



“Hearts Continually Changing!”

13 Heart Check Up’s at HCC

“How’s your heart?”

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Hattiesburg Community Church

Introduction

Hearts Continually Changing



Hattiesburg Community Church (also known as HCC) has a true biblical vision.

This vision is easy to remember because it goes with the letters HCC. “**Hearts Continually Changing!**” is the goal for every member of this Family of Faith. This study explains that vision over thirteen foundational elements of the Christian life. This vision statement will be in red font every time you see it throughout the study. Before we get to the study, let’s look briefly at this vision.

Hearts **God wants you to love Him with all your heart!**

In the physical realm, the heart is extremely important. One major blockage and our lives could be over in seconds. Our hearts are just as important spiritually. Therefore, the Bible has much to say regarding our hearts. We need to keep a regular spiritual check on the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Matthew 12:34 (ESV) . . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.

Continually **God wants you to continually seek Him!**

Psalms 105:4 (NIV)

Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually!

Changing **God wants to change you daily into His likeness!**

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

This study is called a Heart Check Up. We get regular check-ups for our physical health. Yet, many times we never check our spiritual health. Our heart spiritually needs to be monitored to see if we are indeed growing in our faith. So, you will see this question often in our study: “**How’s your heart?**” When you see that question, pause and reflect on how healthy or unhealthy your heart spiritually is in the area discussed. Be honest with yourself so that God can change your heart!!

Hattiesburg Community Church
Salvation
The Goal of the Gospel



At HCC, we say **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** There are many purposes behind that 3-word statement. The primary purpose is that God seeks to change your heart!! It is the “Goal of the Gospel.” The Good News is that Jesus comes to seek and to save those who are lost! God wants to be the Lord of your Heart.

So, **“How’s your heart?”** Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you experienced salvation in Jesus Christ? You see, before God can continually change your heart, He must first of all be the Lord of your heart!

When you go to the doctor, you may or may not have your heart checked. However, you could be healthy in every other area; but if you have a bad heart you are in trouble. Heart Check Ups are extremely important to you physically. They are even more important to you spiritually! The main spiritual Heart Check Up asks the question, “Are you a Christian? Have you been born-again? Has God given you a new heart?”

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The problem is that word, “if.” How do you become “in Christ” so that you can get a new heart?

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)

⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

How do you get your heart to that Romans 10:9-10 moment? I’m so glad you asked. The Bible says, “If you know the truth, the truth will set you free.” Well let’s look at some truths.

Truth #1 – The Problem of Sin. Why you need salvation

Every single person is born with a problem called sin. In fact, the very first parents on earth (Adam and Eve) passed it on to their children. Every person who has lived since then was born with the same sin problem. Romans 5:12 (NLT) describes it this way: “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.” Simply put, nobody is perfect

But what is sin? And how do you know when you have committed it? According to 1 John 3:4, sin is when you break God’s law. When a person commits a crime, they are violating the laws of the state in which they live. When a person commits sin, they are violating the law of God. Some of God’s laws are referred to as the Ten Commandments. The Bible is filled with many other commands or laws, and no one has ever obeyed all of them.

The truth is that none of us can measure up to God's standard. Even if you have done more good deeds than bad ones, you don't meet the perfect standard of God.

Suppose three long jumpers were lined up at the Grand Canyon in a contest to see who could jump across. One of them may jump much farther than the other two, but all would fall short of making it across. It is the same way with God's standard. You may not be as "bad" as others, but the truth is that you have sinned, and fall short of God's standard of perfection.

Romans 3:23 states, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Truth #2 – The Penalty of Sin. Why your sin must be dealt with

When a person violates a law and commits a crime, they will face the penalty of that crime. Likewise, when a person commits sin and violates God's laws, they will face the penalty of their sin. The penalty of sin is death according to Romans 6:23a: "The wages of sin is death." Every person will face physical death one day, which is the separation of the soul from the body.

Truth #3 – The Payment for Sin. How your sin penalty was paid

God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus Christ to pay the penalty of your sin. Romans 5:8 states, "But God demonstrated His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Good News is that Jesus died for our sins and then rose again from the dead! By rising from the dead, Jesus conquered sin, death, and hell.

Suppose you owed a debt of one billion dollars, a debt you cannot pay. Let's also suppose that a multibillionaire offers to pay your debt. That would be good news, wouldn't it? You would have a balance of zero. But let's suppose he decides to credit another billion dollars to your account. Now that would be a great transaction!

You have a sin debt that you cannot pay yourself, and you cannot erase the sins you have committed. Jesus Christ offers to not only pay your sin debt, but also to credit His perfect righteousness to your account. What an amazing offer! If you accept this offer, then God will see you as having the righteousness of Christ, who never sinned, and His standard of perfection will be met. How do we claim this wonderful offer? A decision must be made.

Truth #4 – The Personal Decision for Salvation.

Remember, we started this conversation with Romans 10:9-10. Three verses later we read: "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (ESV)

Therefore, you must confess with your mouth that He is Lord. And you must believe by faith that Jesus was raised from the dead. So true belief is not just intellectual assent, but an act of your will to put your faith in Jesus and surrender all your life to Him. So, to make a personal decision for Christ, you must call on Him to save you!

How's your Heart?

If you want to experience the most important Heart Check Up and would like to be saved, please contact any of our pastoral staff. We would love to speak with you about this monumental moment in your life. In fact, that is what we love doing more than anything else! If you have just made this decision, we would love to speak with you also so we can share with you your next step to take as your

"Heart Continually Changes!"



