

The Transformation of the Heart

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[0 : 00] I have a lot in common with children. The more often you tell me something, the more likely I am to forget.! I think that Roger, Jeff and I must have said a dozen times each, don't forget to turn on your mic. Almost forgot.

So now you can hear me. So I don't know if you, as we're worshiping together, how much focus you put on Tina.

And I don't want to embarrass you, Tina, but I want to point out something this morning. Because I've got to confess, I don't pay that much attention. Because my head's focused on the words, I'm trying to think through my sermon, got a lot of distractions. But I noticed, in one of the songs, the line was about bidding anxious fears goodbye.

And I don't know if you saw the signs that she gave. For anxiety was, you know, made sense, or nodded stomach. And then fear, we all tremble when we're fearful. But the thing I wanted to point out was the smile on her face.

So it wasn't just a hand gesture. It was a smile when you say goodbye. That's what we have in the Lord. And that's, as we go through the sermon this morning and talk about the Pharisees' approach to life versus what Jesus is trying to direct us to, that you'll see that. That you'll have a big smile on your face as you recognize that you can bid anxiety goodbye. That we can say goodbye to those things.

[1 : 33] So, one other quick thought as well, that, about Memorial Day. This is going to sound like a weird analogy. So, for a number of years, Kara and I were missionaries in the Dominican Republic.

And my primary job was hosting short-term mission groups from the U.S. At the end of a week, we would do a debrief with our teams. And I would talk to them about what they could expect when they go home.

Now, I don't know if you've ever been on a mission trip or you've talked to someone who's been on one. But we're full of stories. You've been on a mission trip. You've seen things maybe you've never experienced before. You're pretty, you're hyped up. You're full of adrenaline.

People come up to you and they'll ask you, how was the trip? And your inclination is to vomit all these stories. People are not prepared for that.

What they really want to hear is, you survived. The food didn't kill you. And you made it home. But there's still the need to share the story. And what we would tell them was, find somebody who's probably been in that situation themselves that will listen to you.

[2 : 51] That will ask you good questions. That will help draw you out so you can talk about your experience. Now, what's true of people who've been on mission trips is also true of veterans.

I'm actually the only member of my family who didn't serve in the military. My youngest brother did several tours in Iraq. And like somebody returning from a mission trip, he had a lot of stories to tell. And some of it was incredibly painful. Giving him the space to talk was probably the greatest gift that I could give to my brother.

And as you have friends that are veterans, some of them don't want to talk about it. My grandfather was a pilot in the Pacific Theater throughout World War II. He never talked about his military experience.

But as you have veterans in your life and they want to share their stories, give them the gift of providing space to listen. Because unburdening our experiences through story is part of the way that God uses us to, part of the process that God uses to heal us.

[4 : 05] So give them that grace. So, now I'm going to tell you a story that has nothing to do with service. It has to do with Josiah, Becca, Ashlyn, and Killian.

Josiah is in the Air Force. He is a Chinese linguist. They live in Okinawa, Japan. And that's all I can tell you about his job. One of the things that I love, because I'm an obnoxious human being, is he'll call me and talk about his job.

And I'll try to draw out the top secret parts. Dad, I can't tell you that. So where do I focus my attention? I want to know more. I want to see if I can trip him up and get him to talk about what he's not supposed to talk about.

Well, I can't tell you. But he's got a pretty cool job. But they're in Okinawa for the next two and a half years. It's been a great opportunity for Becca and Ashlyn and Killian to experience another culture, to see some great sights.

They're about to celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary. I cannot believe I have a son who's heading to double digits in marriage. But we're there.

[5 : 09] Ashlyn and Killian are eight and five. And as you can imagine, full of energy and excitement and all kinds of great things. So pray for them. Pray for their work as he's with the Air Force.

Pray for them as a family, that Josiah and Becca would be wise parents. And they are very involved in their church there. I think they're hosting a small group. Let that be a vehicle for them to share the gospel, not just with fellow service members, but also with some of the Japanese people who come to their church as well.

So I appreciate your prayers for Josiah and Becca. And Lord willing, at some point, they'll be here on a visit and you'll get a chance to meet them in person. So with that, let's turn in our Bibles to Mark chapter 7.

And while you're doing that, I'm going to pray for us. Father, thank you for the people that have been willing to put their lives in the lines for our protection.

