

*Look Into  
Your Heart*

A Women's Study  
By Joyce Jamerson

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Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life.



## Acknowledgements

This book has been in the making for more than two years. It has accompanied me to doctor's offices, hospital lobbies, and surgical waiting rooms; a welcomed distraction. My dear husband saw about half of it completed and I deeply miss his continued encouragement. His battle with cancer ended on May 6, 2012 and so this work is dedicated to Frank Jamerson. His heart was touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ at an early age. He truly loved our Lord and being His servant was a life long joy. It has been to my advantage to be able to lose myself in this study; I hope it will be to your advantage to study it. My heart has been anguished, broken, and joyful all at the same time. It continues to amaze me how God does that! He is and will continue to be the strength of my heart, Psalm 73:26.

May He be that for you each day.

My sweet friend, Katie Mitchell, and my beloved daughter-in-law, Julie, continue to proof read for me and I give them my grateful thanks. It's so helpful to have other sets of *eyes* that can have input for clarity and content.

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unless otherwise noted.

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# Shepherding Our Hearts

## Lesson One — Introduction

*“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” 1 John 3:21-22*

**D**o you live with confidence and purpose? Or is your heart so crowded with *stuff* that living with purpose becomes living to survive? Spiritual depth may be taking a back seat to the demands of the moment because of busy schedules or the needs of family. Staying in shape physically is top priority, as well as good diet and exercise; maybe a vitamin or two will fill in whatever is lacking. We want to be able to keep up with the everyday stresses of marriage, child rearing, education, and career so we have a good physical checkup now and then, but have we had a good heart examination lately?

From the bottom of my *heart*, I hope you’ll consider this study and we can get right down to the *heart* of the matter in this series. Don’t be half-hearted!

*If, at this moment,  
God would search our hearts,  
what would He find?*

Put your whole *heart* into it! An African proverb states: “Lord Jesus, make my heart sit down.” Can we slow our pace a little and make our hearts *sit down* for this study? Another statement that I couldn’t

help passing on was a comment that women need to balance their time more carefully than men, because women don’t have wives! So let’s plan wisely and make the most of the opportunity, Ephesians 5:16.

My PC Study Bible reveals 726 references for the word heart. Of course, we realize that this type of heart is located in our heads (our minds), not in the organ that beats in our chest; a combination of intellect, will, and emotion. (Funny, the word brain is not mentioned at all in Scripture.) As we scan the Old Testament, we see that hearts can be arrogant or proud; hearts can be

tender and hearts can be lifted with joy and delight. We see the hardening of Pharaoh's heart as he stubbornly refused to accommodate the children of Israel in any way. After they were led out of Egypt, their *hearts* were stirred to build the tabernacle, Exodus 35. God has always wanted to live among His people (live—not just a casual visit); to be close to them. They were told to seek the Lord and they would find Him if they searched with their *heart* and soul, Deuteronomy 4:29. God's *heart* was grieved when the intent of man's *heart* was evil.

We might describe hearts as being trusting, tender, open, patient, courageous, wise, loving, and many other positive things. How about happy or faithful? To the contrary, hearts can be broken, heavy, wounded, hardened, or deceitful and if convicted or frightened, the heart can tremble.

*Our will, our thoughts,  
emotions, and feelings all  
make up our heart.*

In Jeremiah 17:10 we find that God searches the heart:

*“I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,  
Even to give to each man according to his ways,  
According to the results of his deeds.”*

If, at this moment, God would search our hearts, what would He find? Do we really love God? Or do we simply enjoy our lifestyle as a Christian? I heard one person say, “It’s a great club, but I don’t particularly want to join.” How do we pattern our life? Is our lifestyle determined by what others think of us? What does it really mean to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart*” (Luke 10:27), the heart of which God is the Shepherd?

