

HEART TRANSPLANT

The loss of a loved one leaves an absence and an emptiness that may never truly be filled again.

Although the pain may ease a bit over time, very few things bring real comfort in the early stages of grief. For Eugene Stogsdill, a new teddy bear eased a bit of the pain he was experiencing from the loss of his daughter. But this wasn't just any stuffed teddy bear!

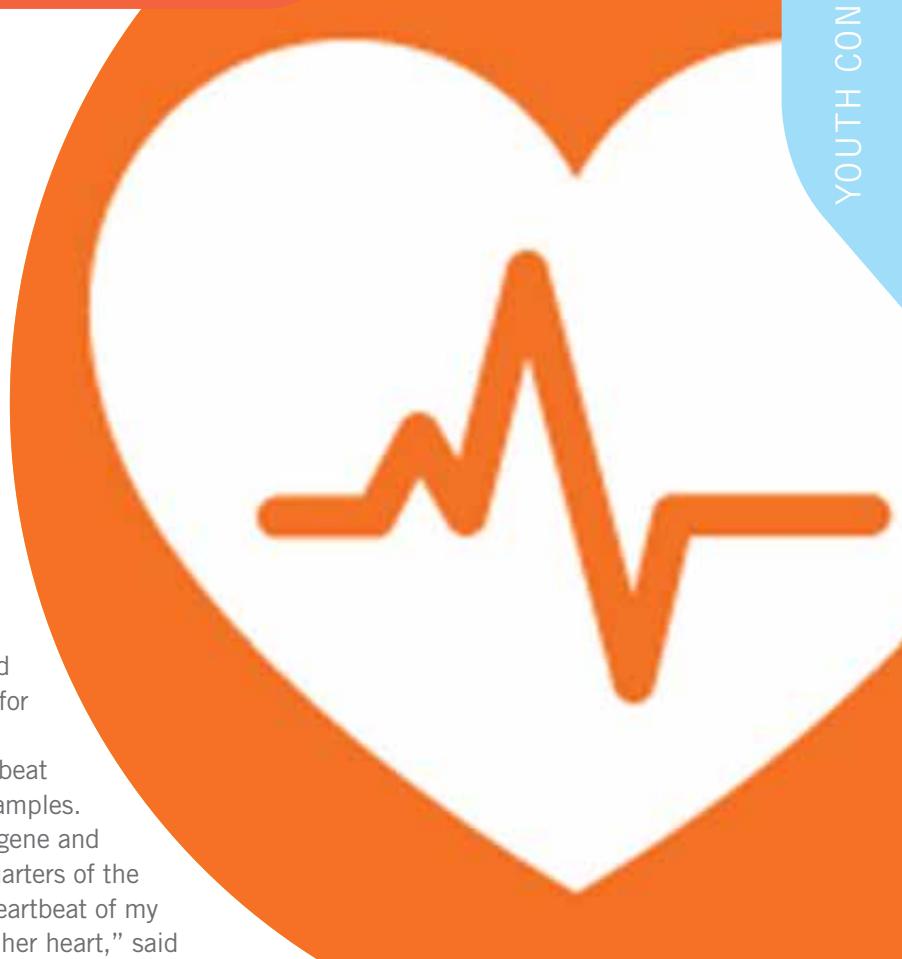
Eugene's daughter had signed the line on her drivers license indicating she wanted to be an organ donor. As a result, five lives have been vastly improved due to her generosity. One recipient, Lisa Russell, said: "I received my new heart and I was so thankful. I remember going into surgery and I was thinking about the family and I was celebrating life and they were all still grieving. Every day I live so thankful for the life of my donor."

Sometime later Lisa decided to record her new heartbeat into a teddy bear designed to receive and play audio samples. She mailed the gift, along with a personal letter, to Eugene and his family. "I read the letter and I think about three-quarters of the way through, the letter, it says that she recorded the heartbeat of my daughter and if you squeeze its right hand, you'll hear her heart," said Eugene, the father of the organ donor.

