

## SICK OF EVIL • Week 2: It Came From Within

### Daily Briefing • Day 3 of 5 • Try Harder

#### WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.*

**Jeremiah 17:7**

Sunday's message named behavior modification as a false solution. God is the one who changes the heart, not you. Today we look directly at why trying harder was never the answer, and what you should actually seek instead. You can watch or listen to the sermon at [1mso.church](http://1mso.church) or on the One Missoula app.

#### OPENING PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, I am tired of the world telling me to do better and try harder only to fail time and again. I am asking You to do what only You can do: miraculously change my desires, my values, and my drives, so that my thoughts, words, and actions flow from a renewed identity rather than my own willpower. Turn me into the new creation You promise in Christ. My willpower has failed. My behavior modification has failed. I haven't been able to guilt-trip or shame myself into Your best, so I am asking You to succeed where all of my efforts have failed. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### TODAY'S TEACHING

Modern culture offers a constant stream of advice for fixing your life: better habits, better routines, better willpower, better systems. All of this advice assumes the same thing. If you change what you do, you will eventually become a different person. Scripture makes the opposite claim. You do not act your way into a new heart. A new heart is what produces new action in the first place.

Sunday's message named this directly using the image of a tree. A bad tree does not become good by tying good fruit onto its branches. The fruit has to come from a different root. Ezekiel gave God's own solution to this problem centuries before Jesus used that same illustration. "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). God does not offer you a better system for managing your existing heart. He offers to remove it and give you a different one.

Behavior modification asks the wrong question first. It asks what you should do differently. Scripture asks a different question before that one. What do you actually want? What do you actually value? Both of those come from a deeper question: what are you? Not what do you do, what you actually are, at the level of your nature. It's a question about your core nature. A heart of stone and a heart of flesh will produce different behavior eventually, but the difference starts with what each one wants and treats as important, not with which rules each one manages to follow.

Jesus gave a direct command for what to actually seek. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Paul described the same pursuit in different language. God "will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Romans 2:6-7). Both point to the same thing. What you are actually seeking will eventually show up in what you do. The goal was never better behavior management. The goal is a heart that seeks something entirely different than it used to seek.

#### READ & MEDITATE

**Ezekiel 36:26-27**

*"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."*

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27 slowly and notice this is not a self-improvement plan. Every verb belongs to God. He gives. He removes. He puts. The only thing left for you to do is receive it and then actually walk according to that new nature.

#### REFLECT

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Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment is far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Behavior modification asks what you should do. Scripture says that your drives are based on what you actually are and then asks what you actually want.

Do you want to gain as much pleasure, comfort, luxury, fame, or human applause as possible in this life?

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If you actually got all of that, would it be enough? Answer honestly, not with the answer you know you are supposed to give.

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What you value shows up eventually in what you do, even when you have not noticed it yet.

What would you say are your actual core values, not the ones you would list for someone else, but the ones you see revealed in your daily choices?

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Are you willing to value loyalty and integrity even when they cost you? Or are you alternatively drawn to dominance, superiority, and a whatever-it-takes mentality when it benefits you? Name which one actually wins most often.

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*Fill in the blank from Ezekiel 36:26:*

*"And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of \_\_\_\_\_."*

*(Ezekiel 36:26)*

*\*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

Every verb in this promise belongs to God. What does that tell you about whether you can produce this change in yourself through more effort?

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Okay let's talk about desires, drives, and goals. Jesus said to seek the kingdom first. Paul said to seek glory (the good kind), honor, and immortality through a lifetime of doing good. Both point to the same question.

What are you actually seeking above all else with your time, your money, and your attention this week?

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Is what you are seeking actually the kingdom of God, or is it one of the things Jesus said would be added to you if you sought the kingdom first instead? You can see what he was talking about in Matthew 6:31–33. Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

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#### PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we've read, God's ear is not dull (Isaiah 59:1–2). Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

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#### MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Jeremiah 17:7 from memory:

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