

New York Times Bestselling Author

MAX LUCADO

JUST LIKE JESUS

A Heart Like His



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK



STUDY GUIDE

O N E



A HEART LIKE HIS

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. What would change in your life if Jesus really did become you?
 - A. Who would be surprised at the “new you”? Why?
 - B. Would you have “fences to mend”? If so, to whom do they belong?
2. Since God wants you to have a heart like his (“a new person, made to be like God,” says Ephesians 4:23–24), give yourself a checkup:
 - A. What’s your heart condition today?
 - B. What would happen during a spiritual “stress test”? Would the results differ, depending on what was happening in your life from day to day? Explain.
 - C. What specific actions would you have to take to develop a heart like Jesus’?

3. God wants you to be like him, but he does love you just the way you are. Describe the “you” that God loves.
 - A. What are your gifts, talents, abilities, concerns, cares, quirks, faults, needs, desires?
 - B. How would any of those be different if you had “a heart like his”? Which parts of you would be “tweaked”?
4. Jesus’ thoughts, actions, and entire self reflected his intimate relationship with his father. As a result, his heart was supremely spiritual.
 - A. Describe a “spiritual heart.”
 - B. Describe any differences between your heart and that of Christ.
5. As Max points out, we’ve “tapped into” God’s power, but not enough of us use it to its full extent.
 - A. Describe your “power usage.” How much of his light do you use at work? At home? In your community?
 - B. What can you learn from reflecting on the heart of Christ?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read Philippians 2:5–13.
 - A. We are to have the same attitude as Christ, to “think and act like Christ Jesus.” How difficult is this for you? What is difficult about it? Explain.
 - B. How much effort are you willing to expend to comply with the directive of this passage? What kind of effort?

- C. What about your heart needs the most attention?
- 2. Ephesians 4:20–32 deals with some specific no-no’s for those Christians who want to live as “children of light.”
 - A. Which part of your “old self” gives you the most trouble?
 - B. What can you determine today to do about this?
- 3. Jesus was sinless—his words and actions were always pure. Read 1 John 3:1–10.
 - A. How does it make you feel to know you have an example like this? Is it intimidating or comforting to you? Explain.
 - B. Jesus has given his sinless self to you and is waiting to remake you into someone just like himself. How can you use this thought to motivate you to become like him? Does it? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

- 1. Write down Colossians 3:10 on a card and post it where you will see it every day. Memorize it and thank God for loving you enough to change you into someone like him!
- 2. Spend a few minutes imagining yourself handling a particular prickly situation, one that you usually struggle with. Now imagine how you could handle it with “a heart like his.” Then pray that God will enable you to handle an actual situation just as you did in your imagination. The next time it occurs, write in a journal what happened, and see how God will answer your honest prayers!

T W O



LOVING THE PEOPLE YOU ARE STUCK WITH

A Forgiving Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Consider “the claustrophobia that comes with commitment.”
 - A. Have you experienced commitment claustrophobia?
 - B. Where do you encounter this—with a spouse, child, employee, or someone else? Explain.
 - C. Have you ever felt fearful or frustrated because of the permanence involved in commitment? If so, describe your reaction.
 - D. If you feel “stuck” with someone right now (with a major case of stuckitis), do you feel most like fleeing, fighting, or forgiving? Explain.
 - E. How would you feel if you knew that person felt the same way about you? Do you think anyone does? If so, explain.

2. Jesus was able to love people who were even hard to like.
 - A. Name some folks you find hard to like. Why is this?
 - B. Name some folks who may find you hard to like. Why is this?
3. Jesus knew no one “expected” him to do the work of the lowliest servant when he washed the feet of the disciples as described in John 13. Remember he was fully aware that they would desert him in his greatest hour of need—yet he served them with a heart bursting with love.
 - A. If footwashing were still a custom today, would you be willing to serve one of the people you named in study question 1 or 2 above in such a way? Explain.
 - B. Think of someone who “washed your feet” when you didn’t deserve it. What were the circumstances?
4. As you shift your gaze away from your “problem person” and onto Jesus, what happens to your ability to forgive that person?
 - A. Name the sins for which Christ has had to forgive you this day alone. Are any of them “repeats”? Explain.
 - B. Realizing all the clean-up duty Jesus has had to perform on you, how willing are you to do the same for others? How do you respond to those who continually, repeatedly, cause you the same problems?
5. Max reminds us there was only one man in that Passover Supper room worthy of having his feet washed, and that was the

footwasher himself. The one who should have been served chose to become the servant.

