



Prayergram[®]



Challenging Christians to Pray — January/February, 2015

The Complexity of



the Human Heart

The heart of man is a highly complex mechanism, so incomprehensible, so delicate, and so troubling at times, and only its Maker understands its various intricacies. Each heart is different, punctuated by different motives, controlled by various circumstances, influenced by unexpected occurrences and propelled by incorrigible passions. In spite of its complexities, some people try to manage their heart without consulting with the Creator, and that seems to be the tragedy of the moment.

Man is entrenched in many fears and doubts. He is at war with himself and his heart becomes the battle ground for good and evil. On the surface, he looks happy and successful, but underneath that veneer of respectability and gaiety, there lays a side of man that no one knows except God, the infinite Creator.

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We all have moments of exhilarations, doubts, fears and many ups and downs; but a trusting heart that is wholly devoted to God does know the exquisite delight of doing His will and purpose. Man has a penchant to flatter God with his lips while his heart is far from worshiping his Creator. Beware



of such flattery that denies God's sovereign majesty! Man cannot atone for his sin; it is the sovereign work of God. Then, what can man do? He can acknowledge God's power, recognize his sinful nature and ask for forgiveness and pardon by bringing himself before the 'mercy seat.' A heart at peace

with God gives "strength and vitality" to the body; but a heart full of hate and envy rot the bones.

The knowledge and wisdom of God is based on a 'pure heart,' a broken and contrite heart. Jesus Christ takes the most complex heart and changes into a heart full of grace and mercy. Our rebellious nature toward God can be traced to a 'defected or deceptive' heart; one that refuses to yield to its Creator, God. Politics can never cleanse the human heart neither does psychology or philosophy. Some cut deals with the devil and hope no one will ever catch them in the act, but the Lord knows the HEART of all men.

There is an old Latin adage: "Mundus vult decipi; ergo, decipiatur" written by Horace two thousand years ago. That means, roughly, "The world wishes to be deceived; so let it be deceived." Or, as T. S. Elliot said in a more contemporary context: "Mankind cannot take very much reality." To some, life goes on "in its seemingly endless round of empty repetition." An honest probe of the human heart will lead some to despair and dismay, like the French existentialist playwright, Jean Paul Sartre, who says "there is No Exit from this meaningless existence."

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Take for example; Saul of Tarsus, the devoted hunter of Christians, had a transformation of heart and he was instantly changed from a strong-willed and forceful Pharisee into a humble and ardent lover of Jesus Christ and His people.

What is the picture here? **The “heart” of Saul was changed,** and he became Paul of Tarsus, the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ through a spiritual heart surgery. God can take a complex heart like Paul and change it into a heart of love and mercy.

In one of my visits to Nigeria, I was talking to a medical doctor who told me something that I will never forget: **“The heart of man is darker than the darkest night.”** I do not know whether the good doctor was aware of what the prophet Jeremiah said long ago, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** (Jeremiah 17:9) That’s precisely why Jesus came to cleanse our hearts from all unrighteousness. Jesus

says, **“Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murderers... evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness”** (Mark 7:21-22). We may talk about the nobility of humanity and all the humanitarian work we do, but there is

something in our nature that nobody wants to tackle or deal with it—”darkness, deceit and conceit.” The profound words of Jonathan Edwards come to mind. **“Nothing sets a man so much out of the devils reach as humility.”** Humility is the very opposite of conceit.

True humility is a God-given virtue that leads us to an understanding of who we really are and the condition of our hearts in relation to God, our Maker. We are admonished in the Scriptures to look up, and when we do look up, what do we see? We see hope, love, compassion and strength.

The immortal words of St. Francis of Assisi come to mind, **“Keep a close eye toward life’s end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God’s creature. What you are in His sight is what you are and nothing more. Remember, when you leave this world, you can take nothing that you’ve received—fading symbols of honor—trappings of power—but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.”** God beckons us, **“Give me your heart and only when you’ve given me your heart you’ve given me everything.”** Have you given your heart to God, or still holding your heart in your hand? It is an undeniable truth that the human heart is made for Christ and it is incomplete until it is surrendered to Him in total submission and unbridled humility.

We do live in a changing world, and we are becoming increasingly restless as we pursue life’s fleeting desires without giving heed to the voice of the Father. We’re a restless society that is built on speed. No matter how costly our search for speed or happiness, there is always a hunger and thirst for a meaningful relationship with the living God. The reality of our heart, questions pertaining to life, death and eternity can only be explained by our Creator. At the end of the day, when the

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sun goes down, when you are alone in your room feeling empty, what matters is not the wealth, or the accolades, or the awards on the wall, but the need for a God who loves you and responds to your every cry. Is there a longing in your heart for more of God and His presence? Remember, God's heart is stirred when we are hungry for Him and are pursuing Him. His heart is stirred when we seek His face and not His hands. His heart is moved when we desire Him above all things and not His blessings.

