

X Ray Questions by David Powlison

(as used by permission in the book *How People Change* by Paul David Tripp and Timothy Lane)

- 1) What do you love? Is there something you love more than God or your neighbor?
- 2) What do you want? What do you desire? What do you crave, long for, wish? Whose desires do you obey?
- 3) What do you seek? What are your personal expectations and goals? What are your intentions? What are you working for?
- 4) Where do you bank your hopes? What hope are you working toward or building your life around?
- 5) What do you fear? Fear is the flip side of desire. For example, if I desire your acceptance, then I fear your rejection.
- 6) What do you feel like doing? This is a synonym for desire. Sometimes we feel like eating a gallon of ice cream, or staying in bed, or refusing to talk, etc.
- 7) What do you think you need? In most cases a person's felt needs picture his or her idol cravings. Often what we have called necessities are actually deceptive masters that rule our hearts. They control us because they seem plausible. They don't seem so bad on the surface and it isn't sin to want them. However, I must not be ruled by the "need" to feel good about myself, to feel loved and accepted, to feel some sense of accomplishment, to have financial security, to experience good health, to live a life that is organized, pain-free, and happy.
- 8) What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish? What are you really going after in the situations and relationships of life? What are you really working to get?
- 9) What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? Where do you find your garden of delight? What lights up your world? What food sustains your life? What really matters to you? What are you living for?
- 10) Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, and escape? When you are fearful, discouraged, and upset, where do you run? Do you run to God for comfort and safety or to something else? (To food, to others, to work, to solitude?)
- 11) What do you trust? Do you functionally rest in the Lord? Do you find your sense of well-being in His presence and promises? Or do you rest in something or someone else?
- 12) Whose performance matters to you? This question digs out self-reliance or self-righteousness. It digs out living through another. Do you get depressed when you are wrong or when you fail? Have you pinned your hopes on another person? Are you too dependent on the performance of your husband, wife, children or friends?

13) Whom must you please? Whose opinion counts? From whom do you desire approval or fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living?

14) Who are your role models? Who are the people you respect? Who do you want to be like? Who is your "idol"? (In our culture, this word is used for role model.)

15) What do you desperately hope will last in your life? What do you feel must always be there? What can't you live without?

16) How do you define success or failure in any particular situation? Are your standards God's standards? Do you define success as the ability to reach your goals? The respect and approval of others? Is it defined by a certain position or the ability to maintain a certain lifestyle? By affluence? By appearance? By acceptance? By location? By accomplishment?

17) What makes you feel rich, secure, and prosperous? The possession, experience, and enjoyment of what would make you happy? The Bible uses the metaphor of treasure here.

18) What would bring you the greatest pleasure? The greatest misery?

19) Whose political power would make everything better for you? Don't just think in a national sense. Think about the workplace and the church. Whose agenda would you like to see succeed and why?

20) Whose victory and success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?

21) What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to? What do you feel is your right to expect, seek, require, or demand?

22) In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? When do you feel confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What do you fear? What do you seek to escape from? What do you escape to?

23) What do you really want out of life? What payoff are you seeking from the things you do? What is the return you are working for?

24) What do you pray for? The fact that we pray does not necessarily mean we are where we should be spiritually. On the contrary, prayer can be a key revealer of the idols of our hearts. Prayer can reveal patterns of self-centeredness, self-righteousness, materialism, fear of man, etc.

25) What do you think about most often? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively? When you are doing a menial task or driving alone in your car, what captures your mind? What is your mindset?

26) What do you talk about? What occupies your conversations with others? What subjects do you tend to discuss over and over with your friends? The Bible says it is out of the heart that our mouths speak.

27) How do you spend your time? What are your daily priorities? What things do you invest time in every day?

28) What are your fantasies? What are your dreams at night? What do you daydream about?

29) What is your belief system? What beliefs do you hold about life, God, yourself, others? What is your worldview? What is the personal "mythology" that structures the way you interpret things? What are your specific beliefs about your present situation? What do you value?

30) What are your idols or false gods? In what do you place your trust or set your hopes? What do you consistently turn to or regularly seek? Where do you take refuge? Who is the savior, judge, controller of your world? Whom do you serve? What voice controls you?

31) In what ways do you live for yourself?

32) In what ways do you live as a slave to the Devil? Where are you susceptible to his lies? Where do you give in to deceit?

33) When do you say, "If only..."? Our "if onlys" actually define our vision of paradise. They picture our biggest fears and greatest disappointments. They can reveal where we tend to envy others. They picture where we wish we could rewrite our life story. They picture where we are dissatisfied and what we crave.

34) What instinctively feels right to you? What are your opinions -- those things that you feel are true?