

Equipping Hour: Mar. 15

Mar. 15: The Dynamic Heart (pt5)

Over the past several weeks, we have been slowly unfolding a biblical vision of the heart. When we began this series, we started with the language of Scripture that calls us to delight in the Lord.

Psalm 37:4

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

Psalm 16 says that in God's presence there is fullness of joy. The Christian life is not meant to be merely dutiful or mechanical. It is meant to be relational, worshipful, and deeply joyful. God calls us not simply to obey Him but to delight in Him.

Yet if we are honest, many believers struggle with that language. We affirm that God is worthy of delight. We sing about it. We preach about it. But in daily life, delight can feel distant. Our hearts feel pulled in many directions. Fear, frustration, bitterness, envy, control, discouragement — these things often shape our inner life more than joy. So we began asking a deeper question: what is happening in the heart that makes delight in God so difficult?

That question led us into a careful exploration of the heart itself. We began by recognizing that the heart is not a single emotional center but the dynamic core of the human person. Scripture uses the language of the heart to describe our inner life before God — the inner place where we believe, where we desire, and where we choose.

In Week Two we explored the cognitive dimension of the heart, the dynamic part of us that thinks, interprets, and assigns meaning. The cognitive heart decides what is true and trustworthy. It's the part of us that believes. Sometimes those beliefs become what Jeremy Pierre calls controlling beliefs — convictions about life that quietly shape how we respond to everything. Controlling beliefs, what I would call worldview beliefs, operate beneath the surface, both good and bad, but they profoundly shape how we interpret life.

In Week Three we examined the affective dimension of the heart, the dynamic part of us that treasures, desires, and longs. Just as there can be controlling beliefs, there can be controlling desires. These are the "must-haves" of the heart. They might be approval, comfort, control, security, or recognition. When those desires are threatened, our emotional reactions reveal them. Anger reveals blocked desire. Fear reveals threatened desire. Bitterness reveals disappointed desire.

In Week Four we turned to the volitional dimension of the heart, the dynamic part of us that chooses, commits, and worships. The willful heart yields itself in allegiance. The will is not independent of belief and desire; it expresses them. Every choice we make reveals what we trust and what we love most in that moment. Just like our beliefs and desires, our willful hearts possess controlling choices that shape what we do. Remember that: Repeated

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choices become patterns. Patterns become habits. Habits shape character. So today we arrive at the question that has been sitting quietly underneath this entire series:

So what?

What difference does it make to understand the dynamic heart? How does this actually help us move toward delighting in the Lord? The answer is that understanding the dynamics of the heart helps us see where the obstacles to delight actually lie. Delight in God is not hindered by lack of information or lack of effort. It is hindered when our hearts are oriented toward something else as more satisfying, more secure, or more necessary than Christ. Every single one of us have barriers that keep from experiencing all that God offers us in Christ. How do we address these?

Author Jeremy Pierre offers four practices that help us engage, with the Holy Spirit, our dynamic hearts: reading, reflecting, relating, and renewing. These practices help us pay attention to what is happening in the heart so we can remove barriers as the Spirit reshapes. These practices are our part of spiritual formation. God causes the growth and the change, but we partner with Him to remove the barriers.

The first practice is reading the heart. This is about getting to know your heart. Not becoming obsessively introspective or turning inward in a self-focused way. Rather, it means learning to pay attention to what your reactions are revealing. Just like the check engine light on the dashboard. Scripture repeatedly teaches that our words, emotions, and behaviors are not random events; they are expressions of what is happening within.

Jesus states this plainly in Luke 6:45:

“Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

What comes out of us reveals what fills us. Words, reactions, and emotional responses are like windows into the heart. They show us what our inner person is currently believing, loving, and leaning toward. It reveals our current posture of worship. Proverbs uses similar imagery when it says in:

Proverbs 20:5

The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

The language of deep water reminds us that the heart is not always immediately obvious. The check engine light isn’t a full diagnostic. It simply tells you something is off. What governs us lies beneath the surface. Reading the heart means learning to draw those deeper currents into the light. This is important because most of the time we live reactively. Something happens and we simply respond without slowing down to consider what that response reveals, or that we have control of and responsible for that response. Someone criticizes us, and we immediately feel defensive. A plan changes unexpectedly, and frustration rises. A coworker receives recognition, and jealousy surfaces. These reactions

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often feel automatic, but they are not meaningless. They are the check engine light indicating a need for deeper diagnostic.

