

**Christianityworks**  
**God Wants to Heal My Heart**  
**060-1**  
**Heart Matters**

God is so much more concerned with our hearts than our comfort. God searches, tests and probes our hearts.

**An Amazing Little Machine**

Your heart and my heart! Well, I don't know if you have ever thought much about this but our hearts are amazing machines. Let me give you just a few vital statistics: this ball of muscle in your chest; it's about the size of your clinched fist but much, much stronger. It's built like a Sherman tank, in fact, when it comes to staying power and pulling power and reliability and durability, a Sherman tank has nothing on your heart. In a lifetime your heart will pack much more punch than any Sherman tank will in it's lifetime.

In an average lifetime a heart will beat somewhere between two and three billion times – about seventy to eighty times each minute – minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, year in year out, without skipping so much as a beat. Every day your heart will pump around seven thousand litres; that's about fifteen hundred gallons. In a lifetime your heart will pump enough blood, listen to this, to fill between eighty and a hundred Olympic sized swimming pools or about five hundred average backyard pools.

And here's the amazing thing – we don't even notice it! Yet, let it stop beating and you and I will be dead within just a few minutes because it's our life blood. It pumps the blood which delivers oxygen and removes waste – just a few short minutes without that blood being pumped to every one of the hundred trillion or so cells in our body and life ceases. A pretty amazing little device, the old heart and yet in the developed world, about half the people over the age of fifty-five have coronary heart disease. In fact, coronary heart disease is the number one killer in the world.

So whilst in the developing world, HIV/AIDS and lower respiratory functions are the big killers, followed by heart disease and diarrhoea, in the developed world heart disease and stroke are by far the greatest killers. But here's the crazy thing: we know how to prevent heart disease. What are the top causes? Being overweight, high cholesterol, smoking, high blood pressure, lack of exercise – I don't think there's one person listening today who couldn't have listed those and what's more, most of them are relatively easy to deal with. People can dramatically reduce their risk of heart disease just by losing a bit of weight, eating healthier food, quitting smoking, exercising.

By and large we can save lives by taking some very simple steps and yet we don't. Here are some stats: back in 2002 just over fifty seven million people died in the world - forty two percent of those were through heart disease. Take

that just to the developed world and the percentage killed by heart disease is much, much higher. This isn't some statistical aberration; it's not some blip – millions and millions of people each year are dying before their time because of something, which for the vast majority, is entirely preventable.

And those morbidity statistics don't begin to count the cost to health care, to the economy. They don't begin to tell the story of the misery and the suffering and the years of chronic disease and isolation and fear and... Are you getting the picture here? This is nuts! The heart is such a powerful, precious, life giving thing and yet we abuse it to the point of death. The human race is so smart, so creative, so amazing, how can we be so stupid? It defies understanding. We are like a bunch of lemmings all heading in the same direction, over the edge of the cliff to fall to our deaths.

Now why are we talking about this today? Well, interesting, but the heart is something that God talks a lot about too. Although He's not so much meaning our human heart but the heart is a picture of, well, who we are. It's the symbol, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, of the essence of the person. We acknowledge that a lot in our everyday language. We talk about losing 'heart'; throwing our 'heart' into something, doing something with all our 'heart'. We use phrases like 'taking things to heart', 'the heart of the matter', 'setting our hearts on something'. The heart is the symbol of the essence of life. When God talks about the heart, He's talking about the inner being, the innermost part, the seat of our appetites, our emotions, our passions, our courage, our fear - the middle, the central, the innermost part of the person.

Over these next few weeks we are going to spend some time looking at our hearts. I have called this series "Oh God, Come Heal My Heart" because just in the same way as wrong eating and wrong living and a lack of exercise is killing millions of people each year needlessly, so a different heart disease is robbing people of life, here and now and eternally.

This world is full of a disease of the heart that is stunting peoples' growth, stopping them from living lives - their lives, to the full because that's what heart disease does. And just like the physical heart, we behave as though there is nothing wrong. We know the facts but we ignore them. Solomon taught some young men – King Solomon – one of the wisest men who ever lived and he had a great piece of advice for them. He said this:

*"Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life."*

Guard it, value it, treasure it and keep it safe for it is the wellspring of life. Problem is, we just live life – we shove food into our mouths, we don't exercise and then we wonder why we have heart attacks in epidemic proportions. So why should our inner heart be any different? If we have an angry heart or a fearful heart or a hard heart or a sorrowful heart, if we lose heart or we set our heart on the wrong things, why is it that we would imagine that those things would help us to lead a full life? Why is it that we would imagine that they wouldn't lead to a diseased life?

Let me read it again – Proverbs chapter 4, verse 23:

*“Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.”*

Literally what it says there in the original Hebrew language in which the Old Testament was written, is diligently guard; watch over and preserve your heart in the way that the watchmen of old would stand on the rampart of the fortified city to keep watch for the enemy that was coming to attack – keep watch, watch over, guard and protect your heart. Cities had walls and fortifications built around them to protect them from attack.