- A. Name several relationships you could improve by doing some unexpected footwashing.
- B. How could you “wash” someone’s “feet”? How do you think it would be received? Explain.
- C. Do any of the people involved sit at your supper table? If so, is this kind of footwashing easier or harder? Why?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

- 1. Meditate on Colossians 3:12–17.
 - A. Insert people’s names where appropriate in this passage (“Bear with _____, and forgive whatever grievances you may have against _____.”)
 - B. Now repeat this exercise, asking God to help someone bear with you.
- 2. Put yourself into the scene described in John 13:1–17.
 - A. You’re sitting there, waiting. And waiting. Just where is that wretched servant anyway? Then your Master, of all people, gets up to do the work. How do you feel, watching while he is working? What are you thinking?
 - B. If you were at this scene and knew what Judas was about to do, would you have washed his feet as Jesus did? Explain.
- 3. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and loving [or compassionate] to

each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ.” Read the next verse (Eph. 5:1).

- A. How grimy did God get when he reached down to clean you up? How grimy are you willing to get in order to be an “imitator of God”?
- B. Ephesians 5:2 continues, “And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” With God’s help, what kind of changes do you need to make in order to make your life a sweet-smelling sacrifice? Explain.
- C. Is there a Judas in your life? Can you do for him what Jesus did for his Judas?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Thank God for his daily mercy and forgiveness. Express your gratitude for his limitless grace. Meditate on the biblical truth that he remembers your sins no more, but they are as far from him as “the east is from the west”!
2. The wronged wife in the story at the end of this chapter was merciful to her husband. She forgave and was willing to let go of her hurt. She said, “Let’s move on.” Think of a person who has wounded you. Determine today that you will start this same process. Ask God to help you bathe his/her feet in his love, and deliberately forget the hurt. Spend time in prayer about this person and the situation. Ask God to help you know how to forgive the hurt and love the person just as Jesus does.

T H R E E



THE TOUCH OF GOD

A Compassionate Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Remember some instances when “God’s very hands” ministered to you. How did this make you feel?
2. Do you think you have the “hands of heaven”? Explain. Do you make it a practice to seek out opportunities to care for others with those hands?
3. Have you ever “quarantined” someone from your life?
 - A. If so, what was/is the situation? Why did you make the exclusion?
 - B. What would cause you to include him/her once again?
4. Though Jesus’ words cured the leper’s disease, Max points out that only Christ’s loving touch banished the man’s loneliness.

- A. Describe some periods in your life when no words came, but a touch said it all.
 - B. Is talking about “godly touching” easier than actually doing it? Explain.
 - C. Do you find it easy or difficult to receive such a touch? Why?
5. Make a list of ways to “touch” someone emotionally without physically touching him or her. (Here’s a start: cards, visits, etc.)

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read again the story of the cleansed leper from Matthew 8:1–4. Read also Mark 1:40–45 and Luke 5:12–16. All three writers mention the touch of Jesus, as well as his healing words.
 - A. Why do you think Jesus thought it was important to physically touch the man?
 - B. Would the story have been diminished without the touch? Explain.
2. The Mark account states that the cleansed leper, though having been warned not to tell the story to anyone, instead went out and began to talk freely.
 - A. Why did Jesus command the man to be silent?
 - B. What happened when the man spoke out?
 - C. Would you have been able to keep quiet if such a marvelous thing had happened to you? Explain.

3. The NIV rendering of Colossians 3:12 states that we are to “clothe [ourselves] with compassion and kindness.” Dressing is a deliberate act; we intentionally do it and it never “just happens.” But as we do it every day, it becomes a natural act.
 - A. Think of someone who has a compassionate spirit? How is this spirit expressed through his/her actions, speech, demeanor?
 - B. With the Lord’s help, how can you work at better showing compassion?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Spend a few minutes thanking the Lord for those who have taken the time to show you compassion or kindness when you needed it most. Bring them by name before the Lord. Then tell them personally, through a note or phone call, what their ministry to you has meant.
2. Ask God to show you someone who needs that special “godly touch.” Chances are you already know who it is. If you sense some resistance on your part (“Not him/her! Not me—I can’t!”), ask the Lord to make your hands into his and surrender them to him. Then follow as he leads you.

F O U R



HEARING GOD'S MUSIC

A Listening Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Scripture often reminds us that it's not enough to have ears—we must use them. The problem is, we often don't.
 - A. We are to “listen like sheep” who follow their master's well-known voice. How do you try to hear God's voice on a regular basis?
 - B. How can you become so familiar with the Master that you'd know “a stranger's voice” immediately? How can you recognize false teaching when you hear it?
2. Jesus made it a habit to pray. Max says Christ “cleared his calendar” in order to speak with his father.
 - A. Describe your own prayer life. Do days ever go by when

you realize you've totally neglected this privilege? How did those days go for you?