The moment of reaction is often the moment when the heart becomes visible. Consider anger, for example. Scripture does not deny that anger can sometimes be righteous, but very often our anger exposes a blocked desire. James 4:1 asks a revealing question:

James 4:1

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

James traces conflict not primarily to circumstances but to passions within the heart. Something the heart wanted was obstructed, and anger emerged.

Fear, what we call worry and anxiety, works in a similar way. When fear grips us, it often reveals something we feel we must control in order to feel secure. Jesus addresses this in Matthew 6 when He speaks about worry regarding food, clothing, and the future. Fear reveals where the heart believes security must ultimately come from.

Bitterness exposes something else: a deep sense of injustice that the heart cannot release. Hebrews 12 warns about a “root of bitterness” growing within the body of Christ. That root grows when the heart clings to a demand for repayment rather than entrusting justice to God.

Reading the heart means learning to pause when these reactions appear and asking honest questions:

- Why did that affect me so strongly?
- What was I afraid of losing?
- What did I feel I had to have in that moment?

We avoid this level of introspection because we want to believe we are basically good. We’ve not, though. But these questions are not meant to condemn us but to expose the reality of our hearts to ourselves before the Spirit of God. The psalmist models this kind of awareness in Psalm 42 when he speaks to his own soul: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” Notice that he does not simply drown in the emotion. He interrogates it. He examines it. He brings it into the light of God’s presence. Reading the heart means learning to do the same. David prays a similar prayer in:

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me...

A posture of humility is required for reading the heart well. Recognize that we do not always see ourselves clearly. We invite the Lord to expose what lies beneath the surface. The

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purpose of reading the heart is not to become fascinated with our inner life. It is to recognize where our hearts are attaching themselves to something other than God. When a reaction exposes a controlling belief, desire, or choice, that discovery becomes an invitation. It invites us to bring that part of our heart into the light of Christ.

For example, imagine you feel intense frustration when someone interrupts your plans. Reading the heart might reveal that your deeper desire was control. Your plans were functioning as a source of stability, and when they changed, your sense of control felt threatened. That discovery reveals an opportunity: the heart can now be brought back to trust in God's sovereignty.

Or imagine you feel wounded when someone fails to acknowledge your work. Reading the heart might reveal a deeper desire for approval. Recognition had quietly become a source of identity. Seeing that clearly allows you to return to the truth that your identity is secured in Christ, not in human applause.

Reading the heart becomes the first step toward transformation. Without it, we remain stuck at the level of behavior management. We try to control our reactions without understanding what produced them. But when we learn to read the heart, we begin to see the deeper currents shaping our lives.

And that awareness prepares us for the next step: reflecting on what those discoveries mean in light of God's Word. If reading the heart helps us notice what our reactions reveal, reflecting on the heart helps us interpret what those discoveries mean in light of God's Word. Reading brings awareness; reflecting brings discernment. Without reflection, we may see our reactions but misunderstand their significance. Reflection asks deeper questions and invites Scripture to evaluate what the heart is trusting, loving, and pursuing.

The Bible consistently calls believers to this kind of thoughtful self-examination.

Lamentations 3:40

Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord.

Notice how examination leads somewhere. It is not an exercise in endless introspection; it is preparation for turning back to God, to changing our posture. Similarly, Paul exhorts believers in:

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

Reflection allows the light of truth to shine into the deeper places of the heart. The heart can hide its own motivations even from us. That's why we need help reflecting. Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that:

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Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Reflection, therefore, is not merely self-analysis; it is inviting God to reveal what we might otherwise miss. It asks questions that connect our reactions to the deeper dynamics of belief and desire. This is why reflection must always be guided by Scripture. If we reflect without God's Word, we will only reinforce our own assumptions and remain self-deceived. But when reflection is anchored in Scripture, the heart's hidden beliefs and desires are confronted with truth.

Hebrews 4:12

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

What discerns our thoughts, intentions, hearts? The Word of God. For instance, when you are angry, consider and reflect on:

Proverbs 19:3

When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.

This proverb exposes something subtle about anger. Often when circumstances go poorly, the human instinct is to blame outwardly—to blame people, situations, or even God. But Proverbs says the problem is deeper: the heart is reacting to God's providence.

