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As a Man Thinketh in His Heart

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Series: What the Word Says About the Word

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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As a Man Thinketh in His Heart

Father,

You know the very beat of our hearts, every thought that we think, every need that we have. Even in eternity past You knew those needs and prepared to meet them exactly at the precise mini-second in time that would bring the most glory to Your name. We worship You, we adore You, we fall on our faces before You, and surrender to Your sovereignty and to Your grace.

And we acknowledge afresh and anew that apart from You, we can do nothing. But we can do all things through Christ who enables us. So, enable us this morning we pray, to be taught by Your Spirit. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's just imagine that you turn on the ten o'clock news this evening, and the commentator comes on and says there's been an amazing new discovery. Medical science cannot believe what has taken place. A brand-new piece of diagnostic equipment has been discovered that will literally change the scientific world. Nothing since the advent of the x-ray machine has made such an impact, at least for counselors, psychologists and those in the ministry. This will make the X-ray, the MRI and the CAT scan obsolete. Now it doesn't say anything about physical diseases and we'll still need those other machines, but what it does, is scan the mind, filter through all the layers of hypocrisy and legalism and all the artificial religiosity, until it comes to the real you—not what the world thinks you are, not even what you think you are. It sees your thoughts the way God sees them. It sees your motives, your attitudes, and your inner feelings.

Here's what it will do. When you stumble across that person in the hallway at church today that you really can't stand, and you run up to them and hug them and say, "I'm so glad to see you brother," the RYM machine (the Real You Machine) will light up and say "You hypocrite." What you meant to say was, "I hope I never have to see you again. You really get on my nerves." Or you may be sitting across the room from your husband and he may smile and say, "I love you dear." But the RYM may light up

and say, *why did I ever marry that guy, he'll never amount to anything.* The clerk in the store gives you too much change and you smile and say "I can't accept that; you gave me too much." And suddenly the RYM lights up and says, "You should have kept it. He never would have known the difference." Something comes on television that you should never watch and you know it and you begin to comment to those around you about how distasteful and immoral it is, but the RYM light's up and says, "Boy, did I enjoy that." I think you get the picture.

The RYM shows the language you think, not the words you say. The anger you feel, even if you suppress it. The lust that lingers even though you're pretending to be shocked. It shows your attitude toward God for the circumstances in your life, yet, all the while you're going around giving a testimony about all things working together for good. It shows how you really feel about your mother-in-law. It shows how you really feel about witnessing and praying. It erases that pious look in the worship service and flashes across the screen, *how much longer is he going to preach. I'm hungry.* The RYM. Some things we're praying will never become a reality, but we're too late. It already exists. Now we can't see each other's thoughts, hallelujah, but God can. God owns the only RYM and it grieves Him beyond understanding. He calls it a heart machine. Because it really gets to the heart of the matter but it has nothing to do with our ticker, it has to do with our thinker. And hundreds of references are made to it in Scripture, and we're going to be looking at some of those as we try to find the real you.

What we're doing is continuing our look at what the Word of God says about the Word of God. You may think we're taking a side trip today which is kind of common in this class, but I do believe this lesson is a necessity. It's a bridge between the last lesson, which was a look at the need to lay the Scriptures on our hearts, and the next lesson, which will be how to do it.

I began studying for this lesson by looking up verses, and suddenly I began to realize that I'm not sure most of us really understand what the heart is. As we learned two weeks ago and we're reminded of again, we are to or hide or ingrain the Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him. But if I were to stop here this morning, take my little roving microphone and ask ten of you to tell me what the heart is, I bet I would get at least ten different answers. If I were to ask you what it means to have a

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pure heart, I'm not sure we would agree. If I were to ask you if bad things come out of a heart, if a heart feels or thinks, or what's in your heart, I'm not sure we would agree. So, if we're going to talk about putting the Word in your heart, and why we have to put it there, perhaps we better begin by finding out where is the heart, and what is the heart, and it's going to be painful.

I believe this may be one of the most important studies we've ever done as a class. Now, I don't expect you to pay attention because I say that about every Sunday, but this time I really mean it. It's at the heart of the matter. You see for decades the Christian movement has mirrored the Pharisees in so many ways by creating standards of external behavior in order to govern spirituality. And we "evangelicals" decry that movement. But for the most part, we just create new external systems of behavior to replace the old ones. The truth of the matter is, God is not impressed with the outward appearance. He looks at the heart. I wonder if we should do the same thing.

What is the heart? We always begin with the definition so we know what we are talking about.

- The heart it is the real you, behind the mask. It's made up of mind, emotion, and will.
- The heart is the part of you nobody sees.
- It is what you think when you think no one knows what you are thinking. That's the heart.
- The heart is what you would do if there were no restraints and no consequences.

It is your mind—what you think about—without the intervention of the Spirit of God. Every thought you would think about would be selfish. It's what you would do if there were no restraints or consequences—every decision you make would be selfish. You say, "Well, wait a minute. You don't know me. I don't see myself that way. I was a good person before I came to Christ." That's a very common statement, but it's a lie. Jeremiah is a good place to start. I don't know if you remember Jeremiah 17, but in a prior lesson, we looked at the early part of that chapter and it describes a man or woman,

...whose hope is the Lord.

(Jeremiah 17:7b NKJV)

And then it says he will become like,

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...a tree planted by the waters. (Jeremiah 17:8a NKJV)

Now, look at the next verse.

The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV)

The place where we are supposed to put the Word into our lives, is the heart. It doesn't sound like a very pretty place. But, if I were to ask most of you how you feel about your heart, you might not say that. In fact, we write books about our self-image, apart from Christ, and we've determined we're something special. We *are* something special apart from Christ; we're especially gross.

God is saying that the real you, apart from divine intervention, is the most deceitful thing in all the world. Nothing else and no one else is more likely to deceive you or sell you a lie than your own heart. That's what the Bible says. I didn't say it, God said it. It's not only deceitful above all things, which means it's the most deceitful thing around, it is desperately wicked. That means that left to itself, apart from God, there is no telling what it will do.

You say, "Wait a minute. I was a moral person before I came to Christ." You may have been. Remember the heart determines what you would do if there were no restraints or consequences. It's how fast you would drive if there were no speed limits or policemen. It's how many people you would hurt if no one would ever find out. It's how many lies you would tell if no one would ever know. It's how many acts of immorality you would commit if you were guaranteed no one would find out and you wouldn't get hurt. It's how much you would charge for your product if there was no competition and no laws about greed. You may have been brought up in a moral environment. You may have been trained in right behavior. Those are restraints. You may have had parents who disciplined you when you went astray. That was a consequence. So, your behavior may have been moral; you may have acted well. But I've got to tell you that according to Scripture, your heart was still deceitful and desperately wicked. God said so.

You say, "But you didn't know my aunt Mary." No, I really didn't know your aunt Mary, but God did. You say, "She was a naturally moral person." No, your aunt Mary was either a Christian, or she was acting out of constraint or consequences. She was not inherently good. You say, "Prove it." It says in Romans 3,

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As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one.

(Romans 3:10 NKJV)

Somehow, Paul thought he would need to reinforce this so he goes on to say,

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

(Romans 3:11,12)

Why didn't he make it clearer? That's God's assessment of the situation. Apart from the transformation that takes place when God, through His Holy Spirit, invades the human heart and replaces that self-centeredness with God-centeredness, nothing good can come out of that life eternally. The world may see a good person, a humanitarian, a religious hero, a kindly soul. They may honor that person and give them the world's version of sainthood, that's wonderful, but to God their goodness is as filthy rags. That's what He says. For their motivation is not of God and their empowerment is not of God. They have been deceived; the heart does that. It is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

If you're a believer, God's Spirit lives inside your heart. He has taken up residence in that part of you where decisions are made. Those decisions take place in the will. Your mind reasons through the Word, hopefully, and makes choices through your will. Sometimes your emotions will become cheerleaders and agree, and sometimes your emotions will become adversaries and fight it; they're not to be a part of the decision-making process. Decisions should be made by the will, in harmony with the mind. But even as a Christian, there is a part of you that's still deceitful and desperately wicked. That's what I want to talk to you about in this morning. And that's why we locked the doors.

