

Weekly

Correspondence

From Pastor Emmanuel & Your Church Family

Personal Transformation: The Heart

Personal transformation affects four levels of who we are: mind, heart, soul, and body.

So far, we've talked about the mind. In this reflection, we'll discuss the second level, drawing on what the Bible says about it.

The Mind is an open field

The mind is our inner first way of being in contact with the outside world and what we experience from the encounter. It is also our first way of contact with our past experiences.

That makes the mind an open field. Anything can come into our minds. It is the place for all mental activities.

Make sure you review our previous reflection on the mind to learn more.

In the past, I've also talked about the mind in other videos that I encourage you to revisit: the power of the human mind, three things about your mind, and how they can your life fo the better, your mind helps you experience healing, and renew your mindset to live and influence better.

Now, Read Matthew 15:18-19,

But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.

To get a better sense of what's going on in this story, you'll need to read from the first verse. But, as we go along with our reflection, I'll share bits of what's happening in this text.

The text begins with the religious leaders who have seen the disciples eat without washing their hands. That was against tradition, the Jewish culture, as given to them by Moses.

It's more of a hygiene situation here than a spiritual matter. However, the ritual of washing hands before eating was a part of the Jews' daily living and culture.

Remember that Jesus never came to destroy the law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them (see Matthew 5:17-20).

So, He didn't come to change the tradition, but to fulfill the Word of God. Also, He often clarified the meaning of God's Word (The Law and the Prophets). He is doing the same thing here in Matthew 15, the text for our reflection.

For the Jews, if you eat without washing your hands you defile yourself. To defile yourself means you make yourself impure or unclean in God's eyes.

Here are the words of the religious leaders about what they had seen the disciples do,

Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat! Matthew 15:2.

Of course, these people were not just inquiring about this situation for their learning and personal transformation as a result of believing in Jesus Christ. They were looking for all possible means to trap Jesus and eventually get rid of Him.

The Heart is your filter

Here is Jesus' response,

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, is what defiles them. Matthew 15:10-11.

The question is why Jesus brought up the concept of the heart. That pointed out the reason why in Jesus' eyes the human heart matters so much.

Jesus goes on to say,

But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them. Matthew 15:18-20.

If you read carefully the above scripture, you see that from the heart come thoughts and plans. These thoughts and plans can either be evil or good.

In other words, it's in the heart, the choice for thoughts and plans that are good, instead of evil, is possible.

But, how can we do that?

God writes His Word on our hearts

Read Hebrews 8:10,

This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

When you read the Old Testament, including the hand-washing rituals mentioned in Matthew 15, all the laws (including the Ten Commandments) were written on tablets or scrolls.

The Israelites had carried with them all these laws, commandments, and traditions until when they settled in the promised land.

In spite of having the written Word of God, they still failed to live by them.

Later, God would resolve to write His Word on their hearts because, according to God, that's the only way to live by God's Word. See Isaiah 59:21, Ezekiel 11:19, Jeremiah 31:33, just to name a few.

That makes the point why God cares so much about your heart more than anything.

The question though is "how do we allow God to write His Word on our hearts, and why do it?"

If God says that He will write His Word on our hearts, then, we simply have to invite Him to do so through prayer. It's a prayer, I think, we all should say every day, asking God to write His Word on our hearts.

And, when we do so, we experience the following:

- A **true relationship and covenant with God** through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 2:28-29). We become descendants of Abraham and God's people.
- **Obedience to God and God's Word** (Romans 6:17).
- We have **inner and spiritual strength** (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).
- We have the **purity of heart** (Psalm 12:6). When God writes His Word on our hearts, we become pure.

Bringing it together

You can't control what comes into your mind. But, you have control over what to do with all your mental activities. The power to choose what to do with what's going on in your mind comes from your heart, which is the area where you make choices and decisions. When God writes His Word in your heart, you become obedient to God, and you have inner and spiritual strength to live by God's Word.

Since we had communion when I preached on this, I would like to invite you to use the sealed cup and celebrate communion today.

I have already blessed communion. So, what you have to do now is to say the Lord's Prayer,

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom,

and the Power and the glory forever,

Amen.

Now, open your cup. Notice there are two seals, one to give you access to the wafer, and the other will give you access to the juice.

After receiving communion, spend a few moments in a prayer of thanksgiving.

About

You are receiving a written reflection from Pastor Emmanuel, based on his message from Sunday worship. This correspondence contains last week's Sunday sermon: *Personal Transformation: The Heart*. Pastor also publishes his messages as reflections on his blog, www.emmanuelnawaji.com. The other document included in this envelop is the Sunday bulletin. While we do not print bulletins for worship, we would like you to have a printed so that you know what is happening in the life of our Church.