WRITE IT ON *THEIR HEARTS*

unit 15 | session 3

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jeremiah prophesied about a coming day when God would write His law on His people's hearts and provide lasting forgiveness of sin. This prophecy points to God's provision of Jesus. Through Jesus, God offers us forgiveness, and through the Holy Spirit, God enables us to obey His commands.

WRITTEN ON YOUR HEART

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Jeremiah 29–31

GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR TRUST

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

5 This is what the LORD says: Cursed is the person who trusts in mankind. He makes human
flesh his strength, and his heart turns from the LORD. 6 He will be like a juniper in the Arabah;
he cannot see when good comes but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt
land where no one lives. 7 The person who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence indeed is
the LORD, is blessed. 8 He will be like a tree planted by water: it sends its roots out toward a
stream, it doesn't fear when heat comes, and its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a
year of drought or cease producing fruit.

GOD PUTS HIS WORD WITHIN US

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

31 "Look, the days are coming"—this is the LORD's declaration—"when I will make a new
covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 This one will not be like the
covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of
the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master"—the LORD's
declaration. 33 "Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those
days"—the LORD's declaration. "I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will one teach his neighbor or
his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest
of them"—this is the LORD's declaration. "For I will forgive their iniquity and never again
remember their sin."

MAIN POINT.

God transforms us from the inside out.

THEOLOGY *CONNECTION*

ILLUMINATION OF SCRIPTURE

Because of the incredible difference between God's wisdom and ours and because of our sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without the Holy Spirit's help through the process of illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not rely on our own knowledge and understanding in the process of interpretation, nor do we only rely on organizations' or scholars' interpretations. Instead, we rely on the work of the Spirit of God, who illuminates the Scriptures in our hearts and minds (John 14:15-18; 16:7-15).

DISCUSSION

GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR TRUST

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

- **Which is easier: Depending on people or on God? Explain.**
- **What threatens the tree (v. 8)? How is this like life for us?**
- **What happened to the tree because it was planted by the water? Where are you planted?**

GOD PUTS HIS WORD WITHIN US

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

- **What do you think it looks like for God's Word to be written on your heart?**
- **What's the difference between heart change and behavior change?**
- **How do these verses point to the gospel? How has God kept His Word?**

WHAT "HEAT" OR "DROUGHT" ARE YOU FACING NOW? HOW CAN GOD'S WORD WRITTEN ON YOUR HEART HELP YOU KEEP GOING?

CULTURAL *CONNECTION*

Have you ever needed a fresh start with someone, like a friend, a parent, or a teacher? Maybe you lost trust with one another because one of you didn't keep your word. Maybe one of you betrayed the other person. If you've ever been through something like this, then you know that a fresh start feels good—like a weight lifting off of you. You can simply start over and try to do better. We often need a fresh start in our walk with the Lord, don't we? Like Israel, we often fail to keep our word; we fall into sin; we fall into idolatry; we wander away and seek worldly pleasures. God gives us mercy every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). When we repent of our sin, God forgives us. He writes His Word on our heart so that we can change and grow. But it's hard to be changed by the Word if we don't commit to knowing it. You want a fresh start with the Lord? Get into His Word. Seek Him in prayer. Deepen your relationship with Him. He'll change you from the inside out.

DAY ONE

PSALM 1

Have you ever driven through a desert? Or even seen one on television? If so, then you probably noticed that the trees look more like shrubs, and in some places, there may not be any at all. Trees can grow tall only when their roots grow deeply. Roots help them to stand and not be blown over by the wind. The problem with trees growing in the desert is that their roots can't grow very deep due to poor soil conditions. Sand can't provide what a tree needs to thrive. Of course, the lack of water plays a major role too. The bottom line: Trees grow and thrive only in the right conditions for them to do so.

As odd as it sounds, we're a lot like trees. We'll only grow and thrive in the right conditions. This psalm echoes the same idea. Spiritually, we'll grow strong roots when we're planted in places that fuel growth—places that can sustain and nourish us. Here's the truth: You're as close to God as you want to be. If you're not growing spiritually, then look at where you're planted. You may be planted in desert places—in places that will stunt your growth and with people who can't help you grow. Verse 1 explains what starves us: Walking with people who carelessly sin, taking advice from people who make ungodly choices, making those who don't know God our closest people. We will starve spiritually if we plant ourselves in these situations—in sand. But the psalmist says those who plant themselves by a stream bear fruit and remain green. What does that look like for us? We plant ourselves in God's Word because it's our daily bread; it gives us spiritual nourishment. We commit to other spiritual disciplines, like prayer, worship, fasting, and service. We surround ourselves with godly influences—with other people who are spiritually growing. We can't grow if we're planted in the sand, and we'll never survive the wind with shallow roots. Instead, plant yourself in good soil and thrive.