Our vision of **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** is made possible by a faith that grows. What a football is to a football game, believing is to a believer. It is the foundation of our faith! For example, it is not good enough to just have a football if you don’t know to use it. You need a football to even start a game, but how well you can perform with it dictates the measure of your success. In the same vein, salvation requires belief to start this journey of faith. You can’t “get into the game” without it! However, how well you grow in this belief will determine your success in the Christian life.

Here is another way to say it: Salvation is an event followed by a process. The event was a belief unto salvation called justification. The process is a continued use of that belief called sanctification. An easy way to remember what justification means is “Just-as-if-I’ve-never-sinned.” When you got saved, at that moment, you were justified before God the Father. Your sin was placed on Jesus, and Father God sees you as spotless because all your sin has been forgiven. Sanctification means “set apart” and it is a process of continuing to grow daily in your faith.

Bible scholars refer to three tenses of salvation.

- Justification – I was saved.
- Sanctification – I am being saved.
- Glorification – I will be saved.

I will one day be complete with my Savior in Heaven!

“How’s your heart?”

Is your belief just an event or are you daily growing in your faith?! As we continue to discuss the sanctification of the believer, check your own heart and see how spiritually healthy you are.

1. Faith is a Verb!

The apostle John used the Greek verb πιστεύω - "pisteuō," translated as “believe, trust, or commit” 98 times in the book of John. In fact, John never uses the noun form of believe anywhere in his gospel!

In His discourse with Nicodemus in the 3rd chapter of John’s gospel, Jesus says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.” That word “believes” is a verb!

By stressing its verb form, John presents faith as an intentional act of believing. For John, faith in Christ was never meant to simply be an idea, an emotional feeling, or just information to believe. The term, “Believe”, meant entrusting our lives and futures to God with our whole hearts. Believing is an action that one does, not an object or thing that one possesses. Faith is a verb!

Is your faith active – a verb, or inactive – a noun? Is your faith something you use on a daily basis or just something you used one time in the past? Does your belief in Christ make a difference in your life today?

Notice just a few of the many examples found in the book of John.

John 5:24 (NIV)

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and Believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

John 6:28-29 (NIV)

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.”

John 7:37-38 (NIV)

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

2. Faith is not just Receiving; it is also Relying!

The faith that saves is also the faith that sustains! How would you feel if your children only loved you when you gave them something? What if your children loved the gifts you gave them more than you – the parent – who were behind all the giving? You do know that as a Christian, God is our Father and we are His children? If we are not careful, we could treat God the same way we would never want to be treated by our children! We could put our faith in God for the gift of salvation, and then not go to Him for the daily strength we need. If we aren’t careful, we could fall into the religious trap of loving the gifts of God more than the Giver of those gifts!

And by the way, that is not even biblical faith! True faith not only saves, it sustains! As we just mentioned, biblical faith is a verb. Belief is not just something you know; it is something that grows! And pardon the rhyme, but faith is also something that shows! Faith is like a muscle, the more you use it the stronger it gets! And as you will see throughout Scripture, a faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted! This is what James means when he writes:

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:2 that God is the author and the finisher of our faith. It is essential that we keep moving forward to be all that God desires of us. Steve Morrison shares this story:

The Australian coat of arms pictures two creatures--the emu, a flightless bird, and the kangaroo. These two animals were chosen because they share a characteristic that appealed to the Australian citizens. Both the emu and kangaroo can move only forward. The emu's three-toed foot causes it to fall if it tries to go backwards, and the kangaroo is prevented from moving in reverse because of its large tail. Those who truly choose to follow Jesus become like the emu and kangaroo, moving forward.

In the area of believing Jesus, **How’s your Heart?** How is your present-day faith in God standing up to the testing times? Are you moving forward in faith?

Hattiesburg Community Church
Belonging
The Meaning of Membership



At HCC, we say **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** The word **“heart”** shows up a lot in God’s Word: 863 times in the NASB, 963 in the KJV, and 791 in the NIV. That’s a lot of matter about the heart! That’s because the heart is what matters!! So around here, we ask this question often, **“How’s your heart?”** The heart in Scripture is not the fist-shaped organ that pumps blood to the body. The heart is the seat of emotions where life takes place. It is the total being – Body, Soul, and Spirit – of who you are! The Bible states in Proverbs 4:23 (NLT). **“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”**

“Continually” means “very often, at frequent intervals.” And we all know what **“Changing”** means. Spiritually, is your heart constantly moving and beating without interruption? Therefore, we do Heart Check Ups around here at HCC. One of the beginning Heart Check Ups has to do with your membership in a local church.

Membership Myths

The reality is we think of membership like belonging to a club, or like the old American Express commercial where “membership has its privileges.” That is not the way the Bible refers to membership. In fact, in 1 Corinthians, Paul doesn’t say the church is *like* a body. He says the church *is* a body.

1. The Church is a Body!

1 Corinthians 10:17 expresses, **“And though we are many . . . we are one body.”** Two chapters later, in 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul exclaims, **“The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.”** The phrase he uses to describe the individual connectedness is we are “members of the body.”

2. This Body is Biblical!

In Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth, we discover that they were putting people out of the body. The Bible teaches that we can be connected to the body, and we can be apart from the body. Therefore, membership in a local body of believers is a biblical concept.

The Biblical word “member” is more related to the medical word “member” than it is to the common cultural term. For example, if you have unfortunately lost a finger or toe in an accident, you would call that *dismembered*. That’s the actual technical term. A member of your body was separated from the body. That is a tragic thing. It’s also tragic when part of the Body of Christ is separated and missing from The Body.

3. The Body needs to Be Connected!

Today, Lone Ranger Christians are all too common. But people need membership commitment to a Christian community. This is not just for the benefit of the faith community, but also for the uplifting of the individual believer!

So Membership Matters!

