

SUPERNATURAL Transformation

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SUPERNATURAL TRANSFORMATION: Change Your Heart into God's Heart

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I

Matters of the Heart

What is the most important question you've ever been asked?

During Jesus' ministry on earth, one of the religious scribes asked Him to name the one commandment—of all God's commandments—that was “*first*,” or most significant. (See Mark 12:28.) Such a question is the equivalent of asking, “What is the most important thing in the world?”

Jesus answered, “*The first of all the commandments is: . . . ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’*” (Mark 12:29–30). Then He immediately linked that commandment with another: “*And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these*” (Mark 12:31).

Entrance to the Kingdom

The scribe who had asked this question replied that he agreed with Jesus' answer, saying that to love God wholeheartedly and to love your neighbor as yourself “*is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices*” (Mark 12:33). Jesus responded by telling him, “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*” (Mark 12:34).

From this exchange, we see that entering God's kingdom—and living according to that kingdom—is, at its essence, a matter of the heart. The most important thing we can do is to love God with our entire being.

What Is the Heart?

Physically speaking, the heart is the central organ of the human body. Its function is to circulate the blood throughout the whole bodily system, pumping oxygen and nutrients to the other organs and pulling toxins away from them. If the heart stops beating permanently, bodily life ends; obviously, the heart is indispensable. A human being's entire physiological system is designed to safeguard this organ, above all others. For example, in extremely cold conditions, the blood begins to retract from the extremities in order to maintain the integrity of the heart.

We have another “heart” that is the center of our spiritual being. The Scriptures say, “*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). A human being is a spirit that has a soul and lives in a physical body. The sense in which I use the term “heart” in this book is principally the spirit, but it also includes the spirit's interactions and connections with the soul—which is the moral seat of humanity and consists of the mind, the will, and the emotions.

The Foundation of Our Being and Character

The word “*heart*” appears hundreds of times in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the words most often translated “*heart*” are the related Hebrew terms *lebab* (H3824) and *leb* (H3820). *Lebab* means “the heart as the most interior organ,” and this term is also used in the same sense as *leb*. *Leb* means “the heart; also used figuratively very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect.”

So, figuratively, these terms refer to the inner being of humans—our very core, including our feelings, desires, will, and intellect. In the New Testament, the main word translated “*heart*” is *kardia*, which, in a figurative

sense, indicates “the thoughts or feelings (mind).” Our heart is our true self, and it is the catalyst for our desires, motives, intentions, and actions. A *desire* is “a strong wish: a wish *for* something or *to do* something.” A *motive* is “something (as a need or desire) that causes a person to act.” An *intention* is “the thing that you plan to do or achieve: an aim or purpose.”

Another term the Bible uses to refer to the heart, or spirit, is “*inner man*”: “*That [God] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*” (Ephesians 3:16). Again, the heart is the core, or identity, of the human being. It is the most complex, sacred, and intimate part of a person—the foundation of his whole being and character, from which his desires, designs, purposes, will, thoughts, and attitudes originate.

Accordingly, *the condition of our heart will be the condition of our life*. The state of our spiritual heart affects all aspects of our daily living. Every spiritual, mental, and emotional matter—and many physical ones—is rooted in the heart.

Becoming Spiritually Heart-Healthy

“Heart-healthy” is a popular phrase today. We hear it from doctors, nutritionists, fitness instructors, and food manufacturers who want to encourage us to pursue a lifestyle of “wellness” that will strengthen our cardiovascular endurance, prevent heart disease, and promote long life. We are encouraged to choose a healthy lifestyle through exercising regularly and by eating nutritious meals—making use of resources such as heart-healthy cookbooks, diets, and restaurant options. In the United States, the American Heart Association’s symbol for an approved heart-healthy product is a red heart with a white check mark in it.

As we will explore further in chapter 2, every human being is faced with a spiritual health issue—we all have “heart disease” and need to become spiritually heart-healthy. The Scriptures say, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Although our heart is the center of our being, many people do not truly understand the heart and how it functions. Jesus Christ came to earth not

only to reveal God the Father to us but also to reveal ourselves to us. He wants us to understand the nature of our heart and how it affects our relationship with our heavenly Father and other human beings, as well as the whole course of our life.

Even when we have been forgiven and reconciled to God through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us, we must actively focus on this matter of the heart and the spiritual laws God has "written" there (see, for example, Hebrews 8:10), so that we will know the fullness of life He desires for us. Heart issues often keep us from overcoming the problems and hindrances in our life. God wants us to experience a transformation of the heart that will make us whole again.

