



Speaking to Matters of the Heart

(Student Guide)

[This study follows closely the Life Sunday bulletin insert—Item LFL921BI available at www.cph.org. If you used these, you may want to refer to it or even use it in class.]

Introduction

For the Old Testament Hebrew, the word “heart” signified much more than the physical organ. In fact, there are very few uses of heart in this sense. The vast majority of uses refer to a person’s inner being, their essence, their very soul.

Hebrew Idioms

With that in mind, look up the following verses which contain Hebrew idioms using the word “heart.”

Joy – 1 Samuel 2:1 – What does Hannah’s heart do that expresses her joy?

Grief – Nehemiah 2:2 – How does King Artaxerxes describe Nehemiah’s sadness?

Guilt – 2 Samuel 24:10 - David feels guilt over numbering the people. How is that guilt expressed?

Fear – Genesis 42:28 – Joseph’s brothers are trembling in fear at the discovery of the money put back in their sacks. What is the “heart phrase” used to describe that fear?

Comfort – Isaiah 40:1-2 – God wants Isaiah to comfort His people. How is he to speak to them?

The Bad Heart

God’s people in Isaiah’s time needed a message of comfort. They committed detestable sins and chased after other gods. God had just predicted their exile into Babylon (Isaiah 39:5-7).

Genesis 6:5 – Where did such evil come from? But we do better, right? Not really!

Mark 7:20-23 – What did Jesus say about our hearts?

1 John 3:17 – What else can come from a bad heart according to this verse?



Sanctity of Life Quiz – Check the appropriate answer.

	Political Issue	Matter of the Heart
1. Afraid and confused, the pregnant sixteen-year-old thinks abortion is the only answer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. He would pay for his girlfriend's abortion. Then he realized this was their child. But too late, the abortion had taken place. He is filled with guilt and grief.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The abortion haunts her. Her regret seems unbearable. She wonders how Jesus could possibly forgive <i>this</i> sin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. His wife's stroke put her in a wheelchair. Her speech is slurred. She drools. He wonders what would be so wrong with ending her suffering with assisted suicide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Every day in this country nearly 3,000 babies that God created, redeemed, and wants to call die in an abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Message of Comfort

What is God's message of comfort to His people in Isaiah 40:2?

Let's look at these three aspects of God's "Good News" of comfort that were fulfilled in Jesus.

Warfare ended – Colossians 1:19-23 – What "warfare" is ended according to these verses?

Iniquity pardoned – Isaiah 53:6; Romans 8:15-17 – What has happened to our iniquity? When someone is pardoned for a crime, do they remain guilty of that crime? According to the Romans passage, how did God see us and how does He see us now?

Double for all our sins – John 1:15-17 – How much grace do we get in Jesus?

Conclusion

Like the ancient Hebrews, we also deal with "Matters of the Heart." We experience sorrow, "evil of the heart." Our hearts sometimes "strike us" with guilt and regret. Our hearts can "leave us" when we face fearful situations. But the Gospel "speaks to the heart" as nothing else can. Through the forgiveness and hope of the Gospel, our hearts can "leap" once again!



Leaders's Guide follows



Speaking to Matters of the Heart

(Leader's Guide)

[This study follows closely the Life Sunday bulletin insert—Item LFL921BI available at www.cph.org. If you used these, you may want to refer to it or even use it in class.]

Introduction

For the Old Testament Hebrew, the word "heart" signified much more than the physical organ. In fact, there are very few uses of heart in this sense. The vast majority of uses refer to a person's inner being, their essence, their very soul.

Hebrew Idioms

With that in mind, look up the following verses which contain Hebrew idioms using the word "heart."

Joy – 1 Samuel 2:1 – What does Hannah's heart do that expresses her joy?
Her heart "exults" (ESV). The Hebrew here is "aw-lats," to leap or jump. Thus the Hebrew idiom for joy is a "leaping heart."

Grief – Nehemiah 2:2 – How does King Artaxerxes describe Nehemiah's sadness?
"Sadness of the heart." The Hebrew here is "ro'-ah," evil. The Hebrew idiom for grief and sadness is "evil of the heart."

Guilt – 2 Samuel 24:10 – David feels guilt over numbering the people. How is that guilt expressed?
David's "heart struck him." The Hebrew idiom for guilt is to be "struck [naw-kaw] by the heart." Point out how this gives insight into the practice of "smiting the heart" with your fist as a gesture of guilt and penitence.

Fear – Genesis 42:28 – Joseph's brothers are trembling in fear at the discovery of the money put back in their sacks. What is the "heart phrase" used to describe that fear?
Their "hearts failed them." Literally, it is "their hearts left [yaw-tsaw'] them." So the Hebrew idiom for fear is "the heart leaves."

Comfort – Isaiah 40:1-2 – God wants Isaiah to comfort His people. How is he to speak to them?
"Speak tenderly to Jerusalem." Literally, this is "daveru al-leb," speak to the heart. To speak comfort, to speak Good News, is to "speak to the heart."

The Bad Heart

God's people in Isaiah's time needed a message of comfort. They committed detestable sins and chased after other gods. God had just predicted their exile into Babylon (Isaiah 39:5-7).

Genesis 6:5 – Where did such evil come from? But we do better, right? Not really!
Bad deeds come from a bad heart which, by nature, is "only evil continually."



Mark 7:20-23 – What did Jesus say about our hearts?