- B. What would happen to your marriage/family/friendship/work relationships if your communication with the people in them was the same as that between you and your Savior?
3. Jesus was intimately familiar with Scripture.
- A. Christ knew the Bible and how to use it. How's your scripture memory?
 - B. How easy is it for you to locate a specific verse?
 - C. Do you understand most Scripture well enough to apply it effectively? Explain.
 - D. How are you at explaining Scripture to others, especially those who don't yet know Christ?
4. If we want to be like Jesus, we need to let God have us.
- A. Do you really want to be "had"? Explain.
 - B. How can you surrender your entire life, your whole being, to him? Be specific.
 - C. When is the best time for you to spend the necessary time listening for him in Bible study and prayer, until you have received your lesson for each day? Do you take advantage of this time?
5. The Bible says we are worthy because of what Christ did for us; we did nothing to deserve such a lofty status. Because of this,

he wants us to open our hearts completely to him.

- A. How do you react to such undeserved affection? Why?
- B. What happens between you and God when you open your heart to him?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read the parable of the sower in Mark 4:1–20.
 - A. Give yourself a checkup: Which seed describes you best? Why?
 - B. What kind of changes might be needed to make you into seed sown on good soil, producing a crop a hundred times over?
2. John 10:1–18 describes the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep, as well as that between the Lord and his people. The passage says sheep will “run away” from strangers because they do not recognize them. They are so attuned to their master that they want no other, and the master is so in love with his sheep he will die for them.
 - A. What benefits do sheep receive by sticking close to their master?
 - B. What dangers lurk if they choose to wander away?
 - C. Do you think sheep fret over their “worthiness”? Explain.
 - D. What parallels can you draw between sheep and people?

3. If we want to be like Jesus, we must have a regular time of talking to God and listening to his Word.
 - A. Romans 12 contains a list of “do’s” for those who wish to live in harmony with the Lord and with others. Why are we to do these things? How are we to do them?
 - B. How can you make your prayer times worshipful?
 - C. Define “being faithful in prayer.”
 - D. Is it possible to be faithful in prayer without spending time in the Word? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Living in the communications age, we are inundated with so much information that we can become overloaded. Newspapers, magazines, television, and the Internet all scream for our attention. Challenge yourself this week to spend as many or more hours reading the Bible as you do with your paper or TV. Then record the difference it makes in your life.
2. If you don’t already do so, keep a journal of your journey with the Lord. For one month, record the passages you study and the amount of time you spend with him in prayer as a result. Track the positive changes you find in your relationship with the Lord as well as with others.



BEING LED BY AN UNSEEN HAND

A God-Intoxicated Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. We are always in the presence of God.
 - A. Does the statement above comfort you or tire you? Why?
 - B. What does the reality of God's continuous presence mean to you as you go about your everyday activities?
2. God wants us to enjoy the same intimacy with him that he has with his Son.
 - A. Do you like intimacy or do you prefer standing a bit apart, keeping your "space"? Explain.
 - B. How do you try to keep parts of yourself hidden from others? What would you like to keep hidden from God?
3. God is never away from us.

- A. Have you ever found yourself feeling especially close to God on Sunday morning but miles away by Tuesday afternoon? If so, describe this experience. Why do you think this happens?
 - B. God is absolutely committed to us and provides a model for us. What is your level of commitment—to your spouse, your children, your church, etc.? Are they secure in the knowledge you'll never leave and you'll always be there for them? How have you conveyed to them your commitment?
4. In the Christian's "marriage to Jesus," the communication never stops.
- A. When you talk to God, what do you mention first? Does the giving of praise and honor regularly come before the litany of requests? If not, why not?
 - B. How long would a friendship last if the only communication between two people was the asking of favors? Would you long for something else, for something deeper? Explain.
 - C. Is God the first person to whom you talk when something great happens to you? Is he the last when you have a problem? Explain.
5. Consider every moment in your life a potential time of communion with God.
- A. Do you know anyone else besides God who would really want to hear from you all the time?

- B. How is your sense of worth affected by knowing God will never leave you? Does this change your worship of him?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. First Corinthians 6:1 names believers as God's "fellow workers," or to put it more commonly, God's "coworkers."
 - A. What would happen to your everyday work ethic if you truly believed yourself to be working right alongside the one true God? Would you work harder? Would you do your best at everything with God at the next work station? Explain.
 - B. Should life itself be easier to handle, knowing the Almighty is going through it right along with you? If so, how?
2. Read John 5:16–30.
 - A. Jesus said the Son did "nothing by himself"; what the Father did, the Son did. Can the same be said of you? Why? What causes you to run ahead of God? What areas of your life do you try to handle without God's help?
 - B. Jesus also didn't attempt to please himself but his father (v. 30). Who are you most trying to please? Your spouse? Your parents? The neighbors?
3. God's word picture of a vine and its branches in John 15:1–8 describes the relationship he desires with his people. He wants to be completely connected to us.
 - A. How does your desire for intimacy with God compare to

that of Frank Laubach, who felt lost after just a half-hour without thinking of him?