Throughout Scripture, we see the importance of having a shepherd. When Israel was blessing Joseph's sons, he acknowledged “... *the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,*” Genesis 48:15. In Numbers 27:16-17, when Moses was discussing his successor with God, he said, “*May the LORD,*

*the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.”*

Kings were established over Israel so they could shepherd God’s people, 2 Samuel 5:2. And who doesn’t know the words of Psalm 23, “*The Lord is my shepherd*” or remember the wonderful old hymn, “Jesus, the Loving Shepherd.”

Repeatedly, Jesus said He was the good Shepherd, John 10:11, 12, 14, 16. Shepherding is so important that when Christ established the New Testament church, qualifications were given for leadership. Qualified men were to be appointed to be leaders in each congregation: elders or shepherds and deacons. These shepherds lead and care for the sheep (members), Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3.

Jesus is willing to be our Shepherd, but do we see the importance of shepherding our hearts in order to be in His fold? Will we care for our own hearts as well as a shepherd cares for his sheep? A shepherd will gather any scattered sheep and keep them in his fold of safety; surely we want to be in that fold! An added incentive is to know that when the Chief Shepherd appears, we shall at long last, receive an unfading crown of glory, 1 Peter 5:4.

*“As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day,”* Ezekiel 34:12.

God cares about the condition of our hearts. He’s much more concerned with what is in our hearts than our outward actions and cares more about repentance than any of our superficial attempts to impress others. We need to understand all we can about our hearts and minds and how they work so we can not only improve ourselves but also be approved by God.

Our will, our thoughts, emotions, and feelings all make up our hearts. Are we really responsible for the way we think and for what is in our hearts?



Proverbs 23 seems to think so. Verse 7 says, “*For as he thinks within himself, so he is.*” That should give us reason for pause and inward inspection. Can

*Jesus is willing to be our Shepherd, but do we see the importance of shepherding our hearts in order to be in His fold?*

inner thoughts be our downfall? In order to control any wayward thoughts, are we willing to hide the Word of God in our hearts? Psalm 119:11. Later on in this Psalm, the writer says, “*Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart,*” 119:34.

So, it seems as if we have a task before us in learning to shepherd our hearts. Just look at the usage in these verses from Psalm 119.

- 2:** How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their *heart*.
- 7:** I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of *heart*.
- 10:** With all my *heart* I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
- 11:** Your word I have treasured in my *heart*.
- 32:** I shall run the way of Your commandments, for You will enlarge my *heart*.
- 34:** Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my *heart*.
- 36:** Incline my *heart* to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain.
- 58:** I sought Your favor with all my *heart*.
- 69:** The arrogant have forged a lie against me; with all my *heart* I will observe Your precepts.
- 70:** Their *heart* is covered with fat, but I delight in Your law.
- 80:** May my *heart* be blameless in Your statutes, so that I will not be ashamed.
- 111:** I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my *heart*.
- 112:** I have inclined my *heart* to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end.
- 145:** I cried with all my *heart*; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes.
- 161:** Princes persecute me without cause, but my *heart* stands in awe of Your words. (Emphases mine, JJ)

In this study, we'll look at happy hearts, trusting hearts, and those that are tender and courageous — even broken hearts. Difficulty comes to all of us and a broken heart may need some special care. David was comforted during a very difficult time because he had set his heart to understand and humbled himself before God, asking God to “*create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,*” Psalm 51:10.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace, Romans 8:6. The promise from Jesus is, “*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,*” Matthew 5:8. With this in mind, our goal should be to develop our hearts, to draw closer to God, to know Him and see Him more clearly. My mom was a talented seamstress, not only sewing for our daughter and me, but for friends and family. Occasionally she used a dress form. The form had the dimensions needed for a perfect fit. The garment would fit perfectly on the form, but the form was hollow. If our hearts are hollow and without purpose, then like that dress form we are simply an outward shell, something on which to hang clothing.

So, looking into our hearts, are we more than a shell? Make a determination to study along with me, in matters of the heart. Wouldn't it be nice if we could be refreshed with these Bible principles and know them *by heart*?

“*Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life,*” Proverbs 4:23.

