

# Opening the Closed Heart

by David Guzik

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having an open heart in ministry, recognizing our own weaknesses and inabilities, and being quick to ask for forgiveness when we hurt our people.*

**Duration:** 42:31

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 6:11-12, 2 Corinthians 6:14

**Topics:** "Open Hearts", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of opening our hearts to God and to others. He encourages the congregation to pray intelligently and to ensure that their own hearts are open. The speaker also urges the removal of any sense of injury that may exist between individuals, and encourages an on-fire walk with Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the need for open hearts, both from the congregation and from Jesus himself.

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## Transcript

Good morning It's such a blessing just to be a part of this conference and to attend the sessions and to hear wasn't that a great message from Pastor Sandy and you know, it's wonderful to see the moving of the Holy Spirit because you'll see how beautifully The message the Lord's given me for you this morning relates to what Sandy has just shared with us So I really want to express my gratitude to all of you to Pastor Sandy to all the staff here to to Pastor James Just just what a blessing it is for me to be here Father we come before you and we ask that you would open up the eyes of our understanding this morning Help us Lord God To hear from your spirit We know Lord that this is your living word It's not just ink on a page. And so we come with hearts full of expectancy Asking you to meet us in your word. We pray this in Jesus name Amen Open up your Bibles to the book of 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 If I could put a title to this message this morning, I'd call it opening the closed heart And I do think it relates very closely as an extension of what Pastor Sandy just shared with us this sort of deals with some of the fallout or or the the outworking of Having a pen and aya in your life or in the midst or perhaps of being one the 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 beginning at verse 11 Oh Corinthians Corinthians We have spoken openly to you.

Our heart is wide open You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections Now in return for the same I speak as children as to children You also Be open Think in your mind Maybe you can remember or maybe you can just imagine But consider in your mind for a moment that person or that family they come to your church and They are so excited They're absolutely thrilled That they never heard

somebody just open up the Bible and go through a passage and explain it You know, all they've heard is sort of sermonettes for Christian acts And the pastor lecture and go on and on But they're thrilled that here it is the Bible's right in front of us and we can understand it and and all they grow and boy, do they get plugged in and And you know, it's not just that they're there but there's a personal relationship with them And they're they're fed They're supporting they're loving They're present You say oh these these are some of the very precious precious people that the Lord has given us And then it's hard to put your finger on it But over time maybe something kind of changes it begins a sort of a slow progression You know, you just don't see them around as much anymore You know, it used to be that just about every time the church was open there they were Now, well, yeah, they're pretty consistent on Sunday, you know, unless this or that or the other thing comes up And so they're still there. I mean you're still their pastor and this is still their church But but you think about and it's not the same They they stop serving perhaps Maybe they stop or cut back on giving You hear whispers around the church that they're dissatisfied And it's hard to put your finger on it. You don't really have anything hard It's just sort of the whispers the rumors and you don't know exactly what to do You see less and less of them and it's more and more awkward Until the day that you get it and you know what I'm talking about.

You get the letter Have you ever received the letter? If you have you know exactly what I'm talking about if you haven't just give it a little bit of time And you wonder what happened you think back to when you first knew them and when they first started coming They used to like it here what happened That they used to support you and stand beside you and behind you what happened They they used to get fed They used to brag on you to other people What happened to that? I? Want you to know that the Apostle Paul had the same problem and he talks about it here in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 Let me read the text to you again as he appeals to the the Corinthian Christians. He says Oh Corinthians We've spoken openly to you. Our heart is wide open You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own Affections now in return for the same I speak as to children you also be open Paul knew What it was like to deal with people who had closed their hearts to him and Who had closed their hearts in one sense at least to the work of the Lord Paul knew what it cost Closed hearts are costly You know the word isn't sweet to people anymore When their hearts closed, you know, sometimes you can look at somebody in the congregation.

You just have that sense They're not open They have just a particular countenance about them where they're not drinking it in They're just kind of yeah pastor blah blah blah closed hearts are generally cranky and Dissatisfied you just get that feeling about them That they no longer seem to want to joyfully serve the Lord They don't seem to want to share in the hardships of the ministry anymore Then there's another aspect to the closed heart It's when the pastor closes his heart and when the pastor Loses or diminishes his Shepherd's heart for the people Well, I'm excited about this text Because to me it shows that Paul Attempted to open closed hearts. I can't say that. I've always had that attitude Sometimes when I've seen closed hearts, I've just given up Well, what can you do look either they like me or they don't and Maybe in the end that is the final analysis, but but Paul said that's not where I'm going to start Paul said I want to speak to these closed hearts.