Membership is not to say, “I’m a part of a club.” Membership means, “I am part of The Body of Christ.” Membership is a scriptural expression of a covenant connectedness to Christ and His Church. When we are redeemed, we are placed in The Body! When we are placed in The Body, we receive a transfer!!

Colossians 1:13-14 (NLT)

For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Our kingdom has a King! His name is Jesus!!

The King has subjects! That’s us, His kids!

And His Kingdom has a community together where we are connected as God’s people.

Here we call that HCC.

How’s your Heart?

What’s your next Spiritual Heart Check Up?

So how do I become a part of The Body of Christ at HCC?

You have to be a saved, child of God to join His Family as the Body of Christ. At a prior point in your life, you turned from your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

- **By Baptism**

You can join by following the example of Christ and being water baptized. (Please see our handout on Baptism.) You can call the church office and set up an appointment with one of our Pastors to discuss this next spiritual heart check-up in your **Heart Continually Changing!**

- **By Statement of Faith**

You can also join The Body at HCC, if you are a believer and have been baptized, by a simple Statement of your Faith. We will take your word on what God has done and is doing in your life! You can move forward during any Invitation time at the end of a Worship Service and speak to one of our pastors about joining.

Hattiesburg Community Church
Water Baptism
The Symbol of Surrender



HCC also stands for **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** “How’s your heart?”

your heart spiritually taking the next right beat? Another first Heart Check Up has to do with Water Baptism.

Is

Who’s on His Team?

Wearing a sports uniform tells everyone whose team you are on! A wedding ring shows everyone you are committed to your spouse and to your marriage. So spiritually, who is part of His Body? How do we know who is in the Family of Faith?! The answer – Water Baptism!

1. Baptism Identifies you with Christ!

Baptism symbolizes that you are committed to Christ and are part of The Body of Christ.

Romans 6:3 (NLT)

Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death?

Baptism doesn’t save you; it shows you have been saved! It is a powerful symbol of surrender!

2. Baptism Illustrates Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

When a believer is immersed below the surface of the water, it illustrates the death and burial of Jesus Christ. As the person is raised up out of the water, it symbolizes the resurrection of our Risen Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NLT)

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

3. Baptism is an Image of your new life in Christ!

Baptism pictures the death of your old sinful life and resurrection of a new life in Christ!

Romans 6:4 (NLT)

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

At HCC, we say you are “Raised to Walk New!”

As you are being raised out of the water, a great picture of resurrection and new life is being displayed!

So Baptism Matters!

The New Testament (Greek) word for Baptism is “baptizo.” By definition, this word means, “To dip or submerge.” Only a submerged body can represent a death and burial. And as you are being raised up out of the water, it is a celebration of an empty tomb and the resurrection reality found in Jesus Christ!!

In the early church, baptism was an essential part of identifying you with Christ and His Body – The Church!

Matthew 3:16-17 (NLT)

After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy.”

Our kingdom has a King! His name is Jesus!!

The King has subjects! That’s us, His kids!

And His Kingdom has a community together where we are connected as God’s people.

Here we call that HCC.

How’s your Heart?

What’s your next Spiritual Heart Check Up?

So how will you be baptized?

If you want to take the next Heart Check Up in your spiritual journey by following Jesus in Water Baptism, here are your next steps.

Call or email the church office and set up a time to speak to one of our pastors. We want to answer any questions you may have and also hear your story in His Story!

After meeting with an HCC Pastor, we will set up a time for your baptism. At the time of your Symbol of Surrender, you will be asked to walk into a baptismal pool. The pastor will already be waiting in the water. He will announce to those present your commitment and desire to follow Christ in baptism. Next, he will immerse you into the water, and will bring you up out of the water. You will be **Raised to Walk New!**

Hattiesburg Community Church
The Lord's Supper
A Reminder to Remember



At HCC, we say **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** That statement reminds you often that God wants a personal relationship with you. God not only wants to save you from your sins; He also wants to strengthen you as you grow and mature in your walk with Him. So, we ask this question often, **“How’s your heart?”** The Bible is full of Scripture that talks about God and your heart! That’s is because Jesus really wants to change your heart!

The Bible states in Psalms 37:4 (NIV), **“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”** One way to delight yourself in the Lord is to remember the great sacrifice Jesus made to rescue you from your sins. We need reminding. Sometimes, in fact, we need **“A Reminder to Remember.”** Therefore, we do Heart Check Ups here at HCC. One of the Heart Check Ups has to do with your participation in the Lord’s Supper.

The Significance of the Supper

Our Lord gave us 2 main ways to identify with Him as a Church Family. He gave us Baptism to identify in a one-time public confession that we have been born again into His Family. And Jesus gave us The Lord’s Supper as a continual reminder of the sacrifice that makes salvation possible. 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 gives us a great look at The Lord’s Supper.

1. The Lord’s Supper is for people who have been Saved.

1 Corinthians 11:27 states, **“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.”**

So at HCC, we believe that saved people should participate in The Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner. A person who has yet to receive the salvation Christ offers doesn’t understand fully what The Supper represents. So The Lord’s Supper is for people who have been born again into His Family.

2. The Lord’s Supper is a Symbol.

When Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room and shared this supper with them, it was to be for them a symbol after He was gone of His love for them. They had celebrated this supper the same time every year for a long time. It was called the Passover Meal. The Jewish people had remembered God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt by eating this meal together. The death angel had “passed over” the homes of those who had the blood of a lamb on the doorpost of their homes. Jesus said this meal before His death was now the “new covenant.” This meant that Jesus our Passover Lamb was the final and perfect Lamb that would be sacrificed to give His children victory over death! Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 11:25, **“This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”** So, at HCC, we believe The Lord’s Supper provides special symbols of God’s love for us.

