

1. **Review:** Last week, Hazen introduced us to the heart in all its glory and all of its struggle. We learned that in Hebrew tradition, heart means more than emotions but encapsulates the inner world including emotions, thoughts, choices. heart.
 - a. In this process of renewal of the heart, we see Jesus take the lead and initiative. He is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:1). He began the good work of transformation in us and He is faithful to complete it (Phil 1:6).

Ezekiel 36:26 “And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

- i. For some of us, there may be an invitation to live in the “I.”
- b. Jesus did not just own our redemption. He also owns and takes responsibility for our ongoing transformation.

Psalm 32:8 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will advise you with My eye upon you.”

- i. The question we must ask ourselves is, “Am I willing to submit to Jesus’ process of transformation in me?”
- ii. If we can’t trust Jesus in our spiritual formation and growth, how are we going to trust him in other areas of our life?
- iii. One of David’s most beautiful prayers is his prayer of surrender of His spiritual transformation into the hands of God.

Psalm 86:11 “Teach me Your way, LORD; I will walk in Your truth; **Unite my heart to fear Your name. (NAS)**

- iv. The words “unite my heart” may sound a bit peculiar to modern-day Bible readers. The plea to “unite my heart to fear Your name” can also be rendered “give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (NIV) or “grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you” (NLT).
- v. We cooperate with God’s transformational work of our hearts, and it starts with us bringing it to God in prayer!!
- c. We play a part in God’s restorative process of our hearts. Often, we aren’t

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responsible for the wounds that are inflicted to us, or the generational brokenness we inherit. We haven't picked our family of origin or even the protective strategies we adapt to guard our hearts in our own strength.

- d. But as we surrender our transformational journey to God, as we commit our way to Him in prayer, God invites us to be a participant in the work and not just an unconscious patient on the operating room table.
- e. Our life of faith can be described as a growing awareness of ourselves that we continually surrender in trust to God's gracious work in us. **We need wisdom and awareness and need to give care to our own souls.**

Luke 21:34 **“Be careful,** or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.

- f. As we take the time to position ourselves in God's presence and become aware of ourselves, it becomes clear that we are governed by our fears, angers, and judgment much more than we'd like to admit.

2. Unshakeable?: Is it possible?

- a. I want to propose that it is possible to live in a freedom of heart that is unshakeable.

Psalm 125:1-2 “Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people.

Psalm 27:1 “For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.

Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Psalm 16:8 “I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

- b. Reflection: What do these verses have in common?

3. Protecting Ourselves

- a. We have two options for how we live our everyday lives. We can choose to protect ourselves or we can choose to let God protect us.
- b. Our protective strategies are founded on fear. “Fear of what I might not be.

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Fear of what I might see. Fear I won't be successful or accepted, or that I will be hurt. So we have to recognize how dominant fear is in our lives. But this fear is not a great big teeth-chattering fear that something is going to kill us. Our fear is in the service of all the little ways we have learned to protect our false self. But love is who we really are. We'll never see the love we really are, our foundation, if we keep living out of our false self of self-protection and overreaction. We must remember that "perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18). (Richard Rohr)

- c. "The world, the system, moves forward out of fear. That's why it has to threaten us to make us play the game. We're threatened with loss of job, money, reputation, or prestige. One study showed that more than 90 percent of corporate crimes brought no financial reward to the persons committing them. They committed the crimes out of fear of losing their jobs." (Richard Rohr)

4. Returning to God's Protection

- a. The God who formed you in the womb and oversaw your birth, watches over you with attentive care and covering. All of His attention is on you at all times.

Psalm 22:9-10: "Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:1-3 "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

- b. The enemy seeks to cause us to doubt God's covering, protection, and Presence in our lives. Life events, woundings, and trauma, whether big or small, allow fear to enter, causing us to ask the questions: "Am I safe?" "Am I wanted?" "Am I loved?" "Am I taken care of?" When life causes us to doubt God as the answer to these questions, we become bound in a cycle of fear and anxiety.
- c. For Thought: What are some of the fears we carry that cause us to break trust with God?

What do those fears keep us from?

Matthew 6:25-26 "25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as

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to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”

