

Parenting On Point #2 - Loving Emotionally With All Your Heart

- Howdy, Pastor Mark Driscoll here, welcoming you to my first ever parenting series. More than 20 years in the pulpit, never taught an entire parenting series. Parenting on Point is a five week series looking at what it means to love God and live in the love of God with all your heart, emotional life, soul, spiritual life, mind, mental life, strength and physical life and help your neighbor do the same, starting with your own family and the kids that are sleeping in the bunk beds down the hall so thanks for joining me, hope to be of service to you. All right, well if you've got a Bible, go to Mark chapter 12, and what we're gonna look at is the most significant person in the history of the world, Jesus Christ, opens up the most significant book in the history of the world, the Bible and tells us what the most significant section of that book is and it's all about loving relationships and so ultimately, this is a five week sermon series where we're looking at emotional health, relational health, starting with God and extending to others, including your family and here's how Jesus says it in Mark chapter 12, starting in verse 28. And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing, so these guys are having a bit of a theological discussion, debate and argument, disputing with one another and seeing that he answered them well, asked Jesus, which commandment is the most important of all? Hey, Jesus, it's a really big book. What's the big idea? And Jesus says, the most important is this. Hear this from the Lord our God. The Lord is one. Knowing who God is, and then he continues, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength, the second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these and so the first thing I want to see is God sees you as four parts, doesn't matter whether you use old media, books, magazines, newsletters or new media, television, podcast, blogs, what most people are searching for seeking for, when it comes to information is self improvement, diet, health, nutrition, relationship, finances, whatever the case may be. It's about something in your life isn't working and you're looking for advice, counsel, instruction, to make a course correction and to change something in your life so that your life goes better. Number one, that just shows us that the Bible is true. The bible tells us why things go wrong in the world and why things go wrong with us and how God is the one to help straighten us and everything else out. Secondly, what this reveals to us as well is these needs and longings are not bad but where we go to satisfy them or get our information, it's really critical that we make good decisions, so think of anything in your life, if you could pick one thing in your life right now, don't say it out loud, that'd be hilarious but embarrassing, don't say it out loud but just think about it privately, man, if there was one thing I could fix, work on, change, adjust, or pivot in my life, it would be this. Maybe it's emotional, maybe it's financial, maybe it's marital, maybe it's parental, maybe it's vocational, maybe it's health, I don't know. The question then is regarding that issue if you want some help, where do you go? Well, if you go to a counselor, they will oftentimes largely deal with your heart and your emotional life and how you're feeling and maybe even put you in some sort of support group so that you have healthy emotional relationships so that other people can walk with you. You go meet with a Pastor or a ministry leader, they're gonna deal with your soul. Are you praying? Do you know the Lord? Are you reading your Bible? How's your relationship with God? Are you serving? Are you giving?

Healthy spiritual practices for the soul. You go meet with a psychiatrist, they'll largely deal with your mind, what are you thinking, how are you processing reality, what is the process through which you are making your decisions and interpreting that which you experience? And if you go to the doctor, they'll deal largely with your physical body and your strength and wellness. They'll run your blood pressure and check your heart rate and your pulse and then they'll do some diagnosis and maybe even prescribe you some sort of medication to help on the physical side. All of those can be very, very helpful, but they're dealing with the heart, the soul, the mind or the strength. They come to Jesus and they ask, what's the most important thing? He said, "Have a relationship with God with all your heart, emotional life, soul, spiritual life, mind, mental life, strength, physical life." One of the reasons that we don't make the kind of progress and breakthrough that God intends for us is we're dealing with part of who we are, not all of who we are. 2000 years ago, the God who made us comes as the Lord Jesus speaks to us and tells us exactly how to make hope and help and healing, progress in life, heart, soul, mind and strength and so it begins, Jesus said, with a loving relationship with God, whatever you're dealing with, whoever you're dealing with, first priority, loving relationship with God. God loves you. You love God. Heart, soul, mind and strength, and then you're ready to take that loving relationship and to share it with others, he calls this your neighbor. This can be obviously people that you work with, people that you live near, people that are family and extended family, but for the sake of our five week series, we're talking about neighbor being family or closest friends. So Grace and I are coming up on Tuesday, our 25th wedding anniversary. She's my first neighbor. She's my first neighbor. We have five kids. That's our next ring of neighbors. Beyond that is extended family, friends, church family, think of it like a pebble being thrown into a pond. God's love hits and it's to ring out. First into your marriage if you're married, to your kids if you have kids. Family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, those who are doing life and orbiting near you. That's exactly what Jesus is saying. And so we looked in the first week at love. This week we'll look at the heart and we'll look at the soul and the mind and the strength in the ensuing weeks, but let me say this. The God of the Bible is a relational God. The God of the Bible built you for a relationship. The God of the Bible wants a loving relationship with you. Not just an obedient relationship, but a loving relationship and he knows that love precedes obedience. This is why Jesus says, if you love me, you'll obey me, that the obedience is the product of the loving relationship God doesn't want just obedience. He wants obedience from the heart which is our theme today. I drove here this morning in a 2005 Jeep Wrangler. It's a manual transmission, six speed. Since we moved to Arizona, I love it 'cause I drive it and I can just thank Jesus that I get to have the top off and he can see me without any encumbrance because the top is off the Jeep all winter and so I love my jeep and I love the fact it's a manual transmission six speed and on my way here, my jeep obeyed me. Put the clutch in, disengage the transmission, shifted into gear, hit the gas, it obeyed me. But I don't have a relationship with that jeep because that jeep is not a living person. It's a thing. It's a thing, not a person. So I didn't get in the jeep today and didn't ask, "How are you doing? How's your relationship with your extended family, the Comanche, the Cherokee? How are the holidays for you? Are they complicated because your family's very dysfunctional and your uncle drinks too much gas and just makes everybody embarrassed?" We don't have this kind of relational conversation because the jeep obeys me but we don't have any sort of personal relationship. God didn't make you as a machine. God