To guard our way of life. To give us the freedoms that we can enjoy. God, thank you for their sacrifice. Lord, thank you for the sacrifice that you made for us. For the exact same reasons.

[6 : 22] To give us our freedom. To give us peace. To give us hope. Thank you for that. Lord, this morning as we look at another conflict between you and the Pharisees, that you would help us to see that your priority is our heart.

That you wanted to change the hearts of your people. You've always wanted that. And ultimately, Lord, you had to die in order to make that happen. Help us to recognize that.

To embrace the gift that we have in Jesus. And to let our lives be changed. So that we can go out and share the hope of the gospel with other people. Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So let's read together. Mark chapter 7. Now I'm going to cover briefly what Tim covered last week. Because this is a whole conversation.

So you're going to, so we're going to, we've got a long stretch. I had a good friend of mine who when he would preach at church or at camp. He would preface a long reading like this with a statement of, You might be tempted to sleep.

[7 : 25] And one of you know exactly who you are. I threatened to call out his name if I caught him snoozing. But you're going to be tempted to zone out. Don't zone out.

Focus as we go through this long passage. The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around him when they had come from Jerusalem. And had seen that some of his disciples were eating their bread with impure hands.

That is, unwashed. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders. And when they came, when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves.

And there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots. The Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands? And he said to them, Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

[8 : 30] But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. He was also saying to them, You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother, and he who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death. But you say, if a man says to his father or his mother, Whatever I have that

would help you is Corban.

That is to say, given to God. You no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother. Thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down.

And you do many such things as that. After he called the crowd to him again, he began saying to them, Listen to me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him.

But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples questioned him about the parable.

[9 : 39] And he said to them, Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him? Because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated.

Thus he declared all foods clean. And as redeemed believers, that's the point where we discover that bacon is clean. What a gift, one of the parts of the gospel you never think about.

But all foods are clean. And he was saying, That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of man proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

All these things proceed from within and defile the man. What a dark picture of the heart of man. So let's do a review.

So if you remember, really quickly, Mark 6 is really where we see Jesus' ministry take off. At the beginning of the chapter, he takes a second trip to Nazareth.

[10 : 52] The people treat him with dishonor and disrespect and contempt. He can't do many works there because the people just don't believe it. They don't believe that he's who he claims he is. So he sends out the disciples.

They have phenomenal success. To such a degree that word of it gets all the way down from up in the Galilee. Oops, my bad.

Nope, don't want that either. There we go. Let's see if this works. I'm not going to worry about the fancy gadgets.

Just look at the map. So they're up in the upper Galilee and they're traveling around. Jesus has sent them out. And so they're doing so well that news of them gets all the way down to Jerusalem. Ninety miles or more to the south.

Herod hears about it. He thinks John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. Freaks them out a little bit. So there's great success. And then as you go on through Mark chapter 6, the 5,000 are fed.

[11 : 54] Jesus walks on the water. We talked about the last time I was here. And they end up in Gennesaret. And in Gennesaret, Jesus' fame has preceded him.

The people gather. And they're so excited and so confident of Jesus' ability to do what he promised to do that people are being healed. We're seeing great works take place. And that's the end of chapter 6.

Wherever he entered villages or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplace and imploring him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak. And as many as touched it were being cured.

So Jesus is at the height of his ministry. Now we don't know specifically geographically where he was. This passage doesn't really make it clear. He started in Gennesaret over on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

He was headed up to Tyre. Pastor John talked about that on Mother's Day that he went up to the Gentile area. So it's safe to assume he was wandering through that area. So the Pharisees want to go track him down and have a conversation with him.

[12 : 58] Now this is a really important point in Jesus' ministry. This is starting at the passage that Pastor Tim did last week. Because earlier in Mark, the Pharisees were curious about Jesus.

They saw that he was a teacher. That he was an itinerant rabbi. That he was doing healing miracles. So they went to check him out, which is what good shepherds do.

And they discovered this guy is healing on the Sabbath. And they were offended. And then Jesus got angry with them. And what's interesting is from the end of Mark chapter 2 to the first part of Mark chapter 3, you see a significant change.

Because at the end of chapter 2, the Pharisees are curious. They're looking to investigate. By the end of the first paragraph or so of Mark chapter 3, they're seeking to destroy Jesus.

Because he is breaking their law. And they could argue he's breaking God's law. He's working on the Sabbath. So now, they're not just curious anymore.

