

# CollegeLife Life Group Discussion [Leaders Guide]: "Getting the Heart of the Matter"

Leaders: Have your group members fill out this worksheet at the beginning of the group. Once completed, have them put it aside. You'll return to it later in the discussion.

Each of the activities below can be considered either "good" or "bad." Some of your group members are likely to circle only those activities that seem outwardly "bad" while leaving the "good" ones blank. By the end of your time together, they will hopefully see that *all* of them should be circled as the gospel demands that we repent not only from the bad things we do, but also from all the good things we do with bad motives.

**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:**

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

*Leader: Make sure that you are meeting in a location with internet. Use a laptop or your smart phone or whatever you need. You can find the video on [www.theresurgence.com](http://www.theresurgence.com) or on YouTube.*

*The purpose of watching the video together is for you to diagnose where each group member is with respect to the gospel and the church.*

*There is no "right" or "wrong" answer here, so be sure to not correct anything that they say. You are merely trying to create an environment where each group member can honestly and openly share his or her feelings and experiences with God, the gospel and the church.*

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?

*Leader: The goal is help your group understand that who we are why we do everything we do – whether good or bad – is a reflection of our heart's condition. We are counted sinful not simply because of our outward actions, but because of our inward motives and desires.*

*Never monologue the answer for your group members. Always ask questions, "what do you mean by that" and "how did you arrive at that conclusion?"*

*Some other passages you might use to bring the truth home:*

*Proverbs 4:23*

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*Proverbs 27:19*

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?

*You are trying to help your group members see that God doesn't merely demand that we repent from the "bad" things we do, but also from the "good" things we do from bad motives.*

*The crowd around Jesus would have thought, "If God were to love and accept anybody, it would have to be those guys!" But God is not impressed with external adherence to rules. He wants our hearts!*

*You might have your group read Isaiah 1:12-17. God says he "hates" Israel's outward religious obedience (vv 12-15) because their failure to love others ("fatherless" and "widow" - v. 17) had revealed the motives of their hearts as being "evil" (v. 16).*

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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.

*Leader: make sure they haven't made any changes to their worksheet since the beginning of the discussion.*

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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?

*Leader: By this time, your group should understand that every single activity listed should be circled. Our focus should always be on our hearts first and not merely on our external behavior.*

*We don't need behavior modification. We need heart transplants! Christianity is not simply a matter of making right decisions or changing our behavior by willpower. There must be something deeper, more radical. The affections that God demands from us can only arise from hearts made new, transformed by his grace.*

*God takes our stony hearts, monstrous and deformed by sin as they are, and replaces them with new hearts. We begin to be a different person. Our desires and motivations begin to change. Conviction begins to set it where there was once none. Compassion and love for others begins to overwhelm our self-centeredness. A spirit of generosity begins to drown out our materialism and greed. Humility and faith begins to overcome our previous need for power and control.*