

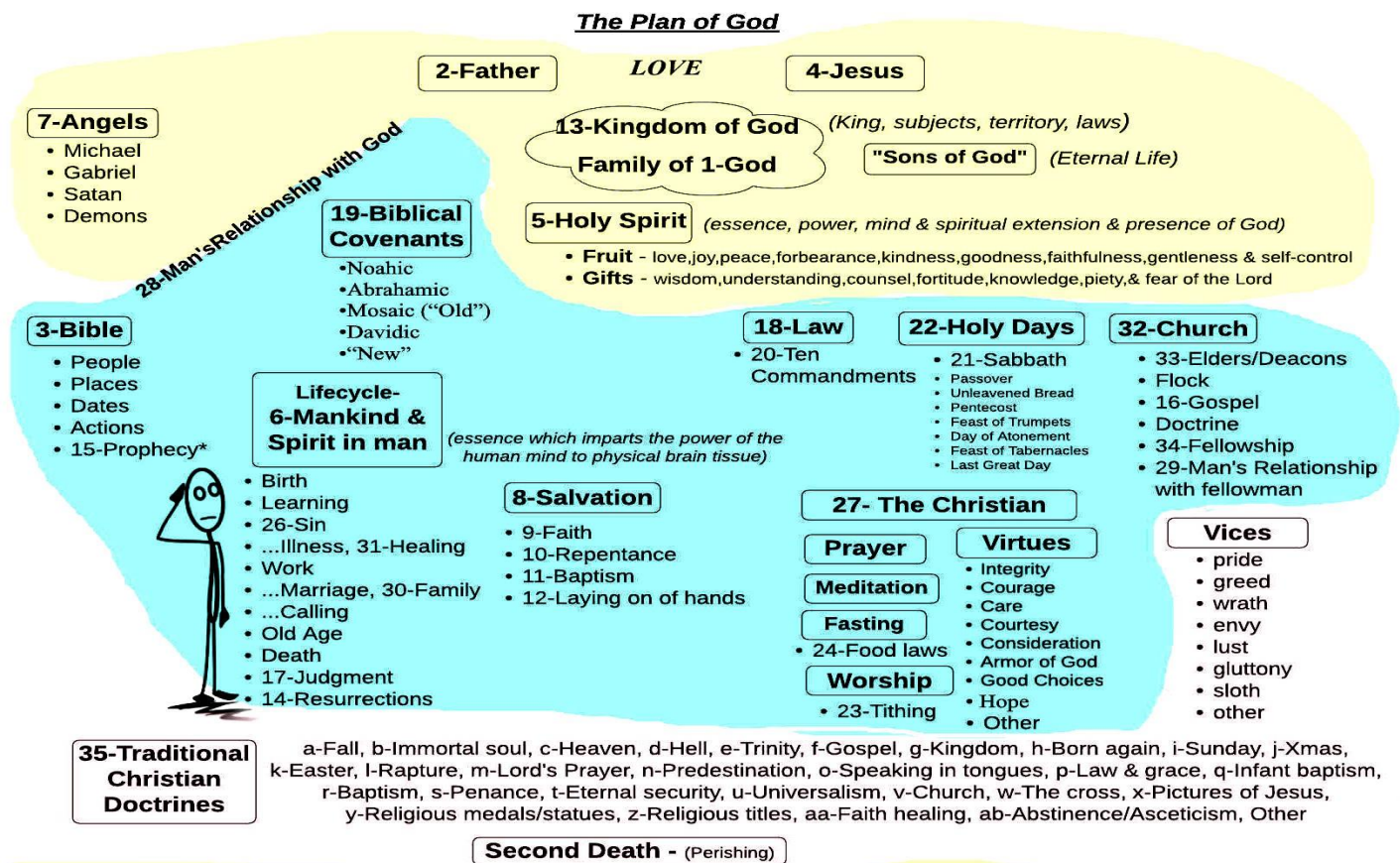
What Does Scripture say about ... The Heart

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, & desperately wicked; Who can know it?

