

Understanding and Encouraging Heart Change

Bible Study

The Bible mentions the heart more than 750 times, primarily to describe our will—our ability and desire to do things, to make and carry out choices. The heart, in this context, essentially describes who we are.

This is not the version of ourselves that we show to the world; it is instead the true self that God sees. “People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

The natural state of our hearts is sinful or “deceitful” (Jeremiah 17:9–10), but God wants to change our hearts, and He is willing to do so for those who seek Him. God will change our hearts in a variety of ways, and for those whose hearts are changed, there will be evidence of such a heart change. For some, change will be immediate. Others will take longer. For all of us, having our hearts conformed to God’s desire will be a lifelong journey. Work through the following Bible study to get a deeper understanding of how God sees the heart and how He wants to change it.



1 What is the natural state of our hearts? (Jeremiah. 17:9–10; Mark 7:21-22)

2 Are we able to keep the darker aspects of our hearts to ourselves, or does God know our true hearts? (1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 44:21)

3 Does God want to leave us with deceitful hearts, or does He desire to change our hearts? (Ezekiel. 36:25–27; Psalm 51:10; Romans 5:5)

4 How does God use the Holy Spirit in the process of changing our hearts? (Ezekiel. 11:19; Jeremiah. 24:7; Romans 5:5; Proverbs 3:5-6; Galatians 4:6)

5 Read the following verses and write out some of the ways God involves us in the process of heart change.

(Ezekiel 18:30-32; 2 Chronicles 32:25-27)

(Psalm 51:10; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 86:11; Psalm 119:36; Psalm 119:145)

(Acts 15:9; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 3:17; Psalm 51:10)

(Mark 12:33; Hebrews 10:16; Psalm 40:8; Psalm 119:2; Psalm 119:10; 1 Corinthians 10:6-10)

(Colossians 3:16)

6 Review your answers to question 5. See if you found evidence for the following ways that God works in us for heart change. Describe how God has worked in these areas in your life:

- Repentance
- Calling out to God
- Faith
- Obedience
- Gratitude

7 In the process of heart change, God works to strengthen and encourage us. Read the following passages and write how you see the Holy Spirit sustaining the process of heart change. (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; Acts 11:23; Acts 14:17)

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Some of the changes we see as our hearts are being changed might involve the following:

- What we think (Matthew 5:28; Matthew 15:8)
- What we say (Matthew 12:31)
- What we treasure (Matthew 6:21)
- Whether we forgive (Matthew 18:35)
- How we love God and others (Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:37-40; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; 1 Peter. 1:22)
- What are some other ways by which evidence would show up in your life?

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Read Galatians 5. When our hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit, and we cooperate with Him in this change, we will see our thoughts and actions shift from a focus on sinful desires to godly desires. Write out the changes you would like to see in your life through this change. Also write out what your prayer is for the changes you would like to see in your children's lives.

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Review question 6. Are there any of these key approaches missing in your life? If so, write them down here and pray regularly for God's help to continue the process of changing your heart.