made you as a person in his image and likeness. God made you as a love receiver and a love giver. God made you for loving relationship and out of that loving relationship can come health for you and healthy relationships with others. And that's the big idea of the series and so today what we're gonna really examine is the heart. What is God's heart, what is your heart, if you have children, what are their hearts and what does God have to say about the heart? And so I want to start in Genesis chapter six. This is in my studies, oh, actually, let me start in Proverbs 4:23, I just gave the guys in the booth a heart attack to keep with our theme of the heart. So Proverbs 4:23 is the verse in the Bible that I want to use to define and explain the heart. When it comes to the issue of the heart, depending upon your favorite English translation, the heart is mentioned roughly 1000 times. So that means it's of massive importance. If God says something 1000 times, it's because he's really trying to emphasize it and make sure we don't overlook it and when it comes to the heart, I could've picked any one of a thousand verses on the heart and something you might like to do is if you want to study more on the heart, literally just go to some website that has the Bible and plug in the word heart and just look at all the things that the Bible has to say about the heart. And see if God the Holy Spirit doesn't help inform and instruct and transform your heart. That being said, sometimes when the Bible refers to the heart it refers to the physical organ, but most of the time, it refers to the emotional center and we use it this way, we say, "Oh, they have a good heart," or "They were heartbroken," right? You have a sad heart, you have a hard heart, you have a stubborn heart. We in our culture even use this language. We'll look at the New York Yankees and Derek Jeter was the heart of the Yankees and so we'll use this language of the heart as being the center, the emotional headquarters from which data is interpreted and decisions are made and Proverbs 4:23 gives this great illustration, this analogy of the heart and I'm gonna read it to you in three different Bible translations because we're a Bible believing church, we love the Bible and sometimes when you hit something in the Bible that really speaks to you, if you look at it in a few different translations, God opens up your understanding and it becomes something that is for you not just black and white but kinda high def color and so here's how it says it in one translation, "Keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life." So think of a spring, right, here we are in the desert. If you're up hiking, let's say around Pacen or Flag or Sedona, you come across a spring, okay, here comes water, and everything flows from there and then downstream is all the life that surrounds the stream. What he's saying is that your life is the stream but your heart is the source of that stream. That you are the keeper of that stream and what oftentimes happens is behavior is downstream and the heart is upstream and we see the behavior. We have a hard time seeing the heart. God knows, searches, examines the heart, but we get frustrated with our behavior so we are into behavior modification, not heart transformation and so what truly he is telling us here is if you don't like how life is flowing, examine what your heart is feeling, that the heart is the spring and that the life is the flow. Now here's another translation. "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." All your decisions, your financial spending, your relational habits, all of your life, decision making, flows from the emotional center of your heart and I like this one. "Guard your heart above all else," almost like a military soldier on duty to guard something that is precious, "for it determines the course of your life," so when we're talking about your heart, couple of things I'll say, cause, effect, cause, effect, cause, effect, behavior is the effect. The heart is the cause. Behavior is the effect. The

heart is the cause. And in our own life we could just focus on behavior and not the cause. In parenting our children, we could just want them to obey us without addressing the heart condition behind the behavior, you understand what I'm saying? Give you an example, some years ago, I was dealing with two couples, you don't know 'em. They were outta state. Similar age. Similar life circumstances, similar story. I met with the one couple and I said, "Well, what do you want?" And they both said, "We want a divorce." I said, "Why?" They said, "We're sick of each other, we're done with each other, our hearts are hard, we just don't care." Then I met with the next couple after them. Happened to have essentially the same story. I said, "What do you want?" They said, "We want to love each other, we want to walk with God, we want to work it out, we just drive each other crazy and we need to figure out how to not drive each other crazy. We're gonna be together. We just don't want to be crazy together." Let me say this. The heart is the want to. The behavior is the how to. The want to precedes the how to. With the one couple, they don't want to have a loving relationship. It doesn't matter how many things I tell them. You could do this, you could try that, you could try this, you could try that, you could read this book, you could follow these four steps, and they would say, "I don't care." There's no love flowing from the heart. Therefore, the want to is not there and the how to will not matter, you understand what I'm talking about? The other couple? What do you want? We want to love each other. We drive each other crazy. Upstream in the heart is love. It's the want to, we want to have a healthy, loving relationship, but we've got some really bad behavior that needs to get adjusted. There is hope for that couple because the want to is there, the heart is there. Now we can work on the how to and the behavior. For the other couple, I could meet with them all day and tell them seven things or eight things or a thousand and seven or a thousand and eight things but if they don't want to, it doesn't matter because that's not what they're going to do. What they need is a heart change. Now they need to acknowledge the hardness of their own heart and they need to invite God to change their heart because the heart is not necessarily stuck in its condition. It's brought before God and God changes the condition of the heart, okay? And so all of that to say that the heart is upstream, the behavior is downstream. The heart is the want to. The behavior is the how to. And when it comes to parenting, the first question is how's your heart? How's your heart? How's your heart with God? You have a hard heart or a tender heart? You have a bitter heart or a forgiving heart? Do you have a broken heart or a healed heart? How's your heart toward God? When your heart is right toward God and it's healed by God's love, then you're able to ask yourself, how is my heart toward my child? How many of you find that your child exposes your heart like no one else? You know, you know what I'm talking about? How many of you, some of you asked recently, you're like, how do I get my kid to stop pushing my buttons? Well, as long as there's a code, they're gonna pick the lock I'm just telling you, they will just keep hitting sequence until they find it. Amy Carmichael, she was a missionary some years ago and a godly woman, she uses an analogy. What she says is, basically, what comes out of the container is whatever it contains, so what's in my bottle of water? Water, okay, so look, conflict, sorry, I just did a Gallagher and got the whole front row wet. I apologize. I'll back up, okay. Okay, so if I bump it, what comes out? Water, the conflict, the collision doesn't change the contents, it exposes them. Some of you blame other people because they bumped you, right, well I'm angry 'cause you bumped me. Nah, I'm just telling you what comes out is what's already in. I exposed your heart, our children expose our heart, amen? How many of you you've said something to

