



Top Ten Signs you Ate Too Much on Thanksgiving

- 10.) You ate the turkey, the pop-up thermometer, and the plastic net.
- 9.) The only two words you've spoken since Thanksgiving are “more” and “gravy.”
- 8.) The last thing you remember is positioning your open mouth behind a wheel barrow full of yams.
- 7.) This morning, the display on your bathroom scale read “O My!”
- 6.) All your silverware is worn down to tiny, useless stumps.
- 5.) While picking your teeth, you dislodge an entire pumpkin pie.
- 4.) Getting off your couch requires help from the fire department.
- 3.) The Four Corners Restaurant just put you on a three-year buffet probation.
- 2.) You decide to take a little nap and wake up in mid-July.
- 1.) You're sweatin' gravy!

The purpose of this goofy list is to introduce the concept of the top ten lists, because this morning’s passage, from the fourth chapter of Luke, leads us to a top ten list of vital importance to our spiritual growth. We will get to that list in a few minutes, but first, turn in your Bibles with me to Luke 4:31-41.

-- Read Luke 4:31-41

-- Pray

This is a potent passage, loaded with insightful spiritual and theological truths, any one of which we could discuss at length this morning. However, since we do not have time to cover it all, my purpose this morning is to focus upon what I believe may be the single most important lesson for us to learn from this passage, and this crucial lesson begins by concentrating on verses 34 and 41. In those verses we see palpable evidence of the clear and profound spiritual knowledge that Satan and his agents have. First, look at the response of the first evil spirit that Jesus casts out in verse 34. It says, “*I know who you are—the Holy One of God!*” The second instance comes in verse 41, where many demons cast out by Jesus came out saying, “*You are the Son of God!*”

Not only do the evil forces in this passage have knowledge of deep spiritual truths, but in this passage, their knowledge of Jesus far outstripped that of most of the people to whom He had spoken and with whom He was traveling and ministering. Satan and His evil legions are not evil because they are ignorant of God. No, they clearly have profound knowledge of God, yet this knowledge is unaccompanied by faith, hope, or love. It is unaccompanied by self-denial and a submissive heart. // Those who possess this type of knowledge are miserable, fallen beings, full of bitter hatred against both God and man.

If there is one clear message from this passage it is this: We must beware of having an unsanctified knowledge of Christianity. It is all too possible, and dangerously so, to know Christ in our heads but not honor Him in our heart And if you ask me, this unholy dichotomy seems to be an increasingly common phenomenon among professing Christians today, does it not? We seem to have a nation plagued by this great heart and head chasm. As a nation, we are blessed with unlimited access to God's Word and knowledge of His ways, but, generally speaking, our words and actions indicate that we simply do not care. Not unlike the demons in our verses today, our culture seems so bent on having its own way and pursuing its own agendas that the knowledge in our heads never takes root in our hearts.

Brothers and sisters, as believers in Christ, this should never be true of us! We must assiduously make God's glory our all-consuming passion in life, and if we are going to put this prerequisite passion into practice, then we must never be content to know religion with our heads only. You and I must, as Jesus Christ commands, "Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength" (Mark 12:30). We must constantly guard our hearts so that we never allow a dreadful chasm to take root in our walk with Christ and separate the knowledge in our heads from the application of our hearts.

This urgent admonition brings us to the top ten list to which I alluded earlier, because if we are going to remain on guard against the great heart and head chasm, then we need to know what we are to be on guard against. Therefore, our top ten list this morning lists the "Top 10 Signs that the Heart and Head Chasm Exists in our Lives." Trust me, there are many more than ten, but I figure you would like to go home before the evening service begins, so I have limited the list to ten.

#### 1.) Lack of authentically humble worship

First, allow me to explain briefly what is meant by "authentically humble worship." Simply stated, it understands that God is great, and I am not. It means

that in my heart of hearts, God is exalted and I am humbled. It says, “Lord, it’s all about You; it’s not about me.”

Christ in our heads becomes Christ in our hearts when we come to worship God as He has commanded. It begins when we worship Him in true reverence and awe. As Hebrews 12:28 says, “*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*” Are we obedient worshippers? Do we worship God according to the manner in which He has prescribed, remembering that He alone is God, and, therefore, He alone decides how He will be worshipped? Do we do our best to worship Him humbly, with a spirit of awe and reverence? Or do we make worship all about ourselves, demanding our own preferences. If we do, we can be sure that we leave this command from Hebrews, and many others like it, lingering on the unholy half of the heart and head chasm? The great heart and head chasm of faith, then, is bridged when we humble ourselves before the Lord. We begin to overcome it when we learn to worship God for His glory and His pleasure as opposed to making worship about ourselves.