You've been programmed that way, and reprogramming takes a lifetime. But there is a key to the transformation. The world wants you to conform; the Word wants you to be transformed. And that's what Romans 12:2 means when it says, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The word, renewing, literally means to replace something old with something new. It's done by substitution, not by eraser. So only as you program the heart with God's Word, will the old choices which always satisfied you, be replaced with choices that always

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satisfy God. And to do that, the Holy Spirit has to apply the Word directly to your heart where those wrong choices have been made. Now, there are some problems with how the church confronts the reality of what's wrong with us in today's world. And I want to take you back for a moment to the Sermon on the Mount. That's where we see how God teaches His people in a direct way. Now listen carefully.

1- Unlike the way we preach and teach in our generation, Jesus did not place His focus on what was bothering people, but rather on what was bothering God. He didn't spend His time majoring on how bad we had it. So much of today's preaching, so many of today's book and radio programs, and so much of counseling, focuses on how bad we have it; what can be done to right the wrongs done to us by our parents, by society and by the evils of our age. Those things are important, but perhaps that's why the gospel is becoming so in-bred in our day. Jesus focused on sin, that which we are responsible for; that which God has become responsible to cure. By recognizing that sin, and appropriating God's mercy and grace, we can not only change our behavior, but according to what Jesus said on that mountain top, we can actually change who we are.

We don't like to preach on sin anymore. We like to preach on social issues, and social and religious injustices, and those are all important things. But they are all the result of sin. And unless and until we get back to calling sin what it is, we will fill our churches with people who are looking for God and for the church to do something to make their lives more palatable. Or to change their circumstances. Or to change society rather than glorying in what God has already done. He has atoned for sin that we might live in victory.

2- Jesus did not focus on the external sins, but on the attitudes of the heart from which those sins came. Again and again, He would relate to what the law said about a particular behavior, and then He would stop and say, "But I say unto you..." and He would go back to the attitude of the motivation. He would take it back to the heart. And any kind of teaching or preaching less than that is not really going to change us long-term. Jesus spoke about the grievous sin of adultery, didn't He? And then He said,

But I say to you, [look at your heart] that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with

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her in his heart.

(Matthew 5:28 NKJV)

He began to talk about murder and that's an awful thing but He said,

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer [in his heart].

(I John 3:15a NKJV)

He spoke of revenge and the problem of greed that initiates in the heart. He spoke about the act of giving, and then He talked about the hypocrisy that accompanies giving when you do it with the wrong motive rather than from the heart. The same with prayer and fasting. He entered into a whole new world of spiritual substance. Man's heart had to be changed from the inside out and then his behavior would be a reflection of his character, not the result of over-disciplined behavior. The key would be character. You see the law frightened man into trying to behave based on fear. This was to give us an understanding of how radically different God's ways were from ours. But the ability to be changed had to come from within. So, God gave His Son to atone for our sins. He gave His Spirit to place in our heart so that we could literally take His Word, have His Spirit interpret it, and have our thoughts actually changed to be like God's thoughts, because His character would literally become ours.

That, beloved, is Christianity. It isn't play-acting. It isn't going through motions. It isn't doing things. And don't you see in simplistic terms, God put the machinery in us to change us, and then put the controls in our hands. You can be converted, and you can stay active in the church. You can be a busy, busy, Christian, but not have time to spend alone in the presence of your God and not have time to meditate and draw upon His Word. You may become religiously acceptable, you may become famous, but my friend in the eyes of God, you will miss the mark because you have not been changed in your heart.

The character of God cannot be imitated successfully. It has to come from within. I'm going to give you four illustrations.

1- Wisdom

The first illustration is wisdom. You can't just act wise. You can't just say, "I'm a Christian now. I'm going to have Godly discernment." Godly discernment comes from the heart. Solomon prayed,

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge

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thy people, that I may discern between good and bad:

(I Kings 3:9a)

And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

(I Kings 4:29 NKJV)

That's where it comes from. It's part of the nature of God that is placed in your heart in an answer to prayer. And what makes it work my friend, is when you lay the Word of God in your heart and meditate on it. We learned that in a previous lesson from Psalm 119:97-100. It will make you wiser than your enemies. It will make you wiser than your teachers. It will make you wiser than the ancients. The Word of God comes from within.

2- Purity

What about purity? You can't just grit your teeth and become pure. There are some things you can do to conform to society, but if society changes, you don't have anything to conform to anymore. The truth of the matter is,

... He who called you is holy, ... (I Peter 1:15 NKJV)

He lives in you; now you can be holy. And that's what it means in Psalm 51, when it says pray this way,

Create in me a clean heart, O God, ... (Psalm 51:10 NKJV)

And that's why Jesus said,

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
(Matthew 5:8 NKJV)

That's where purity comes from.

3- Courage

You may be courageous on the battlefield or courageous in the world, but real courage, which is the ability to allow the Holy Spirit to make you stand for that which is right in the matter of spiritual warfare, comes from God. You have to ask for it, and then the Word of God has to be laid up or inscribed or indelibly imprinted on your heart, as we will see in future lessons. That's what God's Word means when it says,

Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; [He'll do it.] ... (Psalm 27:14 NKJV)

4- Humility

The last one is humility. You have to humble yourself under

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the mighty hand of God, but you have to understand that being under the mighty hand of God means that humility comes from God. Left to yourself you will always be prideful. That's why Jesus said,

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; [Why? I'll show you how to be a leader? No,] for I am meek and lowly in heart: [inside] and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

(Matthew 11:29)

The source of the heart is the Word of God. You're supposed to place it in or on your heart. We learned in our last lesson that as you do that, you have victory over temptation, you have the ability to discern, and you have peace in the midst of your trials. But the truth of the matter my friend, is this, putting of the Word of God in your heart is an activity you have to perform, but you have to be willing to make it happen. Otherwise, it won't. It's the Word of God, that the Spirit of God uses, to reach into your heart and separate who you think you are from who you really are.

We've come to believe the lie, that if we think evil thoughts and if we think evil language, and if we think about doing evil things so long as we control our behavior, God is pleased. That's a lie. God looks at your heart. To God, if you're driving along in your car and your thinking lustful thoughts, you're an adulterer. If you drive around in your car thinking of hurting someone, you're a murderer. To God, if you drive along thinking thoughts of pride, lifting yourself up, no matter how you behave on the outside, you're a fool. And the greatest fool of all is one who is pretending to be what he is not.

Now I'm going to ask you a question. What is the most scathing condemnation Jesus gave anyone in Scripture? Was it the woman taken in adultery? No, it wasn't. Was it Peter when he denied the Lord three times? No, it wasn't. The most scathing denunciation he gave anyone, is found in Matthew 23. It was to the spiritual leaders who were pretending to be something they were not.

But all their works they do to be seen by men. [They are a bunch of hypocrites.]

(Matthew 23:5a NKJV)

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation [because you are a fake].

(Matthew 23:14 NKJV)

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Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay your tithes, but you've omitted the things that matter: judgment, mercy, faith. (Matthew 23:23 paraphrase)

Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. [You're dirty.] (Matthew 23:26,27 NKJV)

Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? [Wasn't that a sweet love letter?] (Matthew 23:33 NKJV)

What was the problem? Were they involved in all kinds of overt immorality? No. These were the religious leaders of the community. These were the pillars of the church. These were the spiritual supermen. But inside, in their hearts, they were full of dead men's bones. They weren't what they pretended to be. That word, hypocrite, literally means one who wears a mask, who plays a role on a stage. He is not what he really pretends to be.

Now I don't know about you, but I can look in a mirror and I can imagine myself looking pretty good. I've got hair and everything. I don't know how it does it, but you look in there and you just see what you want to see. And then somebody will come along with a snap shot and ruin it. Because there's nothing you can do; it's there in living color. What's the difference? We fool ourselves and we deceive ourselves into seeing what we want to see. The mirror that God has given to us as a photograph, which literally shows us what we really are, is the Word of God. This verse in Hebrews 4, is so familiar, I don't think we really grasp the power that is in it. It says,

For the word of God [this book] is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

Now you think about that. God doesn't make this claim about anything else. Think about what He just said. The Word of God is alive, it's not a book, it's a person revealed through a book. In other words, when God's Word speaks, God speaks. That's why we're supposed to tremble with excitement. Not only is it alive, it's powerful. A worm can be alive but have no power. A lion on

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the other hand is alive and powerful. Not only is it a living being, it has, within its grasp, the ability to overcome, destroy and build up. But the Word of God is more than that; it is razor sharp. It makes a virtually invisible incision, but it pierces even to the dividing of the soul from the Spirit. It separates man's thoughts from God's thoughts, man's ways from God's ways. Only the Word can do that. But even more than that, it says it of itself; the Word of God is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, the real you.