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

- The Population Reference Bureau estimates **117 billion** humans have been born... For most of human history, the population grew very slowly because of high infant mortality, disease, and short life expectancies. It took all of human history to reach 1 billion people (around 1804), and numbers have surged only over the last two centuries due to modern medicine and sanitation
- With the global population sitting around **8 billion**, roughly 7% of all human beings who have ever lived are alive right now
- The human body is made up of **hundreds** of parts (including ...91 organs, 206 bones, & 650 named muscles) - incredible complexity!
- Like snowflakes ... no two humans are identical!?!
- Scripture **interestingly** references human body parts ...**a lot!**
 - the **eye** 600+ times - **ears** 270+ times - **hands** 1000+ times
 - **feet** 240+ times - **head** 350+ times - **mouth** 400+ times

In today's message, we hope to explore **the heart** ... With **more than 800** references, we understand that "the heart" is referenced in God's word with **a critical role in our life & salvation!**



Time: (Past - History - Creation, 25-Hebrew Calendar ... Present - (World events) ... (Future - 15-Prophecy*) ... Eternity ...)



What does the Bible mean by “the heart”?

A) In modern society the first thing that comes to mind is the clinical view ...that the heart **is an organ** in the body that “pumps” (circulates) blood through the body. The Bible ***almost never*** references the heart in this way?! But I found at least one scripture where it does...

2Sam 18:14 Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." & he took three spears in his hand & thrust them through Absalom's **heart**, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree.



B) The heart (symbolically/metaphorically) **thinks & reasons**

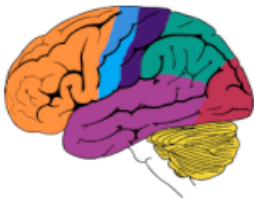
Prov 23:7 For as he thinks in his **heart**, so is he.

Gen 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, & that every intent of the thoughts of his **heart** was only evil continually.

See also: **Mark 2:6–8; Matthew 9:4.**

The heart is involved in inner reasoning, reflection, & the formation of a person's outlook.

Note: Scripture communicates **ideas** without being “hung up” on literal technical correctness



- **Frontal Lobe:** This region makes up 25% to 40% of the cerebral cortex & handles higher-level cognitive processes.

- **Prefrontal Cortex (PFC):** This specific part of the frontal lobe controls executive functions, which include planning, decision-making, problem-solving, & reasoning.

- **Left Hemisphere:** Logical thinking, analytical reasoning, & math are often heavily processed in the left hemisphere of the brain

C) The heart **feels & desires**

Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, & He shall give you the desires of your **heart**

See also: **Deut 6:5; Psalm 13:2; Rom 10:1**

Love, joy, sorrow, longing, compassion, & desire are among the experiences associated with the heart

D) The heart forms **intentions & motives**

Prov 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the **hearts**

See also: **1Chron 28:9; Jer 17:10; Heb 4:12**

A person's outward actions may look good while the motives behind them are wrong. God sees the difference.

E) The heart **believes & responds** to God

Rom 10:10 For with the **heart** one believes unto righteousness, & with the mouth confession is made unto salvation

See also: **Deut 30:6; Rom 6:17; Eph 3:17**

Biblical faith involves more than knowing facts. It includes inward trust, allegiance, & a response to God's truth

F) The heart is the center of **moral & spiritual character**

Psa 51:10 Create in me a clean **heart**, O God, & renew a steadfast spirit within me.

See also: **Psalm 51:10; Matt 12:34–35; 1 Tim 1:5**

Scripture connects the condition of the heart with the character a person develops & the life that person lives.