Every spiritual, mental, and emotional matter—and many physical ones—is rooted in the heart.

The Scriptures encourage us to have a heart-healthy spiritual lifestyle, gaining God's seal of approval for the state of our heart. A strong spiritual heart enables us to be all God created us to be and to fulfill His will in the momentous times in which we are living. Thus, we need to have a steady diet of God's Word and to exercise specific spiritual principles and commands related to our heart, for the welfare of our inner being. A healthy spiritual heart is our supernatural lifeline to God and His purposes.

What Comes Out of the Heart?

How would Jesus, the Great Physician, assess the current condition of your heart? The Scripture juxtaposes two fundamental conditions of the human heart—a heart that has "good treasure" in it, and a heart that has "evil treasure" in it:

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)

Let's compare these two kinds of "treasures":

- ✦ The heart with good treasure is full of kindness, humility, purity, obedience, righteousness, and spiritual strength. It has the ability to love, submit to, and surrender to God, in accordance with His purpose and will.
- ✦ The heart with evil treasure disbelieves God, is easily wounded, becomes offended, and refuses to forgive; it is full of disobedience, selfishness, ambition, and pride—it has become hardened.

Have you thought about what type of treasure you are storing up in your heart? Jesus said, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21).

Even as we grow in grace, we still manifest a mixture of good and evil treasures within us. At times, we reveal the good treasure that is within us through the Holy Spirit. Other times, we manifest an aspect of the evil treasure, demonstrating that we need the Spirit of Christ to reign in that area, removing the corruption and cleansing us, so that we may live in *"newness of life"* (Romans 6:4; see also 2 Peter 1:3–10).

The apostle James wrote about the spiritual incompatibility of a mixture of the two natures:

With [our tongue] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

(James 3:9–12)

The words that we say, including the ways in which we express ourselves and communicate with others, reflect the nature of our heart in some way. *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34).

Similarly, any action we take, whether it is good or evil, comes from a motivation or intention of our heart. This means that all wrongdoing is conceived in the heart first. Jesus said, *"For from within, out of the heart of*

men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:21–23). For example, if you have an arrogant attitude, it means that your heart still harbors arrogance; it doesn’t reflect its true identity in Christ, who is “*humble in heart*” (Matthew 11:29 NIV). However, if you consistently exhibit an attitude of genuine humility, then you have a humble heart, reflecting the nature of God in that area of your life.

Likewise, if you project an attitude of resentment or anger, you prove that your heart is wounded and bitter; you may feel the need to protect yourself from being hurt again, so you lash out at others. Or, if you are insensitive to the needs of your family and to the obvious human pain around you, it shows that you have a hardened heart.

You may wonder, “How can I love God to the extent that I commit my whole being—heart, soul, mind, and strength—when my heart is in the condition you described?” On our own, none of us can. But our heart will be transformed as we respond to God’s deep love for us: “*We love Him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19).

God is ready even now to change our heart to be like His heart through a *supernatural* transformation. Only the work of God’s Holy Spirit within us can effect a total transformation of our heart. And our heart is the key to our soul, mind, and strength, as well. God wants us to yield to Him and actively cooperate in the process of transforming our heart. That transformation begins with the new birth (see John 3:3–7) and progresses throughout our life as we daily grow to be more like our heavenly Father.

A woman named Victoria experienced a change in her heart that led to an encounter with Jesus as her Savior and King. Here is her story:

“In early 1990, I arrived in New York as a refugee from Kiev, Ukraine. Financially, I had always been blessed; however, relationally—specifically in marriage—I had experienced destruction, and I was twice divorced. My two daughters were without a father, so I began to look for answers from above.

"I started exploring Eastern religions like Buddhism, but my life seemed to become more complicated than ever. One day, I cried out to God, saying, 'God, I haven't found You in the Jewish traditions, in Eastern religions, or in Russian Orthodox churches. Please tell me who You are. Change my life.' While visiting my father in the Czech Republic, I met a Russian couple who introduced themselves as Christian evangelists. They prayed for me, and when I got back to New York, everywhere I went, I received Bibles as gifts.

"On Christmas Day 2000, someone gave me recordings of the New Testament and told me, 'Victoria, when you drive in your car, please listen to those tapes.' I did, and something started happening—an atmosphere filled my car, and that atmosphere began to draw me to my vehicle to listen to the tapes. Day after day, I would cry in my car, without understanding what was going on with my heart.