That’s what this piece of God’s wisdom is all about and look at the priority that He gives it – is it second, third, fourth or fifth order of business in our lives? Above all else, guard your heart! No, it’s not....it’s not down there on the list, it’s above all else. And there’s a very good reason that we should guard our hearts because they are the wellspring of our lives. If you have a diseased heart then you will have a diseased life. Let that disease rule your life and you’ll lose your life.

There are so many people in this world with a diseased heart and a diseased heart robs us of life – fear, anger, pride, arrogance, deceit, envy... they all live in the heart – they’re diseases... diseases that we need to deal with. Question is how? I mean a chronic disease is the sort of disease that has been there for ages. It’s the hardest sort of disease to deal with – it can be almost impossible. How do we deal with it?

### **God Values the Heart**

I don’t know if you have ever watched the Oscars on TV. You know, the movie awards they give in Hollywood, in Tinseltown each year. Look, I think it is great that they award the best movies and actors and directors but sometimes, as I see the people prancing down the red carpet and accepting the glory when they accept their awards. Well, I can’t help but have this sense that it all feels just a tad superficial. It’s about being beautiful; it’s about being the best; it’s about winning and that, my friend, is pretty much what our world is like.

If you are beautiful or rich or entertaining, we value you, but if you’re not, we don’t. We tend very much to judge the book by its cover – not always. Sometimes we form closer, deeper relationships but in a world where there is so many options to consume and to be entertained, hey, you have to choose somehow and we tend to choose a book by its cover. We tend to value outward symbols of beauty and success and that’s good because that’s what makes the economy grow, that’s what gets us to buy things, that’s what gives people jobs so, it’s a good thing, isn’t it?

Now we know it’s not but it’s just the way the world is. This of course is nothing new – it’s been around for a long time. The Apostle Paul, a couple of thousand years ago, wrote about people in Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 12, who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. And another

thousand or so years before that, God had this to say through the prophet Samuel when he was looking for a new king for Israel:

*“Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*

That comes from First Samuel, chapter 16 and verse 7.

I was watching a show on TV the other day, out of the UK. It was about a woman who goes in to show shops how to turn their businesses around. She was helping this little boutique that was struggling in Doncaster in England and decided that their target market was in fact the disciples of Beckham – people who wanted to be and look like Victoria and David Beckham. Now sure, they’re celebrities and there’s nothing wrong with that but the whole idea in turning this boutique around was to stock and promote clothes and the look that celebrities were sporting. To be seen to mimic the celebes.

It’s all about outer appearances but outer appearances aren’t actually that important to God. He’s much more concerned about the heart and to tell you the truth, when I started doing a bit of research, I was actually quite shocked about how concerned He is for our hearts. First Chronicles chapter 28, verse 9, says this:

*“The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.”*

See, He searches every heart!

We race around doing things, thinking things, imagining that nobody notices. Imagining people can only see us on the outside and not what’s going on on the inside. We can be angry, vengeful, deceitful and dishonest in our hearts but we put a smile on our face and soft words on our lips and we think we’re kidding everybody – but not God, because He searches every heart and understands every motive behind every thought.

And God tests our hearts too. Have a listen to these couple of verses from Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 2. It says:

*“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments.”*

And this one from Second Chronicles chapter 32, verses 27 to 31:

*“Hezekiah had very great riches and honour and he made treasuries for his silver and gold and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables. He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and oil, and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks. He built villages, acquired great numbers of flocks and herds, for God had given him very great riches. It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channelled the water down the west side of the City of David. He*

*succeeded in everything he undertook. But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and know everything that was in his heart.”*

See, this king, rich, powerful, successful, all under God’s hands because he turned away from his pride and so God blessed him. Everything he touched succeeded but when the ominous, threatening envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon and they showed up to check out all the success, what did God do? Did God perform more miracles and wonders? Did God show up with some flashy display of power? No! God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart. God is so much more concerned with our hearts than our comforts. God searches, tests and probes our hearts. Probe is a very strong word. Psalm 17, verse 3, says that God ‘probes’ our hearts and examines us. Jeremiah chapter 20, verse 12:

*“God examines the righteous and probes the heart and mind.”*

God does that because God aches for us to have a healthy heart. God looks on the inner person; the inner man, the inner woman because He wants to heal us – He wants to set things right in our hearts. Listen to me my friend: He wants to heal our hearts. We go through life setting our hearts on all sorts of things. We go through life with our hearts torn and divided. We want to serve God; we want to love Him but all these attractive, beautiful, external things that everyone else can see, they beckon us and that means that our hearts can be torn.

