



## HEART IMPLANT

Pastor Al Detter Romans 10:8-10

9:30 & 11:00am Grace Church March 4, 2007

I'm a prolific dreamer. I have more dreams than any-one I know. Sometimes my dreams are so real that I think I'm in real life. There are times I park in the driveway of our new church. I look at what's going on and I ask myself, "Is this a dream? Am I really the pastor of a church that's going to relocate? Is this really happening?"

Our building project and impending relocation is a reality. Each week is one less week we'll have in this facility and one week closer to our new chapter on Grubb Road. We've been at this location since 1960. After all those years, you just don't wake up one morning and go to a new campus. That would be a nightmare. It will take a lot of preparation on many fronts to move.

We're already getting the wheels in motion for the physical move. There's going to be a ton of things to do and we're going to need a lot of teams. Over the next few months, we'll be asking you to help out on a team. But our spiritual preparation is just as vital. I have a sense that the time has come to start our spiritual preparation for the move. So over the months until we move, we're going to have a number of sermon series that will prepare us spiritually for our move.

Sitting on this table is an empty jar. In my mind's eye, I can see what's in the jar. You can't. So I need to tell you what I see in this jar.

I'm in my 5th grade classroom. We're studying science. In the back of the room are some science exhibits and experiments on a table. There's a little branch with leaves on it in the jar. The lid has holes in it. On the branch is a cocoon. Over the next number of weeks, our class is going to watch a little caterpillar hidden in that pouch become a butterfly. I learn a new word—metamorphosis. It simply means "transformation". I had no clue back then, but that word has become central in my life.

As we get ready to move to our new facility, the 1st thing I want to remind us of and rally us to concerns the most important thing we're about as a church—transformation; changed lives. There isn't anything more important than that—introducing people to Jesus Christ and helping people experience transformed lives.

When I talk about transformation, I'm talking about a life that moves us from self as the center to God as the center of life. I'm talking about a life that moves us from doing the things that please us to doing the things that please Him. I'm talking about a change in character that reflects the ways of Jesus rather than the ways we go about things. I'm talking about living a life that's different than the way we used to live before we met Jesus.

If life change is the most important thing we're about as a church, in this series I want to talk about how transformation happens. Four things must be involved in the transformation of a life—a new heart, a renewed mind, a changed life, and healthy relationships.

Our March series is called Metamorphosis. We're going to work our way through each of these 4 aspects of human metamorphosis, human transformation. The whole process starts with a new heart and that's where we begin today.

I lead a busy life and maybe you do to. While I have a consistent devotional life, honestly, I don't often think about the spiritual part of us called the "heart". So many other things capture my attention. I rarely stop to ponder things about the heart. So this week was an interesting journey as I prepared for this sermon.

Some challenges asserted themselves as I did my study. First was the sheer amount of references to the word “heart” in the Bible—100’s of them. I’m the kind of person that likes to look at all of them. I could have spent all of my time separating out the various meanings and usages of heart. But I wouldn’t have had any time left to prepare my sermon. The good thing was—I already knew what I was after—the relationship of the heart to a changed life. So I stayed in that ball park.

Second, I discovered that familiarity with a term doesn’t mean that you can easily explain it. I thought that after all these years it would flow right out of me. But I found myself stumbling to explain the various meanings of the term “heart” that I’ll be talking about today. My prayer is that I’ll be clear.

Third, all of the Christian teaching in my life from little on up into adulthood—in the church and in my college and seminary days—taught me when we come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, we get a new heart. That’s true. But at the same time I was taught that my heart as a Christian is bad—that it’s deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17:9) and that the bad things I say and do come from my heart (Mt. 15:18-19; Mk. 7:21-23; Rom. 3:10ff.). As you’ll see later on, I’ve changed my thinking about this part.

Until 4 years ago, I’ve lived my whole life believing that my heart is basically bad, even as a Christian. It caused me to live with a nagging, unresolved problem—what’s wrong with my new heart? I’m so often disappointed in what I do. Why is my new heart so powerless? Why am I doing bad things I don’t want to do and not doing good things I really want to do? I even struggled to the point where I wondered whether or not I had really been converted.