## 2.) Lack of gratitude and joy

Quite often, when I consider this particular evidence of the great heart and head chasm, I am flabbergasted with myself, because I can sometimes grouse with the best of grouzers. When I do, I am always blessed to ask myself, “Why?” Why would I ever complain, grouse, or whine? It simply does not make spiritual sense. You see, I know in my head that God is has complete control over all things. Furthermore, I know from Romans 8:28 that He has promised to use every single thing that happens to me or around me—even things about which I am tempted to whine, complain, and argue—He has promised to use them together for my good and His glory. I know this in my head, but sometimes there is a great chasm between the knowledge I have in my head and its proper application in my heart. In those moments, I know that I grieve the Lord, and I know that I damage my witness to Christ by carrying about in an ungrateful, joyless manner. Those are the moments in which I must learn to obey the Spirit and stop whining, give thanks to God, and press on with a determination to walk in the joy that the Spirit gives whenever I wholeheartedly seek it.

Knowledge of Christ transitions from our heads to our hearts when we decide to be truly grateful and joyous people! In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, we are commanded to, “*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*” Let me pose a question here: Are we doing our best to obey these commands, or are they merely

swirling around in our heads, rarely if taking root in our hearts? Are we really learning to “give thanks in every circumstance,” and are we completely committed to being “joyful always?” If we were to ask others who know us well, what would they say? Are they likely to categorize us among the joyful? Or are they more likely to number us among the grumpy? Would we be listed among the truly grateful or among the miserable moaners and groaners of the world? You see, we bridge the great heart and head chasm whenever we deliberately and obediently choose to walk in gratitude and live with Christlike joy.

### 3.) Lack of hunger for God’s Word

Although Christ in our heads tells us that God’s Word is good and useful, it rarely compels us to meditate upon it and walk in submission to its instruction. Christ in our hearts, however, inspires an obedient daily hunger for the spiritual nourishment that can only be found in God’s infallible Word. With Christ in our hearts, and not just our heads, our attitudes will be like those seen in the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where we read, “*My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times*” (Psalm 119:20), and, “*Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long*” (Psalm 119:97).

Closing the heart and head gap means much more than merely educating our minds in what God’s Word says. A heart for Christ comes to Scripture for a purpose of infinitely greater importance—to know God and submit to His instruction. As we discussed last week, the great heart and head chasm is bridged when we live in constant amazement of God’s Word.

### 4.) Lack of concern for and camaraderie with God’s people

When Christ is in our hearts, and not just our heads, we long for and cherish the company of God’s people. As Hebrews 10:25 directs, “*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*” And in Philippians 1:8, we see in Paul an urgent longing to be in the company of his brothers and sisters in Christ. He writes, “*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*” Simply put, we harbor a spiritual chasm whenever we claim to love the body of Christ while our attendance and our priorities reveal precious little desire to gather together regularly with His people.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to cultivate and grow in Christlike love for one another. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

God's command to us is clear. So let me to ask you: As those empowered by the perfect power of the Holy Spirit, are we giving our very best effort to reach out constantly in love for one another? Or, on the other hand, has this command retreated into some stubborn abyss in our minds, never illuminating a lifestyle that wholeheartedly seeks to imitate Christ? If we are going to bridge this great chasm that too often exists between our heads and our hearts, then we must remember the Scripture lesson from last week and endeavor to live in constant appreciation of the amazing grace God has given us by allowing us to be a part of the church of Jesus Christ. You see, we begin to close the gap when we truly and deliberately begin to reach out in love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, for together with them we form the church, the very body of Christ.

#### 5.) Lack of concern for the lost or lack of conversation about the Gospel

A desire to honor Christ our hearts, and not just know Him in our heads, also calls us to live in constant amazement of the Gospel. It urges us to *"be wise in the way we act toward outsiders; and to "make the most of every opportunity"* (Colossians 4:5). Can we say along with Paul the words of Romans 1:15-17, where he jubilantly declares, *"I am eager...to preach God's Good News. For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes."* Has a genuine, heartfelt delight for the Gospel of Jesus Christ so taken root in our hearts that it spills forth in our conversation? Are we speaking God's glorious message of love and grace to our lost neighbors and associates who so desperately need to hear it? Or, on the other hand, does its life-saving truth inflexibly reside in the silent spaces of our minds, never finding its way to our lips.

The chasm between Christ in our heads and Christ in our hearts is bridged when we become so amazed by the Gospel that we can no longer keep its magnificent message to ourselves.

Here are five more signs of the great heart and head chasm in shortened form:

#### 6.) Lack of hatred for sin

Whereas knowledge of sin in our heads says, "I guess have messed up, but at least I'm not as bad as the next guy," knowledge of sin in our hearts says, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Whereas knowledge of sin in our heads says, "Oops," understanding of sin in our hearts says, "Yuck!" We bridge the gap as we learn to hate what God hates and love what He loves.

#### 7.) Lack of biblical prayer

Whereas head knowledge of prayer says, “Prayer is useful,” understanding of prayer in our hearts says, “Prayer is absolutely essential.” Whereas head knowledge of prayer says, “I’ll pray when I need help,” understanding of prayer in our hearts says, “I am helpless, so I need prayer.” The heart and head chasm is bridged when we learn what it means to *“Pray without ceasing.”* (1 Thes. 5:17).

