

# *Program Transcripts*

For May 2019



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY<sup>®</sup>

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**May 2019**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **MAY 5 – THE HEART OF CHRIST**

If you really want to know someone, look into his heart. If you want to know the Lord Jesus, look into Scripture that reveals His heart, His attitude, and His obedience to the Father. His heart reveals what our hearts should be!

## **MAY 12 – UNDERSTANDING THE HEART**

The word heart is used hundreds of times in Scripture to describe the inner man who thinks, feels, and decides what he believes, what he loves or hates, and what he will do. God wants your heart that you may serve Him.

## **MAY 19 – YOUR HEART**

What kind of heart do you have? Some allow their hearts to become hardened toward God, and others have hearts that has forgotten God. Each of us is either growing closer to God or wandering farther away. Where is your heart?

## **MAY 26 – THE GODLY HEART**

A person is godly when he takes God and His will seriously in thought and in behavior. David asked God, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). We too need a clean heart.

## The Heart of Jesus

If you really want to know someone, look into his heart. If you want to know the Lord Jesus, look into Scripture where His heart is revealed. The Bible opens the way for us to know the Lord. We don't rely on opinions, or polls, or hunches. We know the Bible always teaches us the truth, so we focus on God's Holy Word.

Jesus loved people. God sent Him into this world because the world needed Him so badly. Jesus cared about people's lives. He fed the hungry. He cared about their health and so He healed them. He cared about their problems and invited people to cast their cares on Him. But, more than anything, He cared about the souls of people. This is why He preached repentance and the need for forgiveness. He wanted everyone to be right with God.

In Matthew 9:36-38, we see a little of the heart of Jesus. "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'" Jesus knew that all of us needed someone to guide us out of this dangerous and sinful world and to a place of peace and righteousness.

Galatians 1:4 says Jesus "gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Jesus cared about souls enough to die for us so that we might die to sin and live in righteousness. What a wonderful Savior! How blessed we are just to know Him. Today, we want to look at the heart of the One who cares.

Our Scripture reading comes from the Book of Philippians 2:5-8. Some people think this passage was part of a song that the early church sang. It talks about the heart of Jesus.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What a wonderful gift – the heart and the life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has always existed in the form of God. He is Divine. Some think of Jesus as a man and doubt His Deity. Some think of Him as a prophet or only the Son of Mary. Still others think He was simply a great, moral teacher. The Scriptures, however, present Jesus as Divine. They argue that He has always existed.

John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." In this passage, "the Word" is a reference to Jesus Christ. He was in the beginning; He was with God; and He was and is God' and creation took place through Him. In John 1:15 John bore witness about Jesus and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'"

In His prayer to His Father, Jesus spoke of His existence before creation. He said, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5). Later Jesus prayed, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because

you loved me before the foundation of the world” (verse 24). The Lord Jesus has always existed.

Jesus was truly God before He became a human. Then, without ceasing to be God, He was willing to lay aside the glory of being equal with God. He emptied Himself of divine privileges by becoming human. Philippians 2 says Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of men and found in appearance as a man. He became something different than He was before. He left his place in Heaven and took on flesh.

John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only (begotten) Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus Christ was indeed unique. John saw a glimpse of His glory, but He was full of glory when He came, and He died on the cross, and was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Jesus was God, yet He humbled himself and became flesh. One might ask why.

Hebrews 2:14-15 answers that question. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” The devil possesses the power of death in that he tempts people to sin and to come under sin's penalty, which is spiritual death.

Jesus took on flesh so that through dying He could take control of death. He shed his blood on the cross to free us from sin and from the consequences of sin. He conquered physical death when He arose from the dead. The faithful Christian who follows the Lord, doesn't have to fear physical, spiritual death, or the judgment. He has the promise of heaven.

