

Equipping Hour: Feb. 15

Feb. 15: The Dynamic Heart (pt1)

I want to give you a quick reminder that the content for this class is available through the church app.

For the past year, we have been walking through what it means to adopt and embrace a biblical worldview. My hope and prayer is that you have been challenged and encouraged to see how and where God's transforming wisdom and power needs to be applied to your beliefs, values, and behavior, **that you have been given some gospel-driven tools for recognizing mouse poop theology and secular godless influence.** What we have covered will be an on-going opportunity in the future since discipleship doesn't stop just because we covered it once.

Our pace for the rest of this Spring semester is now changing as we leave behind our three-week worldview topic format and press just a little deeper. Yup, deeper. If you've been with us with any regularity, you have been blasted with a significant amount of content, from what the secular world embraces and why, from what Scripture reveals as God's given reality to us and for us, and from poking at the question, "So what?" with all this information. We have been, in a very real sense, just skimming the surface because there is so much more to uncover and reveal about how sin has and continues to impact our thinking, desiring, and choosing, let alone examining all that God blesses us with in Christ Jesus. Remember that biblical information without transformation is useless information. So that's where we are headed. We are going to do our best to embrace what God's word reveals about how spiritual formation and growth occurs, what that means at the deepest level of what makes you, you.

Let's begin with a simple question—one we don't often slow down enough to ask:

What do you genuinely delight in?

Not what you *believe* in. Not what you *agree* with. But **what actually brings you joy, shapes your choices, and captures your attention.** Let me add some context so you recognize where I am coming from. Various theological camps play a kind of tug-of-war when it comes to this question. Some camps are drawn to the powerful emotive expressions of delight, but these are often experiential rather than transformative, meaning they struggle to sustain lasting change. Other camps are drawn to cognitive expressions of delight, meaning a deep theological knowledge and insight that helps them with the right answers but does little to poke or stir the deepest recesses of the heart. It doesn't necessary "move" and "shake" them where change actually takes place.

We are aiming for the middle of this tug-of-war, where knowing God better makes for a profound and lasting change, where knowledge and mystery are friends, not rivals, **both propelling your heart towards worship**, where knowing the love of God is the very thing that makes us loving, where sensing the desirability of God alters our preferences and

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inclinations, and we begin to want God more and more *and* more than anything else. This delight goes beyond intellectual and experiential. It impacts everything, from the way we worship and pray, to happier and healthier marriages, to satisfaction in all areas of life. This delight provides assurances, shapes holiness, and transforms the very way we look at and interact with the world around us.

We live in a culture that is constantly shepherding and, dare I say it, disciplining our delights. Algorithms are built around it. Advertisements are aimed at it. Entire industries exist to figure out what makes our hearts lean forward and press in. And often, without realizing it, our delight drifts from God to lesser things—good things, even—but things that were never meant to carry the weight of our joy and satisfaction.

Psalms 37:4 gives us a fantastic picture of this. David declared:

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

That's a command, mind you. Delight yourself in the Lord. Not a suggestion. Imperative. And commands reveal what God knows is good for us. The tension with this verse, though, isn't the command itself: it's the meaning of the word "delight." As a noun, this word is pretty straightforward and points to the idea of great pleasure and desire. But as a verb it takes on a whole new meaning. This Hebrew word, this commanded action for delight, means to pamper or refresh yourself, to be soft, delicate, even dainty. Huh. As a dude, this seems odd and hard. So I'm going to attempt to explain this using two limited analogies describing the dynamics of this word.

Last summer my wife and I went on an anniversary cruise to Alaska. Absolutely amazing. We went with another couple, and they surprised us with one free cruise-long pass to the thermal spa, a rather generous anniversary gift. We went ahead and purchased the other pass, and the four of us pampered ourselves at the spa any chance we got. Sauna, steam room, hot tub, cold tub, salt room, heated contoured beds, amazing views out the back of the ship, lounging areas. Cold fresh oranges, comfy bathrobes, gentle music, relaxing atmosphere. Soft, cushy, refreshing, exclusive. It was delightful, and I regularly find myself longing to delight in that week-long experience again.

