**I Will Give You a Heart of Flesh**

**The Word**

Read together Ezekiel 36:24-28

**The Big Idea**

God promises to do a supernatural heart surgery in his people by removing their stony hearts that are hard and unresponsive and giving them hearts of flesh that are receptive and response to him.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider doing something a bit different in your small group tonight. Rather than walk through the following questions together, consider spending your whole time talking about this first question. On Sunday, some examples of personal conversions and testimonies were given. If you are willing, spend the evening by each of you sharing a bit of your own story of conversion or of a time when God brought about significant inner change in your heart. What were the specific ideas or circumstances he used, and what are some of the specific changes he brought about within your heart?

2. The topic of inner transformation from Sunday’s message is fairly common ground for many Christians. Was there anything new or anything you heard in a new or deeper way regarding the heart of stone or the heart of flesh from Sunday’s message?

3. On Sunday the following statement was made: “Every single one of us has inherited a heart of stone by virtue of being born into the human race.” Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not? What evidence would you give (biblical or otherwise) to support your view?

4. Read together Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 about the inner transformation of the heart. How does that prayer square with your own experience of God, and what questions does that prayer raise in your mind?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. The promise of new hearts

A. “Heart” in Scripture refers to the inner core of a person; the center of his or her thinking, feeling, and willing

 B. Consider the Iceberg metaphor: the heart is what goes on underneath the surface

C. The gospel is fundamentally about our hearts (behavior is important, but the heart is essential)

D. The transformation of the heart is something only God can bring about by his Spirit

II. Consider the heart of stone (v. 26)

A. The heart of stone is hard towards God

1. See Ezekiel 2:4: stubborn and obstinate

2. God’s truths bounce off, don’t penetrate, don’t get inside and sink in

 a. His grace and mercy doesn’t sink in

b. His commands don’t sink in

3. The key issue is pride = “I will decide for myself how I want to live my life”

a. Consider Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

b. If we want control over our own lives, we are not open and receptive to the work of God in our hearts

B. The heart of stone is a divided heart

1. See Ezekiel 11:19-20

2. There may be an intellectual assent to God but the heart is so divided by so many passions, interests, and priorities that passion for God is diluted and choked out

3. Israel’s key issue was idolatry: believing in God but also letting their hearts go after other gods.

C. The Bible’s perspective is that we each have inherited hearts of stone by virtue of being born into a fallen human race, and a miraculous act of God’s Spirit is required to change that situation.

III. Consider the heart of flesh (v. 26)

A. The heart of flesh is soft towards God and his truths

1. The posture of pride is broken and there is a surrender of our lives to God

2. We become soft to his promises, grace, and mercy as we begin to experience ourselves as his children (see Romans 8:15-16)

3. We become soft to his commands (see v. 27) and we begin to obey his commands more fully and also feel grief and conviction when we do not obey.

B. A heart of flesh is Un-divided

 1. God enters our hearts and reveals himself as the one and only true God

2. He becomes the most important thing in our lives, rather than one thing among many

C. Examples of people’s experience of conversion and transformation

IV. Conclusion

 A. Let’s take time to thank God for the work he has done in our hearts.

 B. Let’s take time to ask God to do a fresh work in areas where we perceive hardness.