This passage invites reflection by asking questions like:

- Why am I angry about this situation?
- Am I resisting the way God is ordering my circumstances according to His sovereign will?
- Is my frustration actually revealing a heart that thinks life should go differently than God has ordained?

Instead of merely managing anger, this proverb pushes us to reflect how our heart is responding to God Himself.

What about fear? Here's a good example:

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

This verse exposes one of the most common roots of fear: the fear of people. This fear often grows out of concern about others' opinions, reactions, or approval.

Reflection in light of this proverb might ask:

- Whose opinion am I most concerned about right now?
- What am I afraid someone might think, say, or do?
- Am I seeking safety in human approval instead of trusting the Lord?

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Proverbs contrasts two orientations of the heart: fear of man versus trust in the Lord. Fear becomes a diagnostic tool for reflecting on where our trust is resting, where we are leaning: towards God, or away?

Reflection also leads us to consider how our hearts have been shaped over time. Sometimes the beliefs and desires we discover have been forming quietly for years. Cultural pressures, past experiences, and repeated patterns of thinking can all contribute to how the heart interprets life. Reflection does not excuse sinful responses, but it does help us understand how those responses developed. As we recognize those patterns, we can begin to replace them with truth.

Reflection is not passive observation. It is a conversation between the heart and the truth of God found in His Word. Ultimately, reflection prepares the heart for the next step: bringing what we have discovered into relationship with Christ through confession and repentance. Once we see the beliefs and desires that have been rivaling worship of God, we can turn toward Him with honesty and humility. Reflection exposes the roots so that the gospel can address them, leading us to the third practice.

The third practice is relating the heart to Christ. This is applying the gospel becomes volitional. We do not simply analyze our hearts; we bring them to Christ. When we see controlling beliefs or desires, the biblical response is confession and repentance. Confession means agreeing with God about what we see. It means acknowledging, “Lord, I was trusting this more than I was trusting You.” Repentance means turning — not merely feeling bad about the misplaced allegiance but reorienting the heart toward Christ again. Turning is a volitional commitment. It’s the will moving like we covered last week. 1 John 1:9 reminds us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. Confession restores relationship. Repentance restores direction.

If reading the heart helps us see what is happening within, and reflecting on the heart helps us understand those dynamics in light of Scripture, then relating the heart to Christ is where transformation begins to take place. Change, at the heart level, will not occur unless the will moves.

The fourth practice is renewal, renewal of the heart. Renewal is the Spirit-led process of retraining the heart — reshaping what we believe, what we desire, and what we choose so that our hearts increasingly delight in God.

Scripture repeatedly describes the Christian life in terms of renewal.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

The word transformed points to deep internal change, not mere external behavior adjustment. Renewal happens when the truth of God’s Word reshapes how we think about

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life, God, ourselves, and the world around us. As our thinking is renewed, the heart's desires begin to follow.

Renewal also involves redirecting our loves. The problem with the human heart is not that it lacks desire; it is that it often desires the wrong things in the wrong ways. Augustine famously said that sin is fundamentally disordered love — loving lesser things more than the greatest thing. Renewal, therefore, is the process of reordering those loves so that Christ becomes the heart's highest treasure. Colossians 3:1–2 captures this beautifully:

Colossians 3:1-2

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Setting our minds is an intentional reorientation of attention and affection. As we repeatedly direct our hearts toward Christ, the Spirit gradually reshapes what we value.

This renewal does not occur instantly or mechanically. It is cultivated through the ordinary means God has given His people. Scripture, prayer, worship, fellowship, and obedience are all instruments through which the Spirit works. Psalm 1 describes the blessed person as one who “delights in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” Meditation means lingering with God's Word, allowing it to penetrate the heart and reshape its perspective. Over time, this steady exposure to truth forms new patterns of thinking and desiring.

Renewal also happens through deliberate obedience. Hebrews 12:11 acknowledges that discipline can feel painful in the moment, but it ultimately “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” The language of training reminds us that renewal involves practice. When a believer repeatedly chooses to trust God instead of fear, to forgive instead of retaliate, to serve instead of withdraw, those acts of obedience reinforce the heart's orientation toward Christ. What once felt unnatural begins to feel more natural as the heart learns to value what God values.

