

# Heart Matters

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## Week 3 | Her Heart

### BOTTOM LINE

True surrender is laying down our most precious gifts at God's feet recognizing that He can be trusted and has a better plan than we can imagine.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

To create meaningful conversation that stretches our faith and draws us closer to the heart of God. We will dig into a surrender that is not apathy, but rather a more engaged way of living and leading others.

### SCRIPTURE

**1 Samuel 1:1-28** – Walking through the story of Hannah in the Bible, we experience an example of true surrender. Her story is a story of surrendering her son Samuel.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Were you ever encouraged or even forced to surrender something? Share the experience with the group and how it made you feel.
2. Hannah desperately wanted children. Every year, when her family went to worship at Shiloh, she judged herself to be a failure by her culture's standards. In the ancient world, women who were unable to have children were considered inferior and damaged. And one day it broke her; she couldn't eat, and all she could do was weep. No one could comfort her. **Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20 and Discuss:**
  - a. Consider something you wanted so badly it impacted your life. Describe the situation. Did you pull away from God or were you drawn to Him?
  - b. The vow Hannah makes to God in verse 11 is made out of hopelessness, however, she clings to God in her moment of darkness and despair. What in your life brings you both hope and heartbreak at the same time?
  - c. Have you ever made a promise to God to get something you desperately wanted? If God gave it to you, could you honor your vow even if it cost you the very thing you asked for?
  - d. God granted Hannah's plea for a son. Do you think God expected Hannah to fulfill her vow to give her son to back to Him? Why or why not?
3. How many of us have made a secret vow to the Lord in begging for his help, only to find a way to back out of it later? Why is this so easy to do?
4. For some of us, we resist surrendering these things because we define surrender as giving up, throwing in the towel, taking our hands off the wheel, or just becoming disinterested and disconnected. True surrender is none of those things. What change could you make today to move towards true surrender in your life?

Your life. Your spouse. Your children. Your career. Your finances. Your hopes and dreams. What do you need to surrender to God today?



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## TRY THIS

*Hannah demonstrates the highest level of surrender. It requires trusting God to lay down your most precious gift and responsibility at God's feet. It requires believing God's plan for your child, your job, or your life are far better than your plan. It requires relinquishing the very things that can most easily turn into an idol that would keep you from seeing God clearly. It requires choosing to keep your eyes focused on the giver and not the gift. What is God asking you to surrender?*

# Heart Matters

## Week 2 | Our Heart

### BOTTOM LINE

There is power in Biblical forgiveness – when we humble ourselves to admit we are wrong and soften our hearts to extend forgiveness, we can be peacemakers in our broken world.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

To create meaningful conversation that stretches our faith and draws us closer to the heart of God. Confession and repentance before God must happen before confession and repentance to an offended person. When we follow God's plan for forgiveness, the possibility of being truly forgiven and restored exists in a beautiful way.

### SCRIPTURE

**1 John 1:9, James 5:16, Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32, Luke 17:3-4** – This scripture reveals what the Bible says about forgiveness.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The basic formula for forgiveness is a quick apology followed by a request for forgiveness. We teach it to our kids and we use it as adults. Have you ever noticed this method doesn't always work? Have you ever felt that it was forced or even fake? Why or why not?
2. Author Michael Wilson blows the doors off the idea of forgiveness and gives us a glimpse into the Biblical model of forgiveness. Read the following paragraph and share what stands out.  
"Scripture doesn't actually encourage us to 'ask' for forgiveness from those offended by our sin. While the Bible does call the offender to confess, extending grace and mercy is the task of the offended. Although God always forgives, others may take a long time to come to such a place—or may never extend forgiveness. An offender who asks to be forgiven runs a great risk of either rejection or 'premature forgiveness.' Particularly when the offender is someone with power, the request for forgiveness can serve to manipulate the offended, who mouths words that sound like forgiveness but are void of the very mercy that evidences genuine forgiveness. When we have offended another, we should not solicit their forgiveness. What others do or refuse to do in light of our confession isn't the point. Our part on the road to reconciliation is simply to confess and repent."
3. **Read 1 John 1:9, James 5:16, Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32, Luke 17:3-4 and Discuss:**
  - a. For followers of Jesus, we need to remember confession, repentance, and forgiveness are all a beautiful part of our lives and calling. Have you ever considered that our own salvation is based on this model of confession / repentance / forgiveness?
  - b. What is typically more difficult for you: confession or repentance? Why?
  - c. Is it more difficult to confess and repent before God or before people? Why?
4. The process of Confession / Repentance / Forgiveness can be broken down into four steps:
  - Step one** – Confess and repent to God
  - Step two** – Confess and repent to the other person
  - Step three** – Allow the other person space to process and respond
  - Step four** – Truly forgive and try not to bring it up again (forget)
  - a. When we have offended another, we should not solicit their forgiveness. Share a time when you fell into this place and what the outcome was.
  - b. When we choose not to forgive someone who has wronged us, even if they don't confess and repent, we are allowing them to control our peace and joy. Forgiveness does not erase the bitter past or delete memories, instead it creates a new way to remember the situation. Do you agree? Why or why not?
  - c. Confession and repentance results in the reconciliation of our vertical relationship with God. If we apply the same process to our horizontal relationships with others, what freedom can we experience? What role does reconciliation play in forgiveness?

