

The Heart Is the Target

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Date: 29 November 2015

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[0:00] Well, just in the way of a little bit of a review, the last time we were together, we focused on the heart, targeting the heart. Our whole series is about growing together in godliness.

And at this point, we've entered that phase of the series that talks about some action steps that we need to take in order to grow in godliness. And one of those is that we need to target the heart, and by that we're understanding that we need to understand what the heart is.

And so we took a look at what it is biblically in our study and how it refers to the inner man. And it's described in different ways in the scriptures, different activities attributed to the inner man.

The heart, usually related to the mind, our emotions, our affections, and choices that we make, our will. And then we took a look at the relationship between the outer man and the inner man.

You know, we tend to see, of course, outer man activities and hear the words that we speak to one another and not understanding the kind of heart that they are coming from.

[1:17] And so we saw that relationship in Luke chapter 6, 43 through 45, as it was an issue that Jesus was trying to help the people understand as well.

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars.

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. The good man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks. So the relationship between the outer and the inner man. Paul Tripp developed a principle based on those verses. It's called the principle of inescapable influence.

Whatever rules the heart will exercise inescapable influence over a person's life and behavior. Of course, we can understand that we live that every day and throughout the week.

[2:21] So my growth in godliness, in my growth in godliness, I have to deal with what is ruling my heart. If God-glorifying lasting change is going to take place, we can't miss what's going on in our hearts.

So this week, we want to continue that study and targeting the heart and understand the struggle that we face in our own heart.

We've got to narrow it down a little bit more. We can look at other people, outer behavior, the words that they're speaking. But we don't want to miss what's going on in our own hearts if we want to grow in godliness.

And we're going to do this by looking into the book of James and how our heart is revealed in times of conflict and also in times of trial and temptation.

We're all familiar with conflict, whether it surfaces in our actions of blowing up in our words and actions, maybe attacking with words and actions, or clamming up in withdrawing from people or situations, avoiding a person, maybe giving them the silent treatment.

[3:38] But we're familiar with conflict. We'd like to be less familiar with it, but it happens at different levels throughout our weeks. Sometimes we contain it within, but it's still taking place within there, and it's there for some reason.

We need, again, to understand, well, why is it that I'm struggling with this right now? Or sometimes after the fact, when we have either attacked with words and actions or withdrawn, then we need to go back and think through, you know, what was going on.

Something's going on in my heart. We're going to start in James chapter 4. James is starting here by asking some questions, questions that really are appropriate and helpful so we can determine our hearts, in this case, in times of conflict.

James 4, verse 1. He says, What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? Of course, his first question, What causes fights and quarrels

among you?

It's been a question that's been asked numerous times since James asked it here, and it wasn't even James that was the first one to ask a question like that.

[4:56] Of course, Jesus in his interaction with people was great in asking questions to help people consider, think about, evaluate what's going on inside of them.

And somebody a long time ago gave us a helpful phrase when dealing with people, a question pricks the conscience, but an accusation hardens the will.

So when you're dealing with situations with people, instead of just accusing, approach it with questions. And so we see Jesus asking questions many times, and of course God was asking questions even from the beginning with Adam and Eve, and then with Cain as well, and on and on throughout the scriptures.

You see that. So James is asking the question here, one that's been asked numerous times. What causes fights and quarrels among you? So what might be a typical answer somebody might give? We discussed this a little bit, I think, a couple weeks ago. But let's think about it again. Again, when someone asks a question like that in a situation that has developed, or maybe there's a conflict, whether it's between young people or adults, whoever, if they don't understand this issue of the heart, what kind of answers might you hear a person give to that question?

[6:21] Why are you fighting? Why are you quarreling? He hit me first. Of course, that justifies me hitting him back. Obviously, you understand that.

What other answers might they give? They make me so mad that, of course, you would understand why I would need to hit them or answer back with sharp words because they have said this or done this, and it has moved me to the level of anger so that I must speak with harsh words or react with harsh actions.

Other thoughts? Of course, I came ready with some as well, and you've already mentioned some of those. Or a couple children. He took my truck. Or I just have a short fuse.

That's the way I am. That's my personality. Or I'm Irish. You know, of course. We know Irish people act that way. You know, I'm Irish. I can say that.

That explains it right there. Especially when they lose a game like they did last night, eh? Or it's how I was brought up. Of course, my parents were like that.