If you’ve ever had time to reflect on the subject of the heart, maybe you’ve experienced some of these struggles too. Why is it so much easier to do the wrong thing than the right thing? As a child, why was it that nobody ever taught me how to do bad things but they had to teach me what was right? As a Christian, why do I sin if I have a new heart? Why do I get in ruts and repeat the same old sins? If I feel bad about what I think, say, and do, why can’t I stop?

I grew up in a church in which some people believed in what’s called “sinless perfection”. They believed that they could become so transformed in this life that they no longer sinned. They didn’t relate to the frustration we feel about sin in our lives as Christians. Maybe they never read I John 1:8, “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

I don’t think it’s just me and a few of us in this room that struggle with sin even though we have a new heart. If we’re honest, I believe that we all identify with this problem. But just identifying with the problem is not enough. We must go to a deeper understanding of the new heart in life change and its relationship to sin in our lives. If we can get a handle on that, it will do a lot to contribute to our metamorphosis. That’s where I’m heading today.

For my text, I’ve chosen Romans 10:8-10. You’ll see that word “heart” a couple of times: “The word is near you, in your mouth and HEART; that is, the word of faith we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your HEART that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the HEART man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

I’m not going to unpack these verses word by word or phrase by phrase today. I’m going to pull 3 aspects from these verses and then I’m going to connect them to the truth that we need a new heart in order to live a transformed life.

The 1st aspect from these verses has to do with the meaning of the word “heart”. I want to take some time to deal with what the Bible says about this term “heart”. Actually, when you read about the heart in commentaries and books, it can be confusing. What I have to say is not the last word on the subject. But here’s my understanding of what the word “heart (lebh-Heb., kardia-Gk.)” means in the Bible.

The term “heart” is used in at least 4 ways in Scripture:

**1) The physical heart.** It’s the organ of the body that pumps our blood.

**2) The inner person.** It’s our inner life, the center of our personality. It’s the seat of our mind, will, and emotions. It’s the place God speaks to us. That’s the heart I see here in Romans 10. The need to believe in Jesus comes to our heart—our inner person—and we must make a response from that heart.

**3) The old spiritual nature.** We were all born with a spiritual nature that’s tuned to this world and our own selfish appetites. Sin corrupted this heart and it became alienated from God and completely incapable of pleasing God. It governs our character and from it comes sinful attitudes, speech, and behavior.

So everyone is born with 3 hearts. If these are the only hearts we’ll ever have, we won’t be able to enter God’s Heaven. And even though people might do some good things, their lives will not be changed to do God’s will. That’s why there’s a 4th heart in Scripture.

**4) The new spiritual nature.** This is a new spiritual governing center that flows from the very life of God. We get this new heart, this new spiritual entity, by a gracious, special, irreversible, and sovereign act of God that results in a transformation of our entire outlook on life. Our old heart can’t do what it should. The only way to solve our problem, whether Jew or Gentile, is to get a new heart that reflects the mind, will, and feelings of God.

That’s exactly what God said He would do—give us a new heart. He said through Jeremiah the prophet, “I will give them a new heart to know Me (Jer. 24:7).” Through the mouth of Ezekiel, God said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you (Ez. 11:19; 36:26).”

The New Testament uses several terms for when we get this new heart. It talks about being “born again (Jn. 3:3-7; I Pet. 1:23)” and “regeneration (Mt. 19:28, Titus 3:5)”. Simply put, these terms mean that God has given us a new heart making it possible for us to live changed lives.

Now that we’ve looked at what the Bible says about the “heart”, the second aspect I want to highlight from our text today is when we get our new heart. We get our new heart, the heart that makes transformed living possible, at the moment we confess Jesus as Savior with our heart and mouth. At that moment, our sins are forgiven and God creates in us a new and clean heart. It’s an awesome moment.

That leads me to the 3rd aspect from our text today. Paul says that when we sincerely believe in Jesus and confess Him as Savior, the result is righteousness. That means we’ll see life change. Paul talks about another result as well—salvation. Salvation is a pardon from our sin to live forever with God. But it’s this life change result that I’m talking about today.

True life change is only possible because of a new heart from God. That’s the 1st vital step of human metamorphosis. I want to be sure you’ve gotten my main point. It’s this—We must have a new heart from God in order to have a changed life. That’s the starting place for spiritual metamorphosis. Without a new heart, we can’t please God or go to live with Him someday.

