

**What Jesus Says About Us**  
**Celebration Baptist Church**  
**Inspired: The Words of Jesus**  
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Before I moved to Tallahassee nearly 15 years ago, my family and I lived in Kearney, MO, a small community about 20 minutes from downtown Kansas City. It's a great little town with good schools and a nice way of life. It's famous for being the birth place of Jessie James!

The next town over was Liberty, MO. It's the site of the first day time bank robbery in America. Who do you thing pulled that job? Jessie James!

Our house was within walking distance from where Jessie James was buried. You'd drive by it and tourists were out there taking pictures. Living there made me feel like I was living in the Old West or something!

While we were living in Kearney I hit my 40s. That's kind of a heartbreaking transition! When you hit 40, you're no longer a young person. You're decidedly middle aged. And around my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, I really kind of took my foot off the gas on fitness for a couple of years. Up to that time, I'd been a pretty serious runner. I put in a lot of miles each week and all that running let me eat whatever I wanted! But for some reason, when I hit 40 I backed way off on the miles but not on the food. That is not a winning combination!

My doctor there was a great guy. He's just out of med school. He was this young, bright, physically fit, handsome man. I picked him because I thought we had a lot in common! Because I saw myself as kind of an athlete and I wanted a doctor who would understand what that was about.

When I started going to this doctor I was in really good shape. But by the time I went to him for my "welcome to your 40s" physical, I'd picked up a few pounds. I'd backed way off on the milage on my runs. I was kinda frumpy. So he does the bloodwork and the whole bit and all those numbers were still acceptable, but they weren't amazing or anything. As we sat together reviewing everything he looked at me and said, "I've gotta be honest with you, your weight is not on a healthy trajectory right now. You don't have a problem today, but you will if you don't change some things around.

Then he asked, "How's your running coming along?"

So I'm sitting there just stunned that he said this to me and I'm thinking, Who does this punk kid think he is!!! I mean welcome to your 40s! I'd never had a doctor say something like that to me before! I gotta be honest, it really stung.

But deep down I knew he was telling me the truth. The numbers didn't lie. I was getting soft and entering a season of life that just requires a higher amount of effort and maintenance to stay in shape. I hadn't been doing a very good job of that lately.

So I told him, I've been backing off a bit to be honest. My mileage is way down. Then he looks at me and says, Well let's get together one morning this week and go for a run. I was blown away. My doctor not only cared enough about me to tell me the truth about who I was, he also cared enough about me to run alongside me.

True to his word, over the next several weeks, he came out to the house and we'd go for a run together. He was younger, leaner and faster, but he would just run along beside me stride for stride. It didn't take long before I was back in running shape and it was all because my doctor cared enough about me to tell me the truth about who I was and then get into the trenches with me and lead me to turn it around.

Maybe you've been through something similar to that. Maybe it wasn't your doctor and maybe it wasn't something related to your health. Maybe it's a coworker who pulls you aside to talk with you about your work ethic. Maybe it's a boss who tells you that you've been mailing it in. Maybe it's your spouse who's telling you the truth about the way you're handling your relationship with your kids. Regardless of the circumstances, you have probably had someone come along side and tell you a hard truth about yourself. It really stings doesn't it?

If you don't have the right mindset, you can interpret someone being this candid with you as them being judgmental, critical or mean-spirited. But if you can get past that, you begin to see that they're not trying to hurt you or hold you back, they're trying to give you a wakeup call so you can turn it around because they care about you.

Well it turns out Jesus spent a lot of time telling us the truth about who we are. Jesus has done for humanity what my doctor did for me. Jesus tells us the hard truth about what's wrong with our heart, our vision, he tells us about what's really going on in our lives.

I've got to tell you, what Jesus has to say about you and me, about humanity in general, it's not pretty. It's the unvarnished truth. As we look at this today, you might be thinking, Who knew that Jesus was so judgmental! He's not being judgmental. Jesus says he hasn't come in to the world to condemn it, but to save it.

When Jesus came to earth a part of his mission was to act like a doctor making a house call. He came to tell us the truth, he came as the medicine, he came to bring healing. So just like my doctor helped me when he told me I was on the wrong path and if I didn't change direction, I'd eventually have a serious problem, Jesus comes telling us the truth about our condition.

So today we're going to look at what Jesus says about us, about who we are. And it's like going to the doctor and listening to him or her tell you the truth about who you are. It's not a lot of

fun to listen to, but it's really important information to have. And if you take his wise counsel and use it as intended, it's life giving.