[7:38] You can understand why I am the way that I am today. If he wouldn't do that, then I wouldn't have said whatever. Or he made the wrong call. You know, you could expect why I'm yelling and acting like this.

Or I didn't sleep well last night. And on and on we go with all these different reasons to explain, or at least that we think justify, our wrong actions or our wrong words.

All the answers are really that miss the heart and don't lead us in that direction of real change that leads to glorifying God.

So people that don't recognize the influence of the heart put the blame on other people or circumstances. People in situations don't force us to be angry.

Those are not determinative in how people respond. Put different people in the same situation and you won't get the same response. A quote from Paul Tripp's book, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, we do not respond to people in situations in the same way because we do not bring the same heart to them.

[8:48] So that's why in a situation you might see one person blowing up in his words or his action, another person just standing back, you know, calm and handling it well.

Well, same situation, same circumstances, but two different responses because those two people have brought different hearts to that situation. And so that's why we need to target the heart.

If we're going to understand our sinful anger, we need to understand our heart. And this is the answer that James gives in the form of a second question in this verse.

Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? Of course, it's a question. Of course, he knows the answer and they know the answer as well. In order to understand conflict, we need to look within and understand what's going on in our hearts and more specifically the desires that are battling within us.

Another quote from Paul Tripp's book, *We must understand the war metaphor* James is using. If a war is being fought between nations, it's fought for geographical and political control.

[10:02] Control is the purpose of war. So it is with our desires. We fight for control or which fight for control of our hearts. Competing desires exist within each of us.

What controls our hearts will exercise inescapable influence over our lives and behavior. And we see that not just in James, but throughout the scriptures. Another passage in 1 Peter 2.11 where Peter was helping the people there.

Extreme circumstances just like the people James was writing to. Which many times we would think justify my reactions. But Peter is helping them understand.

No, this is how you need to respond and prepare yourself for these difficulties that you're experiencing in life. And he says, Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires, which do what?

War against your soul. So one of the things we need to understand is this war that's taking place within and understand these desires that we're having, the intention of the desires.

[11:14] The intention of the desires is not for our good. I've never heard soldiers fighting an enemy that were concerned that the enemy was watching out for their welfare and trying to do them good.

No, the enemy is seeking control, dominance over them, so that they can get control for their own good, for what they want out of it, not for what would be good for you.

And so it is with these desires that are waging war in our souls. They want control. And these desires within, the war taking place within, is between desires that set apart Christ as Lord, so as Christians, there are good desires there.

Those desires that set apart Christ as Lord and seek God's glory, and desires that set self for the created thing up as Lord and preeminent in our lives.

The thing desired may not necessarily be evil in itself, but it becomes an idol when we want it so much that we're willing to dishonor God to get it or to keep it.

[12:26] So with that in mind, what are some examples of things that we might want so much that we would be willing to dishonor God to get or to keep them?

What could be some things that a person would want so much, could be bad, could be good, initially, but what is it that he could want so badly that he'd be willing to dishonor God to get it or to keep it, protect it?

A human being could be a family member. It's a good thing. Family members, we enjoy. It's an appropriate thing to protect family members, but can you always?

You can't always. And it could become so predominant in our lives, but it leads us to maybe worry, anxiety, etc., etc., or control, you know, all things that wouldn't be good that would show a heart of trust in God, love for God and others, etc.

What else? Yeah, some thing, you know, that whether it's Aunt Thelma's, what a mouthful to say, a teapot or something else that we think we must have.

[13:46] And, of course, that thing becomes the representation of what we think it brings to us, like the children with the toy truck.

The toy truck becomes the manifestation of the idolatry of fun. They want fun so bad that it's the toy truck, and it's the toy truck that's bringing that fulfillment at this time.

So when another child comes and takes the truck away, he's taking away that which is providing him his fun, or the thing that he thinks he must have more than anything at that time.

And I've heard somebody say before that, well, at that time you may as well take that little truck and set it up in an altar with two candles next to it and fall down and worship it.

You know, it's become the representation of that which I think I must have so much that I'm willing to dishonor God with my words or actions in order to keep it or get it. And so many other things that we could put down here.

[14:53] Respect, consideration, appreciation, things done right, usually my way, safety, acceptance, the esteem of others, a life free of pain, financial security, independence.