Another key dimension of renewal is remembering the gospel. The heart cannot be renewed merely by trying harder; it must be reshaped by grace. The gospel reminds us that our relationship with God is grounded not in our performance but in Christ's finished work. God does this promised work in us according to Ezekiel 36. This promise finds its fulfillment in Christ, who not only forgives our sins but also gives us His Spirit to transform us from within. As we remember the mercy we have received, gratitude begins to replace fear and pride. The heart learns again and again that Christ is both sufficient and worthy of trust. Remind yourself of the gospel daily.

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Renewal also requires persistence. The heart has been shaped by years of habits, beliefs, and desires. Transformation does not fully happen overnight. Instead, it unfolds gradually as the Spirit patiently reshapes our inner life. Paul encourages believers in:

2 Corinthians 4:16

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

That phrase day by day reminds us that renewal is ongoing. Each day provides fresh opportunities for the heart to be oriented toward Christ.

Ultimately, renewing the heart means cultivating a pattern of life that continually returns to God. When we discover controlling beliefs or desires, we bring them into the light of the gospel. When we stumble, we confess and receive forgiveness. When truth confronts us, we receive it and allow it to reshape our thinking. Over time, these rhythms form a heart that increasingly trusts God, treasures Christ, and chooses His way.

And as that renewal deepens, something remarkable begins to happen: delight in the Lord grows. What once perhaps felt like duty begins to feel like joy. The heart discovers that God Himself is the greatest good. In that sense, renewal is not merely about correcting wrong patterns; it is about restoring the heart to its original purpose — to find its deepest satisfaction in the presence of God.

All of the practices we have discussed—reading the heart, reflecting on the heart, relating the heart to Christ through confession and repentance, and renewing the heart through truth—ultimately depend on something deeper than human effort. The transformation of the heart is not accomplished by introspection alone or by sheer determination. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within the believer. This is why the New Testament repeatedly describes the Christian life as walking by the Spirit.

Paul writes in Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

The word flesh there means your old sinful self. The word walk is also significant. Walking is not a single dramatic action; it is a steady pattern of movement. It describes the ongoing direction of one's life. To walk by the Spirit means to live in conscious dependence upon Him, allowing His truth and power to guide the orientation of the heart day by day.

The context of Galatians 5 reminds us why this is necessary. Paul describes a real conflict within the believer in the next verse:

Galatians 5:17

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.

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The Christian life is not free from struggle. Even those who belong to Christ experience competing desires within the heart. The flesh pulls us toward self-centeredness, control, pride, and indulgence, while the Spirit directs us toward love, humility, faithfulness, and obedience. Walking by the Spirit means learning to yield the direction of the heart to Him rather than to the impulses of sin.

This yielding begins with dependence. Jesus promised His disciples that the Spirit would guide them into truth and remind them of His words (John 14:26; John 16:13). The Spirit works through the Word of God to illuminate truth and expose the deeper dynamics of the heart. As we engage Scripture, the Spirit confronts controlling beliefs that distort our view of God and replaces them with truth. What once felt unquestionable begins to be reexamined in the light of God's promises.

The Spirit also reshapes our desires. Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19–23. The works of the flesh include things like jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, and envy—expressions of a heart oriented around self-rule. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Notice that these qualities are called fruit, not achievements. Fruit grows as a result of life within the tree. In the same way, these qualities emerge as the Spirit reshapes the heart's affections and the roots are replaced.

Walking by the Spirit also strengthens the will to follow Christ. The Spirit does not merely change how we think and feel; He empowers us to act in alignment with God's will.

Romans 8:13

If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The language of putting to death indicates intentional action, but that action is empowered by the Spirit. Believers are not left to fight sin on their own strength. The Spirit supplies both conviction and power for obedience. This means that walking by the Spirit is not passive. It involves active participation in the life God has given us. Paul describes believers in Galatians 5:25 as those who “live by the Spirit” and therefore are called to “keep in step with the Spirit.” The imagery suggests a continual alignment of our lives with the Spirit's direction through those other practices: reading, reflecting, relating, renewing. We learn to listen to His leading through Scripture, respond to His conviction when sin is revealed, and trust His strength when obedience feels costly.

