

HEART HEALTHY FAITH



The heart is a muscle that pumps blood through the body. It needs a reliable supply of oxygen to function. Blood carries oxygen through arteries

which must be protected against plaque build ups which can cause a heart attack. Cholesterol and harmful fats can collect in the artery walls resulting in heart disease. Cardiologists remind us that it is important to control the risk factors to a healthy heart. These risk factors include high blood pressure, a diet high in salt, sugar and saturated fats, a lack of exercise, obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption. Each year Americans spend millions of dollars to maintain healthy hearts and to treat coronary disease.

As important as it is to take care of our physical hearts, it is even more important to have healthy hearts spiritually.

In the Bible the spiritual “heart” is the center of one’s will, desires, values and priorities. Scripture says: “The Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7), and “searches every heart” (1 Chronicles

28:9). The psalmist prayed: “may this meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, Lord” (Psalm 19:14). With sincerity he asked: “create in me a pure heart, O Lord” (Psalm 51:10) Solomon, the wisest king of Israel advised: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23). In the New Testament we read: “Do the will of God from your heart” (Ephesians 6:6).

The only person with control of your spiritual health is you. Check your diet carefully; feed your heart on the word of God, rather than teachings invented by men. Avoid sinful behavior that produces spiritual heart diseases, such as immorality, hatred, greed, violence, doubt and apathy. Nurture your heart by spiritual exercise like prayer, worship and Christian fellowship. A sound, healthy faith will make a difference where you spend eternity.

— **David Tarbet, Editor**
New Milford, Connecticut

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HEART OF A SEEKER



To seek the Lord one needs to have the right heart, or attitude, to search for Him. Four Scriptural principles will guide the sinner to the Lord.

First, understand that the Lord wishes to be found (Deuteronomy 4:29). God does not hide from those who are seeking Him. In fact, God wants to be discovered by His creation, as He made us in His image and wished to have a relationship with us through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, His Son.

Second, understand that the Lord is searching the hearts of man and understands the intent of our hearts (1 Chronicles 28:9). A false sincerity can not fool God. If you seek for Him, it must be because you genuinely wish to find Him.

Third, search for the Lord with your entire being, your whole heart (Jeremiah. 29:13). In the Bible, the heart refers to the inner nature of man, the true self, and the soul. One cannot find the Lord with a half-hearted attempt.

Fourth, in order to know the Lord, one must understand His will and His doctrine (John 7:17). Today, there is but one place to discover the will and doctrine of the Lord: the Bible. The Bible shows us His love, His patience and His faithfulness. It teaches us that everyone may now have access to the Lord Almighty through Jesus Christ by obeying His commands. Are you seeking the Lord? If you are, He will not ignore your prayer if you search for the Lord with all your heart. Seek the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength; seek Him within His holy word. Jesus promised “seek and you will find” (Matthew 7:7).



A friend of mine was shocked to discover he had severely clogged arteries. They rushed him into surgery and installed stents in his arteries. Would you be surprised to learn that your spiritual arteries are clogged?

Those who witnessed God's miraculous plagues on Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea became resistant to God's will. *"Do not harden your hearts as you did in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested me"* (Psalms 95:8-9). Like the original people of God we may give in to the temptation to idolatry, sexual immorality, prideful attitudes or the love of money. Many things can clog our spiritual arteries.

Without a correct spiritual diagnosis we will suffer serious consequences. *"See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness"* (Hebrews 3:12-13).

The solution to spiritually clogged arteries is what God calls circumcision of the heart. *"The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live"* (Deuteronomy 30:6). This hope is what God is offering us in Christ. The Great Physician will operate on your heart. *"Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead"* (Colossians 2:11-12). The surgical follow-up requires spiritual exercises and diet. One needs a well rounded diet of the Word of God. Put what you learn of God into action as a daily exercise. Become part of congregation that encourages your spiritual growth.

— Bruce Wadzeck

A JOYFUL HEART

“Do what makes you happy.” We’ve all been advised of this motto when we’ve begun an education, career, marriage, or spiritual journey. We are bombarded by advertisements for beauty products, cars, and foods that promise to make us happier. We splash photos across the internet, craving likes and shares for rushes of pleasure. We are surrounded by drugs and alcohol, designed to mask our unhappiness. We triple our work hours so we can have more luxurious houses and vehicles because we believe keeping up with everyone else will make us happy. And, when tragedy strikes, we become depressed or even suicidal, because our happiness has disappeared again. It seems our quest for happiness is pointless because those good feelings never last. Can we ever stay happy?

