

Published based on [Getting to the Heart of Things](#)

# Getting to the Heart of Things



A most terrifying and at the same time, comforting, thought is that Jesus knows our hearts. When we face the truth about our own heart, we find two things. We find that, at times, our heart is desperately wicked, strays from God, and seeks our own way. Concurrently, we find that our heart is good and has been changed by God Himself.

We have two natures. The Scripture refers to this as the old nature and the new nature. Our journey with Christ invites us, with the Spirit's help, to crucify the old nature and its desires and strengthen and feed the new nature.

This journey into our own hearts is initiated by God. I have found that as I know more and more about the truth of my own heart and am able to name my own sin, struggles, and woundedness, I am able to find more of God's heart. In other words, the journey to know my true heart leads me deeper into knowing God's heart and vice versa.

In John 21, we find an exchange between Jesus and Peter which has been the topic of many sermons, Bible lessons, and discussions. I've been meditating on this passage since last night. This morning, I kept feeling challenged by God that there was much more there than I'd seen before. I invited His Spirit to speak, to teach me, to open my eyes.

When Jesus foretold his crucifixion to his disciples, Peter had boldly rebuked Jesus telling him that he was wrong (Matt. 16:22). Later when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and told his disciples that one of them would betray him, Peter had a moment of self-awareness and asked if it were him, however moments later he assured Jesus that even if everyone betrayed him, he would not. Jesus proceeded to tell Peter that he would, in fact, deny him three times before morning. During Jesus' darkest hours, Peter bitterly denied even knowing Jesus.

After his resurrection, Jesus very purposefully sends word to Peter that he is alive. He appears to him on the Road to Emmaus. Then we find this divinely appointed exchange between Peter and Jesus in John 21. I have so many things dancing in my spirit about this, but for today I want to laser in on one particular truth.

After their breakfast, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. Many of you are aware that the New Testament was written in Greek, a beautifully rich language which affords us many shades of meaning. The word that Jesus used when he asked Peter if he loved him was "agape." In the Greek, this particular word we translate love means the God-kind of love, a self-sacrificial love. Each time Peter answered, "Lord, you know I love (phileo) you," and used the Greek word that means brotherly love.

I've so often heard this taught in such a way that leaves us to believe that Jesus and Peter ended this meeting with a sort of resignation of Peter's lack of sacrificial love for Christ, but I think there may be more there.

What if Jesus was taking Peter back to his earlier cockiness, focusing his attention on the pride that had been in Peter's heart? He began this conversation by asking Peter, "Do you love me more than the rest of these guys do?"

Just days before, Peter would have said, "Of course, Lord, you know I'm your number one supporter." But now, Peter is more aware of his own heart. He has faced the depths of his own humanity, his own failure. Now Peter simply responds, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you like a brother." No longer is Peter willing to proclaim his superiority to the other disciples. He has faced the truth of his own heart.

I think that perhaps Jesus was pleased with this moment, as opposed to being disappointed as many would lead us to believe.

As I meditated about this today, I wondered if Jesus would set up this encounter with Peter when he restores him, restates his purpose, and validates the call upon Peter's life in front of the other disciples, and have it laced with the idea that Peter is a disappointment.

Of course, we all know Peter had failed. We all know that Jesus was disappointed in Peter's failure, but in this instance, Jesus was not aiming to focus on his disappointment with Peter. He was initiating a life-giving encounter that would enable Peter to step into his destiny.

With that in mind, I think that maybe Jesus was rather happy that Peter now knew more about his own heart than he had just days before. Peter was in a place where Jesus could work, the place of acceptance and truth.

The cocky boldness that had characterized Peter before was transformed and used as strength. On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23), Peter stands boldly on the truth of Christ's crucifixion (which he had rebuked Jesus for even suggesting) and challenges the religious leaders of the day.

Peter's ministry was amazing, exciting, and difficult, but I think that he walked that journey out with a deep awareness of his own need to depend upon Christ. His heart was purified in new ways as he learned from his own experience that "Without him, I can do nothing, but with him I can do all things." (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).

Where are you in your walk with God?

Are you willing to face the truths about your own heart? As scary as that can be at times, I believe that it is the place where we can find freedom and grace.

Would you invite God's Spirit to show you your heart? When you do, I believe that you will find that His Spirit will transform you in deeper ways than ever before.

You can also find this article published on [Getting to the Heart of Things](#), and on the tag pages [agape](#), [Christ](#), [Day of Pentecost](#), [heart](#), [John 21](#), [Lord's Supper](#), [Matthew 16](#), [new nature](#), [Peter](#), [phileo](#), [Road to Emmaus](#), [sinful nature](#).