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THE BIBLE’S BIGGER PICTURES

A Study of the Heart

How often have we heard a quote on TV or read something in a newspaper or magazine, later to find out the quote was taken out of context of what someone said or meant? We always have to be careful that we find reliable sources of information.



When it comes to topics we read from the Bible, we know that the source, God’s written Word, is reliable. However, when it comes to seeking God’s guidance to us from the written Word, the thing we must be cautious about is making sure that we don’t inadvertently take something out of context.

Some of the better Bible studies out there encourage us and caution us to always take into account the context in which something is said in Scripture. Context can include who was speaking, who was being spoken to, and why the person said what they said. Context can include looking at the culture of the times, as well as important things that happened, not just prior to a particular verse, but prior to a chapter, and even prior to a book of the Bible in which we may study. Another important aspect of context is to remember whenever we study a trial described in the Bible, both God and Satan are involved, whether they are specifically mentioned or not! If we overlook this aspect of context, we may miss out on seeing crucial insights on how the spiritual war is behind every real-life challenge we face!

One of the keys to understanding life in Christ, and how to live it better, is “Your Heart!” In this article we are going to look at another aspect of context. Specifically, we are going to get a big picture view of a number of verses that together can help us get an overall context for a particular topic: the heart. This same kind of big picture examination can be helpful with other key topics the Bible speaks to: sin and how to resist it, God’s will, free will, trials, the Holy Spirit, etc.

WHAT IS “THE HEART?”

Before we go too much farther, what is “the heart” that the Bible often speaks about? In answering this question it is important to remember that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament, mostly in Greek. Of course, there are a huge number of translations out there. No matter what translation we use, it is important to recognize that, due to no fault of the translators, some vital sentiments or critical aspects of a word’s meaning can get lost or at least lessened in the translation process. With that in mind, let’s look at the word *heart* and exactly what it means, first in the Hebrew, then Greek.

“The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. When the interaction between the thinking and feelings/desires (mind and heart) was able to lead a person toward God/Truth, this dynamic represented the ‘godly’ inner man and the word לֵב was used. This Hebrew word, in a very limited way, translates into English as ‘heart.’”¹

“In the New Testament, the Greek word for ‘...heart, or καρδιάς, means ‘*desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses.*’ The heart includes feelings, motives, and desires. These are things which compel and seek to influence us to do the things we sometimes do. The heart can be felt. The heart reveals what *actually* drives us as individuals in a given situation. The heart includes our deepest desires and the passions we *actually* work to fulfill. The heart is what influences our will. It has the potential to ‘change our minds’ for better or for worse.”²

In the New Testament’s Greek language, “...the heart is ... the seat and center of human life.”³

In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the heart deals with things we feel and things we want, particularly in a given moment of trial. The things we feel and/or want may be influenced by God, but in trials, Satan is also bringing his own influence to bear. This is part of the spiritual war into which we were born. So, we may have reasons why we feel a certain way and we may have reasons why we want what we want, but our reasons come from the mind. Because the heart is the seat and center of human life (because God designed us that way), the content of our hearts actually drives our thinking. The point is that when the motives, desires and/or feelings in our hearts are off (i.e., are being influenced, baited and tempted by Satan), our hearts make our thinking sinful, whether we recognize how or not. Our thinking, in turn, makes our actions sinful. When the content of our hearts suffers from the influences of Satan, then we are in a trial. During trials our hearts must be changed and transformed. This is true whether we see the full spiritual ramifications of that trial or not.

When it comes to the Bible’s bigger picture of the heart, there are three overall views of the heart. In some ways they *seem* to contradict one another. Once we’ve looked at each, we’ll see why they actually do not contradict one another. With that, the first chart* we will look at shows a number of verses which, when we focus on them alone, can lead us to believe that the heart cannot ever be trusted.

* NOTE: This article presents three groups of verses, relating to the heart, using three different charts. (The first group, on the next page, looks at verses indicating the heart cannot be trusted.) Researching the Bible, to discover which verses would fall into which grouping, involved a few things which we wanted you to know. First, a lot of verses were involved, and a couple of the charts are really long. You don’t have to read every verse in the three charts when you are first reading through the article. You may just want to read the first few verses presented to get the gist of them. This way you can finish reading the article, and then you can come back to look at the rest of the charts more in-depth later. We provided the number of verses we did so you have all the results of the research we did. We used the New American Standard Bible (see copyright page). We looked at every verse, from that translation, which mentioned the word *heart*. We only selected verses that very clearly fell into their respective grouping without a lot of interpretation or further research. For this reason, some verses that had the word *heart* in them were not placed into any of the three groups we look at in this article.