The short answer is no...happiness is a temporary feeling prompted by positive events, and we cannot avoid all negative experiences. However, we can learn to cultivate joy in our hearts. The difference between happiness and joy is that happiness is an emotion dependent on circumstances, but joy is a choice to be thankful and peaceful regardless of our situations. Joy doesn’t happen; it grows.

For Christians, there is wonderful news – the Bible is full of teachings about joy. God shows us its importance in Proverbs 17:22, which says, “*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*” His Word defines it for us in Psalm 126:4-5: “*Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in*

the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.” Did you notice that the people in this verse had unhappy times but now have joy in the Lord? Joy is also listed as a “*fruit of the Spirit,*” one of the characteristics we need as we obey God’s plan and have His Spirit in us (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 2:38).

How can we acquire joy that goes so much deeper than mere happiness? We have to follow God, His Son, and His Word. Jesus says in John 14:27, “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*” We can have joy even on this earth, because Jesus will take care of us. We can also be joyful because, as Christians, we have the hope of heaven, our gift from God, eternal life with Him through Christ (Romans 6:23). In heaven, we’ll have the ultimate joy, as Revelation 21:3-4 promises, because God will take away all our suffering.

Happiness will fail you; joy in Christ will sustain you. Rest in Him, and be joyful in heart!

— Sarah Floyd is a member of the Church of Christ, Bennington, Vermont

She is author of two Christian fiction books: “Finding Joy” and “Enough Joy” in the Voices of Joy Series

Joy is a
choice
to be
thankful
and
peaceful.

GOD SEES OUR HEARTS

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:11-13).

“God sees my heart.” I have heard that phrase uttered as an excuse to not try to do His will.

Some people cannot walk into a house without straightening a picture they see crooked on the wall. The homeowner doesn’t shrug and say it was the thought that counted or mutter that he had a level but was too lazy to use it. God sees in what ways our lives are crooked and doesn’t accept our fumbled excuses. Rather, He tells us to *“be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48).

But there’s grace, we cry out! Sure there is, but we cannot be like the Roman Christians who thought they could keep on sinning so that grace might increase (6:1). His grace, freely given and possible through the death of God’s Son on the cross, cannot be our excuse to sin.

True worshipers worship *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). This means that our Christianity cannot just become a checklist and be pleasing to God. Neither, though, can it be just whatever feels good and right. Emotion and experience, in our assemblies or our



personal lives, do more to please ourselves than they do God.

In my toolbox I have a plumb line that my dad gave me when I left home. In a world of transits and laser levels, we’ve forgotten how our grandfathers used to build things square. God told the prophet Amos of the Old Testament that He was going to set a plumb line among them and spare them no longer. They had the Law to tell them how to live to please Him. “God sees our heart” was not good enough.

And so we have the plumb line of the Word of God that judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. We may deceive ourselves, but God knows if we are true worshipers, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. We must correct our lives in accordance with the plumb line of His Word because it is true, what we say—God sees our heart.

— Douglas Kashorek
Church of Christ, Plattsburg, New York
He is editor of sermonlines.com



A LOVING HEART

On one occasion Jesus was questioned by a man who asked: “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus’ answer serves as the foundation to a solid relationship with our heavenly Father. Jesus said:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”(Matthew 22:37-40).

It helps us understand what God values most. God values loving Him and loving others. This is consistent with Jesus’ statement: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus’ statement encourages us to love God with our total focus and behavior. Pursuing a relationship with God should be life-long and it should be our constant priority to please Him. Each day provides an opportunity for us to show God that we love Him. For example, we should thank God for our blessings each day through prayer. And, we should endeavor to live morally upright lives in spite of life’s challenges.

In addition to Jesus’ statement about loving God, He also calls us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In the world we live in today with instant access to people in our local community, state, nation, and the world, our neighbor is no longer just the person that resides next door. Our neighbor is everyone we encounter. God says we need to love that person as we love ourselves. How do we love ourselves? We love sacrificially and with care. These are two qualities that we should show our neighbors. When they need help, we should be helpful. When they need encouragement, we should encourage. And, when they are under attack, we should come to their rescue.

I am reminded of a song that I learned as a child:

What the world needs now is love, sweet love
It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of
What the world needs now is love, sweet love
No not just for some but for everyone.

These words are as true today as when I learned them as a child. Let us have loving hearts as God does toward us and others.

— Maurice Davis
Church of Christ, Milton, Massachusetts

OBEY GOD

The scripture reads: *“But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves of sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin.”* (Romans 6:17).