Elaine Stogsdill-Baker lost her life due to health complications and yet, through her death, she was able to give new life to several people—literally. Elaine's legacy lives on, along with her heartbeat. It is astounding how we can carry on the life and love we receive from others.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are offered God's life-altering grace. Furthermore, we are tasked with carrying forth the heartbeat of God through loving others and serving those in need. Love God. Love neighbor. That's what God asks of us. As we continually mature in faith, receiving more and more of God's heart and mind, we are better able to act as God's representatives in the world.

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." —Luke 10:27



TIP FOR THIS ISSUE

It's easy to think that a one-time decision about baptism, confirmation, or a moment at summer camp is all it took for God's heart to change us completely. But for most of us, it requires a lifetime of worship and devotion to continue the hard work of discipleship and transformation. Let's use this issue to help young people understand that we each play a vital role in our own transformation. We must participate in allowing God's heart to fully transplant ours, empowering a more complete life change. Knowing about God is not enough. Loving God and being devoted to God's work is what we are called to do.

NEW CREATIONS

Question of the Day: What do you think about becoming an organ donor?

Purpose: To help teens remain open to continuing to receive God's heart and mind.

Cultural Connection: New Heart Recipient Gives Donor Family An Amazing Gift

Topic: Growing in Grace

NEW CREATION

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. —2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Commentary:

Paul's first letter to Christians in Corinth was written primarily to deal with specific moral issues. Subsequently there were false teachers who raised doubt about Paul's authority. In this second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul restates his credentials and wholeheartedly urges the community not to turn away from the truth.

As those who have surrendered our lives to Christ, we are new people on the inside. The Holy Spirit has given us new life, and we are not the same anymore. We are not reformed, rehabilitated, or re-educated; instead we are re-created, living in vital union with Christ. In our conversion, we do not merely turn over a new leaf; we begin a new life serving a new Master.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ Can you recall a time when you made an important commitment or re-commitment to Christ?
- ▶ How can we remain in Christ?
- ▶ How have we received God's heart, much like a donor would receive a new organ?

TREASURE

Matthew 6:19-21

Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven,



where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. —Matthew 6:19-21

Commentary:

In this passage, Jesus urges his listeners to reorient themselves by placing God first in their lives. Jesus contrasts the right orientation to God with a wrong orientation toward worldly wealth. It's important to know that during this time period the heart was considered to be the origin of thought, intention, and moral disposition. The nature of heavenly reward always outlasts earthly accolades and treasures. The problem is that we usually seek after what we can see and touch, which often has more immediate benefits.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ What is God teaching us through Jesus' words in this passage?
- ▶ Looking at your life, what do you treasure most?
- ▶ What do you worry about most? Or, what do folks your age tend to worry about most and why?
- ▶ What or who has captured your heart? Does God play a lesser role of importance in respect to these people or things?

SANCTIFY

Romans 12:1-4

Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature. Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don't think of yourself more highly than

TEACHER BIBLE PREP



you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you.

—Romans 12:2-3

Commentary:

In this epic letter full of foundational Christian theology, the apostle Paul writes to Christ-followers living in Rome. Though the first verse uses the term *bodies*, Paul implies your total self. This is a holistic perspective beyond just the physical person. As believers we must make wise decisions about the amount of worldly influence we allow into our lives. And our refusal to follow in the ways and behavior of the world must be a commitment that is rooted firmly in our minds and hearts.

Questions to think about:

- ▶ How difficult is it to live in the world yet not be about worldly things? Why?
- ▶ What are some ways that teens often fall into the trap of being about worldly things?
- ▶ How might we think differently from those around us?

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Let us remember that we all are on a journey towards perfection.

in need. Let us remember that we all are on a journey towards perfection, allow ourselves some grace, and renew our commitment to try our best. May God renew your heart and mind this very day. So let it be.

DEVOTION: SLOWLY

As hard as I tried, I couldn't do it on my own. My faith was still in its infancy, and my actions showed it. All through school, the struggle was real for me. At confirmation, I made a personal commitment to Christ and yet I still had wild emotions, diarrhea of the mouth, and unbearable hormones. *When would it change?* I wondered.