The heart can be good or bad

One of the Bible's most important teachings is that **we cannot assume our hearts are right simply because we “feel sincere” or “believe” we are doing the right thing.**

Condition of the heart	NKJV Scripture	What it teaches
Deceitful	Jeremiah 17:9	<i>The heart can deceive us about ourselves.</i>
Evil	Genesis 6:5	<i>Human thoughts & intentions can become persistently evil</i>
Hardened	Heb 3:12–13	<i>Unbelief and sin can make a person resistant to God.</i>
Proud	Daniel 5:20	<i>Pride can lead to a person's downfall.</i>
Divided	Psa 12:2; Jam 4:8	<i>A person can be inconsistent or divided in loyalty.</i>
Foolish	Romans 1:21	<i>Refusing to honor God can darken understanding.</i>
Sincere	Hebrews 10:22	<i>We should approach God with genuine faith.</i>
Pure	Matthew 5:8	<i>Inner purity matters to God.</i>
Wise	Proverbs 16:23	<i>A wise heart helps guide a person's speech.</i>
Understanding	Proverbs 2:2	<i>The heart should be inclined toward wisdom and understanding.</i>
Contrite	Psalms 51:17	<i>God welcomes a genuinely repentant spirit.</i>
Cheerful	2 Cor 9:7	<i>Giving should come willingly rather than under compulsion</i>

A crucial distinction

Jeremiah 17:9 warns us about the heart's capacity for deception. Therefore, our **feelings, intentions, & confidence** are **not** sufficient tests of whether we are right.

See also:

- **Prov 14:12** — A way can seem right to a person ... yet lead to death.
- **Pro 28:26** He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered
- **Psalms 139:23–24** — David asks God to search him & reveal what is wrong.
- **Psalms 119:105** — God's word provides guidance for our path.

*The biblical approach is **not to ignore** the heart, but to **examine it** in the light of God's truth*



God looks at the heart

Several scriptures emphasize that **God sees** beyond outward appearances

- **1 Sam 16:7** — People tend to look at outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the **heart**
- **1 Chron 28:9** — God searches all **hearts** & understands the intent of every thought
- **Psalms 44:21** — God knows the secrets of the **heart**
- **Proverbs 21:2** — The LORD weighs the **hearts**
- **Jeremiah 17:10** — God searches the **heart** & tests the mind
- **Luke 16:15** — God knows the **hearts** of people
- **1 Thessalonians 2:4** — God tests the **heart**

These scriptures have important implications because **God knows**:

1. ... whether our motives are genuine.
2. ... hidden sins that other people may not see.
3. ... sincere obedience that others may overlook.
4. ... when apparent righteousness is motivated by pride, envy, or a desire for recognition
5. ... not only what we do but also what motivates us to do it.

Self-examination question: If God evaluated the reasons behind my actions, would He find the same goodness that other people see in my behaviour?



What comes out of the heart?

Jesus taught that our **words & behaviour** reveal something about our inner condition

- **Mat 15:18-20** But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the **heart**, & they defile a man. For out of the **heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man

- **Mat 12:34-35** Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the **heart** the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his **heart** brings forth good things, & an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

- **Prov 4:23** Keep your **heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the “issues of life”

Note ... not every action reveals a person's entire character

This helps explain why **“biblical change” must go deeper than outward appearances**
For example:

- A person can speak kindly while inwardly resenting someone
- A person can perform religious duties to receive admiration
- A person can obey a rule reluctantly without developing love for what is good
- A person can also **genuinely repent & gradually change** both attitudes & behaviour

Outward conduct matters, but Scripture also calls for **inward** transformation



We are commanded to guard our hearts

“Guarding the heart” does not mean suppressing every emotion or refusing to examine painful experiences. It means learning to evaluate our thoughts, feelings, desires & responses according to God's wisdom.

What we should do	Scripture	Practical application
Guard the heart	Prov 4:23	<i>Pay attention to what influences your thinking & desires</i>
Hide God's word in the heart	Psalms 119:11	<i>Internalize Scripture so it influences decisions.</i>
Meditate on what is good	Philips 4:8	<i>Direct attention toward what is true, noble, just, pure and praiseworthy.</i>
Avoid a hardened heart	Heb 3:12–13	<i>Respond to God's correction rather than repeatedly resisting it.</i>
Keep a forgiving heart	Eph 4:31–32	<i>Put away bitterness & cultivate kindness & forgiveness.</i>
Reject envy and selfish ambition	Jam 3:14–17	<i>Examine the motives behind competition & conflict.</i>
Love God wholeheartedly	Deut 6:5	<i>Give God the central place in your loyalty and devotion.</i>
Pursue purity	2 Tim 2:22	<i>Flee sinful desires & pursue righteousness, faith, love & peace.</i>