I have a hunch that you might be interested in life change. Now you know where life change begins—with a new heart implanted by God. This new heart is what makes it possible for spiritual metamorphosis to happen.

I want to take you one more step today. I want this teaching on the new heart to make a difference in your life. There are 3 very practical ways you can bring what I said about transformation and a new heart into your life.

### **1) Look for evidences of a new heart in your life.**

A new heart always reveals itself. It’s going to affect your conscience. It’s going to make you uncomfortable with sin. It’s going to make you interested in the things of God. It’s going to dim your appetite for the things of this

world. It's going to make you want to know more about the Bible. It's going to make you more sensitive to other people. Simply put, you'll start noticing changes in your life.

John says it this way in his little book in the New Testament, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 Jn. 3:9)." A new heart is the seed of God in us. It leads us away from a lifestyle of sin. We begin to see changes almost immediately once we get our new heart. Are you seeing these kinds of things in your life?

Just remember, this metamorphosis is life-long. It doesn't happen overnight. Don't get discouraged. Be encouraged because there's one thing we can be sure of. If God has given us a new heart, we start seeing evidence of it. If we don't see any evidence of change in our lives and we claim to be religious, we have to really question whether we have a new heart.

**2) Believe the truth about your new heart—it is totally good.** There's nothing wrong with our new heart. It comes from God. It's a perfect creation of God and that heart cannot sin. Our new heart is never the problem when we sin. The Bible never tells us to crucify the heart. We have to believe the truth that our new heart is good. It's on God's side.

If we have a new heart, that core of our being is good. We don't have to live in shame, guilt, and defeat that something's wrong with our new heart. We have to stop believing that our heart is bad. The problem of sin we face is never because our new heart. Friends, this is freeing truth!

**3) Fight for your new heart.** If I have this new heart from God, why do I still sin? The problem isn't our new heart. The problem is our old heart, the old man, the old nature, the flesh. These are all synonymous biblical terms. Unfortunately, this part of us stays with us until we die. We live in a state of warfare. We battle this old part of us. Jesus and Paul said that all the bad stuff comes from this old part.

The New Testament tells us to crucify it (Gal. 5:24), to put off the old self (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:8). With our new heart and with the Spirit of God in us, we must wage war against the old heart within that rejects the new heart. We must choose to use the weapons of the Spirit to battle back the old so that our new heart might fuel life change. If we don't fight for our new heart against the old, we'll be like a 20-year old baby spiritually speaking—alive but in diapers sucking our thumbs when we should be maturing.

Maturity is about one thing and one thing only—a dynamic relationship with God that results in transformation because of the new heart He put within. Once we understand this, we'll constantly protect our new heart from the onslaught of the old.

Back in 5th grade, I had this thought, "When everyone else goes to recess and no one is inside the room, open up the cocoon and see what's inside." I never did that because I was afraid I'd mess up the experiment and get into trouble.

Today I have a similar wish. I wish it were possible to open you up and see inside each one of you. To see if you have a new heart. To see if you're fighting on behalf of your new heart so you can experience the transformation God has in mind for you.

I can't open you up. And even if I could, I wouldn't want to. It would be as stupid as opening up a cocoon. I have enough to worry with concerning myself. Finding out what's going on inside of you is a job that God has given you to do for yourself. It's so important for you to know what's going on inside.

Can we all be spiritual cardiologists for a minute? Can each of us answer several questions about ourselves?

**1) Do I have a new heart from God?** Have I ever confessed Jesus as Lord with my mouth and believed in my heart that God raised Him from the dead? Do I see evidences of a new heart in my life because I see life change going on?

**2) Am I fighting for my new heart?** Am I aware that my old heart is a traitor that must be harshly dealt with? With the power of God and with spiritual weapons, am I dealing with the deeds of the flesh so that my new heart can allow the life of God to flourish in my life?

How did your spiritual heart exam go? If after you've examined your life, if you realize that you don't have a new heart from God, you to be one of the latest recipients of a new heart today. All you need to do is to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead!

And if you've examined your spiritual heart today and realize that you've not been fighting for the health of your new heart—that you need to get serious about your lack of concern so that life change can happen, you need to make some key changes to protect your new heart.

Spiritual metamorphosis begins with a new heart. Then we've got to fight the old nature for the health of our new heart. What is your heart exam telling you to do today? Do it without delay.