[14:03] Now they're looking for more things. They're building a case. So these Pharisees, like Tim talked about last week, the Pharisees come up. And they're looking. What can we find about this guy? And so they discover, oh my goodness.

They're not washing their hands. Now it's not like you tell your kids before they come to the dinner table, hey, wash your hands because you're disgusting. Which, let's be honest, some of our kids can be pretty nasty when they come to the table.

No, this is a ritual cleansing. And the implication, actually not even the overt teaching is that washing your hands somehow makes you clean before God.

And Jesus is going to confront that. So let's pause here in this conversation. And think for a minute. Why were the Pharisees so obsessed with rules?

Why were they so legalistic? As we answer that question, it's going to point to why are we, why do we tend to be legalistic? So I'm going to give you a history lesson.

[15:03] If you know your Old Testament, the book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament in the way that our Bibles are arranged. It's also the last time that a prophet appeared to the people of Israel all the way until John the Baptist appeared.

400 years of silence. There's no voice from God at all. All they have is the written word of God. In addition, the ten tribes were scattered throughout the world.

They were dispersed. And they continue to be dispersed for the most part all the way until the middle of the 20th century. They were under God's wrath.

And the ultimate punishment for their disobedience was to be dispersed over the world. So about in the middle of that 400 silent years, rabbis, again, I think from a good place, trying to figure out what does God require of us?

What does, what does he want us to do? So that we don't repeat history. Because they could read their history. You've, many of you have read the Old Testament.

[16:15] You can see that the children of Israel didn't just mess up once. They were really good at it. They did it over and over and over again. And so these rabbis from a good place said, let's figure this out because something was lacking.

Our people, our ancestors didn't get this. Let's fix it. And then they took a sharp turn in the wrong direction. They realized, or they concluded, God just didn't give us enough rules.

He wasn't clear enough. So they started to flesh out what God had lacked in giving the rules. I'll give you an example.

So this is a rule about the Sabbath. Yesterday, Saturday, if you're Jewish, it's the Sabbath. I went and got my hair cut. Joanna did a great job, I think. I look younger, smarter.

I probably run faster. But if Joanna was an Orthodox... You're welcome. Thank you. But if Joanna was an Orthodox Jew and cutting my hair, she sinned.

[17:19] Because the Jewish rabbis came to the conclusion that shearing sheep or cutting a shepherd's hair was a sin on the Sabbath. However, if Joanna was scheduled to work but didn't cut hair, she could sweep the floor because that was okay and the rabbis didn't think that was work.

Can you imagine keeping track of all those rules? It would melt your brain. Now, but why did they do that? And why did those rules develop? Develop because they were trying to figure out what can we do to keep ourselves on the straight and narrow rather than falling into sin.

Rules don't do it. And that became the center point of the argument between the Pharisees and Jesus. And I just want a quick application off of this. Our natural propensity is to layer rules, to add rules upon rules upon rules.

Rules that only help with outward behavior just don't work. I had a boss when we lived in the Dominican Republic who would make rules as fast as I could figure out loopholes.

She made rules so fast, we started an employee manual and we gave up because we couldn't type fast enough to keep up with all her new rules. But her rules, like the Pharisees, were from a good place.

[18:42] She was afraid. She had some pretty significant health issues. She was frail. She's one of the most courageous people I've ever met because she lived in a developing country with all these

health issues.

But the way to protect herself was rules, rules, rules, rules. And when she met me, she realized she needed to redouble her efforts. Rules just don't work.

They don't work to change behavior. But when you get into that mindset, you start running with rules and you just try to stay ahead. And that's what the Pharisees were doing. It eventually becomes pride.

I'm keeping the rules. You're not. I'm godly. You're not. That's where the Pharisees were. And that's where the conflict came with Jesus. So what did Jesus say?

They come to him and say, hey, these guys aren't washing their hands. Jesus doesn't even answer the question. He just turns to Isaiah and says, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching his doctrine the precepts of men.

[19 : 45] And then Jesus made his point, of course, with the conversation about Corban. The Lord gave a clear command. It's the first commandment with a promise in the Ten Commandments.

Honor your father and mother that you may abide in the land. And they figured out a loophole. Only the heart of man can come up with loopholes. And then Jesus ends the section that Pastor Tim covered last week with this statement.

You are invalidating the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. And you do many things such as that. Rules don't change lives.

And so that's where we get into our passage this morning. So, imagine this scene. I'm going to back up to Mark 7-1.