So let's take a look at what Jesus has to say about us. Let's listen to what he has to say the way we would listen to a really good doctor who cares enough about us to tell us the truth. We're just going to zero in on 2 truths that Jesus says to us about who we are. He said a lot more than that, but these two are just great examples of how Jesus honestly confronts our problems and speaks to us with honesty and clarity about them.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus tells us We have a heart condition. Listen to what he says about it: **Mark 7:20–23** 20 Then He said, “What comes out of a person—that defiles him. 21 For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, 22 adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a person.”

Contrast that with our own very inflated view of our heart. We view our heart as an internal guidance system that will lead us to make the right decisions and head in the right direction. I mean, how many times have you heard someone tell you to follow your heart? Or they told you that they were at a crossroads in their own life and they made the decision about which way to go by following their own heart.

We act as if our heart basically works like a GPS. It already knows what you truly want to become. It's preprogrammed to lead us down the right path. Turn on the GPS, and you're assured to head in the right direction.

If that were true, then why do so many of us, myself included, make so many bad decisions? How many times have you blown the job decision because you followed your heart? How many times did you date the wrong girl because you followed your heart? How many times did you wind up living in the wrong town because you followed your heart? How many times have we chosen a college because we followed our heart only to transfer a couple of semesters later? I wish I possessed an infallible heart that always knew what I truly wanted to become and how I could get there! If all it took to know what you truly wanted to become was following your heart, I'd be all in. But sadly, it isn't true. And if we're honest with ourselves, we know it. Following our heart can get us in to real trouble. Why is our heart so unreliable? Well in the Bible, the term heart refers to the center. The heart is the hub that contains our emotions our psychological, and intellectual properties. All of our desires are produced in the heart. When our heart produces a desire, it begins to leverage those emotional, intellectual and psychological assets contained within in an attempt to fulfill the desire. Once the heart locks in on something it wants, it does everything it can to rationalize so that it can experience fulfillment.

Maybe you're in the market for a new car and you develop a no-nonsense budget. You're looking for cheap transportation to get you to and from work. Then you start looking at cars. You become dazzled by the technology in the more expensive models. Suddenly you realize you

deserve to be comfortable and safe too! Your desire leads you to rationalize coughing it up for the more expensive car. You follow your heart and drive off the lot in way more than you can afford! Sound familiar?

Back to our verse: Jesus knows this is what our hearts are capable of. He goes on to tell us that our heart is far more likely to wreck us than to help us. And he gives us a long laundry list of ways our hearts can lead us astray. Just look at the list Jesus gives us: **Mark 7:21-22 . . . out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, 22 adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness.** That's a terrible list. Jesus says, your heart isn't an infallible GPS system it's completely untrustworthy and will get you in to trouble because once it settles on something it wants, it will do anything from that list to make it happen.

Jesus says that when you follow your heart, you wind up defiling yourself: **Mark 7:23 All these evil things come from within and defile a person.**

What does Jesus mean? When something is defiled, it's no longer fit for God's service. Jesus is telling us that following our hearts could well lead you to being disqualified from what God really wants you to be and do.

God creates us with talents and abilities. He has a future in mind for you and for me. But we achieve that plan when we agree to live our lives in a way that is honoring to him. The Bible is filled with insights about how we should live our lives. It talks to us candidly about how we should conduct ourselves in business transactions, dating relationships, how we should deal with our parents or our kids, how to cope with anger, you name it.

Paul, a great theologian and leader in the early church captures Jesus teaching perfectly. Listen to what he says in **Galatians 5:19–23 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

You can see the words of Jesus clearly reflected here. Following our heart, what Paul calls the flesh here, leads us to all kinds of heartache, but when we follow God's insight instead of our own heart, when we are listening to His Spirit, good things happen. We're lining ourselves up to experience the future that God has for us.

Jesus is teaching us that the heart leads us away from, not toward where we want to be. In short, our hearts are a lousy GPS.

Here's the bitter truth, your heart is no better than mine. Our hearts can't be trusted and it makes no sense to follow our own fallible hearts.

Jesus doesn't just warn us about our hearts in this single verse. Jesus tells us that a lot of our biggest problems we face in our lifetime come from heart problems. How about Adultery? Jesus says that's a heart problem. What about when we begin to get antsy in our marriage and heading for divorce without any biblical justification? Heart problem. What about becoming obsessed with money or possessions? Heart problem.

Like a good doctor, Jesus examines our heart and he gives us a warning: You've got a heart issue and you'd be wise not to trust it.

Not only does Jesus warn us of a heart problem, he also warns us of a vision problem. We don't see the truth about our own spiritual condition.

