stapling new apples onto the branches. They also will rot because they are not attached to a life-giving root system. And next spring, I will have the same problem again. I will not see a new crop of healthy apples because my solution has not gone to the heart of the problem. If the tree's roots remain unchanged, it will never produce good apples.

The point is . . . much of what we do to produce growth and change in ourselves and others is little more than "fruit stapling." It attempts to exchange apples for apples without examining the heart, the root behind the behavior. This is the very thing for which Christ criticized the Pharisees. Change that ignores the heart will seldom transform the life. For a while, it may seem like the real thing, but it will prove temporary and cosmetic."

- Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands*

1. In what ways do we "staple fruit" to ourselves and why?
2. Take a look at the worksheet you filled out at the beginning of the discussion. Share with the group which actions you circled.
3. Now that you understand that God is primarily after your inward motives and not just your outward obedience, would you leave your worksheet "as is" or would you change anything? Why?