Jesus has been dealing with crowds. I think the Pharisees came up to him and said, Rabbi, can we talk to you for a minute? And so there's a little holy huddle with a group of Pharisees and Jesus.

[20 : 45] And they're saying, can you help us understand why your guys don't wash their hands? And Jesus says what he did from Isaiah. But then he does something that really irritated the Pharisees.

Because he didn't stay in the holy huddle just with these guys. Instead, he goes to the crowd and says, hey, come here. All of you, gather round. I want you to listen to me. And I want you to understand what I'm saying here.

What goes into the man doesn't defile him. It's what comes out of him that defiles him. And then, of course, after the Pharisees or the disciples asked for an explanation, he talks about the state of the human heart.

The unredeemed human heart is a cesspool. It's a disaster. Rules, number one, do not change the problem with the heart. And that messed up, broken heart can't make good rules.

So it doesn't work. But Jesus publicly corrected them. I don't know about you, but I don't like being publicly corrected. But they challenged him publicly.

[21 : 49] He needed to address it because they were leaders of God's people. So he ends, I'm going to read it again. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. In this scene in Mark, you see a pattern that emerges in the Gospels in the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.

The Pharisees are constantly harping on his behavior. You're doing the wrong thing. You're doing the wrong thing. You're doing the wrong thing. You're doing the wrong thing. Your disciples are doing the wrong thing. They're focused on outward behavior, which is a tell.

It exposes that they're concerned with what was probably with their own external behavior as well. And what Jesus always turns back to is the heart, the heart, the heart. He deals with the heart. And that's where he goes with this passage. The problem is, the problem was, the problem always will be with our human heart.

[23 : 09] It says in Jeremiah that our heart is desperately wicked. Who can know it? One thing. I got to air something that drives me crazy.

Jeremiah 17 is often taken out of context. And I hear Christians saying, woe is me, my heart is desperately wicked. And they dwell there.

Brothers and sisters, read the context. The paragraph before that particular passage is a commentary from Jeremiah about people who trust God.

There's a contrast. There's a contrast. And that's what Jesus is getting at. The new heart. If you are in Christ, you have a new heart. Do you still have to battle the tendency toward sin?

Yes. But you have a new heart. Your identity is in Christ. So if your identity, if you say those words, I'm desperately wicked, I would challenge that.

[24 : 19] And tell you that you have a new identity in Christ because you have a new heart. So, end of that little soapbox. Thank you for indulging me. So, the only solution to the dilemma that the Pharisees are trying to address with rules is a new heart.

Back in Isaiah 36, there's a prophecy of what the future holds for the Jewish people. The need for a change of heart is not new news to these men if they would pay attention to the Bible, to their Bible, to the Old Testament.

This is Ezekiel 36, 26-27. I will give you a new heart. And put a new spirit within you.

I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes.

And you will be careful to observe all my ordinances. God has always been in the heart business. He does heart transplants.

[25 : 33] That was the goal. That's where the forebears of the Pharisees, those rabbis in the 400 silent years, missed the mark. They shifted the focus from the heart. Search my heart, O God, said the psalmist.

A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. David wrote. God is in the heart business, but those forebears of the Pharisees got stuck on rules.

So how do we get that new heart? Well, more rules, right? No. Follow along as I read this passage in Colossians chapter 2.

Because I think when Paul wrote this, he was thinking of Mark chapter 6. He had had conversations. He may have known some of the Pharisees that were trying to be the thought police with Jesus.

It's entirely possible. So I think Paul, in this passage in Colossians, is looking back to this conversation with the Pharisees. If you have died with Christ, let's stop right there.

[26 : 44] The first application of this message is the question that Paul asks. If you have died with Christ. Paul wrote in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ.

In Romans 6, he talks about we die with Christ. What does that mean? That means that Jesus, when he died on the cross, took your place.

Jesus allowed himself to be subjected to the wrath of God for you. You have to accept that gift, that work that Jesus did on the cross for you.

You have to accept it. You have to put your faith not on your rules, not on the things that have made life work, or you think might make life work in the future. But instead, turn your gaze, look at the cross.

See Jesus there and recognize you should be there. But you're not. And you don't have to be. If you put your trust in Christ's way of doing things, of his promise of a new heart.

[28 : 00] So, I ask you the question. Have you died with Christ? Did you accept what he did on the cross so you can have everything that follows? That's a question between you and God.