your kid and you're like, I can't believe I said that. Out of the overflow of the heart, Jesus says, the mouth speaks and sometimes the kids frustrate us. They drive us crazy. Right, we call these times being awake. When they do that, they bump us and what comes out is whatever's in so here's what I'm telling you. Some of you want your children to be totally obedient, to never offend you, never disappoint you, always obey you, you want a mechanistic machine for a child, what God is saying, if we get your heart right, then whatever they say or do, the way you respond will be healthy, could build a relationship, help them to have a better heart, so that they also would appreciate a loving relationship. That the heart ultimately comes first and that ultimately it is the parent's heart before God and then the parent's heart toward the child that is primary. Let's look at a case study on the heart. In your English Bible, the first time that the heart appears is in Genesis chapter six and Genesis is the law of beginnings, this is where things begin, this is where things start. Now what I want to do here, I want to take this as a case study, God is a father, the Bible tells us. God's heart is that of a loving father towards his children and here, the children are disobeying and God is responding. So what does a healthy, normal relationship look like when two hearts are involved, God's heart and the heart of the people? Genesis six, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that," and this is an incredibly indicting statement. "Every intention of the thought of his," what, "his heart was only evil continually." We tend to make excuses for our hearts. God examines our hearts. We look at people and we say, you don't know my heart, and God's like, actually, I do. God knows your heart better than you do because Jeremiah 17:9 says it is possible for the heart to be deceitful and wicked. That means God has to search the heart. He has to examine the heart as we excuse the heart. This is an incredible statement. God made us in his image and likeness for a loving relationship and for a healthy relationship. People have decided, I don't want a loving, healthy relationship with God. I'll live independently of God, right? So ultimately sin is where your heart drifts before your behavior manifests itself. Their hearts are far from God so now their behavior is not reflecting relationship with God. Let me say this, if you're a parent. It's gonna be important to honestly diagnose the heart condition of your child, okay? Is my kid brokenhearted? How do I heal their heart? Is my kid hard hearted? God, how do we soften their heart? God, is my child's heart foolishness, do they have a foolish heart? How do we get them wisdom? God, is my child's heart a rebellious heart? How do we give them a compliant heart? God looks at the heart of his children and says the heart of my kids is only wicked all the time. You need to be honest about the condition of your heart. You can't rightly parent until you rightly understand the heart condition of the child. How many of you have seen this? Somebody does something horrific like they murder a bunch of people and then on the news, they bring in the friends and family that are like, ah, yeah, they're a mass murderer but they have a really good heart. You're like, no, they don't, no they for sure don't, right? Because people with loving hearts that read greeting cards and wear Mr. Rogers sweaters and look forward to seeing Jesus are not out murdering people. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Out of the overflow of the heart, the life is lived and some parents, they do not deal with reality when it comes to the child's heart and it's because it scares them. If you're honest about the condition of the child's heart, you're now dealing with reality and you and God can deal with reality because the good news is God is a God who can change hearts, so just be honest about where they're at and then invite him to help change. What is God's heart? The Lord regretted that he had made

man on the earth and it grieved him to his? Heart. Not only do we need to be honest about the heart of the child, we need to be honest about our own heart. God here is as a father. These are like rebellious foolish kids. God's heart is broken. God is heartbroken. He's heartbroken. This is the right response to a rebellious heart is to be heartbroken. God at this moment, he's not violent, he's not angry, he's heartbroken. You know that your heart is in a bad place when your child's heart is in a bad place and your response is something other than heartbroken. You're angry. You've inconvenienced me! Look at all the mess you've made. Okay, that's not about them and their relationship with God, that's about you and your convenience and comfort. What are people gonna think? They're gonna see how our family is. You've ruined the family's reputation. Well, that's not a real good heart. That's a proud heart. That's a fear of man heart. Heartbroken is I love you, I want a relationship with you, I want to enjoy you, I want your life to flourish, I want your relationship with God to flourish, I want our relationship to flourish and what you are doing, it breaks God's heart and relationship with him. It breaks my heart and relationship with me. And it leads to death and I love you and I want life for you, not death for you. That's God's heart. Sin is not just the breaking of God's law. First John says that it is, but sin is first the breaking of God's heart. He wants a relationship and sin severs, it harms, it damages, it separates the relationship. How many of you are parents and you've had a rebellious, wayward or prodigal child and you know exactly what this feels like? Like, how do you feel about what your kid's doing? I'm heartbroken, I want good for them and they're choosing death over life, folly over wisdom, Satan over God, and I'm heartbroken, heartbroken. God's honest about the condition of the hearts of his children, we need to be honest about the heart condition of our children. God tells us his heart. We need to be aware of our own heart And if our heart is not right, we need to bring our hearts to our father as his sons and daughters to get our hearts right before we engage the children. How many of you have found that your child's heart is bad and your heart is bad and that collision is not good? You ever experienced that? Can we be honest, parents? You're like, they're angry so I'm angry. Now we're all angry, yay! That fixed it. They're selfish, now I'm selfish. Now we're all selfish. Yay, that fixed it, right? Their heart exposes your heart. You bring your heart to God to change your heart and then your heart is God's heart and you bring God's heart to the child's heart. What's the father's heart? But Noah, he's gonna tell a story about Noah. How many of you have heard about this guy Noah? Almost everyone always tells this story wrong. I get very frustrated by this because I'm a Bible nerd. My kids will tell you that children's Bibles, they can be amazing, but you got to read 'em carefully because sometimes they really mess up the story so I took a black sharpie when my kids were little and I went through all of their kid's Bibles and I edited the story of Noah, I did. My kids will tell you this. We've still got the edited version on the shelf because the version that they put in there is not the story that was in the Bible 'cause usually, here's how the story is told. There were good people and bad people. The bad people got to swim and the good people got a boat. Moral of the story is be good or be good at swimming. Those are your options, okay, that's the story of Noah. How many of you have heard it? That's the kid's Bible, right? Everybody was bad all the time except for Noah. Noah was blameless and godly and he walked with God and he got a boat. And then the way the story is told is God likes good people, not bad people, God saves good people, not bad people. Be a good person, God will save you. Don't be a bad person. God will drown you. And what that can lead to is these religious kids. I'm a good