The Symbols of The Supper

The Lord's Supper has two very important symbols. If you looked up the definition of symbols you would find the following: "A thing that represents or stands for something else." Biblical symbols are outward expressions of something significant inside someone's soul.

1. The Bread represents His Body!

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 expresses, **"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** When we eat the bread, we remember that Jesus offered His body for us!

2. The Cup represents His Blood!

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 states, **"In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."** When we take the cup, we remember the blood that Jesus shed for us!

The Lord's Supper Matters!

Every time we take The Lord's Supper, we proclaim the Lord's death until He returns to call His children home! It is a special and significant time in our hearts growing in the Lord! We need to prepare our hearts by examining ourselves each time we come to The Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:28-29 (NLT)

"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

How's your Heart?

If you want to take the next Heart Check Up in your spiritual journey by participating in The Lord's Supper, here are your next steps.

Watch for announcements for upcoming Lord's Supper Services on the worship screens and our church's website. (thehcc.website) We will offer the Lord's Supper at least once every three months. The week before those special opportunities, prepare your heart spiritually to come to His table in an appropriate manner. Confess any sin to God in prayer. Repent and turn from your sin! And then come to HCC with a prepared heart to participate. As you participate, worship God through remembering His body and blood as you take of each symbol with your church family. Also, if you have children that attend HCC, please use this handout to guide discussion with them prior to each Lord's Supper.



The greatest commandment in Scripture starts with loving the Lord with all of our hearts! So it just makes logical sense that if our vision is **“Hearts Continually Changing!”**, true worship must be at the center of it! In the area of true biblical worship, how would you answer this question: **“How’s your heart?”**

Is worship something you think you can just turn on for 30 minutes once a week during a “Worship Service” or is it possible that serving Him throughout every day is what real worship is all about?

1. A Definition of Worship!

A great definition of worship comes from Pastor Rick Ousley. He defines worship this way: **Worship is our response to God for who He is and what He has done, expressed in the things we say and the way we live.** There is a lot of theology going on in that definition.

First of all, worship is a response. David Platt expresses worship as, “The rhythm of revelation and response.” God reveals Himself and we respond. Eight times in Scripture, we read that when God revealed Himself to a man, that man fell down on his face before Him. Bowing down before God is worshipping Him. It is one of many responses to God.

And notice from the definition that we respond to all that God is and what He has done. When things don’t go our way and trials invade, many times we stop worshipping God. But God doesn’t owe us anything. And isn’t Calvary enough? Isn’t who He is more than enough reason to worship Him?!

Secondly, worship is a verb, it is something you do! The definition ends with, “. . . **expressed in the things we say and the way we live.**” Worship has action to it! We have a problem with that in our culture. Most of us grew up with worship as a spectator sport. Many church goers treat worship as something they sat in or sat through. Many people grew up evaluating worship rather than experiencing worship. Worship was something they watched instead of being their own personal response. However, the Bible is clear that true worshippers actively express worship and that true worship also involves the way we live.

Psalm 95:6 (NKJV)

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

Psalm 96:8-9 (NIV)

8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and come into His courts.

9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.

Psalm 47:1 (NIV)

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)

But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

2. The Decision of When to Worship!

Many of us also grew up believing that worship was a corporate gathering at an assigned time and place. But biblical worship is an all day, every-day privilege for the believer! A key truth of Scripture is that there never has to be a moment when I stop being a worshipper and there is never a situation that prohibits me from worshipping.

Hebrews 13:15-16 (NIV)

15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Psalms 145:2 (NKJV)

Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

Did you notice in the verses above the phrases, “continually offer” and “every day.” You can make a daily decision to continually offer God praise by the things you say and the way you live. But worship is a decision you have to make!

Deuteronomy 32:3 (NIV)

I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!

In the area of worshipping Jesus, **How’s your Heart?** Are you making daily decisions to respond to God in a way that gives Him glory and praise?!

A lot more can be said about worship, but that is a good place to start for now. Focus back on our vision of **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** I will leave you with the words to Matt Redmond’s song, “The Heart of Worship.”

**“When the music fades, all is stripped away, and I simply come.
Longing just to bring, something that's of worth, that will bless Your heart.**

**I'll bring You more than a song, for a song in itself is not what You have required.
You search much deeper within through the way things appear.
You're looking into my heart**

**I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about You,
it's all about You, Jesus!
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it, when it's all about You,
it's all about You, Jesus!”**

Hattiesburg Community Church
Prayer
Facedown before our Father



The only One who can change your heart is God! And the primary way we communicate with Him is through prayer. Therefore, prayer is essential to our **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** We discuss prayer often in terms of “our prayer life.” This phrase is important because I believe that prayer is a huge part of the Christian life and that prayer is a constant dialogue with God. If you were to let the Great Physician check your heart today in the area of your prayer life, **“How’s your heart?”**

Pastor Rick Warren says, “Prayer is the greatest use of my words.” If that is true, and I believe it is, what does prayer mean in the life of a believer?

1. Prayer is a Dialogue!

Many of us are prone to approach prayer as a monologue. In other words, we only pray when we need something from God. We might have a daily prayer time of five minutes a day where we just give God our prayer list. How would you feel as a parent if your children only spoke to you when they needed something from you? You would feel as if your children didn’t love you and that they just used you! If we are not careful, we could treat our Heavenly Father the same way. God wants us to speak with Him because we love Him; not just because we need something. Sometimes we pray for everything we think we need, and we forget that a relationship with Him is all that matters.

Others approach prayer as just sitting for hours and meditating. Some clear their minds just waiting for God to say something. They sit before Him, but they never share with Him. They think that a relationship with God can only be found through a certain posture or practice.