If you want to understand the mechanics of it, well, how do I, what does that look like? Talk to me afterwards. Talk to Pastor John. Talk to Pastor Jack. We'd love to tell you. It's not real complicated. And no rules. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees such as, Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

See? Even Christians are predisposed to make more rules. Which all refer to things destined to perish with use in accordance with the commandments and teaching of men.

So, why do you put these restrictions on yourself? This is the part of the passage. These are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom.

[29 : 06] We think these rules make sense. These are matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement. What's the key word there?

Self. The appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

In other words, restricting yourself from things doesn't change your heart. It doesn't work. It doesn't work. Something more has to happen. And here it is.

Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ. So, I ask the question. Did you die with Christ? You appropriate that. You accept it by putting your trust in Christ. And the cool thing is, this is Romans chapter 6. That if you have accepted that gift.

[30 : 07] You've put yourself under the protection of Jesus. You've been raised with him to a new life. This is where the fulfillment of what Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 36 becomes a reality for you.

You get a heart transplant. You get a new heart. Pretty awesome. Actually, awesome doesn't even begin to touch it. It's transformational.

Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 9, Let him who boasts, boast of this, not that he's rich, not that he's strong, not that he's wise, but let him boast of this, that he knows me. That's what we find our hope in. Micah wrote, What is good? And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God?

So Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind to the things above, not on the things that are on earth. That doesn't mean we enter a monastery.

[31 : 23] That doesn't mean we take, we separate ourselves from the world. No, it's just where our focus is specifically to address the problems of life, the challenges that we face. The hardships that are an inevitable part of our life.

Where do we turn to deal with our internal sins? Where do we turn to deal with the fact that we're finite? We're finite. We're just not enough to deal with the needs of the people around us.

What do we do? Where do we point people who are suffering and hurting, which we see literally every day? We point them to Jesus. And it's not some pie in the sky, touchy-feely, impractical discipline.

Because here's the best part, folks. When God invites us into relationship with him, I showed my hand.

When God invites us to be under Jesus' protection because he took our place, he gives us a new heart, he's inviting us into relationship with him. There's a phrase I want you to write down.

[32 : 38] Conversational relationship with God. We are invited to a conversational relationship with God. I'll tell you why that's important.

I have a conversational relationship with my wife. We talk about all kinds of things all the time. Our typical morning, for example, starts with me making us both a cup of coffee.

And we sit down on opposite ends of the couch and we read our Bibles. We're in totally different parts of the Bible. Oftentimes, we're reading different other outside books. But over the course of our quiet time, we end up talking about something that Kara's reading or something that I'm talking. Something that we want to expand. Something that we want to understand better or a question that comes up. And so we have that conversational relationship about the things of God. We have a conversational relationship about our kids.

One of our sons, I've talked to you a little bit about him. He's got some odd heart problems that the doctors can't figure out. We talk about that a lot. How can we help Luke? How can we support him?

[33 : 43] We talk about our family here. How can we best serve you and how grateful we are for you? We have a conversational relationship. That's what God's inviting you to.

Do you realize that? Do you realize that? That's what God is inviting you to. And it's not bound by rules. Would I recommend you read your Bible on a regular basis?

Yeah. Do I think you should set the priority in life to pray? Yeah. Talked about that two weeks ago. Three weeks ago. But fundamentally, those are just tools that get you into the presence of God to enjoy a conversational relationship with him.

And I'm here to tell you, brothers and sisters, he talks to you. The old hymn says he walks with me and he talks with me. That's not some distant thing in the past or the future or for some super Christians.

It is our life now. And I want to encourage you to seek God. I was talking to a brother this week. We were sharing points in our lives where we were mad at God.

[34 : 49] And for both of us, in the midst of our anger and not understanding God, we were actually seeking him really aggressively. Maybe not appropriately, but we were seeking God.

And you know what he did in both of our cases? He responded. Because there's a promise in the Bible that says when you seek God with all of your heart, he will be found.

That's Genesis to Revelation. It's the whole book. That's what Jesus was trying to get the disciples to understand. And the disciples certainly, but the Pharisees to understand.

The people of God. You need to enter into this relationship with God. Because when you do, when you get that new heart, you truly have a friend.

Jesus said that to the disciples and by extension to us. I no longer call you slaves. You are my friends. That's what we have in Christ. So let's turn over to Ephesians chapter 4.

[35 : 53] Ephesians 4. This is Ephesians 4, 14 through 16. As a result, we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming.