"After I finished listening to the gospel of John, I felt like I was ready to give birth. When I heard the name of Jesus, I felt heat inside me. Later that day, I got a phone call from the person who had given me the tapes. He gave me the address of a church where a service would be held on that very day. I went to the service and liked what I heard on that first Thursday night of 2001. During the worship, the Lord opened my spiritual eyes, and I saw Jesus. I didn't see Him as on an icon but alive, as a King. And the Holy Spirit told me that He is the Messiah. I couldn't hear the preaching; I was crying so hard and repenting of my sin, for which I felt so dirty.

"I knew that I had come to the house of my Father and there was no turning back. I was born again—radically! As I progressed in my walk with the Lord, I began to seek healing and deliverance, elements that were missing in my church. There was a lot of knowledge there but very little demonstration of it. After years in the ministry, the Lord brought me to King Jesus International Ministry in October 2010.

"Today, I am a woman of purpose and destiny. I am single and completely fulfilled in the Lord. For the first time in my life, I feel like a daughter of the King. Before, I knew the Lord, but His kingdom wasn't a clear

part of the picture to me. Now I have discovered the kingdom, and I am so grateful.”

Monitoring Our Heart

We know that, generally, the condition of our physical heart determines the health of our body. Even in routine checkups at the doctor’s office, medical personnel review our heart rate and blood pressure to help them determine our overall health. And, if they discover a problem—if our pulse is high, for example—they may advise us to make adjustments to our diet or get more regular exercise.

Moreover, when someone is admitted to the hospital, nurses and other medical technicians will continually record the patient’s vital signs. Among other things, they monitor the electrical activity of his heart, determining whether the heart rate is consistent and within normal range. If not, medications and/or other treatments may be called for.

In a similar way, we need to regularly assess the condition of our spiritual heart. Maintaining a healthy heart before God is a matter of vigilance. We must monitor the operations of our inmost being and evaluate whether we are living according to the life and purposes of our heavenly Father.

An Ongoing Process

The verb *monitor* means “to watch, observe, listen to, or check (something) for a special purpose over a period of time.” Again, monitoring our heart is an ongoing process. It is something we should do willingly, and always in conjunction with God’s Holy Spirit within us, for the purpose of becoming more like the Father. No one except God can truly “see” and know our inner being. After stating, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9), the Scriptures say, “*I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings*” (Jeremiah 17:10).

God knows us completely. Therefore, when we become aware of a problem in our heart—whether that awareness comes through reading and studying God’s Word or the direct prompting and conviction of the

Holy Spirit—we must address it so that we can lead joyful and productive lives before God and maintain a close relationship with Him. Only if we are spiritually healthy can we be alert and ready to respond to the moves of God's Spirit in our own lives and in His church.

The Issues of Life

The book of Proverbs tells us, “**Keep your heart** with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Here is the same verse in two other translations: “Above all else, **guard your heart**, for it is the wellspring of life” (NIV). “**Watch over your heart** with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (NASB).

The word translated “keep” or “guard” or “watch over” includes the idea of protecting or maintaining. The combined sense of these translations of Proverbs 4:23 is that our heart requires our diligent oversight, and it needs to be defended from attack by negative spiritual forces and anything else that would do it harm.

Let us now look at the larger context of the above verse:

*My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; **keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.** Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.* (Proverbs 4:20–23)

Note that there are specific criteria by which we are to oversee our heart. The speaker in Proverbs 4 encouraged his son to keep his father's words in his heart and to obtain “wisdom” and “understanding.” (See Proverbs 4:4–6.) In that way, he would develop into a righteous man. It is only when we keep God's Word in our heart and follow His commandments and wisdom that our heart will produce a “wellspring of life.”¹

Proverbs 4 also says: “The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble” (Proverbs 4:18–19). Our heart

1. See *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 561.

determines the path of our life; therefore, it is our most precious possession and our most crucial resource.

The condition of your heart will be the condition of your life.

Life Begins in the Heart

We know that wrongdoing begins in the heart. However, godly life also begins in the heart. All of us have areas in our life that we need to align with God's ways. That kind of change can occur only through God's supernatural transformation.

As I indicated earlier, the condition of our heart affects all aspects of our life. For instance, a person's physical ailment can sometimes be traced to unforgiveness in his heart. One time, when I was teaching about the topic of the spiritual heart during a service, the Lord led me to demonstrate that many infirmities, including those of the mind and emotions, are connected to a lack of forgiveness. I called forward anyone who had various maladies, such as physical affliction or depression, and I led them to repent of their sins, to forgive others, to ask for forgiveness, and to renounce any bitterness and unforgiveness they were harboring in their hearts. Without exaggeration, after they did this and offered a simple prayer to God, about 250 people were delivered—they were healed instantly of diabetes, arthritis, depression, and many other ailments!