However, prayer was meant to be a dialogue; not a monologue. Prayer is a both speaking and listening. That’s how a relationship works. Billy Graham said it best when he said, “Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.” Charles Stanley calls prayer, “The Ultimate Conversation.” Notice the dialogue of prayer in the following verses:

Psalm 120:1 (NLT)

“I took my troubles to the Lord; I cried out to Him, and He answered my prayer.”

Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

“Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

John 10:14-15, 27 (NIV)

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me— ¹⁵just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—and I lay down My life for the sheep. . . ²⁷My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.

Prayer was always intended to be a conversation between you and God. It is only when you learn to speak and listen, that you open up unlimited potential in your prayer life.

2. Prayer is a Delight!

It is amazing to me that the God of this Universe listens to me when I call out to Him! If I told you I had God's cell number; would you use it? Absolutely! Who wouldn't want to speak to their Creator who has the power to do anything? Every Christian has something better than God's cell phone! We have the privilege of prayer! You can call out to Him faster than you can hit a number on your speed dial!

God holds the plan for your life, and you must speak with Him in order to discover it! When you take hold of this privilege, God unlocks all sorts of power in your daily life!

James 5:16 (The Message)

“The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.”

Someone once said, “He who kneels before God can stand before anyone.” There is tremendous power through prayer, so grab hold of your opportunity every day and pray!!

- Go to God when you are in trouble! It has been said, “When God's warriors go down on their knees, the battle is not over. It has just begun.”
- Go to God when everything is great! 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reads, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” Or Psalm 136:1, “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever.”
- Go to God simply because of who He is. God is love. He is Peace. In Exodus 3, God told Moses His name is “I AM.” Whatever you need, God is that! Pray to Him and listen to Him solely because He is God.

3. Prayer should be Daily!

When the Bible speaks of our relationship with God, it describes it with words like, “Often, continually, always, and daily.” The following verse is just one of many examples of this.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV)

Pray continually,

You can call on God anytime and from anywhere. Prayer can be a constant dialogue with your Lord if you invoke your privilege to talk daily with your Savior. Someone once said, “The value of persistent prayer is not that He will hear us, but that we finally hear Him.” God wants to speak to us. He is a God who reveals Himself to us if we choose to listen. The Psalmist stated:

Psalm 116:2 (NLT)

“Because He bends down to listen; I will pray as long as I have breath.”

God actually listens when His people pray! Why wouldn't we take the breath that He has given us and use it most to speak with Him!

How's your Heart when it comes to your prayer life? Are you in a constant dialogue with God throughout the day? Do you perceive prayer as a great privilege to have a conversation with almighty God? Will you be persistent in your prayer life and pray to Him continually throughout all occasions? Check your heart and make sure your prayer life is healthy!

Hattiesburg Community Church
Bible Study
Body Building of the Believer



God has revealed Himself to us through His Word. One of the best ways to hear God speak is to study His Word! The study of God's Word is another key element in **"Hearts Continually Changing!"** If God checked on your level of Bible Study today, **"How's your heart?"**

Bible Study is in fact the Body Building of the Believer. No body builder would continue to be one without regular training. All body builders know that muscles grow as you continue to work out. The same concept is true in the believer's life. We have to continue to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12). And we can't work out spiritually without the regular training of Bible Study.

1. The Importance of Bible Study!

Billy Graham once said, "One of the greatest needs in the church today is to come back to the Scriptures as the basis of authority, and to study them prayerfully in dependence on the Holy Spirit." It has also been said that, "Satan's greatest weapon is man's ignorance of God's Word." There is a great need for Bible Study.

The Scriptures themselves shout out the importance of studying them. The Bible talks a lot about studying the Bible!

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Joshua 1:8 (ESV)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Therefore, the Bible itself speaks of Bible Study as an essential part of the spiritual growth of a believer. I would add that it is impossible to grow without it!

2. The Influence of Bible Study!

Bible Study effects so many aspects of our spiritual journey. Just notice the following:

- It is through the Word of God that we have faith to begin with. Romans 10:17 says that “Faith comes through hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
- If we are going astray, the Word of God corrects us. For example, if you find yourself complaining and murmuring, then Philippians 2:14-15 could be helpful. It reads, “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”
- The study of Scripture helps us say, “No” to temptation. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:11, “I have hidden Your Word into my heart, that I may not sin against You.”
- If we need wisdom or understanding, the Word of God instructs us. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding . . .”
- The more we study the Word of God, the better we know the God of the Word. Paul said it this way in Philippians 3:10, “I want to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.”

The list could be endless of the great influence of God’s Holy Word. It reminds me of an old story I heard about a circuit riding preacher and his son. The circuit riding preacher entered a church building with his young son and dropped a coin into the offering box in the back of the church. Not many came that Sunday, and those who did didn't seem too excited about what was said. After the service, the preacher and son walked to the back, and he emptied the box. Out fell that one coin that the preacher himself had put in. The young boy looked up at his dad and said, "Dad, if you'd have put more in, you'd have gotten more out!" This humorous story illustrates a truth about Bible Study. The more we put into the study of Scripture, the more we will get out of our Christian life.

3. The Impact of Bible Study!

Bible Study has an enormous impact on the spiritual depth of the believer. Dwight L. Moody believed, “The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.” The Prince of Preachers, Charles H. Spurgeon, once said, “Bible Study is the metal that forges the Christian.”

Psalm 62:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from Him.

² Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

If we are to find rest in God, we must know the God well who is our rock and fortress. And the primary way He reveals Himself to us is through His written Word. The more we study His Word, the more He works through us to impact our lives.