Walking by the Spirit cultivates perseverance. Patterns of thinking and desiring that have developed over years often take time to reshape. Yet the Spirit works patiently within believers, renewing the inner person day by day. Paul expresses this confidence in Philippians 1:6 when he writes:

Philippians 1:6

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

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The Spirit who initiated new life in us continues to sustain and transform that life. Ultimately, walking by the Spirit leads us back to the goal that has framed this entire series: delighting in the Lord. As the Spirit renews our beliefs, reorders our desires, and strengthens our obedience, the heart increasingly discovers that Christ Himself is the deepest source of joy. What once felt like reluctant duty begins to feel like glad devotion. The heart learns to echo the words of the psalmist:

Psalm 73:25

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

Walking by the Spirit, then, is the daily practice of aligning our hearts with the life God has given us in Christ. It is learning to trust the Spirit's guidance, depend on His power, and follow His lead step by step. And as we do, the dynamic heart—believing, desiring, and choosing—becomes increasingly oriented toward the One who alone satisfies it.

So what does this look like practically?

Example 1 – When You Are Criticized

Imagine someone criticizes you at work, in your family, or even in church. Immediately your heart tightens. Defensiveness rises. You feel the urge to justify yourself or to push back.

Reading the heart:

You notice the reaction. Why did that sting so sharply?

Reflecting on the heart:

You begin to ask what belief or desire was operating. Perhaps your heart believes, "If I am not respected, I am insignificant." Or perhaps you deeply desire approval.

Relating the heart to Christ:

You confess that approval has become more important than Christ's approval. You acknowledge before the Lord that your identity is already secure in Him.

Renewing the heart / Walking by the Spirit:

Instead of reacting defensively, you respond with humility or calmness. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." In that moment, the Spirit helps you choose patience instead of pride.

Example 2 – When Fear About the Future Rises

You wake up at night thinking about finances, health concerns, or your children's future. Your mind begins racing and fear takes over.

Reading the heart:

You recognize the fear instead of simply being consumed by it.

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Reflecting on the heart:

You ask, "What am I believing right now? Perhaps the heart is saying, "Everything depends on me."

Relating the heart to Christ:

You confess that you have taken responsibility for things that belong to God. You bring those concerns to Him in prayer.

Renewing the heart / Walking by the Spirit:

Philippians 4:6–7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication... let your requests be made known to God." You entrust the situation to Him again and again. Trust begins to replace fear.

Example 3 – When Someone Sins Against You

A friend, coworker, or family member says something hurtful. The wound lingers. You replay the conversation in your mind.

Reading the heart:

You recognize bitterness beginning to form.

Reflecting on the heart:

You ask what your heart is demanding. Often the answer is justice, vindication, or repayment.

Relating the heart to Christ:

You bring that hurt to the Lord and remember the mercy you have received in Christ.

Renewing the heart / Walking by the Spirit:

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." The Spirit helps you release the offense and choose forgiveness.

Example 4 – When Comfort Rules Your Heart

After a long day, you know you should spend time with the Lord, serve your family, or help someone in need—but everything in you wants to withdraw into comfort.

Reading the heart:

You notice that your heart is clinging to rest and ease as a necessity.

Reflecting on the heart:

You realize your controlling desire is comfort.

Relating the heart to Christ:

You confess that comfort has become more important than obedience.

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Renewing the heart / Walking by the Spirit:

You remember that Christ came “not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Empowered by the Spirit, you choose to step toward love rather than retreat into self-protection.

In each of these moments, nothing spectacular happens externally. These are ordinary moments of daily life. Yet they are precisely the places where the dynamic heart is revealed and reshaped. The Spirit meets us there—in the criticism, in the fear, in the hurt, in the temptation toward comfort. And as we read the heart, reflect on it, bring it to Christ, and renew it in truth, we begin to discover something remarkable: The heart that once clung to lesser things slowly learns to delight in the Lord.

Over time, these practices cultivate something beautiful: a heart that increasingly finds its satisfaction in God Himself. Delight in the Lord is not produced by forcing emotional enthusiasm. It grows as the heart’s competing allegiances are exposed, confessed, and redirected toward Christ. As the Spirit renews our beliefs, reshapes our desires, and strengthens our obedience, the heart gradually discovers that Christ truly is better. And that is where we have been heading all along.

The goal of this series has not been self-awareness for its own sake. The goal has been deeper delight in the Lord. When the heart is aligned with Him — believing His truth, loving His goodness, and choosing His ways — joy begins to flourish. The question is where is your heart oriented. And the invitation of the gospel is simple and profound: bring your whole heart — believing, desiring, choosing — to Christ again and again and again, confessing what competes with Him, walking by His Spirit, and learning to delight in the One who alone satisfies the heart.