kid. That's why I got Jesus. He sent me a boat 'cause I was a good person. Let's read the story, amen, okay? "But Noah found favor." This is originally written in the language of Hebrew and that word means grace, love, relationship, forgiveness, mercy, pursuit. "In the eyes of the Lord, these are the generations of Noah Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." Did he start as a good guy or a bad guy? Bad guy, everyone was only bad all the time, including a guy named Noah. God came to Noah and said, you're a bad guy but I'm gonna be good to you. This is Christianity, my friend. This is how God always works. If God only worked with the good people, he would have a lot of free time, amen? His schedule would get freed up real fast. Everybody's bad and what God does is he comes and he gives grace and love and mercy and relationship and forgiveness. God gives that relationship to Noah. That makes Noah a righteous man, blameless, and allows him to walk with God and again, this is all about relationship. God doesn't just want to forgive you. He wants to have a relationship with you where he walks with you and helps direct your life course to keep you from harm and trouble. This is like a parent with a child. Some of you believe in God, but my question would be, are you walking with God? When my kids were little, I'd hold their hand. God's a father. He wants to do that with you. When it gets a little cooler, Monday's my day off. I like to go for walks with Grace. That's one of my favorite things is to hold her hand and go for a walk, that's a relationship. Yesterday, we were at a ballgame and we were walking and my 13 year old daughter grabbed my hand. Right, my six foot sons don't do that, but my 13 year old daughter still does. They'll walk with me but it's more like. That's about as good as we're gonna get. My daughter will hold my hand. God's a father. He loves you. He wants a relationship with you. He doesn't want you just to obey. He wants that loving relationship to cause you to love him and to be more like him and to listen to him and to trust him and to obey him and he doesn't just tell you where to go, he goes with you. He walks with you as a father who loves his child. This is the relationship that God gave to Noah. Okay, next thing I would ask is was Noah really just a fantastic guy who didn't have any other problems after this, no, you just turn the page. The first thing he does after the flood comes and he lives, he plants a vineyard so that he can grow grapes so that he can make wine so that he can get drunk and so that he can pass out naked in his tent, okay? Hillbilly camping. So he's still got issues, right? So don't go home and tell your kids be like Noah. They're drunk, camping in the yard and they're like, I am, I am like Noah. He's still not a perfect man but he's righteous because God has forgiven his sin. He's blameless because God has forgiven his sin. He is receiving grace from God and he's invited into a loving relationship to walk with God. This is the story of Christianity, so here there are these pieces. The heart of the people is hard hearted. The heart of God is heartbroken. The solution is that God would pursue for loving, grace centered relationship to forgive and bless and to walk with in a parental way and let me say this, this is why we love Jesus so much. Jesus is God's broken heart. Jesus is God's broken heart. Jesus is God the son coming on behalf of God the father, seeking a relationship with people who are hard hearted and Jesus's heart is filled with nothing but love. And what we do, we see Jesus's loving heart and it exposes all of our wicked hearts and rather than repenting of our wicked heart, we think there's something wrong with his heart so we kill him. That's how hard our heart is. We crucify Jesus. The loving heart, the perfect loving heart. And what Jesus does on the cross because he is loving, he forgives us, he dies in our place for our sins to pay our debt to God. He becomes the ark that delivers us from the

consequences we deserve and the justice that God has every right to and what's amazing is Jesus dies of a broken heart. Spiritually, he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's a spiritual broken heart that his loving relationship with the father was severed as he took our place as our substitute paying the penalty for our sin. And then it says that they took a spear and they ran it underneath his ribcage and it punctured his heart sac so that water and blood flowed from his side. Jesus had a broken heart. Our heart is hard, sinful and wicked. God's heart is loving, relational and kind. Jesus comes as God's heart and he dies of a broken heart so that our relationship can be reconciled through his love, amen? So if you're here and you're not a Christian, you're like where do I start? Loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Had a guy after the last service, pray for him, he came up, he's like, I think I need God to be my father and I don't think anything in my life is gonna get straightened out apart from God's love. How do I get forgiven? What do I do next? There's an open heart. There's a tender heart. There's a teachable heart. There's a heart that God sees and there's a heart that God will honor and if you're here today, you may be moral, spiritual or religious, you may have been focused on your behavior, but how's your relationship with God? How's your heart condition toward God? Have you received his love? Do you love him back and are you walking with him as if he was your father? That's the heart of God, so what I'm saying is as well, when it comes to parenting your own children, we need to examine our own heart, bring our heart before the Lord, have the Lord forgive and heal our heart in a grace based relationship. Love him back, walk with him and then that sets the pattern and precedent for how we treat our own children. They're gonna be times you look at your kid or kids and you're gonna say, I don't like where their heart's at. God's like, I know. So you need to have a broken heart in the presence of God and then bring God's presence to deal with their heart and some of you parents have never expressed to your children the heartbreak. I'm not saying in a manipulative way but I'm saying in an honest way. I can still remember when I was a little boy. I know this will shock you. I was a little stubborn and hard to argue with as a boy. I know it surprises you, that's why I shared it because I knew you wouldn't guess that, so. Raising me was like raising a small attorney with a bad heart, that's what it was like. 'Cause I would argue with everything and drive my mom crazy. There was one day. I'll tell you this story. I wanted to play outside. My mom said you can't play outside until your room is clean. She said, "Is your room clean?" I mean, I'm a little guy. I said, "It should be." She's like okay, then you can go play, so I get on my bike and I drive away as fast as I can. I come home later that night, she's like, you didn't clean your room. I said, "I didn't say I cleaned my room. I said I should have." All right, the heart, wicked. Now that I'm a parent, I can just call it, wicked heart. What a wicked little kid on a bike. So my poor mom has to raise this, right, like if I don't meet Jesus, I will be a very good attorney for criminals, that's what I'm gonna be. Some sort of Italian family is gonna be paying my services, that's how I would've ended up and so what happens is I would say and do things that would break my mom's heart but oftentimes I wouldn't see it because my mom would go in the other room and she would break down or she would cry or she would pray. I remember one time my dad said, "Do you know what you're doing to your mom? No, go in there and see." I walk in, there's my mom, crying. I was driving her crazy. I was exhausting her. And she loved me and she loved the Lord. And knowing my mom's heart for me and how I was breaking my mom's heart, it started to break my heart. Sometimes it's okay to tell your kids, I really love you. I want good for you. But you're breaking my heart,