How’s your Heart when it comes to Bible Study? Do you have a passion to study God’s Word to know Him better and to discover His will for your life?!



God has commanded us to go and make disciples. Discipleship has been God’s plan from the beginning and Jesus modeled this plan with His disciples. This spiritual discipline may be the most overlooked and ignored command of the modern church. The vision of **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** can only occur if we are becoming the disciples that God has called us to be. Here is a tough question in regards to you as a disciple: **“How’s your heart?”**

In other words, are you being discipled so that God can continuously change your heart?

1. The Command for Discipleship!

Before Jesus left His first disciples, He gave them their spiritual marching orders. They are found in what we know as The Great Commission in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

The main verb in The Great Commission is the command, “make disciples.” All of the Great Commission is important: going, baptizing, and teaching. However, all of these participles in the Greek are in relationship to the main verb. You could read the text this way: “As you are going, as you are baptizing, and as you are teaching; make disciples!

I saw a poster the other day that said, “Christ said, ‘Go and make disciples.’ He didn’t say, ‘Go and make converts.’” I like to say it this way: “Jesus never said, ‘Get people to make decisions.’ He said, ‘Go and help them become disciples.’” Therefore, discipleship is a clear command from Jesus Christ to His followers.

2. The Concept of Discipleship!

Since we are commanded to go make disciples; what exactly is a disciple? The word “disciple” in the Greek is the term μαθητής (mathētēs), which commonly refers to any “student” or “apprentice.” The word actually means “a learner.”

This concept can be seen more clearly when studying the education of boys in first century Judaism. Their early education centered in the home around the Torah. The Torah was the first five books of the Old Testament. The Torah was taught primarily by the Father to his son. During the time of Jesus, there is ample evidence to suggest that primary schools had developed to protect against the influence of Hellenism. After a boy turned 13 years old, there was no formal education. If that boy wanted to continue training in preparation for being a judge, teacher, scribe, or head of a synagogue, he would continue his study of the Torah as a disciple under a certain scholar called a Rabbi. A prime example of this would be Paul. The apostle Paul left his home in Tarsus to study the Torah under a famous Rabbi in Jerusalem known as Gamaliel. This can be found recorded in Acts 5:34 and Acts 22:3.

Thus, when Jesus chose His first disciples, they would have known of this process of studying under a Rabbi for continued learning. If we are to follow this model of discipleship, we have to teach people what it means to follow Jesus in a small group in deep relationship over a long period of time. This notion is also seen in Titus Chapter 2.

Titus 2:1-8 (NIV)

¹You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ²Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

³Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. ⁶Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

3. The Context for Discipleship!

Jesus gave the invitation, “Follow Me” thirteen times in the Gospels. This invitation could be accepted, or denied, but not ignored. The context for true discipleship is found in those words, “Follow Me.” Notice what happens right after the miraculous catch of fish recorded in Luke 5.

Luke 5:10-11 (ESV)

... And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

And as they followed Jesus, He taught them discipleship. He showed them how to follow Him so that they could then teach other people to follow Jesus. Discipleship wasn’t done in a 4-week sermon series or a 12-week class. It was a process that for these first disciples took three years.

Matthew 4:19 (ESV)

And He said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Jesus was telling those first disciples, “Follow Me and I will turn you into something that you are not just yet. But follow Me and you will get there.” He was saying, “Follow Me and I will teach you what it means to be a disciple and you will learn how to disciple others.” For those men, following Jesus meant leaving behind their old way of life and learning a new way. Ultimately, it meant living a life that looked like Jesus – imitating His character, priorities, and actions.

Jesus offers that same invitation still today. He still calls believers to follow Him. Therefore, **How’s your Heart** when it comes to discipleship? Do you have a passion to study God’s Word to know Him better and to discover His will for your life?! Have you been discipled, and will you get involved in discipleship?! We all need to obey His command!

Hattiesburg Community Church
Fellowship
**The Closeness of
our Community**



There is a growing social isolation in our world today. Many people sit behind computer screens and cell phones for most of their communication. They live in gated communities and can shop online even for groceries and have everything delivered to their front doors. There is a growing epidemic of loneliness in our society. Yet, we were all created for community. We are built for relationships and biblical community is essential for **“Hearts Continually Changing!”**. We are better together. This begs the question, **“How’s your heart?”** Is your heart lonely or is it in fellowship with a community of Christ followers?

1. The God of Fellowship!

The Bible teaches that God has existed eternally in community. It is the mystery of the Trinity. While the Trinity is difficult to fully explain, one thing is for certain – one God exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. A student of the Word can see all the Trinity at work in creation.

Genesis 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

I know what you are saying after reading the Scripture above. You see God the Father, and God the Spirit, but where is God the Son. He is in verse 3. The clue is in the words, “God said.” John 1 finishes the rest of the puzzle.

John 1:1-5, 14 (ESV)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.³All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word is Jesus. Colossians 1:15-16 reveals that it is through God the Son that the world came into being. Therefore, from the beginning of creation, we learn that God exists in community. He is the “God of Fellowship” because He exists in community.

And then God created us in His own image. He created us in the image of community. Therefore, we have a longing built in us for fellowship. Notice the Trinity found in the statement that we are made in His image.

Genesis 1:26 -27 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness . . . ²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

After Genesis 1 and 2 comes the Fall in Genesis 3. And while we were created for community, that community was lost because of sin. Sin drove apart what God created to be together in community. However, God is a restorer of everything that is broken. And Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a desire to restore us into what we were originally created to be – in community!