By leaving heaven and coming to earth, the Lord Jesus emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave. Jesus didn't empty Himself of His Deity, but of His glory. His focus was not on being equal with God but of taking the form of God's servant on earth. The Lord Jesus said, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Jesus was and is the Lord of Glory, but He walked upon this earth like a common man.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and Luke 2:7 says that Mary “wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Jesus spent most of his life in Nazareth in a carpenter's shop. While Joseph and Mary knew of His miraculous birth, His neighbors in Nazareth took offense at His claim to be the Messiah and tried to kill Him. To them Jesus was just the carpenter's son.

Jesus never did any of the worldly things that people associate with greatness. He never led an army, never ruled an earthly kingdom, never owned any land or built a great house, He never possessed great wealth, never wrote a book, and never traveled far and wide. He never married or raised a family. He did not come to glorify Himself; He came to glorify the Father and to do His will.

The Lord Jesus left everything holy and good to come and rescue sinful mankind from evil. Second Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Jesus' humility should cause us to be humble. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Jesus never taught

anyone to think of himself as better than others, or be selfish, or to be conceited. Paul once asked, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Everything we have, everything we are, everything we hope to be comes by God's providence and grace. When we consider the grace and providence of God, we have no reason to be arrogant.

The Lord Jesus taught and practiced humility. Jesus taught his disciples, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). He was saying, "You don't become great by putting yourself before everyone else. You become great by putting yourself last, by serving other people." A Christian minister once said, "I was never of any use until I found out that God did not intend me to be a great man."

Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient. Servants and slaves obey. A humble person is free from arrogance. He knows how dependent he is on God. Humble people aren't concerned with prestige. Jesus was God but stooped down in humility and in obedience. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him." The humble obedience of Jesus opened the door for our obedience and our opportunity for eternal life.

The Lord Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). Jesus Christ was approachable by the common Jew, even by those who felt weary and burdened. The downtrodden and the sinner could find a friend in Jesus. They found rest for their souls. The Lord Jesus never sinned, but He was not afraid to stoop down and lift up fallen, broken people.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Many shy away from God when they sin, but we have a high priest who understands all of our weaknesses and knows what it means to be tempted. Rather than shy away from God when we're tempted, we should draw close and pray for help. The Father understands and will help us through our temptations and struggles. We can receive mercy and find grace to help in that time of need.

Jesus was obedient to the point of death on a cross. No other death on a cross compared to His: there He bore the sins of His people, taking their place and enduring the wrath of God that they should have received. The death of Christ was nothing less than Christ experiencing the punishment of sin, so His people would not have to bear it themselves.

The Bible speaks of how personal this death was for Jesus. First Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." Jesus' death was a deeply passionate and personal sacrifice for our sins, so that we could find forgiveness and spiritual healing. Second Corinthians 5:21 says God made Jesus "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus was entirely selfless in dying on the cross, so that we might find blessing.

Jesus didn't die for us and then afterward drop us. Do you know what Jesus is doing today? Jesus is still helping us today. Jesus is defending God's children when they sin.

Hebrews 7:25 says, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." He is pleading the case for your salvation before the Father who is in Heaven. First John 2:1-2 says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

The One who prayed for the forgiveness of those who nailed His hands and feet is interceding with the Father today on behalf of Christians. Jesus never quits loving or blessing us as long as we strive to follow Him. He constantly takes up our defense with the Father. The One who died for us is now pleading for our continued forgiveness. Even when we Christians fail the Lord, He's willing to plead our case to the Father. I must confess to you: when I consider the terrible death of Jesus on the cross and His constant loyal defense before the Father, I cannot fully grasp such great love.

My prayer is like the apostle Paul's prayer. In Ephesians 3, Paul wanted the church to comprehend the love of God, which is to some extent beyond our ability to comprehend. He prayed that they "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Can you imagine how your life would change if you really grasped how deep and wide the love of God is for you? We often take the love and the blessing of God for granted. We forget all He's done and all He's doing for us. We get so caught up in our own little world and our own desires we lose sight of the heart of Christ and His devotion to us. We desperately need the heart of Christ to be in our own hearts. Do you have the heart of Christ?