Let me stop there just for a minute and give you a warning. I was at Barnes and Noble yesterday. I was looking for a book on effective communication. And as you walk into Barnes and Noble, there's a new non-fiction section.

And on the right, down about waist high, is a whole bunch of books about the Bible. With the exception of one that I saw, and they didn't look exhaustively, they were garbage.

Actually, they were worse than garbage. They were poison. They were written by people who support the LGBTQ agenda. Another prominent influencer on TikTok.

Lots of degrees that include the word Bible in them. And lost. Brothers, this is used, lost. The book next to it was written by the pastor of TikTok, who's a graduate from Brigham Young University.

[37 : 04] He's a Mormon. Book after book after book, there's probably half a dozen of them. All claiming to bring the truth that we're bringing lies. You need to have that relationship with God so that he can say, nope, that's trash.

Throw that away. This is the truth. Walk in it. Be aware. Be aware. We live in a world where, just like Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees, we live in a world that's looking for answers, but they're looking in the wrong places.

So, we are no longer children, however. We're not carried away by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men.

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ. That's God's ultimate goal, is to make us Christians.

That's the first place that the, Antioch was the first place that term was used, and it meant little Christs. That's what Jesus wants for you. Because not only will it glorify God, it will share the gospel with the world.

[38 : 09] But when you are a little Christ, you get all the stuff that he has to offer. You are his little brother and sister. You are adopted into the family of God. And he's doing a transformational work to make you everything that he designed you to be.

And this is how it happens. From whom the whole body, that's all of us, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Did you know that I need you? Did you know that you need me? Rush Limbaugh used to get all kinds of criticism for one of his, he used to say this every day, mainly because it made people mad. Talent on loan from God. And people are always offended. That's just a true statement. I have talent on loan from God for your benefit.

You have talent on loan from God for my benefit. God has gifted you, he's equipped you, he's given you certain passions, specifically so that you can bless the people around you.

[39 : 23] Because as we fill our role, as we become more like Jesus and fulfill the role for which he designed us, we all are moved together to become more like Christ, deeper in relationship with him, more fully experiencing the conversational relationship with Christ.

We have got to be serving Jesus and following Jesus together as a congregation. It's not a rule. Don't misunderstand. Don't misunderstand.

But we need each other. And that's, we, each one of us is the tool that all of us are going to benefit from as we seek God. Isn't that amazing?

But it starts with a new heart. It starts with God giving us that transformed heart. So what I want to end with, I'm going to give you a few minutes to just ponder.

Two minutes. And then I'll pray and Harold and Dory, you can come up. But I want you to take two minutes to just think about what does it mean to have a new heart?

[40 : 34] Do I have a new heart? Have I accepted Jesus offer? The wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Not just going to heaven, which is awesome. But new life today in relationship with God. You can have that. So ask that question. If the question is no, you need to do business with God.

If it's yes, you actually still need to do business with God. But what I want you to ponder is, do I have a conversational relationship with God? And what needs to change to enter into that?

And ask him to tell you. And I want you to listen. And I want you to listen. Somehow, someway, may not be in this two minute timeframe.

But somehow, someway, God is going to answer you. And I want you to listen expectantly. It might be a still small voice. It might be a passage of scripture you can't get out of your head.

[41 : 33] Or a song on the radio. Or one of us sharing a promise with you that we read. But God will answer you. So ask him. How can I experience a conversational relationship with you and go deeper?

So, you've got two minutes. Bet you didn't realize how long two minutes can feel. I want to read a couple of stanzas from one of my favorite hymns, And Can It Be?, by Charles Wesley.

Think of the emotion behind this question. And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?

Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be?

That you, my God, would die for me? No condemnation now I dread. Jesus, and all in him is mine.

[42 : 39] Alive in him, my living head. And clothed in righteousness divine. Bold I approach the eternal throne.

And claim the crown through Christ my own. That is our hope. Let's pray. God, I completely agree with Charles Wesley.

How can it be that I should have an interest in your blood? That I have a share. That you've given me new life. Lord, I pray for all of us.

That we would seek you. That we would not just have this new heart, but that we would continue to grow deeper in relationship with you.

That we would establish and mature in a conversational relationship with you that's life-changing.

Not just for us, but for the people around us. And Lord, I pray that as we're changed, that the people around us would see and hear the life-giving message of eternal life in Christ.

[43 : 47] God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.