

# The Biblical Heart Part 3

By Wendy Wood



We have seen that the heart is a major theme in scripture and that the thoughts, words, and actions of a person come from within their own heart. This is vital to understand because Scripture says that we are to love God with our whole heart. Scripture says that God will give us a new heart when we believe and trust him. This blog post will demonstrate these important aspects of the heart.

First, God is the One who opens a person's heart to the knowledge and understanding of who he is. Salvation begins with God as he shines his light into our dark hearts and we see our need for him. On our own, we are darkened in understanding and in no way seek out God. Only God can make a heart willing and open to him.

We see in **2 Corinthians 4:6** that God initiates a relationship with us by opening up our hearts. **“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** God gives the light of knowledge. Romans 3 is clear that no one seeks after God. A saving relationship with God is initiated by him

when he makes knowledge of himself beautiful to us and we see our need for him.

Another way that Scripture talks about God's work in the heart is to say he opens the eyes of the blind. As 2 Corinthians 4 and Ephesians 2 says, we are darkened in understanding before the Lord opens our eyes. The darkness represents a total lack of understanding who God is and a total lack of seeking God. **Psalm 146:8** tells us "**God opens the eyes of the blind**". God gives sight to see him as loving, gracious, merciful, just, holy, and good. Without God giving sight to see, humans would remain in darkness.

After opening a person's spiritual eyes to see God for who he is, God gives a new believer a new heart. Scripture talks about a believer being a "new creation" and the essential part of that is having a new heart that desires God and the things of God. In **Ezekiel 36:26**, God prophesied what the new covenant would entail. "**And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**" The heart of stone in an unbeliever is a hard heart that is focused on self. When God gives us a new heart of flesh, it is one that he will shape and change to love him and his statutes. The new heart will be convicted of sin and desire to love what God loves.

**Psalm 51:10** adds that God gives a clean heart and a new spirit within a person. "**And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**" A believer receives a clean heart when sin is forgiven through the blood of Christ. The new spirit is one that, again, wants to honor and please God in thought, words, and actions. Only God can give us this new heart.

**Hebrews 10:16** explains the new heart further. "**This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds.**" We as sinners, need God to change our hearts. We have the hope of pleasing God and putting off sin to become more like Christ because God has put his law in a believer's mind and heart.

This change is a life-long process. We are told in **2 Corinthians 3:18** that we are changed “**from one degree of glory to the next**”. We are not made instantly perfect at the point when God gives us a new heart. He chooses to leave our sinful nature which continually makes us humble and dependent on him. As we **behold the glory of the Lord**, as we read, study, and meditate on Christ in scripture, the Holy Spirit is changing our hearts and making us more Christlike.

This new heart has many beautiful characteristics. **Ephesians 1:18** tells us that our **hearts are enlightened**. We see God for the majestic, glorious One that he is!

**Psalm 34:18** tells us that “**The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.**” The new heart is sensitive to sin and is also sensitive to hardship and suffering. The heart that is broken over sin and struggling is close to God. **Psalm 51:17** affirms these same truths. “**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**” God delights when we experience grief and sadness over our sin. It shows our need for a Savior. God gives the heart he desires! What an amazing gift that God provides the heart he loves. We certainly need to continue to be humble and teachable about our sin, but a new heart has the capacity for these on-going changes.

Once God puts this new heart in us, we are able to obey his commands. **Psalm 119:112** says “**I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.**” **Romans 6:18** tells us that believers have become slaves to righteousness. No longer is the believer’s heart a slave to sin and unable to please God, the new heart is set free from the power and penalty of sin to be righteous before God and to do righteous works!

The new heart longs for God. The new heart desires to know more of God and to love God more and more. “**So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**” (**2 Peter 2:1-3**). To say that we long for spiritual milk to to say that we want to read God’s word and learn more of him. David says in **Psalm 42** “**As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my**

**soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”** God gives us a heart that desires him!

With our new believer’s heart, we can be pure and holy before God. As we grow in our love for God and others, it stems from the new heart God has given us. **1 Timothy 1:5** says, **“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”** God makes our hearts pure at the point of justification. Before that, our hearts are darkened and cannot and will not love God. Out of a pure heart, we can please God with our faith and maintain a good conscience knowing that he forgives his children.

The believer loves God. This is the key! Jesus tells us that the first and most important command is to **“love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength” (Matthew 22:37)**. We can only love God because God loved us first. **1 John 4:19** says, **“We love because he first loved us”**. And **John 14:15** says the evidence of our love for God is in our obedience. **“If you love me you will obey my commands.”** Our obedience must flow from a desire to love and please God for it to be honoring him. God loves us first, and our obedience is evidence that he has set his covenantal love on us.

God initiates the relationship with us. He opens our blind eyes. He puts the new heart in us. He continues to change our hearts in the sanctification process. He makes us sensitive to sin. He gives us a desire to please him and sets our hearts free from bondage to sin. God loves us first!

Scripture has so much to say about the heart. Where man looks at the outward appearance, God looks at the heart (**1 Samuel 16:7**). That is why it is essential that biblical counselors deal with the heart.