Say it's a teenager, he wants independence. So that's a good thing. That's what God has designed for that teen. But when that teen wants it before the time is right and ready, and he wants it so badly, he could rebel in order to get it and look like disrespectful words, disobedience, etc., etc.

And so we want that teen to understand what's going on in their heart. We're just not dealing with behavior out here. We're wanting that individual to understand there's some hard issues going on here that you might not be recognized.

We both want the same thing. I want your independence as well, but there's a way that we pursue it that honors and glorifies God, and this isn't the way.

So let me help you understand what it looks like, and we can work on it together and head in that direction. So idolatry is often the result, again, of taking good things in creation and making them ultimate things.

[16:10] They usurp the supreme place that only the Creator should have in our hearts and lives. So if that's the case, and we're talking about conflict, how does that inner struggle within me lead to conflict?

Your thoughts on that? How does it lead to conflict? Well, it definitely puts God in the wrong place, and it's going to manifest itself.

Yeah, and why is that bringing a conflict with another person? It's my goal. It's what I want. Why did, Jeff?

Yeah, we don't have the same goals. If the person is relating to me in such a way that he's not hindering my progress in that direction, then, hey, everything's happy and good, you know?

We're doing well here together. But if for some reason this person starts doing things that, and this isn't leading toward my progress, toward getting what I want and what I want to keep, and we begin to feel this little anxiety or agitation, this discomfort in this situation with this person because what we want is now being threatened.

[17:31] There's potential of me losing what I love here. If the person maybe goes away and, okay, you know, now we're settled back down because it's okay, I can still get what I want, but if the person continues to pursue actions or words that threaten it, well, you know, the agitation, you know what I'm talking about.

It builds within me a little bit more, and now I've got to start thinking about, well, how am I going to resolve this so I can get what I want? And if I'm not careful, it could lead to actions and words that would be dishonoring to God or conflict.

Where do fights and quarrels come? Well, they come from my own heart, not this other person. He just brought the occasion. The occasion this other person was the occasion for my heart to be revealed, and as a result, I became angry.

There's some excellent examples in the scriptures of this. One of the best ones, I think, is Diotrephes in 3 John, verse 9, when John was writing to the church, he says, I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.

And then if you read the additional verses, you see other actions Diotrephes was taking that was leading to conflict in the church, throwing people out of the church and not accepting other brothers that were coming to the church.

[19:06] Why? Because he wanted to be first. It's good. We need positions of leadership, but with this man, it had become something he had to have.

And anybody that was a threat to that, whether it was John or somebody else coming in that might outshine him, you know, that wasn't good.

And so he would have nothing to do with them, et cetera, et cetera, all because of what was in his heart. That was the heart of the issue. For the Corinthian believers, in 1 Corinthians 1, we know Paul was writing to them, and there were divisions among the people, my brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

What I mean is this. One of you says, follow Paul. Another, I follow Apollos. Another, I follow Cephas. Still another, I follow Christ. So there was something that they held dear as far as being identified with these different individuals.

And of course, if you don't identify with the individual that I identify with, then that's kind of a judgment upon me and that my position is less than your position.

[20:22] And so when that's happening, there's conflict taking place between these people. It wasn't Paul's fault or Cephas' fault or Christ's fault. You know, if you guys were all the same, we wouldn't have this problem.

No, it's a problem in the hearts of these people. That's why there were divisions among them. So that's what needed to be corrected. Or in Acts 16, 19, the slave girl's owners, the slave girl that was bringing their owner's profit, and when she was, the demons were cast out of her, when the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, what was it they relished in their heart?

Well, whatever it was that they could gain from the money that they got from this girl performing such a service, that was threatened. The possibility of losing that was there and was happening. So as a result, out of their heart of love for prestige, whatever that money brought them, comfort, they went on the attack and they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace, the face of the authorities.

So, and even in this book of James, there seemed to be no lack of conflict among those James was writing to as you read through the rest of the book that different things were happening. So, again, it's no surprise James is addressing this with them, what causes fights and quarrels among you and directing them to their own desires so that that is where the change would take place within the heart of each person.

[22 : 06] Something that they wanted so much that they were willing to lay aside their purpose to glorify God in order to get it and keep it. Oh, let's see.