**Meditation Moment:** The foremost commandment: “*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,*” Mark 12:30.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND GROWTH

1. Contrast how our hearts can be grieved with how God's heart can be grieved. Note any similarities.
2. What is the result when God searches our hearts?
3. List three thoughts on the importance of sheep having a shepherd.
4. From Psalm 119, contrast the kind of heart we would like to have with the kind of heart we have.
5. How did David find comfort during difficult times?
6. List and discuss practical ways to improve our hearts.
7. Why is it important to inspect our hearts?
8. From Romans 8, what two things are rewards for being spiritually minded?

# Why Don't You Understand?

## Lesson Two — An Understanding Heart

*“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is understanding,” Job 28:28.*

**W**ell, you just don't understand!” As a mother, co-worker or wife, how many times have you heard that? Do you remember having said that to your own parents? Regardless of age or position, it's important to be understood. After assigning certain jobs to our boys, they would be asked: “Do you understand?” (Hearing and understanding can be two completely different things!) The job would not be completed properly if that understanding didn't take place. We need understanding in personal relationships, in our workplaces and in our spiritual lives.

We tend to approach life with our own pre-conceived ideas about what we like and dislike. We may not care for the outward appearance of another person, whether it be hair style, clothes, jewelry, or some type of physical disability, so we let their appearance prevent us from knowing them. Disability or illness may make them *different* in some way, so we avoid cultivating a good relationship. To be caught up in our own prejudices limits our ability to know and understand one another. A Thesaurus gives alternate meanings for understanding: sympathetic, empathetic, considerate, thoughtful, kind, accepting, appreciative, and supportive. Can we be these things to one another?

Hannah comes to mind as a woman who could have used a little understanding. Eli even thought ill of her until she explained herself. (Read her story in 1 Samuel 1.) Hannah was barren and Peninah, the other wife, didn't miss a chance to taunt Hannah, generally making her life miserable.

Hannah took her burdens to the Lord, the one source she could count on for strength.

She wept bitterly, as she laid her burden before Him. She confidently proclaimed that *“there is no one holy like the Lord ... For the Lord is a God of knowledge.”* How many times have you wept bitterly over some distress in life? Was a misunderstanding part of the distress? Consider the flip side: How well would we understand if we were trying to be a friend to Hannah? Would we have the patience to understand what Hannah needed? How could she help us to understand? How could we minister to her? Even though there is a great need for understanding between spiritual sisters, it is not the primary objective of this lesson. Do we truly understand God and what He wants for us? Hannah understood that she could open her heart and give Him her burdens.

*“The wise in heart will be called understanding,  
and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.  
Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it,  
But the discipline of fools is folly,”* Proverbs 16:21-22.

From the very beginning, it is clear that God expects us to be educated regarding spiritual things. He wants us to understand who He is and that He has a plan for us. God established a law, expected it to be obeyed and gave Adam and Eve the tools for understanding. Wisdom and knowledge are thoroughly discussed in the five Old Testament books known as *wisdom* literature. Solomon is remembered as the one who asked for understanding in 1 Kings 3:9. He needed instruction and wanted to get it right. If we all of a sudden found ourselves in a position of authority over many, as did Solomon, would we be asking for instruction? I love Solomon’s statement:

*“Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in,”*

1 Kings 3:7.

Solomon recognized his inabilities and pleased God by asking for His help. Have you ever been voted into a position for which you felt totally inadequate? We might say: I'm really lost here! I don't begin to know which way to turn to handle this responsibility. Help! We may foolishly try to wing it, but Solomon wisely made this request in verse 9.

*When we understand a certain concept, do we even think of giving glory to God for being able to grasp those details?*

*"So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"*

And beginning in verse 10, we see God's answer:

*"It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, **I have given you a wise and discerning heart,** (emphasis mine, JJ) so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.'"*

God rewarded Solomon because of his request and because of what was already known about Solomon's heart. God wants our hearts as well, and He wants us to recognize the source of our understanding, just as David did when he passed the temple building torch to Solomon, 1 Chronicles 22:12.