God can change the heart - The Bible does not leave us with the conclusion that we must simply “**struggle with** our hearts” as they are

- **A new heart** - **Ezekiel 36:26–27** describes God giving His people a new heart and a new spirit, enabling them to walk in His statutes.
- **A cleansed heart** - **Psalms 51:10** records David's prayer: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”
- **God's law written on the heart** - **Hebrews 8:10** the New Cov promise
- **Love from a pure heart** - The biblical picture is one of ongoing growth: **God works** in people, & they are called to respond through faith, repentance, obedience, & the renewal of their minds (Romans 12:1–2; Philipians 2:12–13).



The heart and the mind: are they the same?

Scripture frequently mentions the heart & mind together, but it does not always use them interchangeably.

Heart	Mind	Scripture
Inner intentions and motives	Understanding and reasoning	Hebrews 4:12
Love and devotion	Thoughts and understanding	Matthew 22:37
Inner moral condition	Patterns of thought	Romans 12:2
Belief and trust	Understanding of truth	Romans 10:10; Ephesians 4:23
Desires and inclinations	Deliberate reflection	Psalms 19:14

Biblical language is not a technical scholarly diagram. The heart & mind overlap in their functions. Both need to be directed toward God, & neither should be understood as a completely independent part of the person.



A biblical “heart self-examination” checklist

(to use in your personal study, prayer, discussion)

1. Motives

Why do I do what I do? **Prov 16:2; 1Cor 4:5**

Do I seek God's approval or primarily human recognition? **Joh 5:44; Gal 1:10**

Am I willing to admit when my motives are wrong? **Psalms 139:23–24**

2. Thoughts and desires

What occupies my thoughts most often? **Philips 4:8**

Do I nurture envy, resentment, lust, or pride? **Mark 7:21–23; James 3:14**

What do I treasure most? **Matt 6:21**

3. Truth & correction

Am I willing to be corrected by Scripture? **Prov 12:1; James 1:22–25**

Do I assume my own judgment must be right? **Prov 14:12; 28:26**

Have I become resistant to something God is showing me? **Heb 3:12–13**

4. Love and relationships

Do I genuinely seek the good of others? **Philips 2:3–4**

Am I holding on to bitterness or refusing to forgive? **Eph 4:31–32**

Are my words consistent with the condition of my heart? **Matt 12:34–35**

5. Relationship with God

Do I seek God with my whole heart? **Jer 29:13**

Is my faith sincere and accompanied by obedience? **Rom 6:17; James 2:17**

Am I asking God to cleanse and renew me? **Psalms 51:10**

These questions are intended for honest reflection, not condemnation

*The objective is to **recognize** areas needing growth & **seek** God's help in addressing them*



Seven ways the heart can deceive us

These are especially important when examining ourselves, evaluating religious teaching, or trying to understand other people.

1. Mistaking sincerity for truth

A person can sincerely believe something that is wrong.

Scriptures: **Prov 14:12; Acts 26:9; Rom 10:2–3**

Lesson: Sincerity matters, but it does not replace accurate knowledge

2. Justifying our own behaviour

We can excuse ourselves while criticizing the same behavior in others.

Scriptures: **Matt 7:3–5; Rom 2:1–3**

Lesson: Apply the same moral standards to yourself that you apply to others

3. Confusing desire with wisdom

Wanting something strongly does not establish that it is good.

Scriptures: **James 1:14–15; Prov 19:2–3**

Lesson: Examine desires before acting on them

4. Assuming we know another person's motives

We may judge another person's intentions without adequate evidence

Scriptures: **1 Cor 4:5; Prov 18:13, 17**

Lesson: Distinguish observable conduct from assumptions about hidden motives

5. Refusing correction

Pride can persuade us that we have nothing to learn.

Scriptures: **Prov 12:1; 15:31–32**

Lesson: A willingness to receive correction is a mark of wisdom

6. Allowing bitterness to shape judgment

Resentment can influence how we interpret another person's actions.