You know that when our hearts desire wealth or fame or recognition they become diseased with envy and pride. Have a listen what Solomon writes – it’s a great piece of wisdom from God – in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 30:

*“A heart of peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones.”*

My friend, God wants us to have His peace, that’s why God is concerned with our hearts. That’s why we are talking about this stuff today and over the next few weeks.

## **Health Check**

They say that men are the worst at going to the doctors. So many men drop dead in the prime of life from bowel cancer and heart disease because we just didn’t want to go to the doctor. In part it’s this foolish male pride thing going on, but in part it’s that we don’t want to hear the bad news. How many men know that they are overweight but they don’t want to hear it? They just suppress it and behave like it’s not there until one day, they have a stroke or a heart attack that could have been avoided by a bit of exercise, losing just a few pounds and getting the blood pressure under control. None of us like bad news.

Problem is that our aversion to bad news can end up robbing us of life. We want to sweep it under the carpet but all you get when you do that is a lump under the carpet. You don't solve anything. So what we are looking at this week and the next few weeks on the programme is getting a grip in dealing with some issues; the things in our hearts that are robbing us of life. And if you'll join me over these next few minutes, I would like to have a bit of a health check with you. Just a bit of time when we go looking for things in our hearts, probing and prodding around in there, because it's not until we acknowledge those things that we can join hands with God and start doing something about them.

So spend these next few minutes with me and let's have a little bit of a look. Let's have the courage, when we hear one or two things that we know are alive in our hearts, to look God direct in the eye and say 'God, You know something, that's me. I have to take responsibility for that and even though I don't have the strength or the ability to do something about it, I know that You can and that You will and that You want to.' This is about opening our hearts to the Spirit and the Word of God to make some changes, to heal our hearts, so that we can have the life that He always planned for us. Amen?

Okay, here's the first one – Psalm 10, verse 3, says:

*“He boasts of the cravings of his heart. He blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.”*

The first one is 'greed'. So many people in this world want more and more and more and more and we are taught that that is okay. Even our government encourages us to spend more to help the economies, but when the cravings of our heart take over; when greed drives us, let me tell you, you and I will turn our hearts away from God – we will revile Him. We can't serve Him and our greed. We can't serve Him and money and wealth and position and status.

And that one, this whole 'greed' thing, leads to another disease – the disease of deception and dishonesty. Psalm 62, verse 10:

*“Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods. Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.”*

Many, many people are caught up in deceit and dishonesty, theft, lying – in fact there are certain personality types for whom this is their main weakness and the problem with this is that you and I can't lie straight in bed at night if we live like that. We might be deceiving the rest of the world but none of us is stupid enough to think that we can deceive God. And so this particular disease of the heart robs us of our relationship – our fellowship and intimacy with God. It's a rotten disease and I know that there is someone who needs to look God in the eye and confess that one right now - this sin of dishonesty and extortion and lying and deceit - and ask for forgiveness and ask God to help heal their hearts right now.

Now the third one – the third one is a biggie. Many of us get caught up in this one and this is probably the main disease that God's had to heal in me. Have a listen – Psalm 101, verse 5:

*“Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.”*

It's interesting how slander and pride go together here. The root sin is pride. When I'm proud it's all about me – I'm important, I'm more important than you and I'm more important than God. I'm right, it's my way or the highway. See, I can rattle those things off my tongue so quickly because I have more than a passing familiarity with them. And the thing that pride breeds in us is that we can't stand it when someone else succeeds. We can't stand it when someone else gets the limelight and so the proud person will slander other people and stab them in the back and undermine them and with pride and slander comes envy. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 30:

*“A heart at peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones.”*

We looked at that one earlier. You can't have peace when you are proud because life is one big competition, so pride, envy, slander are all part of the same disease.

And these next two that we are about to look at follow close behind. Have a listen to these – Daniel chapter 5, verse 20:

*“But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from the royal throne and stripped of his glory.”*

This was about King Belteshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son – he became arrogant, hard of heart of heart and that happens through pride. And let me tell you something: God always, always opposes the proud. You can read that in James chapter 4 and verse 6. And so this piece of wisdom from Solomon holds true – Proverbs 16, verse 18:

*“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

And the last one we have time for – a disease in the heart of many, both men and women. Have a listen – Proverbs chapter 6, verses 25 and 26:

*“Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread and the adulteress preys upon your very life.”*

Lust - sexual lust brings many a man down and tears many a marriage apart. It's a real disease of the heart and this one more than any other, perhaps, is one that so many quietly live with, not realising the destruction that it brings upon them.

Now we have spoken about just a handful of the most common diseases of the heart – things that rob us: greed, dishonesty, slander, pride, arrogance and lust. These are the things that harden our hearts towards God and they rob us of life. Next week on the programme we are going to see that God is in the business of healing our hearts.

For now I want to encourage you to look at some of the Scriptures we have looked at on the programme today and to take the particular one or two diseases in your heart before God, lay them down, pray over them, so that next week as we go to God's Word, you will be ready for God to heal your heart.