- B. List some practical ways your life would change if you were this connected.
- C. Jesus talks of pruning the branches that bear fruit so they will become even more fruitful. Describe a time you felt the effects of his pruning knife. What kind of fruit was borne afterward? Do you desire even bigger, better fruit, even if you must be pruned again and again? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Ask the Lord for two special verses: one to meditate on when you awake and one for the evening as you retire. Do it faithfully for at least a solid week. Use those bookends to begin directing your whole day toward a totally God-centered life.
2. God already knows what you're thinking, wanting, and doing. Realize that he wants to hear from you, so begin talking to him as if he were on the car seat beside you in the morning, standing in the line at the bank, or sitting at the next desk. He's not interested in flowery phrases or pious sounding words—he just wants you.



A CHANGED FACE AND A SET OF WINGS

A Worship-Hungry Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Describe a time you met a famous person or attended a very important event. Did you buy a new dress or suit? Were you thinking about it for days beforehand? How important was the famous person or the event compared to a meeting with Jesus?
2. How do you define worship? What is involved?
 - A. Why do you worship?
 - B. Is worship more or less important to you today than when you first came to know the Lord?
3. Jesus prepared himself for worship, yet we're often casual when it comes to meeting God.
 - A. Think about a typical Sunday morning before you leave for

church. Be honest with yourself. Do tempers flare? Are you rushing around? Describe the day.

- B. What could you do to improve the situation, even beginning the night before? What keeps you from implementing these changes?
4. God changes our faces through worship.
- A. How can you give more conscious thought to the words you're singing, praying, or hearing?
 - B. What happens to your face as you leave the service and head to your work week?
 - C. Would anyone know by looking at you on Tuesday that you'd been with the Master on Sunday? How?
5. God changes those who watch us worship.
- A. What aspects of your worship are designed to attract people who don't know Christ?
 - B. How often during the service do you take time to pray for any unsaved people who might be sitting alongside you?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read Matthew 17:1–9.
 - A. Do you think the disciples understood the purpose of their worship trip to the mountain?

- B. How do you think they were affected by their experience?
(Read 1 Peter 1:16–18.)
 - C. Why do you suppose Christ told them to tell no one about it?
2. Second Corinthians 3:12–18 contrasts Moses' wearing a veil to mask God's glory with the believer's privilege of an unveiled face.
- A. How do we sometimes present "veiled faces" or hearts as we worship? Why do we do this?
 - B. How can you best "reflect God's glory" this week? At home? At work? With friends?
3. Read Psalm 34 silently to yourself, then read it aloud.
- A. How "big" does God seem to you in this passage? What words would you use to describe God and his glory?
 - B. Read through the passage again and count the number of reasons there are to praise God.
 - C. Now look at your face in a mirror. Do you see God's reflection? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. If Sunday mornings before church are a problem at your house, sit down with your family and talk it through. See if anyone else has been concerned. Determine to make physical, practical preparations the night before (find that lost shoe, make clothing decisions, etc.). Take time for a meeting with the Lord at

home before you meet him at church. And remember: he is reachable in the car on the way, too!

2. Whether you're the "official greeter" at your church or not, consider making this your mission opportunity next Sunday. Instead of waiting for visitors to make themselves known, put God's smile on your face, and purposefully seek them out.

S E V E N



GOLF GAMES AND CELERY STICKS

A Focused Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. One of the incredible traits of Jesus was his ability to stay on target.
 - A. How on track is your life? Explain.
 - B. Where do you want to go in your life? Name some specific goals you have.
2. Our lives tend to be scattered.
 - A. In what way(s) does this statement reflect your life?
 - B. What are your priorities?
 - C. Are you easily distracted by the small things and forgetful about the big things? Explain.
3. God wants us to have focused hearts, to stay on target, to fit into God's plan.

- A. What is God's plan concerning you?
 - B. How do your plans compare with those of God? Explain.
4. When we submit to God's plans, we can trust our desires.
- A. If whatever you desired came to be, do you think it would be good for you? Explain.
 - B. How can you commit yourself to whatever God wants for you, even if it might be different from what you desire?
5. In Romans 12:3 Paul advises that we should "have a sane estimate of [our] capabilities."
- A. You are probably aware of your weaknesses, but what are your strengths?
 - B. How are you using those strengths to serve and honor God? Have you thanked him for them?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read Mark 10:42–45.
 - A. What kind of ruler was Jesus describing in verse 42?
 - B. How should the behavior of "those who want to be great" differ from the actions of others?
 - C. How do you think things would have changed if Jesus had chosen to "be served" instead of to serve?
2. Compare Mark 10:45 with Luke 19:10.