THE HEART CANNOT BE TRUSTED

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Genesis 6:5	Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
Proverbs 28:26	He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered.
Jeremiah 17:9	"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?
Jeremiah 18:12	"But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart .'
Jeremiah 22:17	"But your eyes and your heart Are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, And on shedding innocent blood And on practicing oppression and extortion."
Jeremiah 49:16	"As for the terror of you, The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, O you who live in the clefts of the rock, Who occupy the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as an eagle's, I will bring you down from there," declares the Lord.
Matthew 15:19	"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

Again, taken by themselves, the verses in the chart above seem to indicate we cannot trust the heart because we are sinful creatures with a fundamentally sinful nature, even though as believers we are forgiven for our sin. When we are experiencing disturbing feelings and strong desires in a trial, we may inadvertently conclude that God wants us to solve our spiritual battles with the mind, so as to avoid the evil contents that frequently abide in the heart. While God designed our hearts, we may conclude that it is futile and pointless to try to transform or use it. As a result, we might come to view the spiritual heart like an appendix... it may have served a useful purpose at one point, but now it's just an extra!

...we might come to view the spiritual heart like an appendix... it may have served a useful purpose at one point, but now it's just an extra!

Bottom Line: when we believe or assume the heart is not to be trusted, as believers we can inadvertently begin to stuff, deny, ignore or try to dismiss the feelings and desires of our hearts. We may come to do this because we cannot see how we actually play a part with God in transforming the content of our hearts.

When we view the heart as something we can’t or shouldn’t trust, it appears to be logical to conclude only God can harden or soften the heart. The verses in the next chart (below) seem to support this view. Taken by themselves, this next group of verses seem to indicate there are times when we cannot do anything about the content or condition of our hearts! These verses seem to indicate that God intervenes to change our hearts when *He* so desires. At an initial glance, it looks like God does this in what appears to us as a random intervention that only He understands. In short, we may inadvertently conclude that we play no practical or significant part in the changing or transformation of our hearts.

Some of the verses that lead to this line of thinking can be seen in the chart below.

THE LORD HARDENS OR SOFTENS THE HEART

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Exodus 4:21	The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.
Exodus 7:3	“But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.
Exodus 9:12	And the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart , and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.
Joshua 11:20	For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts , to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.
1 Kings 3:9	“So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”
1 Kings 8:57-58	“May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.
Psalms 10:17	O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart , You will incline Your ear...
Psalms 51:10	Create in me a clean heart , O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalms 141:4	Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.
Isaiah 44:17	They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Jeremiah 32:39	...and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.
Lamentations 3:65	You will give them hardness of heart , Your curse will be on them.
Ezekiel 11:19	“And I will give them one heart , and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,
Malachi 4:6	“He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”
Romans 1:24	Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.
Philippians 4:17	And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
2 Thessalonians 3:5	May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.
Revelation 17:17	“For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

The two groups of verses, about the heart, that we’ve looked at so far seem to indicate:

1. That our hearts will always tend to contain an evil content, unless...
2. The Lord intervenes to soften our hearts.

In many ways that is actually true. However, what is NOT true is that when our hearts contain sinful content, it is solely God’s job to change that! As a result, when we are thinking that we want to be the person God would have us to be, we inadvertently conclude that that thought means we are “doing our part” to cooperate with God so that our heart may be changed. As we will see, simply thinking we want our hearts to change isn’t enough; we often have to do some hard work to embrace the changes He seeks to make in us!

Bottom Line: When we conclude that God changes the heart in ways that supersede the very free will He gave us, then when we are in trials we will tend to stop looking for what God wants *us* to do to change our hearts. As a result, we will tend to pray and ask Him to make changes in us, while at the same time we aren’t actively doing what we must do in order to discipline ourselves to embrace those changes.

The last chart (next page) lists verses indicating that we are fully responsible for the times when our hearts are NOT changing. In short, these verses indicate that we play a very active part in terms of the content of our hearts. (This chart is long – remember note on page 5!)