Because Jesus humbled Himself, God exalted Him. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God blesses those who will humbly obey Him.

We need hearts like the Lord's heart. "Have this mind in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). We too must humbly obey God and sacrifice ourselves out of love. Instead of challenging the Lord with our beliefs and opinions, we need to humbly step back and hear God and keep His words. Love and grace do not excuse us from the need for obedience. Love and grace make us all the more willing to do His will. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Love moves us to do whatever He asks and to live every day in His service.

Love for God moves us to trust Him, to be willing to confess to the whole world that we believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We gladly acknowledge that Jesus is our Lord and we belong to Him. Love also moves us to think of sin differently. We realize sin will ruin our lives and so we repent of sin and we turn to the Lord. We put on Christ in baptism. And we're baptized into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3), where Christ shed His blood. In baptism, God washes away our sins and gives us newness of life (Acts 22:16; and Romans 6:4-7). Take the necessary step of being baptized into Christ. That's when you'll receive the forgiveness of sins. Today is the best day for you to do that.

## Understanding the Heart

Scripture uses the word “heart” to describe the inner man who thinks, feels, and decides what he believes, what he likes or dislikes, and what he’ll do and not do. Today, we examine the word “heart.” Though the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago, the Bible remains the most valuable and relevant book. It speaks the truth and pricks our hearts to see ourselves as we are. The many narratives of Scripture help us to understand not only God’s holiness and purity but also human nature. God helps us look inside of ourselves.

God made you in His own image, after His own likeness. This idea refers not so much to the physical part of man as it does to the inner man that thinks, feels, and makes choices. The Scriptures use the word “heart” to describe the inner, conscious self. The heart is vital to our relationship with God. The Lord Jesus said, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Solomon wisely advised us, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

The Lord Jesus knows our hearts. John 2:25 says about Jesus, “He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” To each of the seven churches of Asia, discussed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus, who walks among His churches says, “I know your works.” Hebrews 4:13 says, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

Our reading today comes from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans 6:16-18. He discusses the importance of who we decide to obey and how we deal with that from our hearts.

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

What a wonderful thing to be able to change from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness.

Our hearts function in many different aspects of our lives, including our thoughts, our feelings, and our volition. The heart is our inner person that remembers, makes decisions, and makes plans for the future. The heart is the very core of our being. We have a relationship with God when our hearts belong to Him and we have determined to do His will and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The heart is where our thoughts, our reason, and our memory arise. The heart is where we recognize the greatness and benevolence of God! Scripture speaks directly to our minds to educate, to reprove, to correct, and to train us in righteousness. If we listen with our hearts to Scripture, we can come to know our Creator and our Savior. God gave us hearts and minds to study His Word. Let’s not waste our hearts on things that do not matter. One day we’ll face God to give an account for our lives. God will judge our hearts, too. Remember, the Lord

Jesus warned, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

According to Scripture, the heart is the source from which the emotions flow. God commanded Israel, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:17-18). Both love and hate come from the heart. Our hearts choose whether we love the Lord and whether or not we love our neighbor.

We'll also decide in our hearts whether we trust the Lord. Proverbs 3:5-7 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil." What we decide in our hearts will always spread to our decisions and our behavior.

The heart is where our desires arise. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart." If we desire God, seek Him, and serve Him, He will bless us; but if we allow fleshly desires to rule our lives, we will separate ourselves from God's blessing. Romans 8:12-13 says, "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

The heart chooses and plans. Proverbs 16:1 says, "The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD." People imagine in their hearts they can do as they please, but God is watching. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand."

Solomon counseled the young to consider their choices in life. God wants us to enjoy life, but He's going to hold us accountable for our choices. Ecclesiastes 11:9 says, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things." Desiring sin in our hearts won't justify our sins. Saying we love someone doesn't justify breaking God's commandments.