The Word of God is able to reveal to you, that the anger you suppress in your heart, is really murder to God. The Word of God is able to sensitize your spirit to realize that those lustful thoughts that play in the theater of your mind when you think no one knows, and that you never want anybody to see, are just as much adultery to God as if you'd committed it. Only the Word can do that. It is razor sharp and incredibly powerful. It will actually displace the hypocrisy that you have accepted as real, and show you who you really are. Not only will it displace the mask, it will actually show you what to do about it. Another passage that is so terribly familiar is found in II Timothy.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, [God breathed] and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16,17 NKJV)

So, first of all it says, all Scripture is profitable; every verse has equal power. That's what it says. It's not only profitable to teach us, but to reprove us, that is, to show us where we've gone astray. It corrects us, and shows us how we can repent. It instructs us, and shows us how to keep from falling again. And these promises are for believers, for the man of God. In order for God to be able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart, we've got to do something.

First of all, we've got to come to the place, beloved, where we acknowledge before God that we are not who we pretend to be. We're not even who we think we are. We are what we think when we think no one knows what we are thinking. We are what we would do if there were no restraints and no consequences.

Now listen to me please. You may be a Sunday School teacher. You may be in the ministry. You may be a seminary graduate. You

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may be an expert on New Testament theology and eschatology. You may even be a disciple-maker whose life touches other lives. You may be chairman of the board or on every committee of the church. You may be recognized as the most spiritual Christian in your community, in your church, in your neighborhood, or in your family. So were the Pharisees. But to Jesus they were whitewashed sepulchers. They were finely varnished caskets. So beautiful on the outside, but inside full of death.

God is not impressed with what you look like on the outside, He's only impressed with who you are; what you would do with no restraints, and no consequences. What you really think when you think no one knows what you are thinking. That's what grieves God. And the more you pretend to be what you're not, the more He's grieved. I want to challenge you, that the major issues facing our society today are neither social nor theological; they are personal. They involve something called sin. Sin is that which breaks the heart of God. And, according to Matthew 23, nothing breaks the heart of God like playing games, like Christians pretending to be what they really aren't.

In the next few lessons, we're going to take some specific steps to get the Word of God into our hearts. We're going to teach ourselves, Lord willing, how to memorize the Word of God—how to meditate on it, and what happens when we do. And, were going to ask God to clean up the garbage, light up the truth, and set us on the path to becoming the quality men and women He wants us to be. But before we do that, I honestly believe we've got to come to understand individually and collectively what the heart is. And we're going to have to look in the mirror of the Word and see if the person we are and the person we pretend to be are the same. Because until they are, nothing is going to happen.

Now I'm going to ask you to do an experiment. I do this often, and I really don't expect you to do it a lot, but this time I do. I'm going to ask you to do something with me. It's simple, but it can be very disturbing. I'm going to ask you for one week, to monitor every thought you think. Not what you do, what you think. You see until you do that, I don't think you will fully grasp the need to lay the Word of God on your hearts the way you should. I think the best way to examine your heart is to examine your thoughts.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

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What was in man's heart grieved God. When he was talking to himself, those thoughts were the real him.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart...
(Genesis 17:17a NKJV)

That's what he was thinking.

Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.
(I Samuel 1:13a NKJV)

And David said in his heart...
(I Samuel 27:1 NKJV)

When that car pulls out in front of you on the way home today, what thoughts will you think? What are the things you wish you could say; the things you wish you could do? That's what God is looking at. You may smile and say, "Jesus saves." You may have a bumper sticker that lights up when you put on your brakes. But my friend, God is looking at your heart. And if what you're really thinking is, "If I could get my hands on that guy..." that's what God sees. That's what God uses to govern how you are controlling your anger; not whether you sit on the horn and scream, or whether you throw a tantrum in your mind.

