

Taking It Home

And now it is our turn to give thanks to you. What's been placed in your hearts is shown to all through your desire to serve Christ by serving others. You are serving with a heart like Jesus, and we are blessed through you.

Using these words from 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, we offer our thanks to you:

*We give thanks to God always for you all,
making mention of you in our prayers;
Remembering without ceasing your work of faith,
and labour of love, and patience of hope
in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*

Your gifts of time and talents are truly a labor of love, God's love at work through you. Please accept this gift as a reminder of the gift you have been to us and as an assurance of our appreciation for you. Together, may we continue to serve with a heart like Jesus!

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Scripture quotations are from the King James or Authorized Version.

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Expanding the Impact of Your Gifts of Encouragement

*Serving with a
Heart
like Jesus*



Getting Started

As a visual for this devotion, you will need a small amount of play dough (can be homemade or purchased) and a squeeze bottle of food coloring. Shape the play dough into a ball approximately 2-3 inches in diameter. Divide the ball of play dough into two pieces. Press the squeeze bottle of food coloring into the flat side of each half, gently squeezing color into various places (try not to get too close to the rounded edge).

Press the two pieces back together, but do not roll around in your hands (the warmth of your hands and the action will bring the color from the inside out, which you will be doing later in the devotion). If necessary, gently press the edges of each half together to re-form the ball.

Introduction

Picture for a moment a breakfast table set out before you—the coffee pot, the pitcher of orange juice, the milk carton, and the box of your favorite cereal. You can be pretty certain that when you begin fixing breakfast, the right thing will come out of the right container. The milk will come out of the carton, cereal will come out of the box, and so on. That’s because what’s inside is what comes out.

Believe it or not, the same is true for you. You may not wear a label or have cover graphics that advertise to others what’s inside, but you don’t really need them. Your life is a living advertisement of what’s inside. What you do and what you say tells others the nature of your heart.

Getting to the Heart

(Hold the ball of play dough in your hand so you can show it to the group.)

Allow me to illustrate using this play dough (*hold it up and turn it as you talk*). What you see when you look at it is a simple ball of yellow (*or whatever color you chose to use*) play dough.

(Begin to roll the ball of play dough around in your hands. Flatten it, squeeze it, do whatever you can to make sure the warmth of your hands brings the color out that is inside.)

But when I work the play dough in my hands, something remarkable happens. A color you could not see earlier, but that had been placed inside, now comes to the surface and changes the appearance of the play dough. As we mentioned earlier, what’s on the inside is what comes out. And in this case what was inside actually changed the appearance for others to see.

In effect, the same thing has happened in your life. You have been changed from the inside out.

To understand this transformation, first look at what’s inside your heart. In Psalm 38:31, the psalmist writes, “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.” God’s Law is written on each of our hearts. This Law serves a threefold purpose:

- Like a curb keeps cars on the street, the law helps to keep sin in check.
- Like a mirror shows our reflection, the law shows us when we do sin.
- Like a guide shows us the way on our journey, the law guides us to lead a God-pleasing life.

But the mere fact that there is Law in our hearts is not what will change us on the outside. The power for living a God-pleasing life can come only from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, we were separated from God. Even our best efforts were doomed to fail. But God sent his very own Son to do what we could not—to bring us back into a relationship with him so that through his death and resurrection, all who believe can now hold the treasure of forgiveness and eternal life in their hearts.

In Mathew 6:21, Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” And what a marvelous treasure it is! It is ours as a gift of God’s grace, completely and incredibly undeserved on our part, but lavish and extravagant on God’s part.

There’s one more thing to consider about how the treasure we hold in our hearts comes to life and shows on the outside. Remember how the warmth of my hands brought the color inside the play dough to the outside? The Holy Spirit is at work doing that very same thing to us. After Jesus rose from the grave on the very first Easter, he joined two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, talked with them, and then revealed himself through the breaking of the bread. After Jesus left them, the disciples asked each other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, our hearts burn with the desire to respond through a life of thanksgiving for God’s great gifts of love to us.

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