#### 8.) Lack of service to and through the church

Ephesians 2:10 states, *“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* Very simply, you and I have not been saved for self; we have been saved to serve. If we are seldom inclined to give our time and talents to God, we can be sure that, while we may have Christ in our heads, His commands to serve have not taken root in our hearts. Yet, we can bridge this chasm when we resolve to *“use whatever gift we have received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”* (1 Peter 4:10).

#### 9.) Lack of Trust in God

In this category, there are several surefire indicators of a disconnection between Christ in our heads only and Christ in both head and heart. These indicators include attitudes like worry, anxiety, fear of man, and superstition. This chasm is only bridged when we steadfastly adopt the attitude prescribed in Proverbs 3:5-6, where we are directed to *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

#### 10.) Legalism

Does the Christian life seem to us as little more than some stricter rules for living? Are we more concerned about the specifics of our behavior than the condition of our hearts? Do we pay more attention to sins of others than we pay to our own? As legalism is concerned, bridging the gap means that, while we absolutely endeavor to obey God, we do so, not because we feel like we are being forced, but rather, because our love for Him is so great that we cannot stand the thought of letting Him down or bringing reproach upon His name.

In short, this great heart and head chasm really boils down to one thing—a lack of joyful obedience to God’s Word as imparted by the Holy Spirit. In essence, Christ in our hearts means willing obedience in our walk. Jesus makes this truth crystal clear in John 14:15, where He succinctly states, *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”*

What this means is that, in God's economy, it is far better to know and faithfully apply one truth from Scripture than to know and ignore ten thousand. As I have stated before, it is my firm belief that, far too often, we believe that living the Christian life means little more than becoming a biblical information station. Please, do not get me wrong, we absolutely must preach and teach and study God's Word. Let there be no doubt, God unequivocally commands us to do exactly this, and to do so with faithfulness, diligence, excellence, and integrity. However, and here is the main point this morning, such spiritual knowledge is utterly useless to us if it is not applied to our hearts and if it does not radically transform our walk with Christ and our witness to His grace. // We must be careful that our emphasis upon obtaining biblical information is not out of proportion with our desire to apply it to our lives for God's glory.

This vital truth is one of the chief reasons why, in the year 2008, we will be changing the way that we do ministry here at First Baptist Church on Sunday nights, or at least about half of them anyway.

-- Explain L.I.F.E. Groups and their purposes

It is difficult to explain the great heart and head chasm more compellingly than does the Apostle James in James 1:22, where he writes, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*" In other words, we lie to ourselves whenever we claim to know a truth from Scripture that we are not doing our best to apply in real life. We can be certain that head knowledge of God's Word without heart application of the instruction that it gives is a dangerous deception indeed. In chapter 2, verses 14 and 17-19, we read, "*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ... In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*"

Of all of the connotations of this great chasm that often exists between our hearts and heads, none is so terrible as the chasm that the book of James speaks about here. When James says that "*even the demons believe that there is one God, and shudder,*" he emphasizes one of the most important truths of Scripture, and that is this: Genuine, saving faith involves much more than mere head knowledge about Christ; it requires a sincere desire in our hearts to love Him, serve Him, and obediently submit to His commands. Saving faith involves the conviction of the Holy Spirit leading to sincere repentance of sin. In short, we must realize that

there are many who claim to possess salvation in Christ but have never actually received Christ in their hearts.

If this message still does not resonate in your spirit, then maybe the words of our Lord will. In Matthew 15:8, Jesus says, *“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”* And listen to this warning from Christ: Matthew 7:21-23 – *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Is there a great spiritual chasm between your heart and your head this morning? Are you determined to bridge it for the glory of God?

Will you please bow with me in prayer. And as we pray for these next few moments at hand this morning, please forget about what the people around you think about your salvation. Maybe you have never invited Jesus into your heart and would like to today. Or maybe the entire congregation believes that you are genuinely saved, but you know in your heart that there is really a great chasm between what you profess about and what you actually believe in your heart. Please, allow the Holy Spirit to convict your spirit this morning. Ask yourself, is there evidence in your life that Christ has come in and taken charge? Are you more like Christ today than you were on the day that you first believed? Are you living for Him or are you still living for yourself? Please ask yourself, if Christ returned this moment, which He certainly could, would he say to you, “Well done, my good and faithful servant?” Or would He say, “Away from me, I never knew you?” Not one of us is very far from hearing one of these two statements. Which one would Christ say to you today?

Would you like to know for certain that you will inherit eternal life in heaven? Would you like to bridge the gap between your heart and your head? If you would, please pray with me now...

-- Pray... Ask for hands...

For those who have been given assurance of salvation in Christ, ask yourselves, where in my life is there a chasm between my heart and my head? What truths of Scripture do I know to be true yet to which I have not submitted my heart? Will you commit yourself to obediently bridging the chasm between your knowledge of God and your obedience to Him today? If so, please pray with me now...