WE PLAY A PART IN CHANGING THE CONDITION OF OUR HEARTS

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Exodus 8:15	But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.
Exodus 8:32	But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.
Exodus 9:34	But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart , he and his servants.
Deuteronomy 4:9	“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.
Deuteronomy 4:29	“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.
Deuteronomy 6:5	“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
Deuteronomy 8:5	“Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.
Deuteronomy 10:16	“So circumcise your heart , and stiffen your neck no longer.
Deuteronomy 11:16	“Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.
Deuteronomy 30:17-18	“But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish....
Deuteronomy 32:45-46	When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, <i>even</i> all the words of this law.
Joshua 24:23	“Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”
1 Samuel 6:6	“Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts ? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?
1 Samuel 7:3	Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your heart , remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”
1 Samuel 16:7	But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart .”

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
1 Kings 8:61	“Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”
1 Kings 11:4	For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.
2 Chronicles 12:14	He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.
2 Chronicles 20:33	The high places, however, were not removed; the people had not yet directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.
Psalms 4:4	Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.
Psalms 26:2	Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart .
Psalms 21:34	Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the Lord.
Psalms 44:18-19	Our heart has not turned back, And our steps have not deviated from Your way, Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals And covered us with the shadow of death.
Psalms 58:2	No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.
Psalms 66:18	If I regard wickedness in my heart , The Lord will not hear...
Psalms 77:6	I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart , And my spirit ponders...
Psalms 81:11-12	“But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me. “So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.
Psalms 95:8	Do not harden your hearts , as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness...
Psalms 119:11	Your word I have treasured in my heart , That I may not sin against You.
Proverbs 2:2	Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding...
Proverbs 3:5	Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.
Proverbs 5:12	And you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!
Proverbs 23:12	Apply your heart to discipline And your ears to words of knowledge.
Proverbs 23:17	Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the Lord always.
Proverbs 23:19	Listen, my son, and be wise, And direct your heart in the way.
Proverbs 24:17	Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles...
Proverbs 26:24	He who hates disguises it with his lips, But he lays up deceit in his heart .
Proverbs 27:19	As in water face reflects face, So the heart of man reflects man.

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Proverbs 28:14	How blessed is the man who fears always, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
Ecclesiastes 7:3	Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.
Ecclesiastes 7:9	Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools.
Ecclesiastes 10:2	A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s heart directs him toward the left.
Isaiah 35:4	Say to those with anxious heart , “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.”
Jeremiah 4:14	Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?
Jeremiah 29:13	‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart .
Ezekiel 3:10	Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely.
Ezekiel 18:31	“Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?
Hosea 7:2	And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face.
Joel 2:12-13	“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart , And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.
Zechariah 7:12	“They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts.
Malachi 2:2	“If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” says the Lord of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart .
Matthew 6:1	...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 9:4	And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts ?
Matthew 22:37	And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart , and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
Mark 8:17	And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart ?

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Luke 10:27	And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart , and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."
Luke 18:1	Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart ,
Luke 21:34	"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;...
John 14:1	"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
John 14:27	"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.
Acts 5:3	But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?
Romans 6:17	But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,
Romans 10:9-10	...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
Galatians 6:9	Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.
Ephesians 1:8	I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,...
Ephesians 6:5-6	Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.
Colossians 3:12	So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;...
Colossians 3:15-16	Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms <i>and</i> hymns <i>and</i> spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
2 Timothy 2:22	Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart .
Hebrews 3:8	Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness,...
Hebrews 3:12	Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

Scripture Reference	What It Says About The Heart
Hebrews 10:16	“This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart , And on their mind I will write them,”...
Hebrews 12:3	For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart .
James 1:26	If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart , this man’s religion is worthless.
James 4:8	Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts , you double-minded.
James 5:8	You too be patient; strengthen your hearts , for the coming of the Lord is near.
1 John 3:17	But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?
1 John 3:19-22	We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

Bottom Line: From Adam, Eve and Cain in the Old Testament, to the Apostles and believers of first century Christianity in the New Testament, to all people today, all have been responsible before God for submitting to God in order to transform the content of one’s heart in a trial. The only thing we can trust our hearts to show us, in the moments of trial when Satan is baiting and tempting us, is that part of our hearts are oriented on things not of God! If we will see that with spiritual eyes, we can use that information to discover how God would have us make a change of heart in Christ! It is in the initial moments of trial that peace is replaced by hurts, fears, and desires that we would like God to want us to fulfill, but may not be what He actually wants for us! God will permit us to harden or soften our hearts. And if we want our hearts to be focused on Him, then we must do our part to cooperate and submit to the changes He would make in our hearts.