- A. Do these two verses say the same thing? Why or why not?
 - B. Would you consider one or both to be Christ's "mission statement"? Explain.
3. Romans 8:28 has often been quoted and misquoted.
- A. How does this verse function when so-called "bad things" happen to us?
 - B. Do you think God "plans" the "bad things" or that he just allows them? Is it the same thing?
 - C. Continue reading from verse 28 to the end of the chapter. Describe how these verses relate to the "bad things" in your life.
4. God wants to use us to bring about his plan. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21).
- A. What are you doing to serve as Christ's representative or ambassador?
 - B. What tools do you have to prepare you for this work? How are you using them?
5. Spend some time in Psalm 37.
- A. How much time do you spend fretting over "evil men"? Are you ever worried they won't "get theirs"? Explain.
 - B. What does God say will happen to them?
 - C. What should you be doing instead of worrying about retribution?

D. When your heart and God's come together, what happens to your desires?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Both Psalm 139:14 and Ephesians 2:10 declare God's marvelous workmanship in you. Do you believe them? Take a few moments to write down the specific things about you that illustrate that statement. Dedicate those qualities to the Lord and determine to start using them for him today.
2. When you were little did anyone ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" How did your answer then compare with today? As you've grown up in the Lord, what do you want to be, to do, for him? Spend some time in prayer and then compose a personal life mission statement, with which you can serve and honor God.

E I G H T



NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

An Honest Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. The Christian is a witness.
 - A. What's the difference between a witness in court and a witness for Christ?
 - B. We know there's a penalty for perjury in court. Is there one for the Christian? Explain.
2. Jesus didn't lie, cheat, or stretch the truth.
 - A. How do you measure up to God's standard in this area?
 - B. Do you think there's a difference between "regular" lies and "white" ones? Explain.
 - C. Once you realize you've been dishonest, what do you do about it? Does it depend on how big the lie was? Explain.

3. God is as angry about lying as he is about such things as adultery and aggravated assault.
 - A. Do you agree with this viewpoint? Explain.
 - B. How can you strive to live out God's honor code? What do you do when you fall short?
4. God always speaks the truth. The Bible says he "cannot lie."
 - A. In what circumstances are you most tempted to lie?
 - B. Do others consider you to be an honest person? Would your assessment and theirs differ?
 - C. How do you feel about lying or evading the truth a little in order to spare the feelings of others?
5. There are times when the truth is difficult.
 - A. Name some situations in which we are more comfortable with a lie than the truth.
 - B. How is it possible to lie without using words?
 - C. We know there are consequences to lying. Have you ever been caught in a lie? What happened? How did you feel? What did you learn from these consequences?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Read Ephesians 4:17–32. Paul admonishes his readers to get rid of their former way of life and display a "new attitude of the mind."

- A. Since Christians are members of one body, is it worse to be dishonest with a fellow believer than with one who is not? Explain.
 - B. How can you be dishonest with yourself?
 - C. Do you agree that lying should be placed in the same category with anger, theft, foul language, etc.? Do you “rank” sins, considering some worse than others? Explain.
2. Spend some time in Psalm 101.
- A. What do you do when others are “slandering [their] neighbor in secret”?
 - B. What kind of company do you keep? Do you tolerate liars?
3. Titus 1:2 and 2 Timothy 2:13 remind us that we can always believe God.
- A. How should this truth affect our everyday lives? Does it? Explain.
 - B. Which of God’s promises are most precious to you? Why?
 - C. When you promise something, can you be relied upon? Explain.
4. Think about the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.
- A. Why do you think this couple lied about the price of the land? Why didn’t they tell Peter they were just giving a portion of what they received?

- B. Do you think Ananias and Sapphira ever thought they would be found out? Why or why not?
- C. What was it about this lie that angered Peter?
- D. How do you feel about the harsh punishment God meted out? How would their witness for Christ in the community have been affected had they not been so judged? What happened to the witness of the church after their deaths?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. In a concordance, look up the words lie, lies, lying. Then look up words like *truth* and *honest* or *honesty*. How do you think the number of references to these words corresponds to God's concern in these matters?
2. From one of the verses you found in the listings above, claim one as your own. Write it on the flyleaf of your Bible. Repeat it each day. Ask God to help you be more like him in the area of honesty.