Our hearts, too, are by nature corrupt. Since this study focuses on the sanctity of human life, you may want to have some brief discussion about sins against life. Abortion is the obvious one. But sometimes others are complicit in an abortion; the father of the child or the parents of the pregnant girl often apply pressure for an abortion to avoid shame and “scandal.” Assisted suicide and euthanasia are sins against life, but closer to home may be people who have made wrong decisions regarding removal of treatment or not starting treatment.

The intent is not to get into a long discussion but to point out that although such sins against life may seem like “big” sins, we all find our sins on Jesus’ list some place! No one has a pure heart and, therefore, no one has pure behavior.

1 John 3:17 – What else can come from a bad heart according to this verse?

Nothing! This points us to sins of omission. When we know someone has a need and we have the capacity and opportunity to help and do not, we sin. The most famous biblical example would be the priest and Levite passing by the injured man in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Sanctity of life focus: If the life issues are “matters of the heart,” things that affect people deeply and challenge their faith, then we have what it takes to address such issues—the Gospel of Jesus. Have the group discuss this question: Do we sin if we are silent about these issues and do not apply the Gospel to them?

Keep in mind that part of “applying the Gospel” is the need for the law in preparation for the Gospel. We need to call wrong things wrong. Then we can speak of what God in Christ has done about wrong things.

Some may think or even say that issues like abortion are political issues and we should not be talking about them. Lead a discussion on this. If you are using the Lutherans For Life bulletin insert (recommended!), refer to that for this discussion. If not, the text is below. Put it on a white board or just read the statements.



Sanctity of Life Quiz – Check the appropriate answer.

	Political Issue	Matter of the Heart
1. Afraid and confused, the pregnant sixteen-year-old thinks abortion is the only answer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. He would pay for his girlfriend's abortion. Then he realized this was their child. But too late, the abortion had taken place. He is filled with guilt and grief.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The abortion haunts her. Her regret seems unbearable. She wonders how Jesus could possibly forgive <i>this</i> sin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. His wife's stroke put her in a wheelchair. Her speech is slurred. She drools. He wonders what would be so wrong with ending her suffering with assisted suicide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Every day in this country nearly 3,000 babies that God created, redeemed, and wants to call die in an abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The desired outcome is to help everyone understand that by their very nature the life issues are spiritual issues. They are matters of the heart, and we have a message that people dealing with them need to hear!

The Message of Comfort

What is God's message of comfort to His people in Isaiah 40:2?

Three things: Warfare ended, iniquity pardoned, and double for all her sins.

Let's look at these three aspects of God's "Good News" of comfort that were fulfilled in Jesus.

Warfare ended – Colossians 1:19-23 – What "warfare" is ended according to these verses?

Our warfare with God. We were "alienated and hostile" toward Him, but in Christ, we are presented as "holy and blameless and above reproach before Him." This peace with God was made possible by the blood of Christ's cross.

Iniquity pardoned – Isaiah 53:6; Romans 8:15-17 – What has happened to our iniquity?

The Lord laid it upon Jesus. It is taken from us and given to Him.



When someone is pardoned for a crime, do they remain guilty of that crime? **Yes, but now they are looked upon as if they are not guilty. The word for "pardoned" here is "raw-tsah." It carries the idea of being pleased with. Because of Christ, God is now pleased with us. We are seen in a new light, as if we had never committed the crime.**

According to the Romans passage, how did God see us and how does He see us now?

We were slaves to sin, but now, being pardoned in Christ, we are His children!

Double for all our sins – John 1:15-17 – How much grace do we get in Jesus? **The picture here is that if they deserved X amount of punishment because of their sins, they will receive 2X the amount of God's grace! In other words, they would not get what they deserved. Instead, they would get twice as much of what they did not deserve! God's grace in Jesus is endless, "grace upon grace." It surrounds us. We live in it. Nothing can touch our lives without passing through this immeasurable fountain of grace.**

Discuss how this Message of Comfort applies to the life issues mentioned earlier or those mentioned in the "quiz."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is tailor made for such issues of life and death, pain and suffering, grief and regret and guilt. The Gospel speaks to the heart of that pregnant teen. It speaks of forgiveness and offers the presence and strength of Jesus. The Gospel speaks to the heart of that post-abortive woman and man. It speaks of forgiveness, forgiveness big enough for any and all sins. The Gospel speaks to the hearts of those in situations involving disease, pain, and suffering. It speaks of a God who, as long as He gives life, gives life meaning and purpose. It speaks of a God who demonstrated His ability to bring good out of suffering through the cross of His own Son. You may expand on the above as you desire.

Be sure to mention LFL's *Word of Hope* ministry that provides a toll-free number (888.217.8679) for those struggling with a crisis pregnancy or those whose hearts have been wounded by abortion. Brochures are available free from Concordia Publishing House (Items LFL404T and LFL909T).

LFL also has brochures that address end-of-life issues and the problems of pain and suffering. You can order them at www.cph.org. Look under the Sanctity of Life tab.

Conclusion

Like the ancient Hebrews, we also deal with "Matters of the Heart." We experience sorrow, "evil of the heart." Our hearts sometimes "strike us" with guilt and regret. Our hearts can "leave us" when we face fearful situations. But the Gospel "speaks to the heart" as nothing else can. Through the forgiveness and hope of the Gospel, our hearts can "leap" once again!



NOTES