The verses in the charts on the previous pages show us three general views of the heart from the Bible:

1. The heart cannot be trusted.
2. The Lord hardens or softens the heart.
3. We play a part in changing the condition of our hearts.

The verses that demonstrate we play a part with God in changing the condition of our hearts are overwhelmingly greater in number than those that seem to indicate the heart can’t be trusted or that the Lord soften or hardens the heart in ways that are random to us. Still, in order to understand the Bible’s bigger picture of the role of the heart in life’s trials, we must ask the question...

WHY DO SO MANY VERSES ABOUT THE HEART SEEM SO DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER?

The answer deals with another important aspect of context: perspective. If we are to determine how the Bible’s teachings about the heart applies to us, we must understand the perspective from which they are written. This will enable us to interpret the application to our own lives. Let’s look at a verse from each of the three groups and apply it to the well-known trial of Pharaoh, when Moses approached him about letting the children of Israel go free from slavery in Egypt:

Proverbs 28:26 - He who trusts in his own **heart** is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered.

Exodus 9:12 - And the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s **heart**, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Exodus 9:34 - But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his **heart**, he and his servants.

When we look at these three verses, we can see the following perspective:

1. We can say Pharaoh foolishly trusted his own heart.
2. We can say God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.
3. We can say Pharaoh sinned and hardened his own heart.

This perspective is from the outside observer’s perspective. It is from the perspective of someone like us, God or Moses, etc. when we observe Pharaoh during his trial. We can see each of these perspectives to be true in that Pharaoh’s heart was not with God, which is the only reason it couldn’t be trusted. We can see that God permitted Pharaoh’s heart to be the way it was; it is part of free will. Finally, we can see that Pharaoh was fully responsible because he sinned and hardened his own heart.

The danger is that we might conclude that Pharaoh’s example is one that teaches us that the heart itself should not be trusted, under any circumstances. The hidden implication behind such a conclusion is that Pharaoh had no choice in the matter. We may erroneously assume that God did something to Pharaoh’s heart to harden it to make a point to Moses. If this were ever the case, then it would indicate God was not really interested in a relationship with Pharaoh, and Pharaoh’s free will was taken away. This would mean Pharaoh was a victim of God, which certainly isn’t true.

In order for us to get an accurate picture of how the hardening or softening of the heart works, while clearly acknowledging Pharaoh’s personal responsibility for the content of his heart, it helps to view the trial from Pharaoh’s perspective.

Again, looking at the three verses above, in the midst of the trial it would not be accurate for Pharaoh to say from his own perspective:

1. I am “walking wisely” and am not trusting my own heart (this would require godly introspection to figure out).
2. God is hardening my heart; it is not my fault that I do not want to let the Israelites go; God is making me do it (this avoids taking personal responsibility for one’s heart and actions).
3. I am not sinning and my heart is not hardened (again, this would require godly introspection to figure out).

When someone is doing us wrong, we might be able to say, “The Lord is hardening his/her heart.” But when it comes to our own wrong actions, we can never get away with saying, “It is not my fault that I am doing such-and-such because God is making my heart the way it is.”

Part of the story of Moses and Pharaoh is about Moses in relationship to Pharaoh. This part of the story shows that when bad things happen to us (like Pharaoh resisting the release of Israel from captivity), we must trust God – God is still in control.

The other part of the story is about Pharaoh in relationship to God. This part of the story shows that we are responsible for the content of our hearts. It shows that we must introspect skillfully if we are to figure out our part of submitting our hearts to God, so that the content of our hearts changes and does not harden in a trial.

In our society today, we often distrust our hearts because the feelings and desires of the heart can be so disturbing and misleading. So, when we face trials, we can tend to try to lean heavily on “godly thinking” as a mechanism to transform the content of our heart. Sometimes this may seem to work; however, it won’t always work due to the relationship God designed between the heart and mind.

The heart influences the mind, for better or worse; not the other way around. When we are in trials, transforming the heart involves seeing what is in it, and submitting our heart to the Lord to have a change of heart! While this may sound somewhat vague, it really isn’t. It only seems that way when we aren’t used to working with the heart, which we have the potential to do as skilled disciples of Christ.