THE GREENHOUSE OF THE MIND

A Pure Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. How can you manage your heart “as a greenhouse”? How can you let the analogy get personal?
 - A. What kind of “seeds” are you allowing to grow?
 - B. What weeds do you see? How can you keep them from flourishing? How do they sometimes crowd out the flowers?
 - C. Would you classify yourself as usually optimistic or negative? Explain. How does your optimism or negativism affect those around you?
2. There should be a sentry at the door of our hearts.
 - A. Where do your thoughts usually go when you allow them to wander?

- B. How can you immediately recognize “wrong thoughts”?
How could you do so more easily?
- 3. We need to submit our thoughts to the authority of Jesus.
 - A. If your thoughts were written down on paper and submitted to Christ before you thought them, how many of them would he “red pencil”? Would you be surprised, or would you have known the results beforehand?
 - B. If your thoughts were broadcast to those around you, would you be embarrassed? Would they be disappointed? Sad? Hurt? Surprised?
- 4. The Bible is the “check point” for our questionable thoughts.
 - A. In your study of Scripture, what validation can you find for an inferiority complex? A prideful spirit? Conceit? Impure sexual desires?
 - B. Some people think the Bible is just a book of no’s whose aim is to squelch free-spiritedness. What happens to us when we follow our own “free-spirit” instead of God’s Word?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

- 1. In 1 Peter 5:8–9 the devil is compared to a “roaring lion.”
 - A. In what circumstances do you most often feel you’re going to be “devoured” in your thought life?
 - B. How can you put up a good resistance to the devil? How can you increase your levels of self-control and alertness?

2. Read Galatians 6:7–10.

- A. God recognizes that we become weary in our struggles with sin (v. 9). Once you realize the need to keep your thought life under control (to plant the right seeds), what do you do if you're tempted to give in to spiritual fatigue?
- B. What are the benefits that can be reaped from a God-centered thought life?

3. Proverbs 4:20–23 admonishes us to pay close attention to what God says.

- A. We are to keep his words not only in our sight but in our hearts. What is the difference between these two?
- B. The heart is compared to a “wellspring” of life. Look up the word “wellspring” in a dictionary. Why do you think that word is used in verse 23?
- C. You've heard the expression “You are what you eat.” Do you believe you are also what you think? Give some examples.

4. In 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 Paul reminds us that though we live in the world, we are not to act as if we are part of the world (v. 3). He recognizes that life is a fight and reminds us we have been given “divine power” (v. 4) to help win the battle.

- A. Verse 5 tells us to “capture” our thoughts, making them obedient to Christ. How can we do this? What are we to do with these thoughts, once we've captured them?

- B. How can you tell your wrong, impure, ungodly thoughts no and refuse them readmittance? In what way can this be like a battle?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Think about a plot of fertile ground for a moment. Is more work involved in the planting stage or the weeding stage? What happens to the crop if the latter is neglected? What market exists for the sale of weeds? Would anyone ever plant weed seeds on purpose? Translate those questions into an evaluation of your thought life. Decide today to plant roses and, with God's help, keep the thistles out.
2. Plant a seed, literally. Use the right soil. Water it. Make sure it gets the correct amount of water and sunshine. Put it where you can see it. Nurture it. Watch it grow. Consider it to be an outward expression of what you are doing inwardly with the garden of your heart.

T E N



FINDING GOLD IN THE GARBAGE

A Hope-Filled Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. How do you view the “garbage” that comes your way?
 - A. Do you think you’ve had more or less troubles and sorrow than the average person? Explain.
 - B. What next “bad thing” are you worried about that might be lurking around the corner?
 - C. Why do you think we hang on to the pain and the hurt rather than look for the good in our troubles?
2. How we look at life determines how we live it.
 - A. The saying goes “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” Have you had to make lemonade out of your life circumstances?

- B. Describe someone you know who's good at this. How do you feel when you're around this person? What can you learn from him or her?
- 3. We need to see our troubles as Jesus sees them.
 - A. Analyze your feelings about any unanswered prayers, unfruitful dreams, or unbelievable betrayals. Are they recent, or have you been hanging on to the resulting hurts for a long while? Explain.
 - B. How can you see these things as Jesus does?
- 4. Jesus found good in the bad, purpose in the pain.
 - A. Do you think this is realistically possible in every situation? Explain. What would you say to someone who thought this was a "Pollyanna" view of life?
 - B. Describe a time you found good in the bad, purpose in the pain. Did you have this attitude while you were going through the difficulty, or did these insights come later? Explain.
- 5. Jesus can change the way you look at life.
 - A. How do we often underestimate the power of God?
 - B. How would your life change if you consistently believed that God's power is the same today as it was in the days of Elisha?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Romans 12:9–16 tells us that troubles are a part of life for everyone; no one is exempt.
 - A. How should we respond to evil? How are we to behave when afflicted? How is this possible?
 - B. Why does God allow us to go through these troubles? What do you think is to be gained by them?
 - C. Do you someday expect to find out God's purpose in your suffering? What if you never do?
2. Compare your spiritual eyesight to that described in Matthew 6:22–23.
 - A. Describe someone you know who prefers to live in the darkness rather than the light. Do you enjoy being around this person? Explain.
 - B. What's God's opinion about this?
3. Read about Jesus' betrayal in Matthew 26:46–52.
 - A. Even after Judas betrayed him, Jesus called him "friend." Have you ever felt betrayed by a "friend." If so, is this person still your friend? Explain.
 - B. In so-called righteous indignation, one of Jesus' companions sliced off the ear of the high priest's servant. Luke records that Jesus responded with a healing touch. How can we respond in such a way when we are hurt? What keeps us from responding like this?