2. The Goal of Fellowship!

You can see this restoration back into community all over Scripture.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (ESV)

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Ephesians 2:18-22 (ESV)

¹⁸ For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

We belong in a family for fellowship. And please don't confuse fellowship with just hanging out with people and eating. Many churches think that if they shook hands and ate dinner on the grounds, that fellowship took place. The biblical meaning of fellowship is much deeper than just hanging out together. That is because being a Christian is not just believing, it is belonging. We need each other and we were created for true fellowship. Therefore, closeness of community occurs as we love each other with the love of Christ and forgive one another because in Christ God has forgiven us. True biblical fellowship develops as we worship God together, and as we take Communion together. This closeness exists as we are real and authentic with each other in a family of faith!

One way to see this biblical community is to study the “one another” passages in Scripture. These verses give us an overview of biblical community. Here are just a few:

- Love one another (John 13:34, 15:12)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Serve one another (John 13:1-20; Galatians 5:13)
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

As we close, test your closeness in community. **How's your Heart?** Are you lonely or are you living in community?



God has called us to serve Him! It is a privilege and the real motive for any ministry. Jesus modeled servanthood to His disciples over and over again. And then He called them to serve the same way He had demonstrated to them. Most believers have never been taught what Scripture teaches about serving. Many serve God out of duty and not delight. As you remember our vision of **“Hearts Continually Changing!”**, **“How’s your heart?”** in the area of serving the Lord?

Most Christians know that they are to love God with all of their hearts, but did you know we are to serve Him that way too? Notice the following Scripture:

Deuteronomy 11:13 (NIV)

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul—

You could say that loving God goes hand-in-hand with serving Him! And all throughout Scripture, we read of those who served God. You could say the theme of God rescuing the world was done through servants.

1. Servants throughout Scripture!

Tucked away ever so subtly is this picture of serving in Scripture. We know that many of the Old Testament saints served the Lord. For example, Noah served the Lord by obediently building an ark before anyone had ever seen rain. But have you noticed how many Old Testament heroes are called servants?

- **Abraham was called God’s servant.**

Psalm 105:42 (NIV)

For He remembered his holy promise given to His servant Abraham.

- **Moses was referred to as God’s servant.**

Deuteronomy 34:5 (NIV)

And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said.

- **The Lord called David, “My servant.”**

2 Samuel 7:8 (NIV)

Now then, tell My servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel.’

All of these servants were important, but even their great service couldn’t restore lost humanity back into a right relationship with God. All of these servants foreshadowed the only Servant who could bring redemption.

2. The Savior as Servant!

Isaiah prophesied about “The Suffering Servant” in what are called “Servant Songs” in Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50, and 52-53. The following is a brief example of one of those songs.

Isaiah 52:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ See, My Servant will act wisely; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at Him — His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and His form marred beyond human likeness—

Isaiah 53:5-7(NIV)

⁵But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by His wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open his mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open his mouth.

All of these “Servant Songs” point to the One True Faithful Servant who fully atoned for the sins of mankind. The religious leaders didn’t take Jesus’ life from Him. Jesus willingly laid His life down as a Servant! Therefore, don’t miss this very important fact. Jesus came as The Servant! Yes, He modeled it through washing the disciple’s feet and taught it through parables; but make no mistake – He also is The Servant! One of the many things I love about Jesus is that He never calls us to be anything that He Himself wasn’t.

3. The Significance of Servanthood!

The significance of Servanthood to Jesus is revealed in each of His purpose statements recorded in the gospels. Two of them deal with being a servant directly and the other two were made possible because Jesus served!

John 10:10 (NIV)

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

The Old Testament servants all pointed to The Suffering Servant – our Savior. And our Savior calls us to live a life of service. **How’s your Heart** when it comes to serving?

Hattiesburg Community Church
Giving
The Test of our Testimony



When you go to the doctor, sometimes they run tests. Tests always come back with results. The only time in all of Scripture that God tells us to test Him is in the area of giving.

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

We should always continue to grow in our faith and have a desire to have **“Hearts Continually Changing!”** In order for that to happen, we should be able to pass the one test given in Scripture - the test of Giving! **“How’s your heart?”** What are the results of your tests?

1. The One Giving the Test is a Giver!

You are never more like Jesus than when you give. God is first and foremost a giver. John 3:16 begins with, “For God so love the world that He gave . . .” God loves you so much that He gives. It is His nature to be a giver. And He gave us the greatest gift of all in salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 explains that salvation is by grace through faith, and it is all a gift from God.

2. Tithing is a Test!

In the text above from Malachi, God says, “Test Me in this.” I believe the test is in two parts.

Question #1 on this test deals with the **Principle**. The Principle is the “whole tithe.” The whole tithe would be 10% to the Lord. Why would God test us in this area of our life? God tests us regarding our possessions because the idol most people put their trust in is their income. This test has more to do with your trust than your tithe! Every time you get paid, there is a test of where your true trust lies. Tithing has more to do with your faith than your finances.

The Bible is clear on the fact that you can’t serve two masters.

Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

It doesn’t say, “You won’t serve God and money.” It says, “You can’t!”

Question #2 on this test deals with the **Place**.

Where will you bring the tithe? Will you bring it to His storehouse so that there will be food in His house? Will you trust Him that He knows best where the tithe is to be brought? And will you trust His Church to be that storehouse to feed people spiritually?

3. The Test of our Testimony!

You have probably heard it said, “You can’t have a testimony without a test.” Well if that is true, then the one test in Scripture ought to be where we will build our greatest testimony. We have a great opportunity while we live life to impact this world for Jesus Christ. We also have a chance to make a difference for Him after we die, if we leave the right legacy behind. It all has to do with the desires of our heart. Jesus Himself said:

Matthew 6:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Is your treasure in your treasure? Or is your treasure your relationship with Jesus Christ? That might be the biggest test question of your life. That’s why Jesus tests us in the area of our tithes. If you can lay down life’s biggest idol, God can take back His rightful place in your heart! God will never have all of us until we trust Him with everything! Will you trust Him in the area of your tithes?