Look at how he speaks verse 11. He begins. Oh Corinthians You can't read that without sensing some of Paul's passion I Mean he's stopping him some just Oh Corinthians, it's a plea to dear brothers and sisters people.

He deeply loves I am absolutely amazed that the Apostle Paul when I see his passion and this is what amazes me about him is We know that Paul was a man of staggering intellect Many of you read the book of Romans lately Have you read the letter to the Ephesians lately? This was the man who could get

together on Mars Hill in Athens and go at it with the most Brilliant minds of the day the Apostle Paul was an intellectual giant But he was also a man of deep passion of real heartfelt conviction for the people Man just just as an aside and I won't walk down this trail more than just a couple of steps Don't don't think that you're progressing in your intellectual or Academic things of the gospel and theology and all don't ever let it rob you of your passion for God's people. I See that happen sometimes perhaps you have to You know, we're not behind the pulpit as the as the chief egghead in the church And if there's anything that we can learn from from pastor Chuck and Other teachers and we really respect in the Calvary Chapel movement. It's the simplicity believe me It's a simplicity that's backed up with with tremendous understanding of the scriptures It's not simple mindedness, but it is a simplicity Paul was a man who could have incredible Intellectual achievement and understanding the man he loved God's people and he pours it out right here, but when he says Oh Corinthians, but then notice what he says next in verse 11.

We have spoken openly to you That's how we've responded to you openly. Our heart is wide open. He begins now if you want to deal with the problem of closed hearts in your congregation Maybe it's just one person you're thinking of as I mentioned this Let me tell you where to begin.

It's where you begin with every problem you begin with yourself You've learned this in your marriage haven't you I I'm beginning to learn it. I Must confess that there were years when I kind of had the attitude I would never say it I was too smart for that, but it was in my heart I thought the main problem in our marriage was my wife and when my wife, you know started really getting right Then then then things would look up in our marriage What a fool I was. I can't believe how foolish I was and Now I guess generally I used to pray this About my wife.

I used to pray Lord bless me and change her You Know what that to live one week with with that kind of foolishness is sinful To live a few years with it is an absolute crime. I Tell you if you want to pray for your marriage if you want to pray for your congregation Pray Lord bless them and change me Now in the scenario that I spelled out for you in the beginning One of the sheep close their heart towards the shepherd But you and I know that the opposite can happen as well now I'm gonna say pastor a lot and refer to pastor I know that many of you are not strictly in pastoral ministry But please just apply what I say to pastor and apply it to you in your own ministry because most all the same principles apply But you know that a pastor can close his heart towards the people Either certain people in particular or the congregation in general And here Paul is is telling the Corinthian Church this wonderful testimony that he has not Closed his heart towards them Notice how he puts it in both ways verse 11. We have spoken openly to you In other words our words were completely open and sometimes that's far easier for us to be open with our words Amen, I preach the whole gospel to those people.

I didn't hold anything back. I taught them the whole counsel of God's Word We'll praise the Lord. That's what you should be doing pastor at the same time.

Look at what Paul adds to that in verse 11 We have spoken openly to you. Our heart is wide open Couldn't we say that for effective ministry pastor you need both? You need to preach the whole word. You need to have an open book before them, but you also need to have an open heart and when we think that there's a problem with with closed hearts either with the congregation as a whole or or More likely it's with one or two individuals that six to eight people that Sandy mentioned in the previous message Look first to yourself Because you can get to the place in ministry.

We're honestly you just don't love the sheep You don't care for them as you once did It's not a good place to be But here's the good news Closed hearts can be opened They really can God can change closed hearts and we don't always think that way Sometimes we take a fatalistic attitude about them either in others or in ourselves. Well, you know, my heart's closed I guess the love's gone time to move on They may say it or you may say it but friends. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way Although God uses all things for his glory and sometimes when God wants to move somebody on You'll find this opening or a closing of hearts and that but you know, it doesn't have to be such a mess Do we really believe that Paul in Barnabas that the only possible way that they could have split up into two more effective Missionary teams was for them to have a big conflict If they were really listening to the Lord and guided by the Spirit I suppose it could have happened in a very peaceful amicable way.

I Mean God used it the way it did happen but maybe there was a higher way a better way that it might have happened and And I think that we should always look for closed hearts to be open and never be fatalistic about it The mere fact that Paul appeals to the Corinthians and says open your hearts to us It shows that that it can be done. Maybe it's hard. Maybe it doesn't happen all the time Maybe your odds of success are low.

