

Lord, Give Us New Hearts

It's time to seek the Lord as never before. As we do, our consecration and devotion will intensify, and we will become remarkably more like him.

Right before we held our conference in Chicago in 2000, God began to get my attention on the subject of the new heart. We were planning to have the event in a beautiful church that seats 4,500 people; it was going to be impressive.

But a few days before the conference, we ran into difficulties and had to switch to another facility. This one was not as big and was more difficult for the people to get to.

I found myself going into turmoil. How could this happen? We had been fasting and praying for this meeting!

God began showing me that my burden was not for the people and what I felt they would receive. I was more concerned about my image and what I would project.

As the tears rolled down my face, God said: "Jesus made Himself of no it is your reputation that has become most important to you. You are thinking about all you are doing, the major platforms where you are able to speak and all the exposure you are getting. But what is the conditon of your heart toward Me and toward My people?"

Confused, I said to the Lord, "My heart? You know that everything I am doing, I am doing to please You."

God said: "You have been working under the assumption that all your works have impressed Me, and I am not impressed by any of it. I want to give you a new heart."

"A new heart?" I asked. "But I already feel like I am saved."

"Your salvation is according to the salvation of the

traditional church," He responded. "Now I want to save you for real."

THE TRUE HEART REVEALED

Years before, I had accepted Christ as my personal Savior. At that time, my spirit man was converted, and I began to get into the Word. I wanted to transform my mind so that my life could begin to experience what had happened in my heart.

But somewhere along the line, I had started reading the Word of God to prepare me to preach—not to convert my own mind. My ministry became my career, and even though I knew I had been called to preach, I believe it was God's compassion for His people that kept me there.

When I had told God I was willing to go, and a cry for help rose up from His people, He anointed me and used me in His work. Yet He loved me so much that He said, "While you are preaching to others, I do not want to forget about you." He wanted to continue teaching me while I was teaching others.

In speaking to me about my heart, the Lord took me to Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! Who can know it [perceive, understand, be acquainted with his own heart and mind]? I the Lord search the mind, I try the heart, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (The Amplified Bible).

As I meditated on this verse, I had to be honest with myself; my heart was not right. I had to ask, "Am I really saved? Does Jesus really live here? Am I sure, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that He lives in me? I do not have any doubt that He uses does Jesus live here? Am I His?"

God began to minister to me. He took me to John 10:26: "But you do not believe and trust and rely on Me, because you do not belong to My fold—you are no sheep of Mine."

This is the message God gave me: Sin and God cannot dwell in the same heart at the same time. Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot dwell in the same temple.

In order to be transformed, we must renew our minds every day. When the renewed mind lines up with the conversion that is in our hearts, we are new creatures—completely, inside and out. We must choose whether to follow the stubborn habits stored in our memories or to submit to the wisdom that flows out of our new hearts.

If you are seeking God, you already know that we are entering a new era. It is time to fall down at the altar and ask God to renew our hearts. It is time to become more like Jesus—for real.

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

God has brought me into relationships with a few people who, although they are not saved, were raised in the church. One of them said to me: “If somebody in Christendom can find a way to make living for God attainable and reachable, then you do not know how many people would come to Christ.”

When this gentleman suggested to me that people were looking for a God who was attainable and reachable, I asked in my heart, “Is God attainable?” I realized I could not answer that question.

I was forced to turn and look within myself. Through the years I had struggled with feelings of spiritual inadequacy.

I looked at the many people God had placed in my life as spiritual examples. I felt as if I could never be like them because they were the epitome of spiritual perfection.

Once I started my own ministry, God helped me realize the error of my heart. I discovered that other people had the same feelings about me. They would say to me: “Prophetess Bynum, you have really blessed my life. You are such a woman of God.”

The truth is that during that time God was breaking me and breaking things off me. But in the eyes of other people, I appeared to be perfect. The image of who I was as a woman of God had become unattainable. But the image in their minds was not reality.

We have to be real with people. If we consistently paint a picture that everything is perfect, as if to say, "You know you have reached God when you look like me, dress like me, walk and talk like me," then we have totally missed God!

THE HEART VS. THE MIND

We are all struggling in our own way, trying to make sure that we do what is right from our hearts. But I've discovered that we function mainly out of our intellects.

The brain teaches us to scheme, lie and manipulate. But God has put a spirit of conviction in our hearts that corrects us when we do something wrong.

The world has trained us to bypass our hearts' conviction and to operate within the realm of our minds and emotions. This is why no one is seeking after God for a changed heart. We do not want to change; we want only to feel better—for the moment.

The Bible says that we are born with a nature that has great potential to do wrong. When we come into the world, our hearts are already shaped for iniquity and sin (see Ps. 51:5).

When you look at our society, you see that this is true—and I am not just talking about the secular world. We are in church, dancing and shouting and speaking in tongues, yet we have hearts of iniquity just as the world does.

It has taken the fear of ongoing terrorist attacks from another country to bring us to our knees. It took this incident to help us realize that in spite of everything we have, we need the Lord.

When we walk with hearts that are born into sin, seeking the Lord is not important to us. Our hearts do not come with a "Yes, Lord" in them. They must be changed. But how?

OUR FIRST PRIORITY

You cannot walk in God's ways unless you fear Him as God and submit to Him, totally and completely. Above this, you cannot walk in His ways unless you love Him from the center of your being—your heart.

Loving God brings about a commitment to Him, as well as a change of character. So if you say, "I love You, Lord," but still walk in your own ways, then you do not really love the Lord.

You can appreciate Him for the life and breath He has given you. You are grateful when He makes a way for you out of no way and for all the things He permits you to have. But that is materialism. It cannot become real love until you become committed and submitted to His ways.

Beware of the deception that can come with the prosperity of God's blessing upon your life. Just as God needed to humble the Israelites and create a spiritual hunger within them, so He has humbled us and allowed us to hunger after Him (see Deut. 8:2-3).

Today God's people must ask for new hearts. The problem is finding those who are willing to say: "I have to have the heart of God. I have to have a new heart. I have to have a real relationship with God outside the pews, outside the choir roll, outside my favorite preacher or evangelist."

Without all the props and all the drama, where does your relationship start? What is the real purpose of your relationship with God?

Having taken a deep look at the church, I have to ask this question: How can the church do the work of the Spirit to the

point that it has the power to be as compassionate as Christ Himself? Where will we find the eternal love we need to embrace the kinds of sinners who are coming to Christ in this hour?

PRAYER IS KEY

It's time to take the keys of God's Word, and from the deep chambers of our hearts, unshackle our minds—and ultimately the world—from the enemy's bondage. Prayer is our vital connection to God through the vehicle of our new hearts.

Here are a few Scriptures to get you started as you seek God in prayer daily. Put yourself in these Scriptures as you meditate on the Word.

Prayer Keys for the Heart. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

"A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

"Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Prayer Keys for the Mind. "For who has known or understood the mind (counsels and purposes) of the Lord so as to guide and instruct Him and give Him knowledge? But we have the mind of Christ (the Messiah) and do hold the thoughts (feelings and purposes) of His heart" (1 Cor. 2:16).

"And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude], and put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).

“You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You” (Is. 26:3).

I have a mandate to preach the “new heart” message because so many believers are deceived (as I was). If you’re one of them, you need to ask God to give you a new heart. It is time to return to the Lord. Nothing is more important than the matters of the heart.

Read a companion devotional.

Juanita Bynum is the author of *Matters of the Heart*, published by Charisma House, from which this article is adapted.