Well, it's at those times when we're at that point of conflict or hopefully even before we get to that place, when we begin recognizing some of the early signs of that sinful anger building.

And that's good for you to become familiar with. Whether it's a rapid heartbeat or more heavier breathing or what else could there be that would be early warning signals.

Let's see. What else do I have here? Oh, your tone of voice is changing. Maybe the volume of your voice is increasing.

Or maybe you're beginning to shut down and draw back. You know, with you it might be different. But start recognizing some of those early signals and use that as an opportunity to ask some questions.

[23 : 16] What is it that's most important to me at this time? What do I value most right now? What have I wrapped my heart around? What do I want or desire or crave or long for or wish for?

I wish I had this. I don't know how many times have we said that throughout our week or whatever. What do I think I need?

If I just had whatever, then I wouldn't act this way. It doesn't usually say if I just had a heart that wanted to honor and glorify God.

It's usually something outside of me. If that would just change or that person would just change, then I wouldn't be this way. What am I planning or strategizing to get or keep at this time that I'm heading down this pathway that's going to lead to some sinful actions?

So James was helping the people understand issues of the heart in these times of conflict. So most likely it won't happen this week that you'll be in conflict.

[24 : 24] But if it just happens to happen to any of you, use it as an opportunity to start thinking that through a little bit more and asking some of these questions. And don't let that growth opportunity be missed because this is what our class is about, growing together in godliness.

Well, what about this matter of trials and temptations? Going back to James chapter 1. And James, again, using this opportunity to help the people understand some things that they were missing in James 1, 13 through 15.

He says, When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he's dragged away and enticed.

Then after desire has conceived to give birth to sin, and sin, when it's full grown, gives birth to death. Okay, so some things to understand first of all.

Wrong thinking that was taking place in the lives of these people. They were facing some severe trials, real difficulties in life, and trials that were leading to sinful actions, responses in those difficulties.

[25 : 43] And James is helping them understand, first of all, what you need to understand is temptation doesn't come from God. Verse 13. In the times of their trials, they were tempted to sinful actions, and their conclusion was, just like all of us at times do, outside of me.

And in this case, it was to blame God. Of course, we believe in the sovereignty of God, right? Would these things happen outside the sovereignty of God? Well, of course not. Well, of course, the obvious conclusion is if the sovereign God wouldn't have let this happen, then I wouldn't have been this way.

Wrong conclusion. If God, as I just said, the wrong conclusion that they came to, and James is helping them understand, that is not a right conclusion.

He just says, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. And then starts helping them understand what the reality is. What's the truth in this situation?

It's not from God. He can't be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But, the answer is in verse 14 and 15, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

[27:02] You see the individual responsibility there, each person. So let's recognize right away, and I'm sure you're all recognizing that, that, yep, that's true.

This is true of me, individually. I need to take responsibility. Each person. And then James talks about his own evil desire.

The ESV has it translated by his own desire. Let's understand, they've used this word, own, that which is specific to you.

Something that you have nurtured within yourself. There's something specific that you desire, that you desire strongly.

Again, that's why we respond differently in different situations. You know, I've nurtured something. It's not that I don't have a problem with sin and temptation. It's just that I've nurtured something different in my heart.

[28:03] And, you know, put the two of us in this other situation that leads to temptation for me. Well, then you wouldn't be responding sinfully. I would be probably in that situation.

No, probably about it. I would be responding sinfully in that situation. So, it's something that we have nurtured. It's not that nobody else experiences that.

You know, there will be similarities between us. But we're understanding that, yeah, there is something that is so important to me. I've nurtured that within my heart over time.

And that has become the thing that I have pursued and set up as what's really important, that I think I need to have this in order to be happy in life. And that's what I'm going to pursue and possibly throughout my life.

Maybe you brought that into your Christian life as a new believer. Maybe you haven't really taken the steps of growth and godliness that lead to putting that off and you've allowed that to continue.

[29:07] And it's still there. Well, that's what you've nurtured. Your own desire. It's a word used for any and all cravings, not just evil desires.

It's a deep, strong desire or longing of any kind, whether it's good or bad. It only becomes bad when it becomes an over-desire that leads us to actions, whether it's inner actions with our minds or outer, that lead to sin.

So we've got this strong desire, something I have to have it. It's become an inordinate affection, a strong desire. It's not something that I just desire.