*Don’t ask WHY
am I feeling this
way; ask WHAT
must I change in
my heart in
order to have
the peaceful
heart of God!*

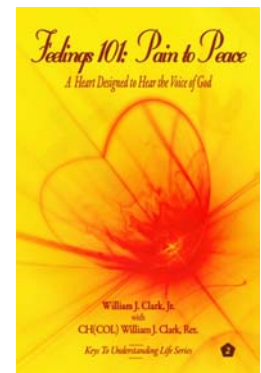
One of the challenges we believers have during trials is that we often are reluctant to look within our hearts. When we think about what it means to “look within our hearts,” we often think that means we need to look at our reasons *why* we feel the way we do, i.e., why our hearts are the way they are. We must be careful because when our hearts are inclined a certain way during a trial, the way our minds work is to justify why that inclination is justifiable, which is what happened with Pharaoh! Don’t ask *why* am I feeling the way I do; ask *what* must I change in my heart in order to have in me the peaceful heart of God! The task of looking within our hearts best starts by asking one’s self *what* must change in the heart so that the peace of God is restored to it! This will involve not only a change of heart, but a change of perspective, which in turn challenges the mind to

change! Remember, even when Pharaoh’s mind eventually changed, his heart still hadn’t changed, which is why he met his destruction when his mind changed back again, and he chased after the Israelites.

To look skillfully within our hearts, it can help to spend some time looking at the multitude of verses that talk to the part we play, or are responsible to play, in cooperating with God so that our hearts will orient on Him. These verses are in the 3rd chart. Open your spiritual eyes to how our hearts usually start off being away from God at the beginning of a trial, because they are full of our own personal desires and fears. Then, consider what you must change in you to reorient your heart on Him. While it helps to do this before a trial, it is essential to do these things DURING a trial!

Remember, context includes looking at the perspective from which something is happening in Scripture. Always be sure to look for the perspective that leads to godly responsibility and application for us.

This article really speaks to one of the biggest challenges we’ve found that believers sometimes experience when it comes to understanding the importance of learning to work with the heart during trials. Specifically, that challenge deals with the fact that during trials, there are times when the heart cannot be trusted to point us to God! However, there are other times in a trial when the heart can be wholly trusted to be resting in God! Identifying which is which during a trial involves learning important lessons in discernment. Transforming the heart in a trial, when it is struggling to be inclined toward God, is a huge part of the focus of the *Keys Series* book, [*Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*](#).



Since even before *Feelings 101* was published, the authors have been training believers in the Biblical principles the book examines. They have helped many believers to understand and use the Bible’s principles of transforming the pains of life to peace in Christ, so individuals could discover for themselves the comfort and guidance which THE Comforter and Guide, the Holy Spirit, offers to each believer based on their own specific situations and needs. Until now this discipleship training opportunity has been shared by word of mouth only. The authors are now expanding this opportunity to more believers by using today’s internet and online technologies. For more information about this opportunity, see the ad on page 18.

KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

Remember to come see us at Jesus Jam Fest 2012! *Keys To Understanding Life* will be in the CRRC building from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and then at a booth out on the grounds by the stage area. We look forward to being able to visit with you.



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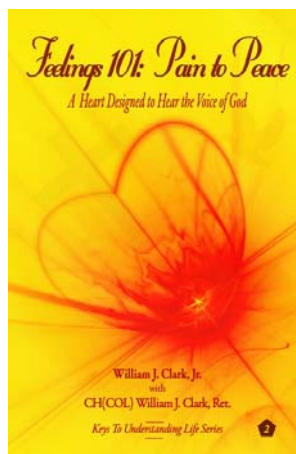
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ENDNOTES

¹ *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 75

² *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 44

³ *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 44

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If you find this e-publication beneficial to your walk with Christ and would like to give a financial gift to the *Keys To Understanding Life* ministry, you may do so by mailing your gift to our Snail Mail Address (our current Snail Mail Address can be found on the Contact Us page on our website).

Just so you know, our ministry is not yet a non-profit ministry. We are currently engaged in becoming a 501 C3 non-profit organization, with a goal of attaining that distinction toward the end of this year. As it is, any gift that is given is a “true gift” in the sense that it is not tax deductible right now. At this time, donations or gifts to *Keys To Understanding Life* may be made out to: William J. Clark.

God bless you.

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