Jesus taught, "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matthew 15:18-19). The desires of our hearts can lead us toward God or away from God. Because our hearts lead to our actions, God takes notice of the heart. Genesis 6:5 discussed the men's hearts during the days of Noah, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Selfishness and sin can lead people to harden their hearts against the Lord. When the heart is only evil continually, one's behavior will be evil, too! The intent leads to the action. I've heard people say, when they sinned that God made them that way; but God doesn't make us sinners. We choose to sin and we're responsible for our choices. James 1:13-15 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."



I've heard people say, "God wants me to be happy"; but it's wrong to think that God wants us to be happy in our sins. God doesn't call us to worldly happiness; He calls us to righteousness. We should never imagine that worldly happiness can compare to the inexpressible joy that arises from a good conscience. The prophet of God said, "Your (God's) eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Habakkuk 1:13). Please don't let your heart deceive you. The Lord said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? 'I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds'" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Romans 1:21-23 says about ancient mankind, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." What foolishness to honor the creature rather than the Creator, but people still have their idols.

Some glorify science as if man created science; but who gave us our bodies, our souls, and our spirits? Who gave them to scientists? Do you honestly believe people could know anything if God had not enabled them? Man's intellect didn't come from primordial soup; only a divine intellect could produce a human intellect. That's why we must honor the Creator, God, not the creature, man. When people exalt the thinking of men and lose sight of God's teaching, they may profess to be wise; but such thinking leads to foolishness.

When people harden their hearts against God, they hurt themselves. When Israel hardened their hearts against God and worshiped idols, He punished them by allowing Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and take them into captivity. After seventy years, God promised they would return to Israel and to Him as their God. God said, "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

The New Testament warns against allowing our hearts to harden. Sin will harden the heart against God. Ephesians 4:17-19 says, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

Even Christians who've known the kindness of the Lord can develop hardened hearts when they let evil into their lives. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

On the positive side, the Bible talks of a heart that prompts a person to do good to the Lord. God told Moses, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution" (Exodus 25:2). God wants us to give to the church willingly and cheerfully. God said, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Unlike the contribution of the Jews, God no longer demands a tithe or a

tenth; nor does God limit our gifts. We can give as much as our hearts desire. Whatever we give, let's give generously and cheerfully.

God desires that we do more than merely keep His laws. He wants obedience from our hearts. True devotion encompasses the whole person. The Lord said to Solomon, "As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel'" (1 Kings 9:4-5). God wants whole-hearted, loving obedience from His people.

The Lord has never wanted hypocrisy that practices righteousness only to be seen by others. Pretended worship or showmanship has never pleased God. The Lord Jesus said, "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). True worship isn't a theatrical production or display of talents; it's a heartfelt praise for the Lord. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Gratitude for the cross of Christ and for what God has done for us every day should move us to serve Him with all our hearts. We must stop forgetting God and turn our hearts to Him. God is well aware of our hearts. The prophet Ezekiel, inspired of God, spoke to a rebellious Judah, hoping to open their hearts. He said, "'Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord GOD. 'Therefore, repent and live'" (Ezekiel 18:31-32). We must not allow our hearts to harden against God.

The Lord commanded Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, as the new king to replace Saul, whom God rejected. Samuel looked at Eliab and thought that he was surely the Lord's anointed. "But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7). God knows your heart, whether you love Him or love something else.

The Lord said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24). What you treasure and love tells where your heart is. You may not be close to God, but you can be! Wherever you are in life, you can find God. Moses told Israel that even when they had wandered from God, they could find Him. He said, "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Where is your heart? Do you seek God? Search the Scriptures and listen to God! You'll find God there! Believe in the Lord Jesus. Without faith, one cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Repent of your sins. Unless you repent, you'll perish (Luke 13:3). Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38).

## Your Heart

The Father in Heaven knows everything about you. He knows how you think, what you say, and what you do. David asked the Lord to search his heart; would you?

The Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness through the teaching in His Word. These are the words of eternal life. They are the words of encouragement, words of love, and words of warning from God's heart. We must listen closely to God's Words and not drift from them. There's nothing like them in all the world.