and they need to see it. God is a father who says you're breaking my heart and he allows us to see it and know it and he sends Jesus as his broken heart so that our heart could be healed and changed so that we could have a heartfelt relationship with him. Next slide please. Here's the good news. God changes hearts. Some of you have just decided I have a bitter heart. I will never forgive them. He can change that. I have a hard heart. It'll never be soft in that area. He can change that. I have a foolish heart. I just make bad decisions. He can change that. I have a broken heart. He can heal that, amen? He can change hearts. Ezekiel 36 26 through 28, a great segment of the Old Testament, God says, I'll give you a new heart. And if you ever watch one of those television shows where somebody gets a heart transplant, I can still remember this years ago, thinking, this is the craziest thing I've ever seen. Somebody walks in, they're like, my heart's bad, it's not pumping blood, it's dying, it can't sustain life, it's only a matter of life, and the doctor's like, that's okay, we'll cut you open, take the old heart out, put the new heart in and then send you home. This is crazy. I remember seeing this like a heart transplant is the craziest thing I've ever heard of. God does that spiritually. God looks at the spiritual heart and he says, "Boy, that's cancer, that's broken, that's clogged, that's unhealthy, the emotional life that flows from that heart, it's just pumping death and disease and destruction, not life, not love, not learning." Well, God says, "I'll take out the old heart and I'll replace it with a new heart." Here's what I need you to know. You can't have a healthy parent child relationship until number one, you have a new heart. And then you got to pray that your child would have a new heart. This is Bible reading prayer, worship, time in God's presence with God's people, saying you know what, before my child's behavior changes, ultimately, their heart needs to change. Some of you keep trying to get your old heart to live a new life or your child's old heart to live a new life and really it's the new heart that allows the new life. Here's how he says it, "I'll put a new heart and a new spirit," that's the Holy Spirit. "In you, and I'll remove the heart of stone." Imagine if right now your heart was literally stone. Could not pump blood. It's like that spiritually. "And I'll give you a heart of flesh, tender, empathetic, compassionate, teachable, moldable, functional, alive. And I'll put my spirit, the Holy Spirit in you." Here comes the love of God. Here comes the power of God. Here comes the peace of God. Here comes the life of God. Here comes the life source that empowered the life of Jesus Christ to say no to sin, to say yes to God, to forgive enemies, to love strangers, this is the power of God at work. In your new heart. "It causes you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules, you shall be my people." Relationship, "and I will be your God." A couple of things about the God who changes hearts. Number one, you and your child both need a new heart. Number two, the new heart wants a healthy relationship with God and others. That's one of the ways you know you've got a new heart. One of the ways I knew I became a Christian is I wanted to get to know God. I wanted to read the Bible. I wanted to pray. I wanted to go to church because here's the big idea. The new heart comes with new desires. Now there's a teaching called Calvinism. I won't get down this rabbit trail, but let me just point it out and the first point is total depravity, and that is that we are by nature and choice, sinners, thought, word and deed. It has infected and corrupted our total person. The Bible teaches that. But that speaks of a non Christian, not a Christian. When you become a Christian, you don't have your old heart. You have your new heart. You don't live by your old spiritually fleshly patterns. You live by the power of the Holy Spirit. And what this means is that the new heart has new desires. I'll read it to you. This is what we cover in week two, the growth track, but

Galatians five, 16 and 17. Walk by the spirit. You will not gratify the desire of the flesh for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh and these are opposed to each other. Here's the line, listen to this. To keep you from doing the things that you want to do. Here's what he's saying. You can live out of the flesh, the old heart, out of the spirit, the new heart. It's death or life, folly or wisdom, lies or truth. The demonic or the Holy Spirit, okay? And what he's saying is that what the flesh, the old pattern and precedence, wants to do is to get you to sin and what that is, it's keeping you from doing what you want to do. Here's what I want you to know. The way out of sin and temptation and your old life is to feed the deepest desires of the new nature. It is to by the power of the Holy Spirit say, "I do have a new heart. I am a new person. I have new desires. I have a new power through the Holy Spirit. I can live a new life by the grace of God. Walking with him in a loving relationship as a child does with a caring parent." Some of you have only been taught that your deepest desires are all sinful, all wicked, and you focus your whole life on what you don't get to do versus what you get to do and you don't have a real loving relationship with God because you're so worried about breaking rules that you're not building relationship. I'll be honest with you. I'm gonna tell you some stuff. I'm way off the notes now. So this is either the Holy Spirit or something I'll apologize for this week, okay, so listen, you make the decision. So I was driving in the truck with my three sons recently. I didn't intend to tell you this, but I feel like I'm supposed to. One of my sons is driving. I'm in the passenger seat. The other boys are in the back, and we're just visiting. I say, "Hey, boys, you guys got any questions for Dad, anything you want to know?" And out of the back one of my sons asks, he says this, "Have you been faithful to Mom?" Why? That's an interesting first question. I said, "Your mom and I are coming up on 25 years of marriage and I'm glad to report I have been faithful to your mom and your mom has been faithful to me." "Why?" I said, "Cause I want to be, I want to be." See, the new heart has new desires. The old heart has old desires. The way to conquer the old desires of the old heart is to nurture the new desires of the new heart. But my goal is not just to avoid adultery. It's to have a loving relationship. And if we have a loving relationship, I'll avoid some other things. It is possible to avoid those other things and still not have the loving relationship, amen? I know people that are faithful to each other and they hate each other. Which isn't really the end zone God was hoping for. That's what happens when you focus on the behavior, not the relationship. The relationship will pull you out of bad behavior because we will do more for love than we would for fear. And some of you, your religious relationship with God is just solely based on punishment and fear. God wants it to be built on love and health and joy and peace and the Holy Spirit. And if you're passionately pursuing the deepest desires of the new heart, the Holy Spirit just puts rocket fuel on those desires, momentum continues. And you get to live a new life. It doesn't mean you don't struggle. It doesn't mean you don't take steps back in your walk with God. It doesn't mean that you don't make mistakes that you regret but when you do, your heart is like God's heart. You're heartbroken. God, why did I do this? That was just wrong. I feel horrible about this. Lord, pull me forward. I want to be with you. I want to be like you. I want to be for you. That's the deepest desires of the new heart, you get this? See, God wants your heart. He knows if he can get your heart, he can work on the rest. He wants you to have your child's heart, knowing if you can get their heart, you can work on the rest, amen? How many of you have seen this with your kids? They don't have a heart for God, they don't have a heart for you, and there's nothing you can do