Through God's grace and the patience of many friends and mentors, today I'm closer to being the person God wants me to be. It has taken decades, and I've still not "arrived," but praise God for God's sanctifying grace.

Spend a few minutes reading and meditating on these Scriptures about transformation:

**Psalm 51; Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17;
Colossians 1:21-22; and Titus 3:5.**

God can renew our hearts and minds daily through both ordinary and extraordinary ways. Often times we can only control the time we devote to the ordinary ways, such practices as: devotionals, reading Scripture, journaling, fasting and praying, corporate worship, and serving those

NEXT WEEK: Mother's Day is coming (official get-present reminder)! Next week in LINC we'll take a look at what it means to truly honor the moms and motherly influences in our lives.

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Getting Ready: You will need copies of Youth Page 6, pens or pencils, Bibles, a timer/stop watch, paper, and a small prize.

Before the Session: Choose a place where your group can take a short walk/run or use some stairs. Also, hide some type of prize for a treasure hunt (like a one-dollar bill, a small bag of candy, or a pony!) either in your meeting room or another space where other groups in the church won't be disturbed.

OPEN

Heart Rate (15 minutes)

To begin, lead teens through a pulse-rating exercise. Ask teens to measure their pulse rate before beginning the physical activity. Explain that the best way to check a pulse is to place two fingers between the bone and the tendon over the radial artery, which is located on the thumb side of the wrist. When teens feel their pulse, they should count quietly for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 (or for 30 seconds and multiply by 2). Note who has the highest heart rate.

Now, take three to five minutes for teens (and you!) to either go on a walk, run in place, or walk/run up and down a set of stairs a few times. Immediately afterward ask teens to measure their heartbeat again and note who has the highest heart rate.

Ask and talk about the following questions:

- ▶ Who won? What do our heart rates tell us?
- ▶ Can we look at these numbers and figure out who loves the most? Why or why not?
- ▶ If you were rating your own heart on a scale of 1 to 10, based on the ability to love others, how would you score yourself? (1 = the Grinch; 10 = Mother Teresa)



If youth are open to discussion, ask, "Why did you rate yourself the way you did?"

After a few responses, ask: "Have you ever known anyone who's had a heart transplant? Listen to this awesome story." Now, read aloud the summary on Page 1 or link to the full article at: <http://www.14news.com/story/34601972/evansville-man-receives-teddy-bear-with-recording-of-daughters-heartbeat>.

EXPLORE

Talk Topic 1: Divine Donor (15–20 minutes)

Middle School Option

After reading about the cultural connection, ask: "What if we could have a spiritual heart transplant like organ donors do? How different would our lives be if we could get rid of our own hearts and have just the heart of Jesus?"

Read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, or ask a teen to do so. Lead a discussion around the commentary and questions provided in Teacher Bible Prep. Then, go deeper using the questions below.

- ▶ Are Christians holy people? Why or why not?
- ▶ Without being judgmental or focusing on guilt, what are some ways that folks your age tend to serve themselves and focus on their own interests?
- ▶ What does the Scripture mean in verse 17 when it says, "if anyone is in Christ"?
- ▶ What are some practical ways you've tried (and can continue to try) to get more in tune with God's heart?
- ▶ Outside of a church setting, how often would you say you think about God's gifts to us?

High School Option

Segue from the opening activity by asking: "What if we could have a spiritual heart transplant like organ donors do? How different would our lives be if we could get rid of our own heart and have just the heart of Jesus?" Read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 or call on volunteers to do so." Talk about the commentary and ask the questions in Teacher Bible Prep. For further discussion, ask the questions below.

- ▶ Are Christians holy people? Why or why not?
- ▶ What exactly has God given us in and through Jesus?
- ▶ Honestly, consider for a moment which you serve more often: your own interests or interests that align with God's heart? Why?
- ▶ What are some practical ways you've tried (and can continue to try) to get more in tune with God's heart?