The other analogy is Gollum from *Lord of the Rings*. I know, weird contrast, right? Where are you going with this, Ben? Consider the total preoccupation Gollum had over the one ring of power. He called it his precious, was driven to possess and reacquire it throughout the entirety of the story. It occupied his priorities, motivations, his total heart, soul, and mind. Nothing else was of greater value, but the ring was evil and it warped and twisted his mind and body. And it was a ring. A piece of frivolous jewelry, something worn by someone with soft, delicate hands, not calloused work hands. In every sense of the word, Gollum gave himself to the ring, fully and without reservation. It possessed him just as much as he desired to possess it. It was his pure delight to be reunited with the ring at the end of the story.

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Now slam those two analogies together, only in this sense, that ring is pure, holy, lovely, and life-giving. Delighting yourself in the Lord means placing yourself in a position to receive from Him. It's a softening of your heart that basks in the infinite pleasure of His lovingkindness. It requires breaking down any safeguards and barriers you might have, including self-protection, in order to be fully consumed by the joy and pleasure of being a child of God. It means both giving yourself over and receiving.

Psalm 37:4 is not a transactional formula—"If I delight, God gives me what I want." It's a transformational promise—"As you delight in Me, I will shape what you want." Today, we're going to start with what it really means to delight in the Lord—and how that delight forms us, sustains us, and overflows into a life that honors God and possess our hearts.

So let's look at the invitation to delight ourselves in the Lord. Psalm 37 was written in a context of uncertainty, injustice, and frustration. David is addressing the temptation to envy the wicked who seem to prosper. And right in the middle of that tension, he says: "Delight yourself in the LORD." That tells us something important: Delight is not dependent on circumstances. It's not contingent on how you feel. It's a verb, yes, but it's a state of being, like I am hungry, or I was scared. I am delighted, in my innermost being, in the Lord. It's an impact that becomes your constant state of being.

Psalm 16:11

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Notice where joy is found—not in outcomes, not in control, not in success—but in God's presence. At His right hand. It's impossible to be aware of God's presence if you have not experienced and are convinced of His presence. A heart delighting in the Lord is a heart that has received God. Jesus implores the church in Laodicea, the church that was neither hot nor cold and therefore useless and ineffectual, kind of like useless information, He implores them in Revelation 3:20:

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

God's presence doesn't require searching, discovering, or exploring. It doesn't require mystical practices or enchantments. He's literally here, knocking on the door of your heart, waiting to be received in **all** areas of your control center.

Isaiah 55:2 presses this even further:

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

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That's a diagnostic question. God is asking His people, Why are you exhausted and still empty? Why are you investing so much of your life in things that cannot satisfy your soul? Delight in the Lord begins when you are convinced that God Himself is your greatest good. Not ministry. Not outcomes. Not blessings. Not even obedience. God. Not what He does for us, simply who He is. Until you have received and been captivated by the glory of God, delight will always feel like a religious burden instead of a joyful pursuit. But you might wonder, how, and where does it come from?

Psalm 34:8

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Regarding God's goodness, David says, "Try for yourself and find out." But too often I hear the lament, "Well, I tried the whole God thing, and it didn't work for me. I tried Jesus, but I didn't get anything out of it." These complaints share a few things in common. The first is wrong motivation because if your motivation to love God is to get something out of God, like a transaction as we already covered, then you will be disappointed because God isn't going to reveal Himself to someone with false motives. **God won't respond, won't reveal Himself to the heart that declares, "Well, what's in it for me?" God will always respond to the heart that declares, "God, who you are is enough. I just want you."** That's the heart that has tasted and seen and then declares, "I want more of you!"

The second is the immaturity of thinking you will have it figured out in short order. There aren't five steps to delight in the Lord, seven practices to a better life, or six months to knowing Jesus better. That thinking is still transactional because it comes with the belief that I am in control, that you can or ought to will yourself into delighting in the Lord. But the reality is delight isn't the same as momentary emotion. Concerning the one truly pursuing righteousness:

Psalm 1:2 declares that:

His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

That doesn't describe hype or spiritual adrenaline. It describes affection that has been trained over time, in the ecstasy of good times, in the pain of hard times, in the mundane and boring. Delight is cultivated. It's formed through attention and practice, perseverance and faithfulness, intentionality and consistency. Only then can we delight regardless of circumstances.

Psalm 112:1 echoes this:

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

Delight shows up not just in worship songs, but in obedience—and if obedience doesn't cost you something, it's not obedience because denying yourself and taking up your cross to follow Jesus means giving up your wants, desires, ambitions, comforts, and preferences.