Scriptures: **Heb 12:15; Eph 4:31–32**

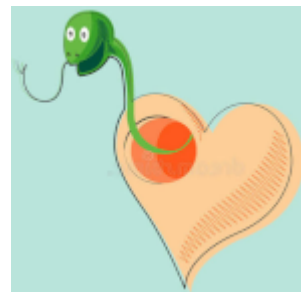
Lesson: Address wrongdoing honestly without allowing bitterness to govern the heart

7. Treating religious confidence as proof of spiritual health

A person can have religious zeal while lacking understanding or humility.

Scriptures: **Rom 10:2; Matt 7:21–23; Luke 18:9–14**

Lesson: Religious activity & confidence must be evaluated alongside truth, obedience, humility, & love





Key conclusion

The Bible's teaching about the **heart** can be summarized in six principles:

1. **The heart reveals who we are inwardly.** Prov 23:7.
2. **The heart can deceive us.** — Jer 17:9.
3. **God knows & evaluates the heart.**
1 Sam 16:7; Jer 17:10.
4. **Our words & actions are influenced by the heart** Matt 12:34–5
5. **We must guard & examine the heart.** — Prov 4:23; 2 Cor 13:5.
6. **God desires to cleanse, renew, & transform the heart.** — Psalm 51:10; Ezek 36:26–27

Perhaps the most important question is not simply, “*What do I believe?*” but also, “**What is happening inside me that shapes what I believe, what I desire, how I treat others, & how I respond to God?**”

In the Bible, **the heart is much more than “the seat of emotions”**. Scripture portrays it as the inner center of a person's thoughts, desires, intentions, beliefs, motives, moral choices, & responses to God.

The Bible teaches that the **heart** can be wise or foolish, sincere or deceitful, hardened or responsive, pure or corrupted. It also teaches that God examines the **heart** and that a person needs a **heart** that is **changed** and **renewed** by Him.

We should examine ourselves honestly, measure our beliefs and behaviour against Scripture, & seek God's help in becoming more faithful, wise, loving, and pure.

The ultimate objective is not merely to feel better about ourselves. It is to develop a **heart** that increasingly loves God, responds to His truth, and produces the kind of life that pleases Him.

The Bible's teaching about the **heart** is both a **warning** and an **encouragement**. It warns us not to trust every impulse, justify every desire, or assume that sincerity guarantees truth. Yet it also assures us that God understands our inner struggles & calls us toward cleansing, wisdom, faith, and growth.

The goal is not merely to know what the Bible says about the **heart**. It is to allow God's truth to examine, correct, & transform our own **heart**.



What does it mean to have a hardened heart?

The subject of hardness of heart appears repeatedly in Scripture.

- **Exo 7:13–14:** Pharaoh's heart is hardened.
- **Psalms 95:7–8:** God's people are warned not to harden their hearts as in the rebellion
- **Mark 3:5:** Jesus is grieved by the hardness of people's hearts.
- **Mark 6:52:** The disciples' hearts are described as hardened in connection with their failure to understand the miracle of the loaves.
- **Heb 3:12–13:** Unbelief & the deceitfulness of sin are warnings against developing an evil heart that departs from God

Hardness of heart is not limited to people who openly reject religion. It can also involve religious people who resist correction, fail to understand what God is doing, or become insensitive to the needs of others.

A useful warning from Hebrews 3:13 is that sin is deceitful. Repeatedly excusing wrongdoing can gradually make it easier to continue doing it.

The appropriate response is not despair, but prompt repentance, renewed attention to God's word, and a willingness to respond to correction.

What is the difference between a broken heart, a contrite heart, and a pure heart?

These expressions overlap, but each emphasizes something different.

A broken heart - Psalm 34:18; Psalm 147:3

Emphasizes deep distress, sorrow, and the need for God's comfort and healing. A broken heart may result from grief, suffering, conviction, or loss.

A contrite heart - Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15

Emphasizes humility & genuine repentance before God. Contrition is more than feeling bad about consequences; it involves recognizing one's need for God's mercy.

