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**SERMON TITLE**

**Matters of the Heart, part 4**

**SERIES****DATE**

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**KEY SCRIPTURE**

Ezekiel 36:26 & more

**SYNOPSIS**

A heart changed by the Spirit affects how you live life.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☞ **Matters of the Heart, Part 4, Living from a Changed Heart**

**Ezekiel 36:26** says, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.* That's God's promise. Today we're asking: what does living from that new heart actually look like in real life? We know that our hearts are desperately sick, easily divided or hardened, and need a complete overhaul. A changed heart isn't just a nice theological concept we check off our doctrine list. A changed heart actually, genuinely changes how we live our everyday lives.

And this is where we find out whether what we believe on Sunday morning makes any difference on Monday afternoon when your coworker takes credit for your idea, or Tuesday evening when your teenager talks back, or Wednesday morning when you're stuck in traffic and already late. And let's be honest—Wednesday morning traffic is where we find out if we *really* have the fruit of the Spirit, or if we just have good manners when people are watching. Today we're going to explore what living from a changed heart actually looks like in the messy, everyday moments of life.

### ☞ **THE FRUIT - WHAT A CHANGED HEART PRODUCES**

So let's start here. **Galatians 5:22-23:** **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."**

Now, I want you to be honest with yourself right now. Just scan that list in your mind. Which one of those is hardest for you to display naturally? For some, it's patience—you can love people from a safe distance, but asking you to wait patiently while someone tells an unending story with no point? That's spiritual warfare. For others, it's self-control—especially the 3 Cs: cookies, credit cards, and commenting on Facebook posts you absolutely should ignore.

Here's what I want you to see: these are called the "fruit of the *Spirit*" for a reason. They're not the "fruit of *trying really hard*." They're not the "fruit of good parenting" or the "fruit of a naturally pleasant personality." They're what grows in us when God's Spirit is alive and active in our hearts. But changed hearts show up most clearly in changed responses, especially under pressure. Think about it this way: when you're stressed, when you're interrupted, when your plans fall apart, when someone criticizes you unfairly—what tends to come out of you? Because that's the real test, isn't it? It's easy to be patient when everything's going your way. It's easy to be gentle when nobody's pushing your buttons. But what about when life squeezes you?

### ☞ **THE FIRE - PRESSURE REVEALS WHAT'S REALLY INSIDE**

Jesus talked about this in **Luke 6:45:** **"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.** Whatever fills your heart comes out of your mouth and your actions, especially when you're under pressure. Our reactions under stress are actually a spiritual diagnostic tool. They show us what's really going on below the surface.



I heard someone put it this way once: A tea bag doesn't show its true color until it's put in hot water. You can look at a tea bag sitting on the counter and it just looks like a little bag of dried leaves. But you drop it in boiling water, and suddenly everything that's been inside comes pouring out. The water changes color, the flavor emerges, the aroma fills the room.

☞ Same with us. **Trials, stress, and conflict reveal** what's really brewing in our hearts. Maybe it's anger that we've been carrying around. Maybe it's bitterness toward someone who hurt us. Maybe it's anxiety because we're trying to control everything ourselves instead of trusting God. Maybe it's pride that makes us defensive when we're corrected. Whatever it is, pressure brings it to the surface.

Now, that might sound discouraging, but actually it's part of how God changes us. Look at **James 1:2-4**: **"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."**

Consider it pure joy when you face trials. Not if—*when*. James says trials are going to come and ☞ they are actually part of the heart-change process because **pressures expose what needs to be dealt with**. They show us where we're still relying on ourselves instead of on God. And when we see those things—when we recognize that impatience or that sharp tongue or that anxiety—then we can bring it to God and say, "Lord, change this in me. I need Your Spirit to produce the fruit I can't." The trial isn't the enemy. The trial is the tool God uses to shape us into the image of His Son.

Remember that tea bag? God doesn't put us in hot water to punish us. He puts us in hot water because that's the only way the good stuff comes out. The flavor, the color, the aroma—it was always in there. The heat just revealed it.

### ☞ **THE FENCE - GUARDING YOUR HEART**

Even though God gives us new hearts and His Spirit produces fruit in us, we still have a responsibility. **Proverbs 4:23** says: **"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."** have to be intentional about what we allow into our hearts and minds.

☞ Here's a principle that's true both spiritually and naturally: **What we feed grows; what we starve dies**. If you plant a garden, the vegetables you want to grow need water, sunlight, good soil. But if you don't pull the weeds, they'll choke out everything else.

