

## Application...working with the heart...assessing the raw material...

*“Thus says the LORD, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit. The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? 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”* Jeremiah 17:5-10.

The prophet Jeremiah is speaking to Judah about its affection for foreign gods and mutual defense treaties with foreign nations. Through these verses and throughout the context of the Bible, it is clear that Man cannot, on his own will or strength, accomplish anything that could be considered a blessing from God or bring glory to God; true motives for one's actions are hidden through self deception. At the core of the issue is the condition of Man's heart. This alone determines what the Holy Spirit will illuminate to you and how successful you will apply; indeed, the whole exercise of Bible study would be fruitless without the right heart.

How do we begin to discover what the “right” heart is? It begins with what God has already done for you and understanding the implications of His Grace.

1. God saved you from the consequences of your sins.

-You now have a personal relationship with Him. His Grace extended to even the worst possible sins you could commit.

2. God loves you.

-You now have new self-esteem. Our self worth is based on what God thinks of us. Jesus chose to die for you; your faults, despite what others say, did not deter His atoning sacrifice. Your self-image is not based on the opinions of man, but by the love of God.

3. God has opened your eyes to the Truth.

-You now know the enemy and the enemy now knows you; people are victims of the enemy.

4. God wrote the Bible for you.

-You now have the guidelines for living; you can know what to do as well as what not to do. Foolish behavior will be less common.

-You know what sin is. Your moral values are objective and no longer subjective and relative.

-You have examples to follow and to avoid; you see the consequences of actions before you yourself make them.

-You know His Commands and His Promises; you know what to expect and can be more confident in your convictions.

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Take a moment to assess yourself by filling out the following chart. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are the root spiritual causes of your assets and liabilities? Learning how to apply begins with knowing where to begin and requiring a heartfelt desire to grow.

Strengths	Weaknesses

Are you willing to be willing?

God wants you to be the best you can be but by His way.

Are you willing to ask God to show you things He wants to change in your life?

God knows precisely what your failings are and how to improve upon them.

Are you willing to listen and trust Him?

Faith is required of obedience.

Are you willing to wait upon Him?

Be diligent yet patient for God's timing will be in your best interest.

**TIPS:**

1. Never forget what you were like before God came into your life; a complacent Christian life is a sure sign of taking Him for granted, and you'll never experience the full potential of the blessings that come with a faithful life.

2. Stop and listen! Be a "hearer" of the Holy Spirit!