A pure heart - Matt 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5

Emphasizes inward sincerity, moral purity, and undivided devotion to God. It concerns what a person loves, seeks, & intends.

A steadfast heart - Psalm 57:7; Psalm 112:7

Emphasizes stability, trust, & faithfulness even when circumstances are difficult.

These are not necessarily separate stages that every person experiences in the same order.

A believer may experience grief while also having a pure intention & a steadfast trust in God

A heart of stone Vs A heart of flesh

Ezek 36:26–27 I will give you a new **heart** & put a new spirit within you; I will take the **heart** of stone out of your flesh & give you a **heart** of flesh... I will put My Spirit within you & cause you to walk in My statutes, & you will keep My judgments & do them.

- A “heart of flesh” is about
- Sensitivity
 - Teachability
 - Responsiveness
 - Receives correction and considers it honestly
 - Is moved by truth, compassion, and the needs of others

What can influence the heart?

Scripture identifies numerous influences that can shape a person's inward life.

Influence	Scripture	Possible effect
Companionship	Prov 13:20	<i>Wise or foolish influences can affect one's direction.</i>
Counsel	Prov 12:15; 19:20	<i>Advice can help correct mistaken judgment.</i>
Repeated sin	Heb 3:13	<i>Sin can deceive and harden the heart.</i>
Fear	Prov 29:25	<i>Fear of people can become a snare.</i>
Envy	Prov 14:30	<i>Envy can disturb inward peace.</i>
Gratitude	Col 3:15–16	<i>Thankfulness and God's word should shape the inner life.</i>
God's word	Psalms 119:11	<i>Scripture can be treasured inwardly to resist sin.</i>
Suffering	Rom 5:3–5	<i>Trials can produce perseverance, character, and hope.</i>
Forgiveness	Eph 4:31–32	<i>Replacing bitterness with kindness and forgiveness changes how we relate to others.</i>
Pride	Prov 16:18	<i>Pride can precede a fall.</i>
Prayer	Philip 4:6–7	<i>Prayer and thanksgiving are associated with God's peace guarding hearts and minds.</i>
False teaching	Col 2:8	<i>Deceptive philosophies can take people captive.</i>

The important lesson is that the heart is influenced by what we repeatedly hear, believe, practice, desire, & permit to shape our thinking.

Does a troubled or anxious heart mean someone lacks faith?

Not necessarily.

The NKJV includes faithful people who experienced fear, sorrow, anguish, and distress. David expressed distress in many psalms; Jesus Himself was troubled in spirit (**John 12:27; 13:21**).

Consider these passages:

- **Psalm 34:18:** The LORD is near to the brokenhearted.
- **Psalm 56:3–4:** David describes trusting God when afraid.
- **John 14:1:** Jesus encourages His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled.
- **2Cor 1:8–10:** Paul describes being burdened beyond strength & learning to rely on God
- **Philip 4:6–7:** Believers are instructed to bring their requests to God in prayer & thanksgiving
- **1Peter 5:7:** Believers are told to cast their cares upon God because He cares for them.

These passages do not teach that every painful emotion disappears immediately when someone has faith. They teach that distress can be brought to God and met with trust, prayer, support, and perseverance.

A useful distinction: Experiencing fear is not the same as choosing fear as one's governing authority. Feeling sorrow is not the same as rejecting hope.