I hope you make it your goal each day to live pleasing to the Lord. It's amazing how many take the grace of God for granted and never consider the need to improve their spiritual lives. The apostle Paul said, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). Each of us must choose how we're going to live, and then we'll have to face the consequences of our behavior. How does God see you?

Have you made it the business of your life to grow in your faith, in your love, and in your zeal for the Lord? Many people live their lives in complacency, thinking that because they're under the grace of God they never need to mature or grow. But, God expects all of us to examine our hearts and to see if there are things that we can do better. As we study from the Scriptures today, I hope that you'll take a long look at your heart, your life, and your soul. Are you living as God wills? Could there be some sinful or hurtful way in you?

Our reading today comes from a psalm of David, Psalm 139, where he discusses the relationship that God has with us.

O LORD, You have searched me and known me.  
 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
 You understand my thought from afar.  
 You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
 And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
 Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
 Behold, O LORD, You know it all.  
 You have enclosed me behind and before,  
 And laid Your hand upon me.  
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
 It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

One cannot read Psalm 139 without the overwhelming realization that God is present with us. He sees and knows everything about us. He searches our hearts and knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows how we think and what we do. Psalm 139 says, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up." God knows our thoughts. Psalm 139 says that God discerns our "thoughts from afar." The Lord even knows every word we speak. Psalm 139 says, "Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether."

God encircles us. "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me" (Psalm 139:5). The fact that you cannot go anywhere that God isn't already present is a wonderful thought. You can't run away from God. Psalm 139:7-12 says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell

in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."

God is both omniscient, that is all-knowing, and omnipresent, that means everywhere-present. He's not limited by space or time; and nothing escapes His notice. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." No one can escape the presence of God. This fact ought to warn us that we must have pure and holy lives. God said, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44 and 1 Peter 1:16).

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." God expects His people to forsake their sins and to live holy lives. God will not tolerate being put in second place to our sins. God wants to be first in your heart, in your life, in your thoughts, and in your words. David knew that God will not tolerate wickedness but will one day slay the wicked.

God knew about us even before we were born. Speaking of God, David said, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:13-16).

Because God saw every aspect of his life and that sin would displease God the Father, David asked the Father, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (verses 23-24). David wanted to please the Father so much that he wanted God to search his heart and life to see if there was any grievous or hurtful way in him. God would already know it. God didn't need to search to find out. David is the one who needed to know. He didn't want anything to come between God and him. He wanted to get rid of the hurtful way and be led in the everlasting way!

David was saying, "If there is something wrong with me, I want to know it so I can change my ways." We too need to have our hearts and lives examined. David wanted so badly to stand right in the sight of God that he opened his life up to God's scrutiny. We might be able to fool others; we might even fool ourselves about our sins; but we can never fool God. David was afraid he was ignorant of a sin or he had blinded himself to a sin that he was committing.

We must all be concerned about whether we're living in sin and then not recognizing it. Perhaps we're entertaining some wicked thoughts or failing to do our duties as Christians. God's Word tells us what we must do and what we must not do. They're clearly set out in Scripture, but many people live completely oblivious to their own sin. I'm reminded of Proverbs 30:20, which says, "This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, 'I have done no wrong.'"

Sin is deceitful. People who commit sin don't like to acknowledge that they could have done such a thing. The more people sin, the more likely they are to excuse themselves of sin. They often re-label sin to soften the sting and make it appear innocent. For instance, a person isn't greedy; he is just "business savvy." Or a drunk will hardly ever admit that he's

intoxicated; instead he's "high." A gossip may never admit that he or she is backbiting; instead they're merely being zealous against sin. Many people shape their principles according to their practice rather than shape their practice according to their principles.