Early on, God chose men to work on the tabernacle and then placed within them wisdom and an understanding of their craft. It wasn't good enough just

to work; they needed understanding about the work. When we understand a certain concept, do we even think of giving glory to God for being able to grasp those details? Praise God, first of all because He is who He is; praise Him for whatever talents we may possess, being thankful that we're not all alike and we can share our talents and understanding with others.

What promotes understanding? Can an understanding heart be developed? Proverbs 2:1-5 gives us the answer:

*My son, if you will receive my words  
And treasure my commandments within you,  
Make your ear attentive to wisdom,  
Incline your heart to understanding;  
For if you cry for discernment,  
Lift your voice for understanding;  
If you seek her as silver  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
Then you will discern the fear of the LORD  
And discover the knowledge of God.*

*Incline your heart:  
Persuade it and bring it  
around to the right place.*

Incline your heart: How would you put that in your own words? Some modern English translations use these phrases:

Pay attention! Listen! Bend your ear! Open your ears! Listen well! Make sure your understanding is coming from the right source. Many books available today are filled with just enough Scripture to make them attractive; religious organizations would have us believe their doctrine is straight from God's Word, but closer inspection will reveal the flaws in their teaching. Evaluate their teachings against the truth of God's Word and rely on older, wiser teachers to help you sort out any error.

Incline your heart; persuade it and bring it around to the right place. Error cannot be recognized if truth is not known. Read and study God's Word; don't accept a counterfeit! Satan's forces love to distract us in our under-

standing, but God knows our hearts and how much time we spend seeking Him, understanding our very intent. The consequences should be very sobering.

*“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever,”*  
1 Chronicles 28:9.

The meditations in Psalm 119 recognize the source of understanding as the precepts of God. Over and over the requests for understanding are connected with God’s Word. The Word is sweeter than honey and the unfolding of those words give light (understanding). Consider these verses:

**34:** Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart.

**73:** Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.

**104:** From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

**125:** I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies.

**130:** The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

**144:** Give me understanding that I may live.

**169:** Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word.

In the 48 times the word *understanding* is mentioned in Proverbs, the gist is that we cannot lean on our own understanding. Fools die from lack of it, 10:21. We need God’s instruction. Incline your heart! (2:2) Lift your voice! (2:3) To gain it, give attention! (4:1) Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding! (9:10)



Daniel was said to be “*endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge,*” Daniel 1:4. Jonathan in 1 Chronicles 27:32 was said to be a man of understanding. How does all this relate to us? We cannot search for something without having a goal. Whatever we want to better understand, we need to gather our wisdom on that subject from the Word of God. The Bible is the life manual for understanding human relations, money management—all areas of life. God wants us to understand His plan for our lives. “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding,*” Proverbs 4:7.

*“All I know is I make sense to me—it’s other people who seem complicated,” Tara Kelly.*

An understanding heart is an educated heart—a knowledgeable heart. Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord and hid themselves from His presence because they did understand and they failed to apply their knowledge. When our heart is educated and knowledgeable, how to minister to Hannah in a difficult time will become less and less of a problem.

*“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not;  
neither decline from the words of my mouth,” Proverbs 4:5.*

*“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!  
And to get understanding is rather to be chosen than silver!” Proverbs 16:16.*

*“The lips of the wise spread knowledge,  
But the hearts of fools are not so,” Proverbs 15:7.*

**Meditation Moment:** Take time to read Hannah’s prayer and then ask this question: What will it take for our understanding to be grounded as well as Hannah’s?

**QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND GROWTH:**

1. What results from prejudice?
2. List ways to encourage our spiritual sisters.
3. What has God expected from the beginning?
4. How did Solomon's request benefit him and how would it benefit us?
5. What does it mean to incline your heart and list at least 4 ways to do so.
6. From Psalm 119, what is the source of understanding?
7. Contrast life with understanding and life without understanding.
8. Define an understanding heart.