Jesus is the only One who can truly diagnosis the human heart without prejudice. We cannot educate ourselves out of the plague of the heart, but only as we accept the Lord's verdict pertaining to the heart can we be at peace with Him. All the perfumes of Arabia cannot wash away the stain of the human heart except the precious blood of Christ which was shed on Calvary's cross. The Christian faith is always about the individual; it focuses on celebrating the individual changed 'heart.' Jesus changes the human heart. **The One Who created the heart of man, alone can redeem it, renew it, capture it and conquer it.** Brains can argue, but it takes the human heart to bring comfort and solace to a wounded soul. When God changes the human heart, a new perspective takes over and life turns around for the better. **"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,"** means that we should always be thankful to God and be on our knees seeking His forgiveness, grace and infinite mercy. We leave

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the act of retribution to God who alone knows the intent of the heart and every heart is judged by its Creator. It seems our hearts are torn apart because God and the world are both beckoning it; because good and evil are both appealing to it. It is in this ongoing struggle that many are being brought nearer to the heart of God. **"For all**

the day long have I been plagued; and chastened every morning" (Psalm 73:14), **and it's through 'pain' that we are made whole"** (Hebrews 2:10).

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heart consciousness. **Conversion involves the heart; decision involves the mind. Whatever seems wrong in the human heart—Almighty God can fix it.** He speaks to each heart with a gentle and loving voice. God removes the stain from the heart and polishes it with His everlasting love and care. Settle the question of the "heart" and many of our pestering social and spiritual maladies will go away. **When the heart is pure, the mind is focused on God, and the spirit of man energized. Joy and peace and blessing, are a natural outcome.**

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Until we get our heart right, we can never get our head straight! As St. Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee Oh, Lord." God alone can change our 'complex' heart, and that makes Him exquisitely, immortally and majestically powerful and glorious, wouldn't you say?

Matthew Skariah on 'Simplicity'

As followers of Christ, we are to love and practice simplicity. The world may think of simplicity as not up with the time, but to God, it is a foretaste of Divinity. When we are simple, we are not gullible and foolish! God's people are led by His standard, not by world's standard. Simplicity and wisdom are inextricably interlaced and we cannot separate one

from the other. "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job 32:9). Wisdom is a gift from God and it excels folly. (Ecc. 2:13) The immortal words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer come to mind, "There is no true simplicity without wisdom, and no wisdom without simplicity."

In all things, seek simplicity!

Are We Techno-Charged Robots, or Human Beings?

Computers and internet are great, but are they jeopardizing our relationship with God and our common humanity? In many ways, technology has taken over our lives. Now, more than ever, people are singing the praises of modern technology, not realizing that something very precious has been lost in the blur, such as human interaction and a loving and caring spirit. The modern person is so enamored with his latest 'electronic toys' than being filled with the love and mercy of the living God who cares for us all. In this culture of technology, selflessness is "out," and self gratification is "in." ***In our cyberspace culture, we're witnessing the death of "human relationship."*** Family and friends are God's gift to us, and in comparison to this gift everything else pales into insignificance. This is by any means to devalue the world of things and their practical benefits to humanity. What is the latest computer, or megaphone, or the most expensive electronic gadgets, or estate, to me, compared to my Lord, my faith, my loved ones, or my Christian brothers and sisters the world over?

Even though we are hooked up with the latest technology we feel at times rootless, like a rolling tumble weed—moving, moving, moving but becoming extremely dizzy from the speed. Christians of the 21st century need to rest on their eternal hope and assimilate their scattered thoughts, revisit their hopes and aspirations, balance their doctrine, and free themselves from becoming casualties of our techno-charged culture. Sometimes a personal visit or phone call is much more meaningful than a forwarded e-mail. Whatever has happened to our common humanity? The world is full of beings, but without humanity. Jesus was human in all aspects. He identified with us; He became one of us and clothed with our humanity.

Never underestimate the power of the presence of the living God! When someone walks by us, they should sense God's presence in our lives, without a word being uttered. The man who walks with God also knows God walks with him.

When I was a little lad, growing up in Southern India, our pastor, a well-educated man who once came to our home to pray for my mother who was very ill. He had been walking in the monsoon rain for hours visiting his parishioners, and as a result, his traditional apparel, the cassock, was filled with mud. That day my pastor taught me a lesson on "Christian love and humility" which made a profound impact on my life. The godly influence of a person whose heart God has touched is like a breath of cool air in a hot summer day. I thank God for the Christians who carry the fragrance of Christ wherever they go and whatever they do. What we say and do is truly an indication of what we are. Robert Louise Stevenson once said, ***"Worth-while folks don't just happen."***

May I humbly ask, ***"Are we techno-charged robots, or human beings with the capacity to love and worship our God, and lend a helping hand to all those in need?"*** This week, why not write a little note or make a phone call or tell someone that you're praying for them and care about their well-being. ***Don't be in a hurry! Don't be a slave to an electronic device! Life is God's gift to us and may we cherish it with utmost reverence and respect! Get with someone and have some real heart-to-heart conversation (fellowship) without dishing out any insult or "I told you so."***

"Lord, deliver us from the fear of man, the love of approbation, the shame of being thought of old-fashioned, and the desire to be modern!"



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World Prayer Band • P. O. Box 686 • Roswell New Mexico 88202-0686 • U.S.A.
(575) 623-6925 • Cell Phone: (575) 626-5097

E-mail: mwpbs@yahoo.com

Website: www.worldprayerband.com