Sin is able to deceive us because sin colors our judgment. If I allow a certain lust in my heart to continue, it won't be long until I find a way to approve of my own actions. People just naturally begin to think that whatever pleases them must be all right. The same passions that lead people into sin blind them to its deceitfulness. They begin justifying their behavior. For instance, the more we hate somebody, the more inclined we may be to tell ourselves this person is rotten and deserves to be hated. We may even tell ourselves that we're right to hate others. Sin corrupts the heart and makes its thoughts twisted.

This is why the Bible says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). Sin deceives us, and then it blinds us to ourselves, and then it hardens our hearts toward Christ and toward other people. Many people who get caught up in sin grow angry at anyone who thinks what they're doing is wrong. Inside they know the truth; they just don't want to face it.

Proverbs 21:2 says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart." If given enough time, you can justify to yourself whatever it is you want to do. Just because you think it's all right, and just because you think it's that way doesn't mean God approves of your sin. All you have really done is lied to yourself. We cannot always trust our own hearts. The Bible says, "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom (the wisdom that comes from God) will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). Don't trust your own thinking as to what is right and wrong; trust the wisdom of God found in the Word of God.

People easily see the faults of others but seem to miss even the most glaring faults of their own. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus about unfair judging: He said, "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:3-5).

When some people see the errors of others, they can quickly condemn them; but it seems easy for people to excuse themselves for committing the same sin. Romans 2:1-3 says, "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?"

Paul urged the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Let's ask ourselves some questions that search our souls. Let's see if there is any grievous or hurtful way in our lives. Let's see if we pass the test.

Do I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? Do I believe He died for my sins and that He was raised up again on the third day? Do I believe the Bible is inspired of

God and free from error? Do I believe the Lord Jesus is coming again one day to judge the world in righteousness according to the things written in the Book and according to our deeds? Do I really believe? If I don't have faith in Christ, I cannot please God at all. I've failed the test.

Do I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? We might easily say that we love God, but do we love Him completely and freely? Do we put Him first in our lives, our decisions, our plans, and our time? Do I pray regularly and fervently? Do I study and meditate on God's Word? Do I seek God's kingdom and righteousness first? Do I tell others about Christ? Do I turn to God when I hurt? Am I compassionate toward those who hurt and toward those who are poor? Have I encouraged anyone lately? Am I willing to be a bigot towards other races or be prejudiced towards those who are not like me?

Do I let the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life to lead me away from God? Do I have pet sins that I keep committing? With what kinds of things do I feed my heart? Do I think pure thoughts or do I allow sexual sin to flirt with me? Do I allow my eyes to see things that I shouldn't see and my ears to hear things I shouldn't hear?

Do I allow my heart to indulge in envy or jealousy? Do I fuss with others often? Do I gossip? Am I greedy? Do I support the Lord's church generously? Am I grateful for all the blessings that God gives to me and my family? Do I tell little lies? Am I honest in all my dealings with others? Do I cheat on my taxes?

The grace of God provides forgiveness, and we all desperately need the grace of God. But God's loving grace should lead us to change our ways. We must never presume on the grace of God. The grace of God is not a license to continue in sin. God's gracious gift of Jesus Christ on the cross was not cheap. It deserves to be taken seriously. So, let's examine our hearts and our lives that the grace God has given us may not be in vain.

In Psalm 26:2, David asks God, "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind." Could you ask God to examine you to see what kind of person you are? Would you want God to look into your heart? Then what would He see? Would you want Him to look into your mind? Would you want Him to know what you're thinking? God already knows what's inside you, but are you willing to face yourself spiritually so you can correct what is wrong? Would you be willing to see if there's any grievous way in you and give it up?

David could say, "I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering" (Psalm 26:1). Can you say that? In verse three, David says, "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked." Can you say this?

As you look into your heart and at your life, you might ask yourself if you've made a firm commitment to God. God has loved you enough to send His Son to die for you. Have you humbly come to Him? A person makes a commitment and becomes a Christian when he believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. A person who commits to Christ will recognize Jesus as Lord and turn away from every sinful thought or behavior and turn to a life that pleases God; this is repentance. A person who commits his heart to Jesus will confess Him before others and will be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). I pray that you'll do that today.