"Every process of restoration begins with an admission to God and to others the exact nature of our wrongs. This is biblical confession."  
- Michael Wilson



### TRY THIS

*Perhaps a specific name and face come to mind during this discussion of forgiveness. Challenge yourself to seek this person out to begin the process of confession and repentance. Or maybe you have wronged someone and are waiting for their confession and repentance in order to forgive them. With God's strength, forgive them and set yourself free. For followers of Jesus, confession, repentance, and forgiveness are all a beautiful part of our lives and calling. What could God do in your life through the act of confession, repentance and forgiveness? What could He do on a viral scale?*

# Heart Matters

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## Week 1 | My Heart

### ■ BOTTOM LINE

God desires for us to have a whole and surrendered heart so that He can use us to change the world.

### ■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

To create meaningful conversation that stretches our faith and draws us closer to the heart of God. Sometimes we make terrible decisions even though we know what the outcome will be. Our head (intellect) often loses out to our heart (experience). Together we will explore how our knowledge about God sometimes contradicts our experience with God.

### ■ SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 16:15-16, Luke 22:33-34, Luke 22:56, and John 21:15-19:** In Peter's journey of following Jesus, we see evidence of a man whose heart and mind were at war with each other. Peter had incredible moments in which he stated beautiful nuggets of wisdom and insight, but yet his actions oftentimes contradicted his words.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Something experiential comes from the real world – from experience. Experiential things can be seen, touched, and verified. Think of a powerful lesson have you learned by experience. It could be from your youth or adulthood. Share with the group what comes to mind. What did this experience teach you?
2. Consider your relationship with God. How often has your knowledge about God been contradicted by your experience with God? **Read Proverbs 3:5, Deuteronomy 6:5, and Jeremiah 29:13 and Discuss:**
  - a. In the Hebrew language, there was only one word for the heart and the mind. Read Proverbs 3:5, Deuteronomy 6:5, and Jeremiah 29:13 again. What changes when you read it this new lens?
  - b. In the Old Testament, loving and living for God was a "whole hearted activity". In what ways is it easy to separate "loving" and "living" into two separate entities?
3. You might think our head knowledge of God would *instruct and complement* our experience with God. Read Matthew 16:15-16, Luke 22:33-34, and Luke 22:56-62 and Discuss:
  - a. In the Matthew scripture Peter declares he believes that Jesus is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, and that Jesus is God in the flesh! In the Luke scripture when Jesus is being interrogated and falsely accused after being arrested, Peter disassociates himself with Jesus by denying he even knows Jesus. Why would Peter do this?
  - b. Peter's logical belief of the truth (mind) was not enough to overcome the experiential lie (heart) that influenced his actions and behavior. His "head knowledge" of Jesus did not translate into his "heart experience" when he was needed the most. Can you identify with Peter? Why or why not?
4. Peter's story does not end here. **Read John 21:15-19 and Discuss** these breakdowns of the scripture. Do you see yourself in Peter's story? What is Jesus inviting you into? How is Jesus casting vision for you to live out of your heart?
  - a. Peter needs his heart and mind forgiven and united in loving and following Jesus.
  - b. Jesus didn't ask Peter if he KNEW Him, even though that was the denial that happened in the courtyard. Jesus went right after Peter's heart. Do you love ("agape" love – highest form of unconditional and sacrificial love) me?
  - c. Jesus invites Peter back into his most painful failure, and doesn't rebuke or scold him for it. He simply challenges Peter to love and lead the disciples again.
  - d. Jesus is casting a vision for Peter's future – He is inviting Peter to have a healed and whole heart. He is inviting Peter to live out of his heart!

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## TRY THIS

*Read Acts 4:13, Acts 5:28-33 and Acts 5:40-42. Can you see the difference? There is boldness and courage shown by Peter and John in the face of questioning by the same group of people that had put Jesus to death!*

*Peter logically and experientially believed the truth of Jesus.*

*Peter changed the world with a whole and surrendered heart.*

*Peter's mind and heart were united in following Jesus.*

*What would it look like for you to have a heart like Peter? What is keeping you from living out what you truly believe?*