- **HONESTLY ASSESS YOUR LIFE: WHERE ARE YOU PLANTED?**
- **ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO GROW SPIRITUALLY. SOMETIMES, IT FEELS LIKE I'M STARVING. HELP ME TO PLANT MYSELF IN THE RIGHT PLACES AND WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE SO I CAN THRIVE.

DAY TWO

MATTHEW 7:24-29

When you're building a sandcastle, you have to remember a few things. First, you need to build it outside of the waves' reach. Next, you need to create a flat, packed sand base to build on. Finally, you need to use water to help pack the sand in a bucket so it will keep its shape. Now, once you do all this, the sandcastle will stand forever, right? Well, if you've gone to the beach and built one, then you know that most sandcastles are gone by morning. Either the tide comes in and washes it away, or someone destroys it. Castles in the sand don't last.

In this passage, Jesus explained that our foundation matters. Why? Because no matter where we build—no matter who we are—wind and rain will come. It's certain. As we saw in the lesson this week, we can expect seasons of heat and drought too. No matter how much we try to avoid difficult seasons, we will walk through them. We'll likely experience loss, sorrow, betrayal, poverty, sickness, or loneliness. The way we stand during those seasons is by standing on a firm foundation. That foundation—that rock—is Jesus. He is the One who never moves and is never shaken by wind and rain. He sustains us in the drought and in the heat. And when we stand on Him by placing our faith in Him and by rooting ourselves in God's Word, we won't crumble when life hurts. We'll feel it—the wind, the rain, the heat. But our faith won't crumble because our salvation is secure and our hope is certain. We'll collapse if we place our hope and faith in anything else. And relying on anyone else won't be enough because people will fail us. We are designed to depend on God—to stand on the Rock. All other places are shifting sand.

- **WHAT ELSE OR WHO ELSE BESIDES GOD ARE YOU TEMPTED TO TRUST IN? HOW WILL THESE FOUNDATIONS FAIL YOU?**
- **WHAT SEASON ARE YOU CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STAND FIRM ON CHRIST?**

PRAY

GOD, YOU ARE MY FIRM FOUNDATION. I KNOW ALL OTHER FOUNDATIONS SHIFT AND FAIL. THANK YOU FOR BEING MY SALVATION AND FOR STEADYING ME DURING DIFFICULT SEASONS. I DEPEND ON YOU.

DAY THREE

EZEKIEL 36:24-27

What does it mean when we say someone is cold-hearted? Usually, we mean that this person doesn't seem to have feelings or care about other people. We mean that their heart is more like stone—hardened, stubborn, and cruel.

God promised through multiple prophets that He would change His people's hearts. Notice, He didn't say He would change their actions. Why? Because change starts on the inside. This week, we read about God's promise to write His Word on our hearts; He promised to put His Word within us so that we would know Him (Jer. 31:33-34). In today's passage, Ezekiel shared a similar message. God promised to replace hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. In this context, *heart* is closely connected to our will—to our desires. It's connected to our emotions and our actions. God promised to put His Spirit within the people. Think about that: God shares His Spirit with us! When we call on Jesus for salvation and commit to following Him, God gives us a new heart. In other words, He gives us His Spirit, altering who we are from the inside out. Our will submits to God; our emotions are rooted in the truth of His Word; our actions flow from inward change. When God gives us a new heart, everything about the way we live changes. Everything about the way we respond to God changes. The way we treat others, how we talk, and what we desire all changes because God dwells within us. We don't change out of our own doing or because of our own determination but out of God transforming us. This is a truth we can rest in. None of us are incapable of change because the Lord is the One who changes us. We receive a new heart. We receive His Spirit. And as we continue to know God, He changes us from the inside out.

- **WHY DO WE NEED A NEW HEART?**
- **DESCRIBE THE CHANGE THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE INSIDE OF YOU. HOW HAS IT AFFECTED THE OUTSIDE?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME A NEW HEART AND FOR SHARING YOUR SPIRIT WITH ME. I COULD NEVER CHANGE ON MY OWN, BUT YOU MADE ME NEW. CONTINUE TO TRANSFORM ME FROM THE INSIDE OUT, AND MAKE ME MORE LIKE YOUR SON.