4. In Matthew 26:53, Jesus reminds the mob that came for him that he could be rescued from their clutches immediately if he so desired.
 - A. In what way can your own difficult situations be easier to handle, knowing that God could get you out of them if he chose to do so? Can they ever be made more difficult because of this knowledge? Explain.
 - B. How do you respond when God chooses not to change your circumstances? Do you still believe God is present in the problem? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Borrow some eyeglasses from a person with an acute vision problem. Put them up to your eyes. Look at a tree, a flower, the face of the person next to you. Now look at these same objects with your normal vision (with or without glasses). What was the difference? Were things distorted the first time? Were they blurry? It's much easier to see all the detail when you view something in the correct way, isn't it? When viewed through the perfect, all-seeing eyes of God, everything that happens to us makes sense!
2. Think about your friends, especially a friendship that went sour. Did that person hurt you, betray you in a way that still smarts whenever you think of it? Ask the Lord to soften your heart, to forgive him/her. Give your grudge to God and ask him to heal your wounds. Make it a point to pray for your friend by name on a regular basis and look for ways to begin the process of restoration.



WHEN HEAVEN CELEBRATES

A Rejoicing Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Jesus knows about the “party”!
 - A. What is this party? Are you sure you’re going to it? How do you know?
 - B. What did God do to make sure you don’t miss the party? What situations did he use? Who were the people involved?
2. Jesus is happiest when the lost are found.
 - A. Describe a time when you were separated from your parent, “lost” in a store when you were a child. How did you feel the moment you discovered you were alone? Panic? Fear?
 - B. What do you think your parents thought during their search for you? Was there joy when you were found? If so, describe it.

- C. Compare this incident with how God must feel when a sinner repents and comes home to Christ.
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- 3. When you get to the “party,” you will be like Jesus. Everyone else will be, too.
 - A. Which aspects of Jesus’ character do you most desire for yourself?
 - B. Which aspects of his character will you appreciate most in others?
 - C. How can you love these people right now, while we’re all getting ready?
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- 4. Jesus rejoices that we are saved from hell.
 - A. Describe what you know about hell. Do you believe it’s a real place? Why or why not? Read some scriptures that talk about it.
 - B. How do you rejoice that you’re on your way to heaven? Do you ever thank him that you will miss hell? Explain.
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- 5. You can have God’s eternal view of the world.
 - A. Which things that you hold dear to your heart become insignificant when you come to hold God’s eternal view of the world?
 - B. If this viewpoint dominated more of your thinking, how would you spend your time differently?

- C. When you hold this view, what happens to your perception of people?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. The Psalms are a great place for praise. Read Psalm 96, paying special attention to verses 1 and 2.
 - A. What does it mean that “all the earth” should sing? Why songs?
 - B. How and how often do you praise God for your own salvation? How do you respond to other people’s salvation stories?
2. Read the three parables of Jesus in Luke 15.
 - A. Much time and effort was spent in looking for the lost sheep and the lost coin. What does that say about the lost ones’ worth to their owners?
 - B. Neighbors and friends were called to help rejoice when the lost ones were found. Why was that?
 - C. The older son in the third story resented the party given for his prodigal brother; he didn’t consider his brother worthy of that attention. Do you ever feel someone is “too bad” to be saved, that he/she should not be allowed at the “party” to be held in heaven? Explain. Apart from the grace of God, do you deserve to go?
3. Luke 15:10 speaks of the worth of a single person to God.