This “Heart Check Up” goes directly with the one that precedes it on “Serving.” You won’t serve the Lord if your heart is in your possession. You will be too busy storing up treasures on earth to serve God and store up treasures in heaven. It all has to do with where your heart is! That’s why we need to regularly check our hearts spiritually. And the test of our testimony is who really is the Lord of our lives. Do you bow down at the altar of the one true God or are you worshipping your possessions?

And the tithe is just a starting place, not a stopping place, when it comes to giving! I call it the “Second Mile Mentality.” It comes straight from God’s Word and from the lips of Jesus.

Matthew 5:41 (NIV)

If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

When Jesus uttered this statement in Matthew 5, you have got to notice something. The Scripture does not just simply say, “If someone asks you go with them a mile, go with them two.” The literal words say, “If you are forced to go a mile, . . .” It is not optional here. This was birthed out of the reality of the influence of Rome on the culture of that day. Roman soldiers would walk from place to place in their daily duties. They carried with them a pack which held all their necessities. And it could be very heavy and burdensome. The Roman soldier had the privilege to take any common citizen under their domain, and command them to carry that pack for a mile. They had to follow orders, or they would pay a serious price. They could be imprisoned or beaten and even killed. That is where the background of this text on giving originates. If you are commanded to go a mile, then you go beyond the legal limit of what is required, and you go a second mile. You don’t have an attitude of giving just because you do what you are supposed to do. You have the attitude of giving like Jesus when you show the second mile mentality.

Therefore, **How’s your Heart** when it comes to giving?

Hattiesburg Community Church
Going
The Feet of our Faith



You can't even spell Gospel without the word "Go." And before Jesus ascended into heaven, He used this word often.

Mark 16:15 (NIV)

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

By the language of the New Testament, the Great Commission can be translated, "As you are going . . ." In other words, God already expects us to be going and spreading the Good News that Jesus saves! This is the last thing Jesus told His disciples. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells them, "You will be my witness . . ." The last words from Jesus should carry enough weight that we act on them. If we have **"Hearts Continually Changing!"**, we should be carrying the Good News of Jesus to a lost world! In the area of going, **"How's your heart?"** Are you expecting other people to witness and go, or do you see your responsibility to share the message of Christ?

1. Live Souled Out!

I am sold on the fact that believers should be souled out for Jesus! Jesus gave us His all! Why should we give Him any less in return? It is essential that we carry the Gospel to the world. We wouldn't be believers if someone had not told us; and the lost won't be saved unless someone tells them!

Romans 10:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

We need more beautiful feet for Jesus! There is a desperate need for Christians to go and share their faith. The purpose Jesus came was to seek and save the lost! Jesus paid it all and ascended to heaven and is sitting at the right hand of Father God. And He is watching to see if the saved will go in the Holy Spirit's power and become His hands and feet to the world.

We have the same mission of our Savior Jesus Christ. Please understand that we cannot save anyone; only Christ can accomplish that. However, Christ speaks and works through His children to spread the Good News. Jesus gives this very important message to His disciples.

John 20:21 (NIV)

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you."

The resurrected Savior shared a resurrection reality! He told His disciples, "The same way the Father sent Me is the same way I am sending you." The following are Jesus' own purpose statements from the gospels: He came to seek and save the lost. He came to give abundant life. He came not to be served, but to serve. That's how the Father sent Jesus. And that is exactly how Jesus sends us out! Therefore, live souled out!

2. Live Sent!

Research shows that most Christians have never shared their faith. Studies indicate that 90 percent of evangelicals have never shared their faith with anyone outside of their family. What a sad testimony to a group of people that have been sent out by God. Most who carry the name Christians don't carry out the commission to go. Many do not live sent!

Our God is a sending God. He sent His best into the world to save us. Jesus is referred to as "sent" forty-four times in the New Testament. The following is just one example.

Mark 9:37 (NLT)

"Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on My behalf welcomes Me, and anyone who welcomes Me welcomes not only Me but also my Father who sent Me."

Pastor JD Greear said, "The question is no longer if we are called, only where and how. The call to follow Him is the call to be sent and to send." David Platt stated, "Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every unsaved person this side of hell." Yet it was Carl F.H. Henry who warned, "The Gospel is only Good News if it gets there on time."

Some years ago, a magazine carried a series of pictures that graphically portrayed a horrific story. The first picture was of a large wheat field in western Kansas. The second picture shows a distressed mother standing on the front porch of a farmhouse in the center of that huge wheat field. The accompanying story explained that, when she was not looking, her four-year-old son had wandered away from the house and got lost in the wheat field. The mother and father had frantically looked all day, but the little boy was too short to be seen over the wheat. The third picture showed dozens of friends and neighbors who had heard of the situation and had joined hands the next morning to make a long human chain as they walked through the field searching for the boy. The final devastating picture was of the heartbroken father holding his lifeless son who had been found too late and had died of exposure. The caption underneath the last picture read, "O God, O God, if only we had joined hands sooner!"

It is time for the members of Christ to unite around the mission of our Lord! The church today seems to be arguing over minor issues while ignoring the mandate from our King! And King Jesus is coming back. The Good News of Jesus can't be late! And we want to be found faithful when He comes. May we never forget that we are to be going Christians for a coming Christ.

Therefore, **How's your Heart** when it comes to going? Maybe I should also ask, "How are your feet?" Would your Lord say, "They are beautiful?" If not, then may He change our hearts so that we can continually be more like Him!