Twenty additional things the Bible says about the heart

#	<u>What Scripture reveals</u>	<u>NKJV reference</u>	<u>Lesson</u>
1	The heart can be instructed	Prov 23:12	<i>We should apply ourselves to wisdom and knowledge.</i>
2	The heart can meditate	Psalms 19:14	<i>Our inward thoughts should please God.</i>
3	The heart can remember	Deut 4:9	<i>We must not forget what God has taught us.</i>
4	The heart can understand	Prov 8:5	<i>We are called to develop sound judgment.</i>
5	The heart can become insensitive	Psalms 119:70	<i>A person can lose sensitivity to God's truth.</i>
6	The heart can be troubled	John 14:1, 27	<i>Christ offers reasons for faith and peace amid distress.</i>
7	The heart can rejoice	Psalms 16:9	<i>Joy can arise from confidence in God.</i>
8	The heart can grieve	Gen 6:6	<i>Scripture uses heart-language to describe profound grief.</i>
9	The heart can be encouraged	Col 2:2	<i>Believers can strengthen one another inwardly.</i>
10	The heart can be strengthened	Psalms 27:14	<i>Waiting on the LORD is associated with courage.</i>
11	The heart can be established	1 Thes 3:13	<i>Believers need stability in holiness.</i>
12	The heart can be hardened /sin	Heb 3:13	<i>Persistent sin can make us resistant to correction.</i>
13	The heart can be hardened through pride	Daniel 5:20	<i>Pride can corrupt judgment and conduct.</i>
14	The heart can be divided	Hosea 10:2	<i>Divided loyalty brings spiritual instability.</i>
15	The heart can be far from God	Matt 15:8	<i>Religious speech can conceal inward distance from God.</i>
16	The heart can be far from understanding	Isaiah 6:10	<i>Persistent resistance can impair spiritual perception.</i>
17	The heart can be enlightened	Eph 1:18	<i>Spiritual understanding involves illumination from God.</i>
18	The heart can be purified /faith	Acts 15:9	<i>God cleanses the hearts of those who believe.</i>
19	The heart can be established by grace.	Heb 13:9	<i>God's grace, rather than strange teachings, should stabilize us.</i>
20	The heart can be strengthened / Holy Spirit.	Eph 3:16–17	<i>God's power works in the inner person.</i>



... a REALLY key point ... I *almost* neglected to mention!

Scripture tells us ... early in Genesis ... **God has a heart!**

Gen 6:6 & the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, & He was grieved in His **heart**.

Anthropomorphism: is describing God in human terms ...

... perhaps a better term for this sermon is **Theomorphism:** where something (mankind) possesses qualities resembling God

God's heart is part of the **Communicable attributes of God** God's qualities that His Creation can reflect to some degree, such as love, mercy, holiness, & justice. It all goes back to **Imago Dei** - Latin for "**image of God**"; the theological doctrine that human beings are created in God's image. Many passages support the idea that humans can genuinely reflect God's moral & relational qualities, even though human beings remain distinct from God

Bible Stories That Reveal God's Heart

1. Hosea is told to marry a woman of harlotry - Hosea 1:2–3; 3:1–3

God tells Hosea to marry Gomer and later to love her despite her unfaithfulness. Hosea's painful relationship becomes a living illustration of God's love for Israel despite Israel's spiritual adultery.

What it reveals: God's wounded love, faithfulness, patience, & desire to restore an unfaithful people.



2. Jesus weeps at Lazarus's tomb - John 11:1–44

Jesus knows He is about to raise Lazarus, yet He is deeply moved by the sorrow surrounding the death of His friend. He weeps with those who mourn.

*What it reveals: Divine compassion is **not** cold or detached. Jesus enters the sorrow of others even while knowing that He will bring deliverance.*

3. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem - Luke 19:41–44; Matt 23:37–39

Jesus weeps over the city because it does not recognize the things that make for its peace. He also expresses the desire to gather its children as a hen gathers her chicks, but they are unwilling

What it reveals: God's compassion, grief over rejected opportunities, & desire for people to receive peace... (Zoomorphism - Describing God through animal imagery)

4. Jesus describes the father welcoming the prodigal son - Luke 15:11–32

When the son returns, the father sees him, has compassion, runs to him, embraces him, & celebrates his return. The elder brother's resentment reveals another **heart** problem.

What it reveals: God's eagerness to welcome the repentant, His joy over restoration, and His concern for those who resent mercy shown to others. It reveals God's attitude toward sinners who repent.

The most compelling biblical evidence that **God has a heart** is not simply that Scripture uses the word "**heart**". It is that Scripture **repeatedly** portrays God as responding personally to human choices—with love, grief, compassion, patience, righteous anger, & joy over repentance.