Another clear example of this truth may be seen in the life of a businesswoman named Lesley who attended one of the Inner Healing and Deliverance Retreats that our ministry periodically hosts. She writes, "Before knowing Christ, I had resentment, doubt, and bitterness toward my family. It was so great that I even lost my sight in a matter of weeks. After consulting several doctors, I discovered there were no eye drops, eyeglasses, or operations that could help me, or anything else they could do for me. The blindness was chronic and without apparent cause! Then, I decided to surrender this situation to God. Even though I had received messages through my family and even strangers to forgive the family members

with whom I had problems, I never thought that this had anything to do with my blindness. But, one day, my cousin Denise told me that the Lord had shown her there was nothing wrong with my eyes, that the only thing I had to do was forgive, because it was a spiritual matter. She invited me to attend a deliverance retreat, but I didn't want to go. Since the registration for the retreat was limited, I asked God that if it was His will for me to go, a spot would be opened for me, and it was! Reluctantly, I attended, and there I received revelation about unforgiveness and what curses are. I forgave, then renounced and canceled every curse in my life, and I was free. People prayed for me, and God gave me back my sight—immediately!”

Our attitudes are a projection of our heart.

Fresh Revelation About the Heart

This book is a journey into the human heart, exploring its purpose, motivations, and potential. We will come to understand and identify our true self and make key decisions with respect to our “inner man.” Today, there is no place for being spiritually lukewarm; we cannot remain spiritually neutral. In this day and age, God is bringing fresh revelation to His people regarding the state of our heart. I believe the reason is that the return of Jesus Christ to the earth is near, and hard times will precede His coming—as foretold by the Bible.

The apostle Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy, “*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come*” (2 Timothy 3:1). Why did Paul emphasize his statement by preceding it with “*Know this...*”? Paul understood human nature and its tendency toward degradation, incurring the judgment of God. In another Bible version, the phrase “*perilous times*” is translated “*terrible times*” (NIV). If there was ever a time in history for which that phrase was appropriate, it is this one. God’s judgment will come upon the earth, even if many people think it will never happen. I believe it will take place in three stages—a preliminary judgment, an intermediate judgment, and the final judgment—and that we are now in the preliminary judgment stage.

God's grace has provided salvation and redemption in Christ, but the perpetual corruption and rebellion within humanity continue to provoke divine judgment. There is no need to blame governments, religions, or other factors for the judgment that our planet and the human race is now undergoing. The basic cause is the degradation of human character resulting from the iniquity entrenched in the human heart.

The apostle Paul listed eighteen character failings that would mark people in the end times. Again, they describe our present generation: *“lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”* (2 Timothy 3:2–5).

These negative impulses will try to pull our heart away from our heavenly Father. We are entering a period when our heart will be weighed in the balance to see on which side we will end up. The situations in our life and the circumstances of the world will soon compel us to decide where our allegiance belongs—to God's interests or to selfish interests; to the “good treasure” or to the “evil treasure.” Will we be prepared to make the right decision?

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you” (Hosea 10:12). It is time to seek the Lord with all our heart. We must have a heart that God can trust to follow Him and obey what He calls us to do, so that we may participate in the manifestation of His coming glory and the last great harvest of souls upon the earth.

Radical and Permanent Transformation

God's plan is not to place patches over the “holes” in our heart caused by our spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical issues. He does not try to “fix” or “improve” the corruption of our heart, and He doesn't gloss over sin. As we will discuss in chapter 2, these are the approaches that various religions take. Instead, His plan involves a radical and permanent transformation of the heart.

In the coming chapters, therefore, we will examine the original nature of the human heart. We will learn what it means for our heart to be “circumcised,” how to forgive others and thereby receive healing for an offended heart, and how to gain freedom from a heart of unbelief.

We will also discover the purpose for brokenness of heart, as well as how to surrender our heart completely to the Lord so it can be a true reflection of His own heart of love, justice, joy, and other divine qualities. And, we will learn how to experience transformation through the renewing of our mind in the presence of God (see Romans 12:2), so that we may experience both deep and far-reaching change in our life.

Do you want to change your life? Change your heart!

The psalmist wrote, “Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6). God has provided the only solution for the corruption of the human heart: repentance, identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, new birth through the Spirit of God, and ongoing transformation into the image of our Creator. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). You can become a new person, a new creation, through the supernatural transformation of your heart.