

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.

January 29 – February 19, 2023

Four Chambers of the Heart



When we give our hearts in love to God, our lives are changed. We see the world through the eyes of Christ because our hearts are centered on him. Our perception shifts and we are flooded with gratitude for God's care and provision. How could we do anything else but want to share this joy with others? The four chambers of our hearts – open, clear, full, and strong – are transformed by love.

*Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart,
for consider what great things he has done for you.*

– 1 Samuel 12:24.

First Week: January 29, 2023

Open Hearts

Colossians 3:1-17

Connect:

Do you have a piece of clothing that you loved but had to give or throw away? How was it to let it go?

Engage:

Read Colossians 3:1-17

1. Paul describes the contrast between the old life without Christ and the new life in Christ. List out the qualities he assigns to each category.
2. How do you put to death the sins described here – distorted attitudes of the heart and disruptive behaviors? Why do you think we struggle with these kinds of sins?
3. How do you clothe yourselves with these Christian virtues? How does living by these values lead to more freedom, contentment, and joy?
4. Paul describes setting your heart and mind on things above. How does being in communion with Jesus invite transformation? What practical steps can we take to seek the things above?

Apply

The open heart longs to see the world with the eyes of Christ. It beats with curiosity, acceptance, and love. The open heart is wounded by judgmentalism, dogma, and exclusion. And when injured, the open heart can become a closed heart. This closed posture can lead to resentment, revenge, and bitterness.

How can you be more Christ-directed this week? What do you need to "put to death," and what do you need to clothe yourself with instead? Share one thing to work on.

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

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Second Week: February 5, 2023

Clear Hearts

Ephesians 4:14-16

Connect:

Describe a time when you had a clear sense of purpose or call.

Engage:

Paul starts this chapter by encouraging the Ephesians "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." He then goes on to talk about the importance of the community in shaping, motivating, and supporting Christians to fulfill Christ's mission.

Read Ephesians 4:14-16

1. Paul charges the Ephesians to be anchored in their Christ, not tossed back and forth by the whims of strong personalities and new-fangled doctrine. How does one know what is the true faith? What are the characteristics of godly leadership?
2. How do our anxious thoughts and fear and feelings of guilt and shame hamper our ability to remain centered on Christ?
3. What other seductions do we need to avoid? Both external and internal?
4. What role can the community faith play in supporting our faith? Conversely, how can the community of faith hamper our faith?
5. How should we address these issues when the faith community betrays our Christian values?

Apply

The clear heart serves as your spiritual compass, which finds its true north centered on Christ. A clear heart speaks the truth with compassion and without fear. There is nothing to hide, no tricks, no games. But sadly, the clear heart is often hampered by fear, anxiety, unhealthy distractions, and racing thoughts. When obscured, it can become a cloudy heart, unable to discern a way forward, know who and what to trust, and often obsessed with perfection and selfishness.

What are you facing this week that might seduce you away from centering your life on Christ? How can you avoid that temptation?

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Third Week: February 12, 2023

Full Hearts

Psalm 138

Connect:

Describe a time when you found yourself bitter and resentful.

Engage:

Read Psalm 138

1. This psalm is filled with gratitude. David has a cosmic sense of God's power above all life, including the political realm. How does your experience of today's politicians square with David's? Do you think this is a matter of circumstance, perspective, or both?
2. David also speaks of God as an advocate for the lowly and one who intervenes against enemies. How has God worked in your life when you felt like you were being attacked or when you were experiencing any type of lowliness (economic, social, mental, spiritual)?
3. Why do you suppose gratitude is a gateway to worship and praise of God? How do gratitude and expressing thankfulness to God change your attitude?
4. What seems to trigger your complaining the most- internal voice or external factors?
5. How can complaining and entitlement rob you of a full and grateful heart? What can you do to become more grateful?

Apply

The full heart beats with gratitude, having a sense of abundance and gratefulness for God's good gifts. This is a free-flowing heart that wholeheartedly gives and receives from others without limit. This heart swells and overflows with compassion and appreciation for yourself, your children, your loved ones, your work, and your world. Unfortunately, the full heart is crippled by entitlement and complaining. When the pool of compassion is seen as limited or only for a select few, the heart becomes cold-hearted and stony.

As you look at your week, what can you do to change your perspective and commit to being more grateful?

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Fourth Week: February 19, 2023

Strong Hearts

Psalm 27

Connect:

Describe someone who was single-minded in their sense of purpose and abilities. It could be you or someone you know. What was it about them that gave them this strong sense of purpose?

Engage:

David's confidence and purpose are rooted in his relationship with God. As a result, he can withstand the attack of enemies and even the fear his parents could forsake him.

Read Psalm 27

1. In verse 1, what qualities does David attribute to God? What do you think he means by each? What life experiences informed these affirmations?
2. In verses 2-3, David describes a vicious threat against him. What do you imagine your prayer would be if you were faced with this kind of onslaught? So does David's request in verse 4 surprise you? Challenge you? Inspire you?
3. As you read through the rest of the psalm, David describes worship as the strategy to strengthen his faith. He has little doubt that God will get him out of this mess. So how can David's example encourage us when external and internal forces deter us from our calling?
4. How does faith, developed over the years, strengthen our resilience and hope?

Apply

The strong heart is home to your dreams, your power, and your abilities. You know that you have been created by God with a purpose and given gifts to fulfill that mission. Because of this call, you will pursue this purpose of your life, no matter the external resistance and roadblocks that come your way. The strong heart draws on the clear and open aspects of the heart, mounting the necessary resilience to keep moving forward. The strong heart is weakened by doubt, tentativeness, and fear. When focus is lost, one cannot face the world with courage.

Ponder your sense of purpose in this season of life. Is it aligned with your gifts, abilities, and passion?

Pray

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