to tell them to be obedient that's gonna change their behavior or fix anything until the heart is right. How's your heart? How's their heart? Is it the same as God's heart? Let me do this, then. Let me say one other story here. I don't want to leave you hopeless. God can change hearts, amen? How many of you, if God's changed your heart, they're like I look in the mirror, that's me but that's not me, like my heart's different. My desires are different, I'm a different person. God changed my heart. You need to know that God can also change your parent's heart. Okay, I'll tell you a story of one of our kids when they were little, we got five kids so some of you have got compliant kids, some of you have got strong willed children, if you get five, you kind of get a little variety pack. You get everything, okay, so we got five kids. One of our kids, not super compliant, I'll just say that when they were little, they were more stubborn. Stubbornness, a good thing or a bad thing? Depends on what you're stubborn about, right? You're like, I'm gonna read my Bible every day, yay. I'm gonna defy Mom for breakfast every day, well, not so good, okay, I told my kid this, I said, "You're very stubborn," I said, "That could be a good thing or a bad thing. It depends on what you're stubborn about." Oftentimes, our sin and our kid's sin is a strength that is misdirected and needs to be redirected, okay? So this kid was little and they were acting up. They were very little. They were getting very emotional. Very angry, escalating, freaking out and it just keeps getting worse, right? Like the terror alert goes to orange and now we're at red and then the siren's going off in the house, right, and the more I discipline this child, the worse it got. There are times when the kid's heart is burning and you put some water on it and it puts the fire out. There are other times you realize you're dealing with a grease fire, amen? You know what happens when you got a grease fire and you throw water on it? It explodes, you're like I used to do this and it worked, now I'm on fire too, like it all explodes. So I realize with this kid, I got a grease fire. I'm trying to love 'em, correct 'em, talk to 'em, pray for 'em and it's just getting worse. So I'm like, okay, this kid's heart is the problem, not just the behavior, so I pick up the child, lovingly, not angry, I literally stopped and I'm like, God, we need to get my heart right. 'Cause my heart right now is like I'm not getting taken down by a 37 pound man. I'm not gonna lose this war. My heart in that moment, I'll be honest with you. My first inclination is not love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, self control. Above such things, there is no rules or laws. Do not let your heart be troubled. And I'm quoting any of those. I'm thinking Old Testament, we're gonna take down the Canaanites is what I'm thinking, so. I'm like, okay, Lord, God, deal with my heart here. I literally had to stop, like, okay, Lord, you gotta deal with my heart, okay, I think my heart's good, Lord, I love the kid. I pick him up, this kid starts to assault me. Okay, I always say this. The difference between a drunk violent pirate and a child without a nap is basically indistinguishable, okay? This kid is gonna kill me. The difference between a terrorist and a child is size. That's it, not intent or motive of the heart. Just size, they can't do all that they intend. So I pick this kid up. This kid is beating on me. Hammering me. I feel like a pinata on Cinco de Mayo. I'm just taking it, right? And I love you, and they're like, I don't care. Okay, okay, we're good, all right, yeah. So I thought of Job chapter one, and in Job chapter one, it says that Job was worried that his kids may have sinned against God in their heart and so as the head of household, he took responsibility, I'm paraphrasing, and he would come before the Lord and he would confess to their sins and pray for them. So I was like, okay, I believe the Holy Spirit brought that scripture to mind at that moment. Okay, Lord, I need to do like Job. This kid's not gonna confess his sins right now. So I will do it for him as his father, little kid. So Lord, this is

my kid, I love them, I care for them, and this kid is pulverizing me, I feel like I'm in an MMA fight up against the cage and experiencing ground and pound. And they are angry and I said, "God, my heart for this child is love, I care for them, I want good for them." And this is how I remember it. God, their heart is really angry and I don't understand why and God, their heart is not tender toward you. It's not tender toward me. So God, you're a father, you're our father, both of us. Holy Spirit, please come right now and change my child's heart. I'm very emotional. I'm crying. I'm kissing my kid on the head and rubbing their back and praying for 'em. God, you can change a heart. Holy Spirit, you can change a heart. I don't have access to this child's heart right now. They're hard hearted. Please change their heart. I confess their sin, I confess their heart, I bring 'em into the presence of God. My kid stopped thrashing, looked me right in the eye, I'll never forget that moment, looked me right in the eye and just said, "Daddy, I'm sorry, please forgive me." And they started crying. The next, I don't know how long it was, 10 or 15 minutes, I'm leaning back holding this child and they are literally covering my whole shirt in tears. God changed their heart. God changed their heart. And once God changed their heart, that started to change their behavior. And ever since that moment by God's grace, I believe I have had that child's heart. I've had that child's heart and that gives me hope for our future together because I want to always have their heart. Don't prophesy doom over your children. I remember when our kids were hitting the teen years, oh, wait til you have teenagers, they're awful. They're terrible. They're demon possessed until they hit 21 That's just a bad run. No, I don't believe that. I'm not gonna prophesy death over my own children. I'm gonna prophesy life. I'm gonna tell them that God has a heart for them and I have a heart for them and I want them to have a heart for God and that God could change their heart and God could guard their heart and yes, certain life seasons and stages are difficult and painful. But this doesn't have a footnote that says, the terrible twos and the teen years are omitted. It doesn't. That you can be a two or a teen or a tween and get a new heart with a new spirit, a heart of flesh, the Holy Spirit and walk with God, obeying him among his people. We need to think Biblically, not culturally. We need to prophesy life, not death over our children and families. And we can't just chase the trends that are secular in parenting. We have to think Biblical because God is God who made us. God is the God who made us for relationship. God is the only one who can really at the heart level change and transform us, and if there's any hope for good parents and godly children, it comes with a new heart, amen? Okay, let me hit a few things quickly. God searches the heart. So as a parent, we got to ask this all the time, this is a great prayer, Psalm 129, 23 and 24. Search me, oh God, and know my heart. God, am I hard hearted toward you? Am I angry that I even have this kid, right? God, how is my heart toward this kid? Am I just literally counting the days til they're 18 and I can just move the problem off the payroll into another address? God, what's my heart toward the child? Try me, know my thoughts, see if there be any grievous weight in me and lead me in the way everlasting Your heart, is it hard or soft, angry or joyful, broken or healed, weary or refreshed, anxious or peaceful, bitter or forgiving, if you had to pick one word right now to describe your heart, what would it be? I asked my kids that this week and my wife. One word to describe your heart right now. I said that mine was grateful. I've seen God provide in the last year in large part through my family and our church family in a way that I've never seen in my whole life. I'm very, very, very grateful, I'm grateful for you and grateful for my family. Some of the kids said their heart was settled. That's good to hear. One of the kids said their heart was