- d. When we live afraid of what may come and have not surrendered ourselves to the care of God, we feel it is up to us to keep ourselves safe. Many times, we grasp for the protective strategies of control, independence, and self-sufficiency in order to seek to bring a sense of empowerment and safety into our lives.
 - i. When we cut ourselves off from God by choosing not to trust and go our own way, we have now chosen a new leader to answer the deep questions of our heart: ourselves.
 - ii. We have the free will to live in charge of our lives and God respects the bounds that we set, but when we are living from the place of self-sufficiency and independence, God is not able to offer us the help He longs to give.
 - iii. God is one step further than the limits we have set around ourselves to keep us safe.
 - iv. *“Anxiety is a term descriptive of a mode of existence characterized by attempting to control one’s life. This kind of anxiety arises whenever we attempt to impose and maintain our own manipulative control upon the world, whenever we attempt to squeeze the world into our own mold.” (M. Robert Mulholland Jr., Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Direction)*
 - v. *“Care arises when we are driven by the need to order and control our own lives. In a world where such order and control are partial at best, anxious care can become a consuming passion that misshapes all relationships, all events and all activities of one’s life. When this happens, anxiety-driven persons tend to become manipulative and dehumanizing in their relationships with others. Others must conform to their pathological attempts to order the world and maintain control of their lives. Anxiety-driven persons are also compelled to impose their own order upon the events of their lives. Layers upon layer of defenses and securities are constructed to keep the unpredictable and unexpected from intruding into their carefully ordered world. Such persons cannot be the persons God intends them to be. They are imprisoned by the need to maintain control of their existence. Such persons cannot be God’s persons for others. They are captive to the need to protect themselves against others and manipulate others for their*

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own purposes. Such persons cannot be agents of God's grace to a broken and hurting world. They are in bondage to the need to impose their order upon the world...Such lives, closed within the fragile shell of their own limited order and control, are plagued with stress, anxiety, fear, doubt, despair, depression, and a legion of other destructive and debilitating demons. Tense and troubled, such persons expend prodigious amounts of energy to maintain and defend their tenuous control of their lives—energies that could have graced healing and wholeness to a broken and hurting world. (M. Robert Mulholland Jr., Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Direction)

- vi. For thought: What strikes you as you read this quote? What does it make you long for in your life?

5. The Invitation

- a. God is calling us to step out of fear and control and return to live from the place of childlike simplicity and trust. This is not something we will ever outgrow. As we mature in the Lord and grow in our spiritual authority, there is still a sweet communion found in the place of simple childlike faith and surrender.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

- b. We see this theme over and over in the Psalms, as David worships the God who is safe, always coming through, teaching, comforting, and supplying.

Psalm 131:1-2 "O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me. 2 Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me."

Psalm 56: 3-4 "3 When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. 4 In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?"

Psalm 91:1-4 "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

Psalm 28:7 "The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him."

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c. For thought: How could trust open up the way for freedom in your life? Isaiah 26:3-4 “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.” 4 “Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.”

Philippians 4:6-7 “6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

6. An Exercise in Surrender and Trust

This is Practical tool and exercise to help you move into a space of trust and surrender with the Lord. The purpose of this exercise is to return to the place of trust and receiving the benefits of a heart entrusted to God. This involves 1) Professing trust in our Maker, 2) Surrendering fears and anxieties as they arise, 3) Posturing ourselves to Receive, 4) Receiving God’s Comfort and Presence, 5) Responding in Gratitude

When and How long: Once a day to start, with a goal of 20 minutes for the entire exercise. You can anticipate the first two steps taking longer at the beginning of doing this exercise. But as you learn to live more and more open-hearted before God, you will find the first two steps becoming professions of love to the Lord more than letting go of hurts and fears. You will then be able to spend more of your time on steps four and five, which is where encounter and transformation really happens.

- a. **Step 1: Trust:** Quietly sit and come into an awareness of God’s Presence within you, all around you. Open your mouth and speak to Him. Speak to each member of the Trinity. Take your time. Focus on not just saying the words, but offering them as an expression of worship to God. Pause after each phrase, letting the truth of God’s trustworthiness touch you, letting the words have impact as you direct all of your heart, mind, will, and strength to the truths you speak. Repetition is fine, as you come more and more into the truth of the words you are saying.

Example: *“Father, I trust You. I trust You completely. I entrust myself to You. You are a good Father, and I trust You.”*

“Jesus, I trust You. You are with me today. Your eye is on me. I completely trust You in every area of my life this morning. I offer my trust as worship before you, My King.”

“Holy Spirit, I trust You. You lead and guide me perfectly. You keep me safe. I trust you completely, Holy Spirit.”

As you do this, you will feel resistances arise in your soul. The first times you do this, you may encounter an awful lot of resistances. This is the great cleansing time, when you are able to discover, identify, and verbalize the areas of non-trust and doubt and fear that are blocking you from God and God from you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you

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discernment to identify the resistances as they arise. As they arise, verbalize them to the Lord and move into step 2.

- b. **Step 2: Surrender Completely:** As the resistances arise, take time to identify what is going on within. What fear is surfacing? What places of mistrust? What deeper fears are they connected to? Are you willing to release those fears to the Lord and to lay them at Jesus' feet? Do so now.