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But obedience without receiving, without beholding who God is and being moved by His glory, is a works based faith. Jesus gives us a powerful picture in Matthew 13:44:

Matthew 13:44

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Notice the order:

- He sees the value, meaning He beholds the glory of God
- Joy rises, and this isn't a short-term emotional response but a response that moves, that propels him to life change, towards transformation
- Sacrifice follows, he removes everything in his life that keeps him from God

Imagine attempting this out of order. I'll sacrifice, but I don't know why or am not convinced I should because I have been captivated and captured by God's glory. If that's the worldview, no wonder so many people born and raised in church walk away. I would, too.

Delight fuels surrender, not the other way around. The alternative is rebellion. If obedience feels constantly joyless, it may be because you haven't fully seen the worth of what God is offering you in Himself. Delight grows when we consistently practice tasting and seeing, as we place ourselves before God's self-revelation and grow more convinced, through His Word, His presence, His people.

Psalms 37:4 promises:

He will give you the desires of your heart.

This is one of the most misunderstood verses in Scripture. God is not saying, *“If you delight in Me, I'll fund whatever you want.”* He is saying, *“As you delight in Me, I will reshape what you want.”* Stop trying to make God do what you want!

Romans 12:2 makes this clear:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Transformation precedes, comes before discernment, and renewed minds lead to aligned desires according to God's will. Not the other way around!

Jesus says in John 15:7:

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Why? Because abiding people offer abiding-shaped prayers. Delight aligns desire. As you delight in the Lord, your cravings change, your ambitions narrow, and your prayers mature. You begin to want what glorifies God—not because you *have* to, but because you *want* to.

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Delight is not fragile. Quite the opposite, actually. Delight produces strength.

Nehemiah 8:10 says:

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

That verse was spoken to a people who were grieving their sin. Joy didn't ignore repentance—it sustained it.

Philippians 4:4 commands:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

Paul wrote this from prison. Which tells us that joy rooted in the Lord is not canceled, eclipsed, or contingent on suffering. The secret to Paul's contentment regardless of circumstances was the delight he had in the Lord, something no earthly power can take away. Hebrews 12 affirms this.

Hebrews 12:2 says of Jesus:

For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross.

Jesus didn't endure the cross by ignoring joy—but by fixing His eyes on it because His delight was the Father's glory. Delight gives endurance. Delight sustains obedience. Delight strengthens weary faith. And when delight is real, it doesn't stay hidden.

Psalms 40:8 says:

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

Obedience becomes relational, not mechanical or transactional. It becomes who you are not something you do. Psalm 96 calls us to sing and declare God's glory—why? Because delighted hearts testify naturally, not from obligation.

And Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7:

God loves a cheerful giver.

Not pressured or compulsory. Not resentful. Not reluctant or coerced. Delight produces generosity—of time, worship, obedience, and love. A delighted soul cannot help but overflow, and quite frankly, it's obvious.

Psalms 73:25 captures the heart of delight:

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

Delighting in the Lord is not escapism from reality—it's grounding ourselves in the deepest truth of reality. When God becomes our joy, our delight:

- Our desires are reordered

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- Our endurance is strengthened
- Our obedience becomes worship

So the question isn't "Do I believe in God?" Even demons "believe" in God. The question is: Is God my delight? And if not—what's missing? We've established the target, so how do we get there?

If God could change just one thing about you, what do you think He would choose? Most of us instinctively answer with behaviors: habits we want broken, sins we want removed, disciplines we want strengthened. **But Scripture consistently points deeper.** God's primary concern is not merely what we do, but who we are becoming, and at the center of that process is the heart.

For the rest of this morning and the next four weeks, we will be on a journey into what Scripture teaches about the heart—not the physical organ, and not merely emotions—but the immaterial control center of the human person. The Bible tells us that everything we think, desire, and choose flows from this inner place. If we want to grow spiritually, to delight in the Lord, we must understand what God means when He speaks about the heart.

When people think about spiritual growth, they tend to focus on habits, behavior, emotional and spiritual maturity. But this is the wrong starting point for understanding spiritual formation. The question we need to pause and ask ourselves is, Why do you think God places such much emphasis on the heart rather than outward performance? Why does the heart matter so much to God?

Scripture refers to the heart more than any other part of the human person. That alone should tell us something. In biblical language, the heart is not a poetic way of talking about feelings; it is the center of human life before God.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

In other words, everything downstream—our words, actions, reactions, and relationships—has an upstream source. That source is the heart.