It's something that I want. And it's something that I need. I must have this in my life. And that's what James is helping them understand about themselves.

And then he goes on to help them see the progression that takes place when we set up these desires as preeminent in our lives. And of course, there's the initial temptation.

[30:10] He says, dragged away or lured and enticed. You think of that word lure. Where would you typically find that word used? Lure.

Fishing, of course. And that's the kind of words that James is using here. He's using commonly used fishing terms.

The people would understand that. He's talking about a heart being lured. When fishing, the bait is very attractive to the fish and they're drawn to it. Instead of resisting the strong desire and turning away from the bait, the fish pursues it and is eventually caught and suffers the consequences.

At least that's what I'm told. Usually I'm not using the right lure or something and I'm not catching the fish. But at any rate, that's what's happening. That's what James is helping them understand what's going on in their hearts.

And James is telling it as readers and us that when we crave something very strongly, in just the right circumstances, it acts as a lure.

[31:17] We're enticed to pursue it. There we are in that situation. Quite possibly, it's not turned into sin yet. It's the struggle is taking place.

And we recognize that. We know that. Usually, when we're faced with a time of temptation, that struggle is taking place within us.

That war is taking place. Galatians 5 talks about that. The flesh lusting against the spirit. The spirit against the flesh. Paul knew about that.

Romans 7 talked about that. And of course, we know it as well. So that war is taking place. Well, if we don't set that desire aside, but instead give into it, James helps them understand where this is going to.

Next part of that verse. Then after desire has conceived a good birth to sin, and sin, when it's full grown, gives birth to death. The point at which the person gives into the desire really is when it becomes sin.

[32:28] He's convinced himself that he must have whatever. I deserve to have this. And now he's willing to do whatever is necessary to get it or to keep or protect what he wants to fulfill that desire.

He's willingly given up or given in to fulfill desires that are set up, that set up something else as preeminent in the heart instead of God.

And the individual that's now committed to pursue activities, whether it's inner activities or outer activities, that dishonor God. And so that that which you love so much is threatened, you've committed yourself, nobody's going to deny me of this.

And so maybe it's some envy, some jealousy, or within the thoughts, he's beginning thinking maybe evil of the person. How could they?

It's just like that person. He never lets me do this. Or, you know, always interfering and won't let me just be satisfied or happy.

[33:36] What's wrong? You know, so now we're thinking. Our thoughts are running away with us. Or maybe we're beginning to make plans to get what we think we have to have. If I just do this, then, or if I say this, we begin manipulating with our words and et cetera.

Or some outer activities, speak harshly, many times, or throw things, whatever it takes to end the conflict. My volume increases.

My words become harsher. And all I'm trying to do at this time is to eliminate the threat to what I want. And I'm choosing to take actions and words that are dishonoring God in order to get or keep what I want or manipulation or act secretly.

You know, I'm just going to hide over here and I'm going to make sure nobody sees me because there's still some things I want to protect out there. Maybe my reputation, but I don't want to give up what I really want.

And so now I have to go after it secretly. And so I'll do whatever I have to to fulfill that desire secretly. So all kinds of activities that it's leading to and James helps them understand the final result of this.

[34:51] And sin, when it's full grown, gives birth to death. He's letting them know the ultimate result of giving in to desires that lead to sinful choices and actions.

Here's a question for you. When faced with temptation, what consequences do people foresee that contribute to giving in to the temptation? Yeah, that's Carol.

So you need to ask that a different way sometimes. When faced with the temptation, so there's the temptation, and the person wants to give in to the temptation, so what are the consequences they usually think will result if they just go ahead and go after it?

Even if it means sinful speech or actions? Nobody will ever know. Yeah. Usually the consequences are very favorable.

You know, it won't turn out so bad. It'll be okay. Nobody will know. And actually, it will probably be best for me and everybody else.

[35:59] So, some interesting quotes that I came across related to this. Our choices are predicated upon what we think is good, what we delight in, what we find most desirable.

The truth about our choices is that we always choose what we believe will be our best good. We always choose what we believe will bring us the most delight.

So, when we've committed ourselves to that idol of the heart, whatever it is, and of course, now we have to pursue that, and part of pursuing that is convincing ourselves of the good results that will come to me if I give in to that.

And so, that's why James is helping these people understand the reality is, ultimately, it leads to a lot of destruction. And that's what you need to understand right up front here.