## The Godly Heart

No matter how much we've grown in Christ, the Scriptures urge us to excel still more. We all need to have a godly heart.

Paul said, "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). The Scriptures reveal the will of God and urge us to do our best to be followers of Christ. Though we've done well in the past, we can all excel still more in faith and in love. Are you growing in Christ?

The Lord calls us to be like Him in our attitudes, in our speech, and in our behavior. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Of course, no one can be sinlessly perfect as God is; but we can choose every day to "walk in the light as He is in the light."

First Peter 2:21 says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." Jesus is our perfect example in how to think, how to treat others, how to forgive, how to serve, and how to love. Paul said, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Some time ago, my brother-in-law, Dale Hartman, told me his heart was every day set upon growing closer to God and being more like Christ. I know that he's not alone in that worthy goal, but his words encouraged me to do more. Have you set your heart on serving God?

Our reading today comes from Paul's Letter to the Church at Colossae 3:12-15. This letter was read to the brothers and sisters at Colossae, but was also read by other churches as well.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Yes, those are the things God would have us do and to be. Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful for Your love and we're thankful, Father, for Your Word. Help us to put on a Godly heart and to do Your will always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Paul addresses the brothers and sisters in Colossae, describing them with three adjectives. He first calls them "chosen of God." God calls us through the preaching of the gospel. When we receive and obey the good news of Jesus Christ, we become chosen or elect as God's children. Second, Paul calls them "holy." When a person is washed clean in the blood of Jesus, God sanctifies him or makes him holy. Then, he belongs to God and can no longer have an ungodly heart that ignores God. Third, Paul calls them "beloved." Christians realize in their hearts that God's great love for them is in Christ. Paul had already revealed the difference that God had made in their lives. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

For this reason, we can't live like those who don't know the love of God or the gospel. God desires that we take off our worldly hearts and put on hearts that conform to His love and His will. First, He calls us to "put on a heart of compassion." To have compassion

means to sympathize with others. We are to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). Jesus blesses those who care. On the Day of Judgment, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me’” (Matthew 25:34-36).

Second, we must put on a heart of kindness. God acted in kindness toward us when He sent His Son Jesus to die for us according to Titus 3:4. Kindness considers the needs of others and often does for them what they can’t do for themselves. God saved us through Christ. A kind person is warmhearted, considerate, generous, and benevolent. This is one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. One cannot be like Christ and act cruelly toward others.

Third, we must put on a heart of humility. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” If the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, could lay aside his garments, gird Himself with a towel, and wash the disciples’ feet to leave us an example, surely we can humble ourselves and serve others. We’ll never be what God desires if we are haughty, proud, or arrogant. Love isn’t arrogant; it instead builds others up. Arrogance and pride don’t built character. First Peter 5:5 says, “all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Fourth, we need a heart of gentleness. Jesus described Himself as gentle or meek, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly (or humble) in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Meekness refers to strength under control; the strong person shows gentleness to others rather than handling them roughly or abusively. The Lord Jesus was meek, but He was not weak. He promised, “Blessed are the gentle (that is the meek), for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

Fifth, we need a patient heart. Love is patient. It maintains a peaceful and tranquil heart while waiting for a desired outcome. It continues to be steadfast even when it’s provoked. God is patient with us. Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” God is patient with us in the hope that we’ll change our hearts; and we should be patient with others as well, hoping they too will change their hearts and be like Christ. People can change when they have a reason to change and truly want to.

Sixth, we must put on a heart that bears with the weaknesses of others. Philippians 4:5 says, “Let your gentle (that is, forbearing) spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.” Some people allow their frustrations over even the smallest matters to boil over into anger and even vengeance. Ephesians 4:26-27 says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” We must learn to control our tempers and take the experiences of others into account. They may have very difficult lives which prompts them to act rashly or unkindly. Let’s have reasonable hearts.