- A. What should this verse do to our feelings of worthlessness?
 - B. How should this verse influence your desire to tell others of the salvation that's available in Christ? Does it have this effect with you? Explain.
4. In Matthew 22:13, hell is described as a place “outside,” in the dark, where there will be “wailing and gnashing of teeth,” with no way out.
- A. If this is true, then why do people speak so lightly of that place?
 - B. Do you think it's important to emphasize the horrors of hell to unbelievers? Explain.
5. Second Corinthians 5:11–16 speaks of a compelling need to tell others of Christ's great gift of salvation.
- A. Is it your main purpose in life to bring others to the “party”? How many people have you introduced to Christ so far?
 - B. Think of someone you know who needs the Lord. How might you be used to introduce this person to Christ? Are you asking God to give you a new heart of love for them? If not, why not?

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. Using a concordance or other study tool, search the Scriptures to make a list of all the blessings of heaven. Across the page, write down all the horrors of hell. Then praise God for blessing

you with the things in the first list and rescuing you from those in the second.

2. Look through the pages of your favorite hymnal. Find those songs that have to do with heaven. Sing one right now!

T W E L V E



FINISHING STRONG

An Enduring Heart

FINDING THE HEART OF JESUS

1. Learn to finish the right things.
 - A. How much time do you spend on non-essentials?
 - B. How do you determine what a non-essential is?
2. Finishing strong in the Christian's race takes a massive effort.
 - A. At the beginning of your relationship with Christ, were your expectations of the Christian life any different from the reality you have experienced? If so, explain.
 - B. Do you think Christians sometimes paint a "too rosy" picture of what life is like after the salvation experience? Describe any examples you can think of.

- C. Would people say you are a stronger believer today than yesterday? Why or why not?
 - D. What have been your primary joys as a Christian? Your difficulties?
3. By focusing on the reward ahead, Jesus had the strength to endure the shame of the whole world.
- A. What does it mean to be focused? How focused are you?
 - B. What kinds of things most often get in the way of a sharp focus? How can you deal with these more effectively? What keeps you from dealing with them?
4. Jesus looked beyond the horizon, saw the table set before him, and focused on the feast.
- A. If you could have your own feast right now, what would be on the table? Who would be the guests?
 - B. What do you think that “heavenly feast” will be like?

PROBING THE MIND OF JESUS

1. Spend some time pondering Ephesians 1:15–23.
- A. In verse 18 Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts (our minds) may be “enlightened.” Why do you think he says that? What kinds of things have been right in front of you that you still haven’t seen?
 - B. Describe an inheritance that either you or someone you’re

close to has received. Try to describe any of the “rich glories” that will be the Christian’s inheritance.

C. How much of God’s “incomparably great power” (v. 19) have you experienced? Describe your experiences. What more is left to experience?

2. The Christian race is discussed at length in Hebrews 12.

A. Why does Paul call the Christian life a “race” instead of a walk, a jog, or some other activity?

B. What kinds of things hinder you from racing effectively? Do you know anyone who has quit? If so, why did it happen?

C. How can we continue to joyfully look toward the end? How do we sometimes lose sight of the goal?

D. Why are you in the race? How can you overcome the urge to stop, rest, and take it easy?

3. The forty-day temptation of Jesus is described in Luke 4:1–13.

A. Jesus ate nothing during this time of temptation and naturally became very hungry. When you are under physical distress, is it harder to keep spiritually focused? Explain. What do you do to compensate?

B. Each time the devil tries to get at Jesus, he responds by using Scripture correctly. How can his example help you in your personal struggles? What strategies can you adopt?

C. The devil attempted to get Christ’s eyes off his father, to

doubt the love and concern he knew was there. How does Satan use the same tactics with us? How can we respond? How have you responded in the past to such attacks? What happened?

4. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30.
 - A. With what specific “talents” have you been entrusted? Name them.
 - B. Do you think the man with five talents had more responsibility than the ones with two or one? Why or why not? If you believe you have just one talent, do you ever spend time wishing God had gifted you with five instead? Explain. How are you using the one you have?
 - C. Since the one-talent servant knew what his master was like and what he’d expect on his return, why do you suppose he neglected his duty? Do we do this as well? Explain.
 - D. Compare the master’s responses between the more gifted and least gifted servants. In whose place can you most easily put yourself? Why?
 - E. If you came to the end of your race as a Christian right this minute, would you expect to hear the Master’s words as spoken in verse 23? Explain.

BECOMING THE HANDS OF JESUS

1. If you are physically able, challenge yourself to a footrace. Set a goal—say, the house at the end of the block—and start running.

When you get winded, keep huffing. When you want to quit, don't stop. Make yourself do it. Reward yourself when you get home—try some time alone with a good book. Then make the analogy between your physical exercise and the race we've just been discussing. What do you learn?

2. Take inventory of the projects that surround you, the things that take up the most of your time. Who or what do they benefit? What would happen if you discontinued your involvement? Sort and filter. Resolve to include only those things that prod you on to your goal.