Examples: *“Father, I acknowledge my confusion over this relationship with XXXX and what my role is in it. I lay down my anger and helplessness, and I choose to surrender it at your feet. I surrender completely to you, Jesus. I trust you in this relationship.”*

After verbalizing a place of surrender, “feel around” in your soul and see if you are experiencing peace. If you are not, there is another layer to deal with. In the case of the example I am giving, there was a deeper fear I was needing to acknowledge and release.

“Father, I acknowledge my uncertainty over whether or not I am doing your will by investing in this person. I acknowledge my fear of missing You, or being stolen from my true purpose by being distracted in investing in this relationship. I release these fears to you. I surrender completely. I trust you Jesus. I trust that You will lead me and direct me in Your perfect will, and that You are my guide. I release any false responsibility I have to figure it out by myself. I release my questions to you. I trust you to lead me Jesus.”

After releasing a place of fear or mistrust to the Lord, return to step 1 and adore the Lord with your trust. See if and what other resistances or pain arise. Continue the step of surrendering completely to Jesus each resistance as it arises and offering your trust, until no more are surfacing.

- i. *a note:* The first times you do this, you will encounter many resistances. You may not even make it past this step for a while. That’s ok! Be faithful to surrender completely the things that the Holy Spirit reveals to you, and offer your Trust to the Lord. I promise, you will eventually reach the place where you have let go of all the fears and doubts that you’ve been holding on to for so long. Eventually, as these older fears and doubts are released, you will reach the place where, when you do the exercise, you will only be dealing with the things that have arisen since the day before or the last time you’ve done the exercise.
- ii. *another note:* Some things you may not want to surrender right away. That’s ok too. There are some things that are too deep and painful to release instantly. Our challenge and invitation in those moments is to embrace the struggle and to wrestle through the fears and pain and through our stubbornness and pride. Until we can put our will behind our prayers of surrender, they will not be

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fully effective. Ultimately though, you will not be able to entrust yourself to God until you have surrendered completely to Jesus. One of the most beautiful expressions of trust that we can offer God, in my opinion, is when, even in the wrestle and struggle of surrender, we verbalize to God our faith in who He is as the Trustworthy one and choose to surrender the little we can, even beyond what we feel able to. There is so much power in these spoken prayers to God, and many times they impart grace and faith to us to believe in the things we struggle to believe.

- c. **Step 3: Relax:** This step is quick and easy, but important. Physically posture your body to be relaxed. Consciously become aware of any places of tension or stress, and relax yourself. Take a deep breath. Relax yourself and surrender physically any places where control is being expressed. Relax yourself as a weaned child resting in their mother's arms.

You've done it! You've done your part! You have cooperated with the work of grace that God is doing in you. You have chosen to trust, to let down the walls you've erected, to release the deeper fears that are driving your efforts of control and self-sufficiency. You have postured yourself to receive. Now comes the good part: receiving from the infinite, wonderful, so-much-better-than-we-think Presence and Goodness of God.

- d. **Step 4: Receive:** You've worshiped the Lord with your trust. You've surrendered completely at His feet. You've relaxed your body and postured yourself to receive. Now open up your spirit and begin to draw on and take in the Goodness of God deep within. Visualize your spirit as a sponge that is soaking up and taking in the Holy Spirit. It may start just as a trickle, a very little bit. For every little bit you receive, respond with step 5.
 - i. Learning to receive in your spirit from the Holy Spirit within is, like many other spiritual things, a discipline that takes practice and time. As you practice this over time, your spiritual muscles will grow and receiving from God's Presence will become easier and easier. Stay with it! Celebrate the little victories and keep practicing.

Psalm 36:8 "They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights."

Song of Solomon 5:1 "I have come into my garden, my sister, *my* bride; I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, friends; Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers."

John 4:13-14 "13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst;

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but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Ephesians 3:16-18 “16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

- e. **Step 5: Thank:** As you receive the presence of God within, thank the Lord with a heart of gratitude and adoration.

“Thank you Holy Spirit. Thank you for our presence. I receive your Presence within me. Thank you for being with me.”

Repeat steps 4 and 5 in tandem forever/for as long as you want. The grace of God is constantly available, for as long as you are able to engage with it. The more you receive during this time, the more you are changed. Places of pain and loss are being comforted. Places of helplessness and fear are being covered and filled with the incredible Presence of God. Stay here, and drink deep of the river of His presence. This is the access point for the life of God. He is faithful to fill us, He is faithful to heal us, He is faithful to empower us and strengthen us to be who He made us to be and fulfill the purpose He’s made us for.

7. Conclusion:

We are not slaves to fear. As we return to the place we were created for, to loving dependence and trust in the Lord, we receive His love within and there is no longer any space for fear.

- a. This is more than words or mental assent. This is the living reality of the Presence of God, in us, filling us, and transforming us as we open our hearts, minds, and spirits to receive His goodness. This gift is available to us all the time, at any time, in any place.

1 John 4:18-19 “ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 19 We love each other because he loved us first. (NLT)