Matthew 5-7 tells us about the Sermon on the Mount. As a preacher, you know you've made an impression when your sermon gets a name!!! In 1741 a preacher named Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled, Sinners in the hands of an angry God. One of the most famous sermons ever preached and it's got a name! That never happens to me! But Jesus was the greatest preacher that ever lived, so his sermons get names!

This sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, is the most famous sermon ever preached in human history. When Jesus preached this sermon, he was at the height of his popularity. Everywhere he goes tremendous crowds are following him. So as Jesus teaches this huge crowd, He lays out how to live a life dedicated and pleasing to God, he talks about how to be happy in life, or how to be reconciled with someone when you have a disagreement with them, or how important it is to be faithful to your spouse, or the need for honesty & integrity, or how to pray with passion and power.

The Bible tells us that people were amazed at the way Jesus taught. I can just imagine people standing around nodding their heads in agreement saying, Yes! Amen! That's right. I can't help but think a lot of them would have assumed, *I got this! I'm in pretty good shape! I think I'm nailing everything Jesus is saying here! Good job Dave!!!*

Then he brings it to a stunning conclusion. **Matthew 7:21-27** <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you! **Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!**' <sup>24</sup> "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. And its collapse was great!"

Wow! This seems like kind of a nasty way to end a sermon! Jesus says, “Some of you who are listening to this sermon, standing there saying Amen, standing there saying, What a great sermon preacher! Some of you aren’t going to be in the kingdom of heaven. You’re talking a good game, but let’s face it, you’re going to be like a house that looks great until the storm hits and then it’s going to collapse on it’s faulty foundation.”

It’s got to be one of the saddest pictures found in the Bible. Because Jesus says that a lot of people are going to find themselves disappointed because in their own eyes, they had everything all figured out. They thought they had a really good bead on life. They thought that they are doing everything right. Then at the end they discover that they’re not a part of the kingdom of heaven. Instead of being invited in, they’re turned away as Jesus says, Depart from me, I never knew you.

Jesus is telling us that it’s very possible to see yourself one way, but in fact, you’re altogether different than you imagined.

We see this with great clarity here in America. Here in America there’s a veneer of Christianity that is still applied to an awful lot of what we do, say and believe. Because of that veneer, it’s really easy to deceive yourself. A recent study shows that about 70% of all Americans think of themselves as Christians. But as you look at our culture, you know instinctively that data point doesn’t pass the eye test. So many people who claim to be Christian live in such a way that is indistinguishable from someone who doesn’t claim to be a Christian at all. It’s apparent that there are a lot of people who claim to be Christians but they’re not.

Is that possible? Is it possible for someone to think, *I’m in good shape with God! I’m a Christian and everything is good.* When in fact they’re not a Christian at all?

That’s exactly what Jesus is saying here in this passage. Jesus is teaching us that so often, we see ourselves as good. We see ourselves as having things all together. But it’s not an accurate picture of who we really are. When it comes to assessing ourselves, we have a real vision problem, and Jesus, like a good doctor, is bold enough to tell us about it.

So how does this happen to us? How can we be so off in our own view of our own spiritual condition?

Well a little earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says a part of our problem is that we mistake what is easy for what is godly.

**Matthew 7:13–14** <sup>13</sup> “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. <sup>14</sup> How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

Let’s face it, we’re drawn to a life that is easy. If we’re given the choice between easy and hard, we’ll choose easy every time.

For the first 10 years we lived in Tallahassee we were way out in the country on a 3-acre lot. Most of it was woods, so we only mowed about an acre or so. Now when we bought that house I was a younger guy, so I bought a push mower. Then while we lived there, CJ got old enough to mow the grass. He didn't exactly like mowing that yard! He would ask me all the time, Dad, can we get a riding mower! It would be so much easier! I'd always tell him, son, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger! Then just before CJ's senior year we downsized and moved into our new house on a 1-acre lot. By that time we needed a new mower. The old one was kind of shot. Now I knew that he would be headed off to college soon, so what kind of mower do you think I bought? I bought a riding mower! When it showed up CJ was like, Hey - why did you buy a rider? I said, because it's so much easier!

Easy makes sense when it comes to mowing your grass. But it doesn't work when you're making a decision about your relationship with Christ. What is easy is to ignore Jesus. What is easy is to play games, go to church once in a while and pay lip service to accepting Christ. What is easy is to go to church because you want the kids to get a good moral background but you don't allow anything to actually penetrate your life. What is easy is to follow your heart. Jesus says to you and me, if that's you, all you're doing is talking a good game and that's not going to get it done.

So how do you know if what you're professing is actually real or not? Let's go back to the Sermon on the Mount: Jesus says you can tell by what your life is producing.

