

# THORNS



*session*

# 3

## HOMework

1. In preparation for next week, try to spend a few minutes bringing the heart issues you have been talking about to God. This is not simply saying, “Dear Lord, I have done this wrong again.” It is saying, “Dear Father, I am the kind of person who does things like this. My heart is me, and I have been desiring/longing/blaming/running after/hoping in \_\_\_\_\_.” Spend some time looking at the story of the lost son in Luke 15:11–32. What can you see of his heart issues? Meditate on how the father responds to the repentant son. How does God respond to all those who come back to him convinced of their attitude problems? Keep talking to God about what you are finding.

2. Next sum up—in writing—what you are discovering about the specific issue you are working on. Briefly, describe the heat you are facing, the thorns you are displaying, and the desires hiding in your heart, as well as a summary of the ways in which God responds to you when you come to him in repentance. Writing this out will help to clarify your thoughts and engage you more fully with the process.

3. If you have time, explore other places where the Bible describes how God receives those who mess up and turn back in repentance and faith. You might try Isaiah 54:4–8; Micah 7:18–20; and Luke 19:1–10.

# TWENTY QUESTIONS TO DIAGNOSE YOUR HEART

We have looked at how our desires become demands and “needs.” That is one way the Scriptures describe how our hearts go astray (Galatians 5:16–17; Ephesians 2:3). God has many other ways of describing what is going on inside us when we sin on the outside. Here are some questions to help you get at what’s going on in your heart. They all start the same way: When I sin . . .

1. What am I loving?
2. What am I seeking, aiming for, pursuing?
3. Where am I putting my hope?
4. What am I fearing? What do I not want? What am I worrying about?
5. Where am I looking for refuge, safety, and comfort?
6. What or whom am I trusting that is not the Lord?
7. Whose performance or control is making life work for me?
8. Whose opinion of me counts most? From whom do I desire approval and fear rejection?
9. What is making me feel rich, secure, and prosperous?
10. Whose victory or success am I hoping will make my life happy?
11. What am I thinking are my rights? What am I feeling entitled to?
12. What am I praying for?
13. What am I thinking about most? What preoccupies me? What am I obsessed with? In the morning, where does my mind instinctively drift?
14. What am I talking about? What is important to me? What attitudes am I communicating?
15. How am I spending my time?
16. What are my priorities?
17. What are my daydreams?
18. What are my idols and false gods? In what do I place my trust or set my hopes? What do I turn to or seek? Where do I take refuge?
19. How do I implicitly say, “If only . . .” (to get what I want, avoid what I don’t want, keep what I have)?
20. Where do I find my identity? How do I define who I am?