PUTTING GOD FIRST



BONUS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Psalm 51 beautifully captures our human need for God's continued grace in our lives. Take a minute and read verses 1–12. Call on volunteers to read aloud two to three verses at a time. Allow time for teens to complete the activity on Youth Page 6, then ask and talk about the questions below:

- ▶ What did you list on the human heart image that you'd like to get rid of the most?
- ▶ What is the most important thing you wrote on the angelic heart that could help you in your faith journey?

Talk Topic 2: Misplaced Heart (20 minutes)

Tell youth that they are going on a treasure hunt. Clarify if there are any off-limits areas and don't provide any clues for the search; just say, "You'll know when you find it!"

After the group has searched and the treasure has been found, ask and talk about the following questions:

- ▶ How did you know it was the treasure when you found it?
- ▶ Do you enjoy scavenger hunts or looking for potential treasures? Why or why not?
- ▶ How does this treasure hunt relate to our topic today?

Following their responses, read aloud Matthew 6:19–21, or call on volunteers to do so.

Middle School Option

After reading the commentary and discussing the questions provided in Teacher Bible Prep, explore the topic further with some or all of these questions:

- ▶ What other kinds of treasure hunts do you enjoy?
- ▶ During a normal week, how do you spend most of your time? What about your friends?

- ▶ What are some habits in your life that you'd like to change?

High School Option

Use the following thought-provoking questions to help your older youth go a bit deeper:

- ▶ What's the difference between success and significance?
- ▶ Why is it so easy to misplace our attention, desire, longing, and passions?
- ▶ How can we discern whether certain desires are God-given or not?
- ▶ Once you've given your heart away to something you shouldn't have, how can you get it back?

Wrap up by saying something like: "The longer you live, the more likely it is that you will misplace your heart at some point. Because life becomes more and more challenging, it's best to establish good priorities and habits now."

Talk Topic 3: Ongoing Transplant (15 minutes)

Combined Middle School and High School Option

Read aloud Romans 12:1–4 and share information from the commentary in Teacher Bible Prep. Form small teams, make sure Bibles are available, and ask teams to talk about the Scripture and then rewrite it in their own words. Allow five or six minutes for teams to discuss and write their paraphrases.

At the end of the allotted time, call on each team to read aloud its version. Then use the questions below for more discussion:

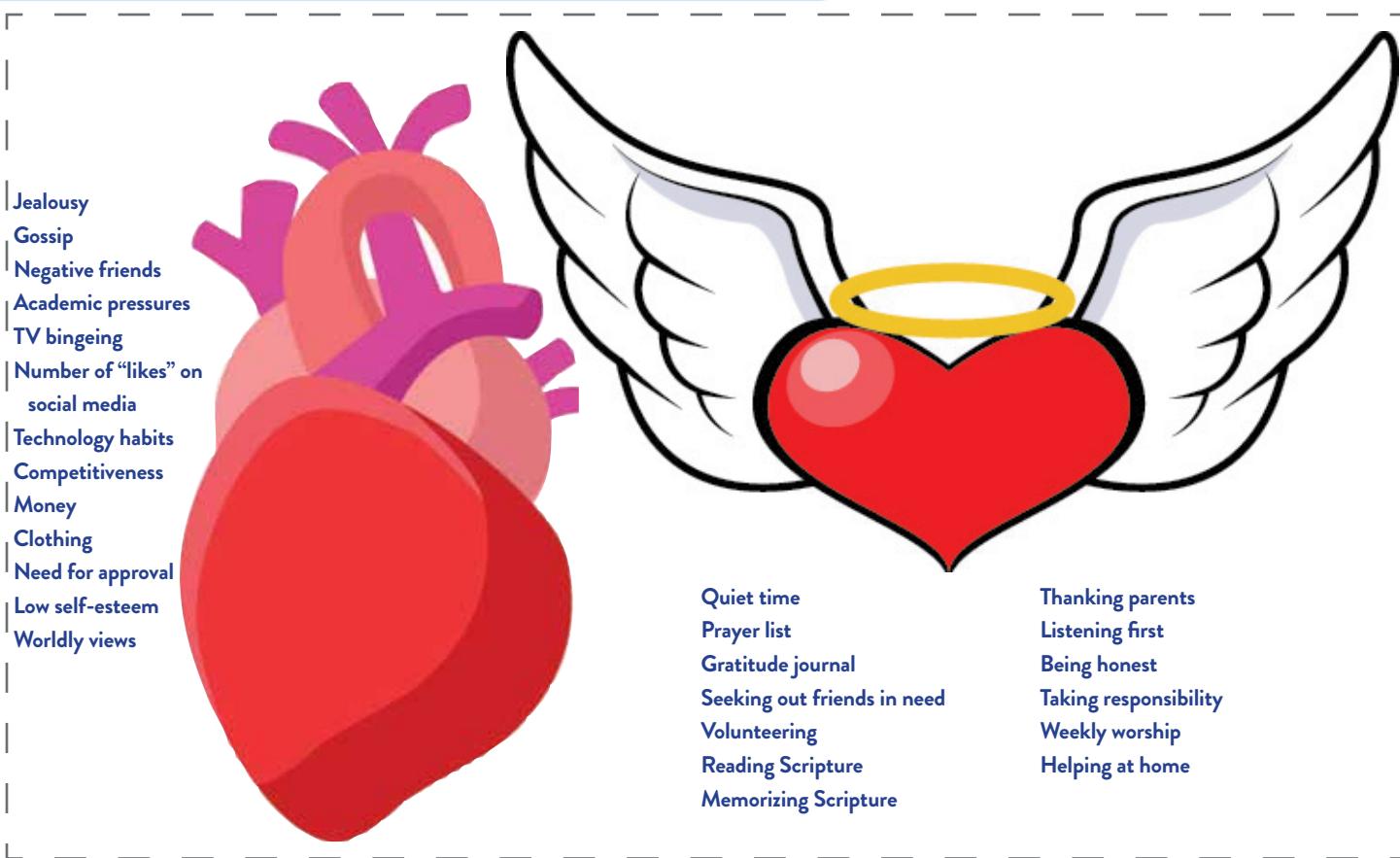
- ▶ Considering that we think we need the following things, how can Christians have different values about: cars, jobs, education, clothing, fame, money, justice, and so on. What else should we value differently?
- ▶ What is something you think differently about now than when you were younger (eating vegetables, people living on the streets, space travel, a dream job, and so on)? What helped to change your mind and why?

TAKE AWAY

A spiritual heart transplant can lead to fruitful life transformation, but the rehabilitation is a daily effort. Let's keep putting God first!

WORKING IT OUT

ONGOING TRANSFORMATION



Jealousy
Gossip
Negative friends
Academic pressures
TV binging
Number of “likes” on social media
Technology habits
Competitiveness
Money
Clothing
Need for approval
Low self-esteem
Worldly views

Quiet time
Prayer list
Gratitude journal
Seeking out friends in need
Volunteering
Reading Scripture
Memorizing Scripture

Thanking parents
Listening first
Being honest
Taking responsibility
Weekly worship
Helping at home

Inside the human heart above, list things that might keep you from having a more full, spiritual heart transplant. Inside the angelic heart, list activities that are helping you grow to be more like Jesus. Also, list activities or practices you want to add to your life in the coming weeks or months. Use the suggestions provided near the hearts to motivate your thinking. Take this sheet home with you, cut out the hearts, and post as a reminder of the ongoing transformation in your life.



In the Bible: Readings for the Week

MONDAY: Read Galatians 5:16-24.

What fruit can God help me grow today?

TUESDAY: Read Mark 8:34.

How can I say no to myself and yes to God today?

WEDNESDAY: Read Isaiah 40:28-31.

Consider memorizing this passage. Pray for renewed strength today.

THURSDAY: Read 1 Peter 2:24.

Remember today that, through Jesus, you are healed.

FRIDAY: Read 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Ask yourself: How has God made me holy? How have I participated in this process?

SATURDAY: Read 1 John 4:8-12.

Our lives should show others we are followers of Jesus.



WHAT'S TRENDING?

Are you an organ donor? Tweet or post about why you made that decision with the hashtag #becameadonor on Twitter to @YMPartners or on facebook.com/youthministrypartners