DAY FOUR

ROMANS 8:1-5

We fall into one of these two categories: We're either rule followers or rule breakers. Middle ground doesn't really exist. We either follow rules perfectly, or by breaking just one rule, we break them all. If we are being honest, we'd admit that we're all rule breakers. Even breaking a rule like not chewing gum in class or walking in single-file line makes us guilty. In reality, none of us can claim that we've followed rules perfectly.

God's law demanded total obedience. His commands are for our good, and they help us reflect His character. But, no one has ever been able to follow it perfectly, except for Jesus. Think about this quote from preacher and writer, Charles Spurgeon: "Things required by the law are bestowed [gifted] by the gospel. God demands obedience under the law: God works obedience under the gospel. Holiness is asked of us by the law: holiness is wrought [worked] in us by the gospel."[1] What is Spurgeon saying? The law requires perfect obedience—total obedience—in order to claim we've kept the law. It requires holiness. And that's not all. The law requires faithfulness, purity, truthfulness, and so on—at all times, in all cases. But none of us have ever been able to do it. All of us stand condemned as law breakers. The gospel is that God does in us what we couldn't do ourselves. Jesus did what the law couldn't do for us—provide salvation. He fulfilled the law perfectly, and when He gave His life in our place, His righteousness became our righteousness. Now, God's Spirit within us works obedience into us; He works holiness into us; He helps us be faithful, pure, and truthful. And though we still mess up and sin, Christ's righteousness always covers us. Now, instead of being condemned as law breakers, we are justified and freed because Christ kept the law when we couldn't. This is the gospel: What we couldn't do, Jesus did. Sin is condemned, and we're free to live by the Spirit.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU TRIED TO BE GOOD OR RIGHTEOUS ON YOUR OWN? WHY DOES THIS FAIL?**
- **HOW HAS THE GOSPEL GIVEN YOU WHAT THE LAW DEMANDS?**

PRAY

LORD, I PRAISE YOU FOR FREEING ME FROM THE LAW. I COULDN'T KEEP IT PERFECTLY, NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRIED. THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON TO DO WHAT I WASN'T CAPABLE OF DOING AND FOR MAKING ME RIGHTEOUS.

DAY FIVE

ROMANS 8:5-11

If you were to keep track of what you think about each day, what would it reveal about you? It'd likely reveal what matters most to you, what makes you happy, what makes you sad. It'd show your priorities, your dreams. It'd reveal what you're passionate about or what you hate. And, it'd reveal your real motives and your sinful desires. The truth is that what we think about impacts how we live. So, our minds matter.

A major shift happens in our minds when we surrender our lives to the Lord. We go from living according to our flesh—our sinful desires—to living according to God's Spirit who lives in us. Paul explained that if the Spirit lives in us, then our mindset changes; it focuses on the things of God, on life and peace. Our old mindset before knowing Jesus was focused on self, and it led to death instead of life. That old mindset was even hostile toward God because nothing in our flesh wants to submit to Him. As believers, we're no longer controlled by a mind that only desires to satisfy sinful desires. We walk in freedom from it! We walk by the Spirit, showing that we belong to God. Our mind desires to submit to God's authority instead. Here's the truth: What we think impacts how we live. Our mind matters greatly. Scripture even teaches that we must take our thoughts captive (2 Cor. 10:5). This means we hold every thought and idea as prisoner; we examine it to see if it lines up with the truth of God's Word. If not, we demolish it; we throw it out. This process of renewing our mind is continual and happens as we walk with the Lord (Rom. 12:2). Take some time to consider your mind. Where are your thoughts? Do you dwell on the things of God or on the things of this world and on self?

- **WHAT ARE MAJOR CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR THINKING SINCE COMING TO KNOW JESUS?**
- **ARE PARTS OF YOUR MIND STILL HOSTILE TO GOD? HOW CAN YOU SURRENDER THEM?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR TRANSFORMING MY MIND. THANK YOU FOR THE FREEDOM THAT COMES WITH KNOWING YOU. HELP ME TO TAKE MY THOUGHTS CAPTIVE SO THAT MY MIND IS FULL OF TRUTH.