And you need to think about this ultimate result at the beginning when that struggle is taking place. And do away with all this deceitful thinking that it's going to be okay.

[37:03] It's not going to be okay. And this is the reality of it. Another quote from Elise Fitzpatrick, sin is always occasioned in us by our belief in its goodness.

I mean, that's what Eve was struggling with and on and on throughout these. King Saul struggled with it. We'll see that in an example here. The choice, Jonathan Edwards in his essay Freedom of the Will, the choice of the mind never departs from that which at the time appears most agreeable and pleasing, all things considered.

And then Richard Baxter, the will never desires evil as evil but as seeming good. You know, this obviously seems good. I've convinced myself that it will actually lead to my benefit and my continued happiness.

And there's so many examples. As you read through the scriptures, thinking of this whole matter of the heart, you see this in so many examples.

And I've just selected one about King Saul in 1 Samuel 13. The Philistines were attacking with numerous chariots and foot soldiers. Saul's soldiers were scared and they hid and began to scatter. [38:17] King Saul offered the burnt offering and the fellowship offering that he was not supposed to offer. He was supposed to wait for Samuel. Samuel arrived and then he asked Saul, what had he done?

There's one of those questions again. What have you done? And of course, Saul, obviously, this is why I've done this. And he replied, when I saw that the men were scattering and that you did not come at the set time, see all this outer people issues, the men were scattering, you didn't come at the right time, the Philistines, they were assembling at Michmash, I thought, there we go again, these are the circumstances, what's going on in his mind, all kinds of things that he's thinking about and he's drawing conclusions about his circumstances.

I thought, now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal and I have not sought the Lord's favor. What is it that he's trying to protect more than anything?

Well, his life. Well, who wouldn't blame him? Well, is that what's most important in life, my life? No, it's not. It's pretty valuable, of course.

And I'm not going to run out there and jump off a bridge, but this, we're understanding what's going on in the heart of King Saul and what's leading him to his actions.

[39:47] So I felt compelled. You see this progression that's taking place. So I, should he have trusted in his feelings? No, he shouldn't have.

No, but he was felt compelled to offer. Of course he's going to feel compelled because this is what he's cherishing in his heart and everything else is working against what he's cherished and so he's feeling compelled in order to protect this thing that I love so much.

This is obviously what I must do. I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering. Samuel says, you acted foolishly. Many times people say, of course, that makes obvious sense.

No, why did he act foolishly? What was, this is the conclusion. Saul came to this conclusion that led to these actions. Samuel's helping him understand now, no, this is the right conclusion.

This is the conclusion you should have come to. You acted foolishly. Samuel said, you have not kept the command of the Lord the Lord gave you.

[40:53] That's what he should have been bringing into his mind, feeding his mind on in all those difficult circumstances so that he wouldn't have acted foolishly in a way that dishonored God, set a poor example for the rest of the people of Israel and was bad for himself as well.

He should have just remembered what God said, pursued that and all would have been well. So, for us to grow in godliness, we need to target our hearts.

We cannot miss what's going on in our hearts. I can't miss it individually. You can't, you can't let me miss it. If you've got to be a Samuel and come to me and say, you acted foolishly, then that's what you need to do if I'm going to grow in godliness and that's what we need to do with each other.

So, we need to learn how to look behind what's going, look, look beyond what is happening in our behavior. It's important.

Our words are important and those will probably have to change sometime, but we can't miss the heart. And so, the importance for us this week is really examining our hearts.

[42:10] Don't miss those opportunities that we need to take in order for us to be growing together in godliness. right on time. Folks, never thought I'd make it.

A lot of talking, a lot of information. Thanks for your attention. Let's close in prayer. Father, this morning, you are so kind and compassionate to us that you've revealed to us truth that we desperately needed to see.

We needed to see our own hearts, Father, even to come to Christ in our salvation. Thank you for opening our eyes to the reality of it so that we see that Christ is our only hope.

And now we pray that even after our new birth, Father, we still need to grow. We've brought some things into our Christian lives that are still not honoring to you that we protect as a result of what's in our hearts.

So, as a loving Father, by your Spirit and your Word and possibly even other believers, help us to see it, help us to be willing to accept it and then to take biblical steps to grow in godliness.

[43 : 16] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.