

Emotionally Destructive Relationships

Emotionally destructive relationships are not always evident to those on the outside. Deep wounds are created which over time will destroy the victim of the relationship. Why would the perpetrator inflict these wounds?

The answer lies within the heart of an emotionally destructive person. In Matthew 15:18-20 (NIV), Scripture says, *“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean’. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”*

Our heart contains our feelings, thoughts, beliefs, values, desires, motivations, and decisions. Behaviors and words reveal what we try to conceal in our heart. Themes of the heart as expressed in Leslie Vernick’s book, *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship*, disclose the dynamics of emotionally destructive relationships.

The Proud Heart

Proverbs 16:18 NIV

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

- ♥ The proud person is his own god.
- ♥ Their life is centered on themselves
- ♥ “I’m wrong,” “I need help,” and “I don’t know” are not in their vocabulary.
- ♥ The proud person refuses to be held accountable for his/her actions.
- ♥ They are blinded to their own sin yet clearly see the faults in others.
- ♥ The proud person determines reality and truth based on what they believe and not necessarily

what is biblical or factual.

- ♥ Pride fuels the angry heart.

The Angry Heart

Proverbs 29:22 NIV

“An angry man stirs up dissension, a hot-tempered one commits many sins.”

- ♥ They use anger as a tool to get what they want.
- ♥ Entitlement thinking fuels the angry heart.
- ♥ The angry heart allows anger to become dominant in their life.

The Envious Heart

James 3:16 NIV

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

- ♥ Envy is always destructive.
- ♥ Comparison thinking rules the envious heart.
- ♥ The envious heart transforms the person into a critical, bitter, hateful, and resentful person who despises the good in others.

The Selfish Heart

Philippians 3:19 NIV

“Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”

- ♥ The selfish heart is a *taker* not a *giver*.
- ♥ Their needs, wants, desires, and rights take precedence over anyone else’s.
- ♥ Because it is all about them, the selfish heart cannot love well.
- ♥ To avoid consequences for their actions, deception will be

part of their pattern of behavior.

The Lazy Heart

Proverbs 18:9 NIV

“One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.”

- ♥ The lazy heart has no meaningful purpose in their life and lives for the moment.
- ♥ There is no motivation to change. “You’ll just have to accept me the way I am.”
- ♥ They want the good things in life, but put forth no effort to work for it.

The Evil Heart

Proverbs 21:10 NIV

“The wicked craves evil; his neighbor gets no mercy from him.”

- ♥ The evil heart shows no remorse and delights in doing evil.
- ♥ They enjoy seeing someone suffer and do not regret the pain and hurt they inflict on others.
- ♥ They are deceptive and often disguise their actions to appear as good.

The Fearful Heart

Proverbs 29:25 NIV

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”

- ♥ Because they are afraid their fears will come true, they control others.
- ♥ They are afraid of rejection, conflict, being hurt, not loved, loss, and seeing the truth.

Proverbs 16:23 NIV

“A wise man’s heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.”

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