Seventh, we must put on a forgiving heart. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, “Let all bitterness and



wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” The Lord Jesus asks us to forgive seventy times seven. The Lord Jesus simply said, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14-15).

If we have a complaint against another person, let’s go privately and humbly to them for an explanation as Matthew 18:15 teaches. It’s better to win your brother and reconcile than to live in anger. If your brother listens to you, you’ve won your brother.

Eighth, we must put on a loving heart. Love binds everything together in perfect harmony. Love unites and brings people together. Selfishness and pride cause division and conflict. The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Jesus wanted us to love each other the way that He loved us. He said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). True love is willing to sacrifice for the good of others. Selfish and hard-hearted people will not sacrifice like Jesus.

The Christians in the church at Corinth in the first century were divided and spiritually immature. Like little children, they wanted their way and they boasted in themselves. Paul reminded them in 1 Corinthians 1:31, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.” We may have many talents and gifts, but if we lack love, we are nothing in God’s sight. First Corinthians 13:1-3 says, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” Let’s put on a heart of love for our brother and for all. We are called to be one body.

Ninth, we need a heart that lets the peace of Christ rule over our hearts, our words, and our actions. It’s better to endure a small, personal wrong and maintain peace than allow strife to grow and to split a congregation. Causing division is a work of the flesh and will cause people to be lost (Galatians 5:19-21). The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). If you wish to be a son of God, then work for peace and harmony among God’s people.

Romans 12:17-18 says, “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” We can’t control what other people do, but we can control how we respond to what they do. Some people enjoy conflict and they love a fight. We can’t control the events of this wicked world, but we can place our trust in a faithful Creator who will do what is right. First Peter 4:19 says, “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” We must do what God wills, even if the whole world is against us.

Tenth, we must put on a thankful heart. Thankfulness to God for what Christ has done for us is the foundation of what it means to be a Christian. We must keep focus on the cross of Christ and the price that He paid for our sins. That cross draws us to Christ in love and gives us a reason for hope. In Christ, we have an abundant life and every spiritual blessing. How

could anyone be a Christian and ignore the blessings that we enjoy in Christ?

Colossians 3:16-17 says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Let's worship with songs of thankfulness, and let's give thanks every day in all that we do. We serve a great God and have a great promise in Christ of eternal life in heaven. A thankful heart is a joyful and a contented heart, full of hope. You'll never find true joy until you get in the habit of thanking God.

We live today in a society where the focus is on ourselves. We're obsessed with our possessions, achievements, and comforts. We wish to achieve greatness, but we'll never achieve greatness until we become servants of God. The Lord Jesus said, "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

If your heart isn't what God wishes, please don't stay that way. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways. God can give you a new heart if you'll let Him. He promised Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20). You too can have a new heart, a new mind and a new spirit, by placing your trust in the Lord Jesus and obeying Him. Won't you turn your heart to the Lord?

Let's pray together. O Father, help us always to look to You and to set our hearts on serving You and doing Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

There is no higher calling in life than to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. First Corinthians 13:4-8 says, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

A loving heart is a believing and obedient heart. Because it loves God, it does its best to please Him in every respect. The heart of Jesus decided doing the Father's will was more important than doing His own will. Jesus didn't quit on the will of God because the Pharisees were hypocrites or because the religious leaders opposed Him. Jesus didn't quit on the will of God when Judas betrayed Him, or Peter denied Him, or the other disciples scattered.

If you would have a godly heart, then lovingly, humbly obey the Lord Jesus. Place your trust in Him as the Christ, the Son of God. Repent by turning your heart from evil and pursuing righteousness. Confess the Lord Jesus as the Christ and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ was a baptism of a penitent believer; and it was an immersion in water to wash away our sins. The New Testament never speaks of sprinkling as baptism, nor does it record the baptizing of an infant. These are innovations, human traditions. We must not trust the traditions of men, but with a godly heart follow the Scriptures. Won't you be baptized into Christ today?