

# >>>The New Heart

Three Devotions On Living Bold Lives For Christ

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## Truth #1>>>

### *Dealing With Sin: We can't fight it on our own*

We've all tried to make a bold stand against the sin in our lives at one point or another. You may have had an incredible experience at a camp, retreat, or mission trip and decided that when you got back to school things were going to be completely different. Maybe you were convicted listening to a sermon or Sunday school lesson, and made a commitment that you were going to take care of certain sins you were struggling with. The problem is that a lot of times **the passion we have in those moments is usually short-lived**. A couple weeks later and we're right back where we started . . .

*Why is this?* Why do we struggle to make long-term changes? Why do spiritual highs come and go so quickly? Part of the reason is because we try and fight sin with our own strength. We set our focus on taking care of a particular action rather than looking at the root of the issue. What is the root? **Our hearts.**

Over the course of these three devotions, we're going to dig into Psalm 51. We're going to learn how to lay a foundation for living bold lives for Christ. We're going to see that in order to live bold lives for Christ, we must do three things:

- Deal with our sin
- Discover our joy
- Define our motivation

#### **Take a few moments to read Psalm 51:1-10.**

In this section of the psalm, it's pretty obvious that David is dealing with his sinfulness. He knows he has issues and it's obvious he wants some things to change. He's admitting the fact that he's been a sinner since the second he was born. David is in the same place we find ourselves when we realize there is sin in our lives that needs to be taken care of. There's a lot we can learn from how David approaches his sin.

David recognized that he **wasn't going to be able to change things through his own strength** and he cried out to God: "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." That word "create" is the same word used in Genesis 1 for the creation of the world. David knew that for his desires and actions to change over the long-haul, it was going to have to come through the power of God. Only the God powerful enough to create the whole world is able to take a sinner's heart and make it new. David recognized his sinfulness and knew that he couldn't drum-up the strength to make changes on his own.

## Follow Through>>>

- Spend a little while today (and over the next few days) reflecting on your own life. What's going on? What are you struggling with? What things do you need to get straightened out? You have to understand that the root of these issues is your heart. What is your heart set on? What is the desire of your heart? If your heart is set on anything other than Jesus, you need to cry out to God to literally create a clean heart in you.

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## Truth #2>>>

### *Discovering Your Joy: Your heart must be gripped by God's love for you*

Think about something you own that you enjoy, something like an Xbox, iPod, cell phone, etc. **Do your parents ever have to ask you to play more Xbox, to listen to more music, or to text your friends more?** No. Those are things you enjoy doing. No one has to talk you in to doing them more.

Now, take a second and think about the stuff you have in your shower, like your soap, shampoo, or face wash. Do you get as excited about those things as you do about your Xbox or cell phone? The answer is, "no." No one gets pumped about owning toiletries. But, they are things you know you're going to need. And even though you don't get fired up about taking a shower, you're glad mom bought that bar of soap at the store.

**Next, read Psalm 51:11-15, focusing in on verses 13-15.** David wanted to be about teaching people the way of God and declaring praises to the Lord. Maybe you, too, have wanted to be about praising God and showing Him to others. But things get in the way. You lose focus, life gets crazy, and you forget about it. We know David had ups and downs in his spiritual journey, just like we do. So how did he expect for these desires to take root? For them not to just fade away, as usual? Let's back up a little and look at verse 12 where it says, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." Think about that for a little while. *What does "joy of your salvation" mean?*

If you've been a Christian for a while, how easy is it for your salvation (or your relationship with Christ), to become routine rather than being a source of joy? **A lot of times we treat our salvation like we treat our soap or shampoo.** It's not as cool as our iPod or Xbox, but we know it comes in handy sometimes. It's nothing that gets us really fired up. But we know we need to go to church, or stay away from some certain sins, so we do it. It makes us feel like we take God seriously when we do these things. It makes us feel better about ourselves.

The problem, though, is that a lot of times there's no joy in it. Since there's no joy in it, our relationship with Christ becomes a list of rules to keep. We end up going one of two routes: 1) we either get sick of the rules and say, "forget this," or 2) we become arrogant about the fact that we keep (some of) the rules; we end up being a 21st century version of the Pharisees.

**Go back to verses 13-15.** If this is what we truly want our lives to be about, our relationship with Christ has to be a source of joy in our lives. It can't just be routine. We can never take our relationship with Christ for granted.

## Follow Through>>>

- Spend some time reflecting on your relationship with Christ, on what it means for you to be saved from the punishment of your sins, and to be adopted into God's family. Think about the love and grace God has showered on you through Christ's death and resurrection. His unending love for us should be our motivation for obedience. Beg God to restore joy to your relationship with him.

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## Truth #3>>>

*Define Your Motivation: God wants your heart, not your rituals*

**Take a second and read Psalm 51:16-19.** Obviously we don't sacrifice bulls or goats anymore, so what does this have to do with us? Back in the Old Testament the Israelites were commanded to bring sacrifices to the temple when they came to worship. It was God who gave them this command. So, why would God command them to do this where we read here that He doesn't delight in sacrifices?

Again, as we said in the first devotion, the issue here is the heart. In verses 16 and 17 we see that God delights in a heart that is repentant of sin. God wanted sacrifices to be a part of Israel's worship. **But more importantly, He wanted their hearts' adoration to be focused on Him.** If he had their hearts, their sacrifices meant something because they were doing them out of their love for God. If their hearts were focused on something else, the same sacrifice meant nothing because it was just empty ritual.

Think about the things you do in your life because you are a Christ-follower. You probably go to church, try to read your Bible and pray, try not to gossip and cuss, etc. *The question is: Why do you do those things?*

Do you do these things because you honestly treasure Christ above everything else in life? Or is it because you just figure you're supposed to? Do you do them because your heart is set on Christ? Or because you're a rule follower and you know all good Christians follow certain rules?

We can't get carried away here and start thinking that God doesn't care about our actions. He does. He just doesn't care about actions for actions' sake. He's concerned with our motives and our motivation. He's concerned with our hearts. God wants us to be so captivated by His glory that our actions are an outpouring of our love for Him. He wants us to treasure Him above all else. Do you treasure God above all else? Do you want to honor Him with your actions? Or do you just want to be a rule-follower?

## Follow Through>>>

- Spend some time thinking about the things you do in your Christian life that have become routine or ritualistic. Are you just going through motions? Are you avoiding certain sins, but still not setting your heart on Christ? Spend some time reflecting on these verses and praying that God would help break you from empty rituals.

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## About The Author

Mark Jenkins is a graduate of Union University and Beeson Divinity School. He has worked in full-time student ministry for the past three years and loves seeing students become passionate about the Bible and living out their faith on a consistent basis. He loves hanging out with students, teaching them God's Word, and helping them find avenues to get down and dirty with their faith. When he's at home, he loves hanging out with his wife and daughters, grilling, reading, and watching the University of Tennessee dominate collegiate sports (2010 men's tennis runner-up!!!!). His experience stacking packages of grits on the midnight shift at the Martha White Factory during the summer of 2005 helped mold him into the man he is today.

