

## “Heart Checkup”

The heart is an amazing creation of God! That muscle in our body that pumps blood 24 hours a day as long as we live is one of the wonders of God’s creation! Scientists and those in the medical community have made astounding advances in the care and treatment of the human heart – with heart bypass surgery, heart valve replacement, even heart transplants! Every day in hospitals around the world heart surgeons perform miracles of healing and the saving of human lives.

The Bible says a lot about the heart. However, most of the time it isn’t talking about our physical heart. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament the heart is the seat of our emotions and feelings, the center of our intellect and will. In other words, *the heart represents the essence of one’s life and inner personality*. It pretty much represents who we are in the center of our being.

I couldn’t begin to cover everything the Bible says about the heart, but let’s take a walk through the Bible to look at some of the most important things Scripture says about the human heart. Let’s begin by looking at *what the heart was meant to be*.

It’s summed up in Deuteronomy 10:12-13: “So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.”

We were made in our inner being to fear and reverence the Lord, to walk in all His ways, to love and serve God with all our heart, to keep His commandments, (notice) “for our own good or well-being”. Jesus reinforced that by saying to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbor as ourself, was the greatest commandment! (Matthew 22:37-40).

We were also created to trust God with all our heart: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5). We were made in our inward being to be able to place ourselves in God’s hands and trust Him to care for us.

Also, our hearts were meant to be pure: Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). God desires that in our inward being we have a pure heart – to be focused on love Him and loving others, not to have mixed motives that are selfish and impure.

All of the above is what our hearts were meant to be! That’s the ideal!

*But the Bible also gives us keen insight to reality, what the heart often is.* The number 1 cause of death in the U.S. is heart disease. It has been for more than a century. But there is a different type of heart disease that’s even more deadly! That’s the sin problem – the fallenness and depravity of our inner life and soul. Early on, in the Book of Genesis, after humankind had fallen into sin, it sums up the problem: “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5). The prophet Jeremiah said, “The heart is deceitful above

all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes saw the human heart as full of evil and madness: “The heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). “The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live” (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

The Bible talks about the hard heart, the unbelieving heart, the stony heart, the evil heart, the impenitent heart. Jesus had pertinent things to say about the human heart. When the super religious scribes and Pharisees complained to Jesus because His disciples didn’t bother with the elaborate ritual of ceremonially washing their hands before they ate, Jesus responded with these words: “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth *come from the heart*, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them” (Matthew 15:17-20).

Jesus identified the root cause of all the evil in the world. All of the evil that takes place in the world is but a manifestation of the evil inside of us! That’s why Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” What happens *inside* of us, in our inward character and personality, determines the direction of our life and our destiny. T. R. Glover was right when he said, “It is not that evil befalls us, but that we are evil.” Quite a few years ago psychiatrist Carl Jung said that modern man’s civilized state was just a veneer, a thin covering, and that the evils of primitive man were crouching in the recesses of the human heart.

So, all the disharmony and turmoil in the world – the wars, the hate, the selfishness and taking advantage of others – all of this can be traced to our *inner life*. Dr. Wallace Fisher put it simply: “All social problems have their roots in man.” Dr. Fisher, in his book *Can Man Hope to be Human*, raised the question whether given the evil nature of our hearts, can we expect to have a better world and a more just and humane society? When someone asked Will Rogers, “What’s wrong with the world, anyway?” he drawled, “Well, I dunno, I guess it’s people.”

How often on a newscast or a newspaper article does the writer or commentator suggest that the solution to the human problems that are tearing the world apart is not more education, or for the government to spend more money, but rather the solution is to change the heart of us humans? Jesus traced the root of the problems in nations and societies to the evil in our hearts – that fatal disease in our inner person that makes us live self-centered lives, and alienates us from God and one another.

We’ve looked at what the heart was meant to be – that in our hearts we would fear God, and love and obey Him, and care about each other. We’ve also seen that in real life the human heart is in some ways wicked and perverse. But, fortunately, the Bible doesn’t stop there! It tells us of the possibility of *a new heart, a transformed heart*.

As I’ve already pointed out, we’re living in a day of remarkable advancements in the treatment of heart disease. There are heart transplants. From what I’ve read, there are *artificial hearts* that

can keep a patient alive for a short time while he or she is waiting for a heart transplant. Perhaps we'll see a day when people will receive mechanical hearts that will allow people to function just as they did with their own heart.

The prophet Ezekiel envisioned a time when God would give people a type of "heart transplant". God's people were judged for their sins, defeated by the Babylonians. Many were taken and forced to live in exile in Babylonia. Now God is offering His people forgiveness and a new start. He will bring them back to their land. God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel: "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. *A new heart I will give you*, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:24-28). Notice, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you."

The prophet Jeremiah said pretty much the same thing. "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

God foretold of a day when He would make a new covenant with humanity, a new relationship with Himself. He would write His laws on our hearts. At Jesus' last supper with the disciples in the upper room, as He's breaking the bread and passing the cup, He says, this is the *new covenant in my blood*. In Christ, God was offering humanity (and each of us), forgiveness, a fresh beginning, a new start and a new heart. *Human nature can be transformed from the inside out, through the power of Jesus!*

How can this happen? How can we get a new heart? *First of all, we have to recognize our need:* that the seat of all the world's problems lies within the human heart. The first step is sensing what the writer of Proverbs proclaimed, "Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?'" (Proverbs 20:9).

Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." This is the first step. Recognize that there's a fallenness, an uncleanness of our human heart that needs to be forgiven and changed. And then to hunger for a new heart and a cleansed heart. Trust Christ to bring about that change in your life. That will mark a turning point, a "conversion", whereby we start a journey of allowing Christ to transform our dirty heart into a –

heart into a pure heart that loves God and cares about others.

It's the power of Jesus Christ within us that brings about this lifelong process of getting a new heart! Ephesians 3:17 says, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Romans 5:5 says "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

Probably the most important change that begins to take place in us when Christ comes into our heart is that He begins to fill us with a new love – a new love for God, a new love for people, a new love for righteousness and goodness. Jesus has the power to cleanse and transform the human heart. And the only way we'll have a better world is when people like you and me let God transform our hearts through the power of Christ within us!

One of the old gospel hymns relates to what we've been talking about.

"Savior, Thy dying love  
Thou gavest me,  
Nor should I aught withhold,  
Dear Lord from Thee;  
In love my soul would bow,  
*My heart* fulfill its vow,  
Some off'ring bring Thee now.  
Something for Thee.

Give me a *faithful heart*,  
Likeness to Thee,  
That each departing day  
Henceforth may see  
Some work of love begun,  
Some deed of kindness done,  
Some wand'rer sought and won,  
Something for Thee."

*Harry L. Kaufhold, Jr.*  
*Community United Methodist Church*  
*October 27, 2024*

