

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:22-27)

A commercial for a local jewelry store extols the value of a particular kind of diamond. It's a "Hearts On Fire" diamond. When I think of someone's heart being on fire, I think of heartburn... or love... and not necessarily in that order! Consider that a diamond is the hardest of all stones. It is formed deep in the earth under intense heat and extreme pressure. The end result of such adverse treatment is beauty and brilliance while reflecting light that is unsurpassed. The attempts of man to create a "look-alike" diamond falls short of the standard. Only God knows how to make a diamond.

Remember the first time that someone broke your heart? I do. Feeling rejected and unwanted, I began to think of that young lady as someone with a heart of stone. As hard as a diamond. When we are hurt too many times, we tend to build up the walls around our heart. Our hearts can easily become hearts of stone. But no matter how hard the heart has become, it can always be broken. No matter how broken, it can always be mended. With God's help, our heart can become new and radically different. God not only knows how to make a diamond, He knows how to make a new heart. Only He has the grace to change our inanimate hearts into intimate hearts. When God spoke to Ezekiel, He had a message for the nation. Let's look at what it means to have a stony heart in need of transformation.

I. A STONE HEART IS A COLD HEART. Stone cold is a rather descriptive phrase. One thinks of stones in their natural state as being cold. A heart in its natural state is a stone cold heart. A cold heart is an unkind heart. The person with an unkind heart is often angry at disappointment or rejection and will not take the risk to show kindness. The result is that their life becomes fortified over time with many acts of unkindness or apathetic response to people who come across their path.

II. A STONE COLD HEART IS A HARD HEART. A hard heart is a resistant heart. Defenses have been building around the heart like layers of impenetrable armor. Like an onion it has layers and layers built around the core. Often the force needed to break the hard heart of stone is tremendous.

III. A STONE COLD HARD HEART IS A LIFELESS HEART. A lifeless heart is a dead heart. It has ceased to feel anything. This is one of the most deadly of heart conditions. It has nothing to live for seeing no purpose in life. This kind of heart is just marking time; beat after mechanical beat, living out a passionless existence. This heart without life is without warmth. Like an ember that has lost its fire and the fire of other surrounding embers it has no life of its own. And like a baker's stone in an oven it absorbs the heat for a season. But left to its own, without warmth or the energy of an outside source, it will cool off again to its natural stone cold room temperature.

V. WE CANNOT LIVE WITH GOD WITH A HEART OF STONE. Only God can break a stone cold, hardened, lifeless heart. Then only He can pick up the pieces of this dead heart and replace it with a heart that loves and lives. If you need a new heart, God is waiting on you to make the appointment. He, as the Great Physician, is waiting on the consultation. He is the ultimate in cardiac care. But He must have access... Come to Him... Call to Him... Be still... and Know that He is God.

At the time of this writing I am hours away from open heart surgery and trusting all that the Lord has put in place for my physical healing and the restoration of my spiritual condition. Please join with me, my family, and my church as we desire that the name of Jesus be glorified through this heart of mine in the time that the Lord has given to us. ***Those that God will use, He purifies so they can testify.***

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam