

# “Spirit of a New Heart”

## Sermon Study Questions - Leaders’ Guide

18 May 2025

*Read Ezekiel 36:22-29*

1. What did the heart represent in the ancient world?

“In the ancient world the heart was the core of the being - that amalgam of thoughts, feelings and will - the place where a life was ordered and decisions were made.”

2. What did Ezekiel mean with his “heart of stone” reference?

The human will was catastrophically and fatally impaired. Even if they were willing to do God’s will they were incapable of making that choice.

*Read Matthew 13:10-17*

3. In our Gospel reading Jesus quotes Isaiah about this fundamental human problem. What kind of things make a heart grow hard or a person become spiritually insensate?

Unforgiveness; Unacknowledged & untended hurts that cause us to put up walls of protection; Deliberate disobedience; Disappointment with God. Can you think of any others?

4. What is the antidote to a hardened heart? Remember the Eustace Scrubb story. A heart transplant - not something we can fix ourselves. We must be willing to let God to replace our defective and disabled core with a living and beating heart that can beat to the rhythm of God’s own loving heart. Our defective and destructive decision-making core must be replaced with one that is in tune with God’s will.

5. What is the key purpose of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit according to Ezekiel? (see vss. 27 & 29a) Do we emphasize that very much in the contemporary church?

According to Ezekiel the purpose of the indwelling presence of the **Holy** Spirit is that we finally can live holy lives. We can both **want** to and be **able** to follow God’s laws.

6. What is a good summary of “God’s righteous decrees?”

It’s the law of love (see Mark 12:28-31)

7. In the sermon James suggested that it wasn't abstinence from certain things that constituted holiness but rather the free flow of God's love into us and through us to those around us. Discuss.

"God's law isn't primarily about abstinence from certain things, though there are things from which to abstain, no God's law is about loving as God loves and the abstinence is because those things from which we are told to abstain get in the way of being able to love God and each other freely and fully." Such things will block up the flow of love into and through our lives to those around us, slowing what is meant to be a powerful torrent down to an insignificant trickle.