

## Deep Change (Week 1) - Heart Check

### **Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Bullet Points or Less**

- 1) "How's your heart?" - that's a harder question to answer you might first think.
- 2) Biblically, your "heart" is your mind, emotions, will, and character taken together, you might say it's the innermost you, the truest you, or you at your core.
- 3) The Christian scriptures and modern psychology both agree that the human heart or self is mysterious and notoriously hard to understand: the Bible uses terminology like deep waters, darkness, and even devious or evasive to describe it.
- 4) There's a maxim in the field of epistemology (the philosophical study of how we know things) that goes like this, "The more complex the object, the more complex the process of knowing that object." If human beings are as fathomless as described above, then getting to know one - even yourself - is a pretty detailed, complicated, long-term affair too.
- 5) But this then leads into a second fundamental truth about hearts in scripture: God alone is the truthsayer of the heart.
- 6) More than a dozen times, we're told that God "tests" the heart, that is, He weighs, discerns, and assesses it (see Psalm 7.9, and Proverbs 15.11, 17.3). In fact, we should invite God to do so (for example, Psalm 26.2). As Christian poet George Herbert says it, "God sees hearts the way we see faces."
- 7) Thus, knowing yourself deeply and being close to God are linked: "(There is) no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God" (John Calvin), and "There is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace, and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him, I will find myself" (Thomas Merton). From a Christian point of view, understanding our own hearts is a gift, God gives it to us, we cannot acquire it on our own, no matter how hard we might try.
- 8) Last, we ought to calibrate our own aspirations for our heart to match God's; what God is hoping to do in us ought to be our hopes too. And what's God trying to do in our hearts? No less than aiming to exchange our stubbornness for responsiveness (Ezekiel 36.26), make the loudest whisper in our soul's ears that God is our loving parent (Galatians 4.6), give us deep peace that we can share (Colossians 3.15 and Philipians 4.7), and make Christ take up residence in our deepest places (Ephesians 3.17).
- 9) So for Lent 2024 as we launch into our congregational book reading and discussion, let's ask God to test our hearts, to help us get to know our own hearts, and to transform our hearts. Let's lean into what God is already up to in our innermost lives.
- 10) To sum it all up, consider one of the more well-known verses in the entire Bible about the heart: "Guard your heart with all diligence, for life itself flows from its springs." That means our day to day life experience flows out of that innermost self.



## **Book Reading this Week**

In our Lenten book, "Emotionally Healthy Discipleship," read the preface (pgs. ix - xxii) and chps. 1-2. (It looks like more than it actually is, promise - chp. 2 is just a self-assessment).

## **More on Your Heart this Week**

- Want to focus your personal Bible reading on the heart this week, if nothing else to see the breadth of the concept in scripture? Try reading through the use of the term in Psalms (click [here](#)) and Proverbs (click [here](#)).

- How about weaving some prayers focused on the transformation of our hearts in your own prayer life this week? For four such prayers, click [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

- Here's some practical psychological advice on how to know yourself more deeply and accurately. You could even try a few of the article's ideas this week, if you want: [8 Approaches to Know Yourself Better | Psych Central](#)

- And here are a few daily devotionals about the heart that you can sprinkle throughout your week: [Always Contrite](#) and [A Change of Heart](#) and [Heart Vision](#) and [I Have a Frisbee](#)