**Matthew 7:17–20** <sup>17</sup> . . . every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

The easiest way to tell if what you're professing is actually real is to just look at what is coming out of the end of the pipe. If your life is producing godly things, it's because God has changed your life and you're now able to produce godliness. A person who is a true Christ Follower will produce what Christ calls on you to produce. It's going to show up. It's going to show up in how you forgive. It's going to show up in your moral choices. It's going to show up in your speech. It's going to show up when you get excited about the same things that God gets excited about. Because when God is working in your life, when your life in Christ is real, you excited about doing what God has for you to do. **Matthew 7:21–25** <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven . . . <sup>24</sup> "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock.

Now am I telling you that if you do all the right things, you'll be accepted by God? No. I am telling you that you can spot a person who is in a genuine relationship with God because the things they are doing are the kinds of things that honor God.

If you have chosen to follow Christ with all your heart, mind and soul then it will be evident in how you live your life. No lip service, no games. You will live as a new person because the power of Christ is in you and the Holy Spirit of God himself is at work in your life and if that is true, then you live differently than other people live.

So Jesus challenges us to have an accurate vision about who we are. To see ourselves not as we might hope to be, but as we really are. To look at our own lives with real discernment and answer the question, Have I been changed by the power of God? With great accuracy.

We have this popular image of Jesus in our minds that he's always accepting and gracious and kind. And while it is true that Jesus invites everyone, everywhere into a relationship with him, he doesn't ignore the hard truth about who we are. He doesn't ignore the condition of our heart and he doesn't ignore our inability to see the truth about ourselves. There's no place in the Scripture where Jesus says to us, You're OK just the way you are! Jesus never says that because it isn't true. Left on our own, we're really kind of a mess. And Jesus lovingly, boldly and plainly tells us the truth about who we are.

The question is, what do we do with Jesus' assessment?

At the beginning I told you all about my trip to the doctor when I hit 40. You remember, the young doctor who told me that my weight wasn't trending in the right direction! I go home after the check up and I have to admit, I'm a little frosted by what he's said to me. So I went and I took a hard look in the mirror. I'm sizing myself up and I had to admit, he was right. My body is a temple but the Philistines had dropped by! I wasn't where I needed to be. I realized, if I was going to turn this thing around, I was going to have to do the hard things. I was going to have to watch what I ate. I was going to have to log some more miles. I was going to have to take the narrow, uncomfortable road.

You and I need to do the same as we consider the words of Jesus. Jesus has said that we have a heart condition and that it's the source of so much of the things that bring destruction to our lives. Jesus tells us that our own self-assessment can't be trusted. We need to look at ourselves through the eyes of Christ.

So why not go home today and just sit down in front of a mirror. Seriously. Sit down in front of the mirror and really look at yourself. Ask yourself, what's really in my heart? If I were to sit down with Jesus the way I would sit down with a good doctor, what would he say about my spiritual condition measured not against my own standards, but against his standards? I know that taking a hard look like that can be uncomfortable, but the Bible actually calls on us to do this:



2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless you fail the test. the Bible says, Hey, it's a good thing to just take a spiritual audit. Because if we are truly in Christ, then we can affirm that and we can covenant to make sure that his life is seen vibrantly in us.

Then, on the other hand, if you're sitting there in front of the mirror and you realize, I'm not in Christ and Christ isn't in me. The truth be told, I'm far from God right now. I may have been blinded to my own sin and folly, but who am I kidding?

Do you see how healing that moment could be? Let me tell you, that's a moment of self-examination that has eternal significance.

You may be thinking, David, I don't want to do that. I think I'm better off just not knowing the truth like that.

But I promise you, like a doctor who desperately wants his patient to be well, Jesus cares enough to tell us the truth about who we are.

He wants what is good for you. He wants your present day to day to be rich and satisfying. He wants your eternity to be secure. That's wholeness. That's wellness.

So instead of following your heart, the Bible teaches us to trust God with it. I love Proverbs 3:5–8 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; 6 think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. 7 Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. 8 This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

Jesus puts an even finer point on it when he says that real healing can be found one way, it can be found in him: John 14:6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

How can he say that? Because of who he is. He is God in the flesh. He created us, formed us and gave us life. He knows us. He's our savior. He paid the penalty of our sin. Nobody else but Jesus can make that claim. He's our lord, he's come to show us a more excellent way to live. And so he rightly calls us to follow him with all our heart, soul and mind.

Let me pray with you today. Let me ask that God grant us the boldness of heart to stand in front of the mirror and ask, Jesus, show me the truth about my heart. Show me the truth about my standing before God. Grant me the courage to give it all to you. PRAY