motivated. What's your heart? What's the condition of the members of your family's hearts? Search my heart, oh God, reveal it to me, what is my heart condition? And then helping others draw out the condition of their heart. I'll close with this, Proverbs chapter 20 verse five, the purpose in a man's heart is like a deep water but a man of understanding will draw it out. He's giving this analogy, any of you have been at the top of a well? You look down the well, true or false, you can't see what's at the bottom of the well. You can't see. I don't know what's down there. So what do you do? You drop a bucket and then you pull up whatever's at the bottom of the well. What he's saying is that our heart is like a deep well. We don't know exactly what's at the bottom of it. God's got to help us sort of get a bucket to the bottom and pull it up. One of the most important things you can do as well with your child is to help them examine what's in their own heart? Be very careful with this. Sometimes parents see behavior. They rush in and judge the heart and they get it wrong and they crush the child's heart. How many of you have had that happen to you? Somebody walks up like, you did this and I know why and this is what you were thinking and this is what was in your heart and I can't believe, you're like, whoa, wait a minute. You didn't ask any questions and you don't know. And actually you came to a wrong conclusion and that's very discouraging. Children feel like that all the time. Draw out the heart. This is the asking of questions and the listening. And what we tend to think of, particularly when it comes to our relationship with God as his kids or our kid's relationship with us as their parent is that there's two kinds of kids, there's good kids with good behavior, bad kids with bad behavior, right? Hey, don't be bad, be good. Well, there's four kinds of kids and there's four kinds of parents. Number one, bad heart, bad behavior. This is pretty easy to see, okay? Tell you a story about Tommy, I don't think that's his real name, but we had a bunch of people over to the house and their kids were playing in the playroom, we're in the living room and this little kid, I think it was a little girl, walks in, she's sad, she's like. Her mom's like, what's wrong? Tommy has my toy. Mom asked the question, who had it? Her, see, you didn't say it 'cause you know it's wrong 'cause I asked, so okay, but we do that as parents, right, we're like who had it first, and the point is, that actually doesn't matter. You can't find a thou had it first verse, it's just not in there, right, like it doesn't matter. 'Cause that's not a heart question. Who had it first? Tommy had it. Well, then just weep bitterly, go sit in the playroom by yourself with nothing to play with. But the parent looks at the child and says, who had it first, and the little girl said, well, Tommy had it first, well, Tommy had it first, you lose, Sally, back to the playroom, so she goes back all dejected. Not too long, another kid comes out. Tommy's got my toy. Mom asks the same question, who had it first? Tommy did, pretty soon it's a parade. All the kids are coming in, they're all crying to their parents, finally I'm like let's go investigate. Go in there, so Tommy got there first, okay? So Tommy got there first, this parent showed up before the other kids, he took all the toys and pushed 'em into the corner and he stood guard in front. Tommy's a thick kid, low center of gravity, gonna be hard to get to these toys. All the other kids come in, they're like, can I have a toy, Tommy's like, no, these are my toys. I got 'em first, won't let any kid have any toy. Tommy's a hoarder, okay? Tommy's a small hoarder. Tommy has a bad heart. I'm not gonna share anything. And nobody's having any fun. Tommy wasn't even playing with the toys, right? And bad behavior, Tommy, those aren't your toys. Don't you want to see the other kids have fun? Don't you want to share? No. All right, Tommy, we got to do Ezekiel on you, brother, you need a heart transplant. How 'bout this one, bad heart, good behavior? This one's sneaky, amen? I'm

gonna get all you religious folks in one fell swoop, okay? These are the people who behave well when others are looking. How many of you were the sneaky kid? See, you won't raise your hand 'cause you're sneaky, but nonetheless. When people were looking, you were really good. When they weren't looking, you were really bad. You were the sneaky kid. Or you learned that if you were good, you could manipulate authority, parental authority. So you were the one, like you were the good kid and then your sibling was the bad kid and you loved having a bad kid as a sibling 'cause that was a huge advantage for you. Hey, how did Johnny do in school, Mom? Oh, he got all D's, yeah, it's 'cause he smokes pot and plays video games and he's an idiot. And I was reading in my Bible today, and you're like, oh, okay. Okay, I see how this works, yeah. And as I was praying for Johnny, I felt like the Lord said buy me a new car 'cause I've earned it. I'm your good child. I'll be your inheritance. So you learned to manipulate, right? The heart is not good but the behavior is good. Here's how Jesus says it. These people honor me with their lips. Is that good behavior? That's good behavior. We're gonna sing in a moment. I want you to honor God with your lips. He says, these people honor with their lips but their hearts are? Far from me. These are people who don't really want a loving relationship. They just want to be rewarded for good behavior. You can raise a moral child who goes to hell. You can raise a child that never smokes, drinks, cusses, chews, date girls that do, you know, break the speed limit and does everything right and goes to hell because they don't have a heart of loving relationship with God. How 'bout this one? Good heart, bad behavior. This one's a little bit more complicated. The kid has a good heart and they got it wrong. Some years ago, I was talking to a single mom. She had a hard job. She came home. She's got a little girl. She's exhausted. Phone rings, emergency crisis at business, oh. I'm sorry, honey, Mommy can't make dinner. I gotta go into the office. I gotta shut the door. Something's exploded at work. I gotta deal with it. It's gonna be a long time. I'm very sorry. We'll have to have dinner late. I'm sorry. Goes in, has this long call, does this stuff, comes out, the kitchen is destroyed. Like everything's out of the cupboards, everything's out of the fridge, it's unbelievable. And there's the little girl in the middle of the kitchen. The woman reported her first instinct was what are you doing, this is hours of work, you've ruined my whole life, do you not have any compassion, I mean, how many of you as a parent in a moment of exhaustion, you're like, that's it. That's it. Instead, she gathered herself, she got her heart right. And she knew the what. The kitchen is destroyed. She asked the why 'cause the why is the heart question. Honey, why did you do this? What are you doing? Little girl smiled. Mommy, I'm so sorry you had a hard day so I'm making dinner for us. Okay, good heart, bad behavior. Thank you, honey, for loving me. Thank you for wanting to make dinner. Okay, next time, ask Mommy and how 'bout I teach you how to cook so that when you want to love Mommy, it doesn't look like this, okay? Amen? But in that moment, you could just go right to the behavior and the child is like, every time I try to help, you just yell at me and get mad. You crushed the heart. Okay, I'll give you another example from one of my kids, one of my sons, I'll use Tommy again. I don't know, poor kid, but. I don't remember this kid's name and if your name's Tommy, I'll lay hands in prayer. You'll be healed afterward. This is all very damaging for you. So we were, you know, conversing in the living room and the kids were playing in the other room and this bigger kid, really big for his age, comes in and he's kinda crying. That's a strategic move by a child. What that means is I want to win, okay, and here's what Proverbs says. Everyone seems right til the other side is heard, so usually the kid who walks in and screams

and says the first thing isn't the most accurate news reporter to the facts, okay, right. So all of a sudden he's got everybody's attention because he's sending off the nuclear siren, you know, and his mom looks, what happened, what happened, Tommy? Named one of my sons, hit me, he hit me. She's like . And she said, "What are you gonna do?" And I said, "Investigate, I mean, maybe he did, you know, I literally come from a direct line of pirates. This is possible." I literally do. So I mean, we have hit people, like this could've happened. This isn't like a unicorn or an honest politician, like this is a possibility, like this could've happened. I'm gonna investigate, so I go in there, and I look at my son, I was like, Tommy said you hit him, what happened, he's like, I hit him. Okay, that's the what, why? There's the heart. He said, he said, "He kept hitting my little sister and he's a lot bigger than her and he was hurting her, and I got frustrated and I told him if he didn't stop, I was gonna make him stop." I look at his little sister, I said, "Is that what happened?" She said, "Yeah, he was beating on me." The mother is there, Tommy's mom, she says, "What are you gonna do?" I said, "I'm gonna buy him ice cream." Right? I mean, like, because I think it's a good thing if a man is beating a woman that another man gets in the middle, I'll just throw it out there. I'll just say that, and if you're seeing your little sister get beat on, you need to get in the middle so what I did tell my son, good heart, maybe not the best behavior to punch the kid. I'll just throw that out as a possibility. I'm not advocating child on child violence. How 'bout next time you come and get Dad, okay? Let's change the behavior, change the behavior. But the heart, you were trying to protect your little sister from actually bodily harm. Good heart, good behavior, these are the times that we live for, these are the places we build momentum. This is where we encourage the child. I'll close with one story. Some of our kids have had night terrors, bad dreams and I don't know if your kids have ever struggled with that. They wake up in the middle of the night screaming. You're not sure if it's just mental or if it's spiritual or what's going on, so we'd run in there, pray for them, lay hands over for 'em, you know, encourage 'em, there was one night I heard one of the boys crying, screaming, yelling, at least, I thought, and then you wake up, you're not sure, you're kind of in that phase. And then it died down and I thought, oh good, I'll go back to sleep and then I thought, you know, I don't know, I should go check, so I get up. And I go down there, and the little boy's laying in bed and his sister is sitting next to him on the bed and she's rubbing his head and his back and she's praying over him, Lord Jesus, I'm sorry that Pucca's scared, I'm sorry that Pucca had bad dreams. I'm sorry that Pucca is frightened. Lord, please help Pucca to have good dreams. Please help him to be calm, she calls him Pucca. I'm in the doorway just watching all of this. Watching a little girl get out of bed, go into her brother's room, lay hands over him and pray over him and comfort him in his moment of distress. Good heart, good behavior. Encourage those times, you remember those times, you nurture those times and those become momentum building occasions. I'm way off notes and I went too long. Here at the Trey Church, we call that Sunday, so. So thank you for letting me teach God's word. God loves you. God wants to have a loving relationship with you. God's heart is open toward you. It's not closed. God starts with grace and forgiveness and mercy and Jesus is God's heart for you. And we're gonna respond now, we're gonna sing which is how we open our hearts. We're gonna worship. We're gonna remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, how God has opened up this possibility of this loving relationship. But I just want to tell you too, I really love you. I really do, and it's an honor to be your Pastor. It's an honor to open God's word. I believe that we have good hearted

people at this church who want to do the right thing, who want to learn God's word, who want to grow in grace and it makes my job very easy so from my heart, thank you for your heart. Father God, as we transition now to sing and to partake of communion and to worship together, pray for our hearts, Lord, please send the Holy Spirit to heal the brokenhearted, to encourage the discouraged hearted, to give faith to the worried heart, to give forgiveness to the rebellious heart, to give tenderness to the hard heart. For those who don't know you, Holy Spirit, we ask right now, in the strong name of Jesus that you would take out the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh and Lord, for our nearest neighbor, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, spouses and kids, may we, Lord God, first examine our heart in relationship to you. May we become healthy people ready for a healthy relationship with others as a result of a healthy relationship with you and Lord God, pray for all of my friends as we search our own hearts but God, it's so good to hear of your heart, your loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate, truthful, just, holy heart and God, we come now to open our hearts knowing that your heart and your love will transform our hearts to be more like Jesus's heart in whose name we pray, amen.