Jesus reinforces this in Luke 6:45 when He says:

Luke 6:45

"Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

Words, behaviors, reveal what already exists internally. Behavior exposes deeper loyalties and desires. Scripture does not treat the heart as incidental; it treats it as decisive. Even passages like Jeremiah 17:9, which warn us about the heart's deceitfulness, do not diminish its importance. They heighten it. If the heart is powerful enough to shape life, then

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it is also powerful enough to lead us astray when unguarded or misdirected. God cares about the heart because the heart governs the person. The whole person. All of you.

When Jesus is tested regarding the most important law, He doesn't list rules. He describes the whole-person delighting in the Lord.

Matthew 22:37

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

This command is not asking us to divide ourselves into neat categories. Jesus is not suggesting that we love God emotionally on Sundays, intellectually during Bible study, and spiritually during prayer. He is calling for total allegiance in all areas that make you, you. In biblical thought, the heart, soul, and mind are distinct but inseparable. Together, they describe the whole inner life of a person turned toward God. **To love God with all your heart means that your deepest loyalties belong to Him. To love Him with all your soul means that your very life is oriented around Him. To love Him with all your mind means that your thinking, beliefs, and interpretations of reality are shaped by who He is.** This is not a call to intensity alone; it is a call to total transformation.

Scripture never reduces love to emotion. Biblical love includes affection, but it goes far beyond it. Love is a direction of the heart, a settled orientation of trust and worship. Deuteronomy 6:5 frames love in covenantal terms. God's people are called to love Him because they belong to Him. This love shows itself in real, tangible ways. **We demonstrate love to God through worship that trusts Him, prayer that depends on Him, and repentance that values Him above sin.** We demonstrate love *for* God through obedience, perseverance, and delight. The heart always loves something. The question is not whether we love, but what or whom we love most. And this biblical reality of love is radically different from what the world teaches, which is narcissistic self-absorbed love.

The Bible teaches that the heart is not passive. It is constantly active—thinking, desiring, and choosing.

Proverbs 16:9

The heart of man plans his way...

Romans 10:10

With the heart one believes...”

These passages remind us that belief itself is not merely intellectual; it's personal and directional. We do not respond to life randomly. **Every reaction, every response, reveals something we believe, something we want, and something we are committed to.** That is why surface-level change is often short-lived. If the heart remains untouched, behavior

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eventually returns to its original patterns. Spiritual formation, then, is not about information. It is about heart transformation.

But it's so easy for us to be tempted to focus on behavior instead of the heart. Why is that? **Because change motivated by behavior reveals a heart that wants to be in control.** Wants to be safe. Wants to do it on his or her terms. If I can change myself, I am in control. I don't want to rely on God's power, presence, or word because those are convicting, and I don't want that. I don't want to confront my unbelief. I don't want to face the darkness inside me, I don't want to deal with those thoughts, wounds, or lies. I can make surface changes and deceived myself and others that I'm okay. **In a very real sense, that kind of change is easier, it's just fake.** It can't be sustained, and ultimately it's rebellion and Jesus will say, "I never knew you." Why? Because you never knew Him...in your heart.

Professor, pastor, and biblical counselor Jeremy Pierre describes the heart as *dynamic*—always responding to God, circumstances, and desires. Scripture shows us that the heart functions in three interconnected ways.

First, the heart thinks. This is the cognitive function. We are always interpreting reality, forming beliefs about God, ourselves, and the world. God wants this dynamic part of our hearts.

Second, the heart desires. This is the affective function. Our loves, fears, joys, and longings flow from what we treasure. God wants this dynamic part of our hearts.

Third, the heart chooses. This is the volitional function. We make commitments, decisions, and directional choices based on what we believe and desire. God wants this dynamic part of our hearts. He wants all of it.

These functions never operate in isolation. Every moment of life is a heart moment—thinking, wanting, and choosing before God because only God can see our hearts. All of it. Over the next three weeks, we will slow down and examine each of these functions in detail in order to hit that target of delighting in the Lord.

God is not satisfied with external conformity. He promises something far better.

Ezekiel 36:26

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you."

This is the promise of the gospel: not just forgiveness, but transformation. Not just escape from hell, but to receiving and enjoying all that God offers us through Christ Jesus. If we want to love God with all that we are, if we want to delight in Him, we must learn to pay attention to the heart—and to bring it honestly before Christ who alone can renew it. Next week, we will begin by exploring how the heart thinks—how belief shapes experience and how truth renews the mind.