Same thing spiritually. If you're feeding your mind on anger—whether that's through certain news channels, social media accounts, or conversations—then anger is going to grow in your heart. If you're feeding your mind on discontentment—constantly looking at what everyone else has, constantly comparing your life to others—then discontentment is going to grow.



☞ But if you're **feeding your mind and heart on Scripture, on worship, gratitude, and truth—then the fruit of the Spirit is going to grow**. Love is going to grow. Peace is going to grow. Self-control is going to grow.

So let me ask you honestly: Whether it's media, relationships, entertainment, habits— is there anything you're consuming that's actually working against the heart change God's doing in you? If you want to live from a changed heart, you need to guard it carefully.

### ☞ **THE FRAGRANCE - YOUR CHANGED HEART IMPACTS OTHERS**

A transformed heart doesn't just change you—it impacts your family, your workplace, your neighborhood, your community. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:14-16**: **"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."**

People are watching you. Now, that's not meant to make you paranoid or self-conscious. But it's true. The people closest to you—your spouse, your kids, your coworkers, your neighbors—they're influenced by how you live. Your kids are watching to see if your faith works when the Wi-Fi doesn't. Your coworkers are watching to see if you're different when you don't get the promotion. Your spouse is watching to see if you're still patient when they tell the same story for the 47th time. So, who in your life might be watching how you respond to stress, conflict, or disappointment? How could your changed heart become a quiet testimony to them?

Peter puts it this way in **1 Peter 3:15**: **"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."** Notice what comes first: "in your hearts revere Christ as Lord." **When Christ is Lord of your heart, changing you from the inside out, people notice**. And then they ask questions.

When people see peace in you that doesn't make logical sense—what door does that open? When they see patience when you have every right to be frustrated, when they see kindness toward someone who doesn't deserve it, when they see joy that isn't dependent on circumstances—they start to wonder. "What's different about you? Where does that come from?" And that's your opportunity. That's when you get to say, "Let me tell you about what Jesus has done in my life." Your changed heart becomes the most powerful sermon you'll ever preach.

### ☞ **FAITH IN THE PROCESS**

Now, some of you are sitting here thinking, "Well, I must not have a changed heart because I still struggle with these things. I still lose my patience. I still say things I regret. I still react in ways I know aren't Christ-like." Please understand: heart transformation is a process, not a one-time event. Paul says in **Philippians 1:6**: **"being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will"**





**carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** God began the work. He's continuing the work. And He will complete the work. But it's not finished yet. None of us have arrived.

So how should you respond when you react in an old, sinful way—even after God's been changing you? First, remember that setbacks don't mean God's given up on you. The very fact that you feel **☞ convicted** about it, that it bothers you, that you recognize it as sin is actually **evidence that the Spirit is still working in you.**

It's like a home makeover. You know what the contractor tells you? 'It's gonna get worse before it gets better.' And you think he's joking until you're living in one room, eating takeout on a lawn chair, showering at your in-laws', and wondering if you should've just learned to love that ugly carpet. But here's what you don't do: you don't fire the contractor halfway through just because it looks bad right now. You trust him to finish. That mess is part of the process.

God's renovation of your heart is like that. Sometimes the mess—uncovering sin, the conviction, **☞ even failures**—is part of the process. But here's the promise: **He always finishes what He starts.** He's not going to leave you half-renovated. Some of you are in the messy middle right now. The Spirit's got the walls torn down, and you're thinking, 'Lord, I looked better *before* You started working on me!' Trust the Builder. He knows what He's doing. And He's committed to completing the work.

**☞ So let me bring this home. A changed heart isn't just about feeling different, it's about living different.** It shows up in how you respond when life gets hard. It shows up in the fruit the Spirit produces in you. It shows up in how you guard what enters your heart. And it shows up in how your life impacts the people around you.

This week, I want to challenge you to do something: Pay attention. Watch for the evidence of God's work in your heart. Notice when you respond differently than you used to. Thank God for those moments. Celebrate the progress. And when you stumble—because you will, we all do—remember: He's not done with you yet. If you sin this week and it doesn't bother you at all—that's when to worry. If it bothers you, if you're feeling guilty about how you snapped at your kids or gossiped about your neighbor—that means you're not dead spiritually. Dead things don't feel pain. So, that conviction is a good thing.

And here's the really, really good news: you're not doing this alone. You don't have to manufacture patience or peace or self-control on your own. God's Spirit is in you, producing fruit you could **☞ never grow on your own.** As always, just **keep coming back to Jesus.**