As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a loyal [perfect] heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts...

(I Chronicles 28:9a NKJV)

He understands. He knows the imaginations of your thoughts. You're not fooling God. When your mate or your boss or your best friend corrects you this week and you smile and you pretend to take it graciously, what are you thinking? That's what God sees. Are you jealous? Are you defensive? Do you carry on a conversation with yourself, supposedly with a fierce rebuttal, while you're pretending to be submissive? You're a fool. You're not fooling God. He looks on the heart. Don't get me wrong, the right response was good, but until you go beyond that response to the attitude of the heart, you're not doing anything to replace that feeling of resentment with one of gratitude that God gave you authority, or God gave you someone to walk alongside you to correct you. When you're alone in the middle of the night and you awaken and immediately thoughts of fear or hopelessness or despair come over you, do you listen to those thoughts and justify them? That's the real you.

You may get up the next morning and teach a class, or you may get up and quote Scriptures to your friends that say, fear not,

but my friend if you're afraid, be honest. There is nothing wrong with being afraid, as long as you look God in the eye, confess it as sin and deal with it. But until you do that my friend, you're not dealing with the real you. The real you is the person who lives in your heart. You're looking at television or a movie or a magazine and your eye begins to search for that which is sensual or critical or worldly, and you pretend it didn't happen because you think, *well if the pressure wasn't on, I wouldn't be interested in that sort of thing.* My friend, that's a lie. And until you see it as a lie, you'll never deal with it.

When someone offends you, or takes advantage of you, what plays over and over in the soundtrack of your mind—what you wish you had said, or what you would say if you really had the chance? That's the real you. When the phone rings and you get bad news, God isn't looking just at how you respond overtly—that's wonderful. What God is looking at is the heart. Are you angry, are you fearful, do you want retaliation? That's the real you.

The real you my friend, is what you think when you think no one knows what you are thinking. The real you is what you would do if no one ever knew, and there were no restraints or consequences. That's the real you. You are a product of years of programming your mind with the old nature, and what you must do now, is begin to see those attitudes the way God sees them, and that's sin.

Begin to put the Word of God in your heart so it can replace those attitudes with the mind of Christ. He'll cleanse the garbage, clean out the filth, renew your thoughts, and make you whole. But it will only happen if you get honest with God. And the way to get honest with God is to examine every thought you have and see that this is really who you are. And that's the you God looks at. People around you may be incredibly impressed, even your mate. But God does not see as they do. God looks on the heart.

I'm going to tell you something, you will see things you have never seen before. You'll stop justifying things that need to be confessed and forsaken. You'll stop condemning others because you won't see the mote in their eye; you will be preoccupied with the beam in your own. You say, "I don't want to do that. It would be too hard on my self-image." So what? My friend, the only image you have to be concerned with now, is the image of God; the

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image in which you were created. And that is the image He wants to restore you to, and of which He wants to remake you. And it will only happen if you see sin as sin; if you see the Word as alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, able even to discern the thoughts and intents of your heart.

Take one week of serious business, eternal business, painful business, necessary business, business of the heart. Next week we're going to look at what to do about it. But for this one week, I ask you to consider praying this prayer, every day, all day long.

Search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try [test] me and know my thoughts: See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23,24)

And then you might add,

Because as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

So is he, indeed. Let's pray.

Father,

Some of us are really tired of playing games; of pretending to be so spiritual but inside harboring attitudes and thoughts and desires that if displayed in a theater of reality, would cause us to run and hide.

Yet, somehow, we've forgotten that's the us you look at all day long. We don't fool you. Why do we try so hard to fool ourselves?

By your grace, Father, through this week may we begin to enter into a season of great victory by seeing ourselves as we really are. May we then see Jesus as He really is, and falling down before Him, take His precious Word and apply it to those areas of our lives that are filled with sin, that we might be transformed in ever-increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another.

Search us, oh God, and reveal our hearts. Test us, examine our thoughts, and show us. Please show us this week, the men and the women behind the mask.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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