Why does the word “obey” seem so foreign in today’s world? God has always asked men and women to be obedient. Here are a few biblical examples:

Naaman (2 Kings 5) was given a way to be healed of leprosy (*“Go wash seven times in th Jordan”*) but wanted to make a substitution in method and location which was not commanded. He was healed only when he obeyed.

Abraham obeyed God’s command concerning the sacrifice of Isaac his son (Genesis 22). By this obedience he was declared to be righteous.

The **nation of Israel** was given opportunity in the covenant of blessings and cursings (Deuteronomy chapters 28 through 30). God promised if they obeyed, good things would come; if they disobeyed, very bad things would come their way.

In Romans chapter 6, the apostle Paul said early Christians *“obeyed from their hearts”* the *“pattern of teaching”* which brought freedom from the guilt of their sins. In context, the *“pattern of teaching”* was their immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-4).



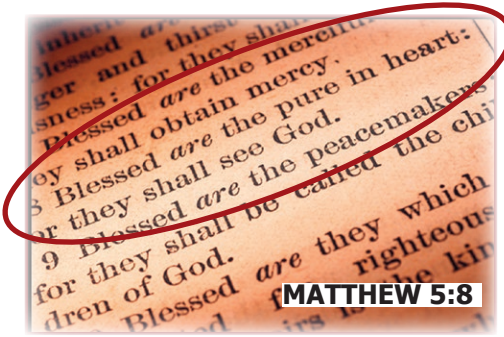
Immersion re-enacted the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It brought assurance that they were *“set free from sin.”* In baptism they claimed their *“allegiance”* to Christ. Baptism signified the beginning of *“newness of life.”* Today this act of obedience *“from the heart”* puts one *“into Christ”* putting him into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). One rises from baptism to no longer be a *“slave to sin”* (Romans 6:6)

The apostle Peter declared: *“Repent, and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* If you want to understand how *“obedience from the heart”* through repentance and baptism will set you *“free from sin,”* produce *“forgiveness of sins,”* seal your *“allegiance”* to Christ, and assure that you receive the *“gift of the Holy Spirit”* take a look at Acts 2: 38-41.

Have you become *“obedient from the heart”* to that *“pattern of teaching”* which will set you *“free from sin”*?

D. Kirk Israel
Green Mountain Church of Christ
Castleton, Vermont

THE PURE IN HEART



It is easy for a person to fake purity. Acting righteous when around people, but indulging ungodliness in the secret places of one's heart. This hypocrisy is most dangerous because one thinks he is getting away with sin. But eventually what is in the heart exposes itself. By saying "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8), Jesus is reminding us that God wants purity that is genuine. Purity that flows from the heart, impacting not just how we act, but also how we think. The "pure in heart" allow God's word to direct their thoughts and actions in all matters.

— **David Rollert**

**Lakes Region Church of Christ
Tilton, New Hampshire**

When we dwell on the awesome nature of God's loving plan to save our souls, we begin to understand "pure in heart". The pure in heart "see God" because "the eyes of our heart have been enlightened so that we know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance" (Ephesians 1: 18-19). The "pure in heart" seek to please God through obedience to His word.

— **Gary Babcock**

**Kent County Church of Christ
Coventry, Rhode Island**

The person who is "pure in heart" keeps himself unspotted from the world (James.1:27). The pure in heart obeys the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Imagine what will happen when we pray to the Lord as David did in Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a pure heart, O God!"

— **Timothy Tarbet**

Church of Christ, New Milford, Connecticut

The beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-16) describe the desired inner qualities of a follower of Christ and they promise future blessings for those who will do as Jesus says. To be "pure in heart" is a challenge for each one of us. We are told in Jeremiah 17:10 "The heart is deceitful above all other things and beyond cure." Jesus taught in Matthew 19:26 "with God, all things are possible".

— **Don Roarabaugh**

**Mid-Hudson Church of Christ
Poughkeepsie, New York**

The pure in heart are the single-minded, who are free from the tyranny of a divided self, and who do not try to serve God and the world at the same time. From such it is impossible that God should hide Himself. They endure as already seeing Him who is invisible, and one day they will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

— **R.V.G. Tasker**

The Gospel According to St. Matthew

How can we acquire a pure heart? This happens when we believe in Christ's redemptive work on the cross, repent of our sins and are "buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12), If you want to see your Heavenly Father one day, purify your heart today.

— **Jesus Nieves**

Church of Christ, Farmington, Connecticut



While visiting a cemetery in an old church yard my eyes fell on a tombstone which read: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". There is no greater comfort than to know that one leaves this world to behold the face of God!

— **David Tarbet**

Church of Christ, New Milford, Connecticut



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