Maybe you'll be successful less than half the time Maybe it'd be 10% of the time But shouldn't we take the example of the Apostle Paul and say I'm going to appeal to closed hearts whether that closed heart is in me or in somebody else Again, it's no guarantee, but you can at least do what Paul did But friends let me say especially that if it's your heart that's closed that can change You can return to your first love not just for the Lord, but for your congregation It can be that sweet again. Don't tell me it can't Because it can be that way in your marriage, right? Somebody comes to your office for marriage counseling Pastor the fire is just kind of out in my marriage and I don't love my wife the way that I used to and and you Know it's just hard. What do you say to the guy? What move on better find somebody else? You'd never say that You do the right thing You you encourage and you comfort that mean it can be it can be better than it ever was before It won't be easy.

It'll take some work, but it really can be better Although you have to say that the worst situations probably are when it isn't just a closed heart on behalf of the congregation or a few individuals or Not just a closed heart on behalf of the pastor, but when both of them have closed hearts That's a disaster in the making, isn't it? Now here's something else about open and closed hearts that you'll notice here. Look at what Paul says in verse 12 He says you are not restricted by us This gives us an important indication as to how hearts become closed Paul says we didn't do it We're not restricting you as a matter of fact, he says in verse 12, but you are restricted by your own affections Here's the principle Hearts often close out of perceived injury Look down to chapter 7 verse 2 Paul's continuing on in the same theme He says open your hearts to us. We have wronged.

No one we've corrupted No one and we've cheated. No one Why would Paul have to write that? Unless it was the opinion of some of the Corinthian Christians that he had in fact wronged them That he had in fact cheated them That he had in fact injured them in some way You see the Corinthian Christians played the victim before Paul out of godly Necessity the Apostle Paul had to be firm with them on previous occasions Have you ever read the letter to first the first letter to the Corinthians? He really gets down pretty strongly with them, doesn't he? He really confronts them and there they are in the Corinthian Church. Oh Paul you're hurting our feelings.

I Guess you don't love us. I guess you don't really you probably are a mercenary Paul just like some among us say you are and Because they perceived that Paul injured them They closed their heart to him Suppose that we would love to reconcile with you Paul, but the pain that you caused us Restricts us. We just can't get over it What does Paul say look at verse 12? You are not restricted by us He Lays it right on the line.

You see the real problem was that the Corinthian Christians were restricted by their own Affections it wasn't that Paul did not love them enough. That's how they wanted to feel as victims Now, you know the real problem was and we'll touch on it more in just a little bit The real problem among the Corinthian Christians was that they loved too much their own Affections restricted them Friends when you find closed hearts Most all the time There's a sense of injury Involved, you know what Paul said in chapter 7 verse 2 Open your hearts to us. We've wronged.

No one we've corrupted. No one we've cheated. No one That's our desire to be able to say that in the ministry, isn't it? at the same time We know that sometimes we hurt our people don't we Isn't that a terrible burden to live with in the ministry That thing you said that you really wish you could take back The decision that you made and you know, it was the right decision, you know, the decision was from God but man, you were like a bull in a China shop the way that you implemented it and you just shouldn't have done it that way and People were hurt Or that thing that you really should have said to somebody but she didn't Phone call you didn't return and that person has never forgotten You know what I'm talking about, don't you As pastors we we injure folks prayerfully never ever deliberately But it's just sort of the in the in the give-and-take of normal relationships with people there's always going to be a little bit of stepping on them toes and that's why Paul says that there has to be grace and Love and forgiveness among Christians and our people need to be taught to have forgiving hearts towards us Not that it's some kind of blank check for us to hurt and offend people and and drive them up the wall Anyway, we want well, then you just forgive me brother.

I'm sorry, but but you know what I'm talking about that people need to be able to deal with our own weaknesses and our own inabilities and Friends I think what's really required of this Us in this I should say is to be humble as as ministers to recognize that we're capable of hurting our people and when we do To not endlessly beat ourselves up about it Oh, I know that there's some folks who would like you to don sackcloth and ashes and walk around, you know Depriving yourself of all but bread and water for about 30 days just to demonstrate your repentance to everybody No, but but a sincere Heartfelt apology and asking for forgiveness and then moving on That they deserve that from us, don't they?

They don't deserve a proud or an arrogant pastor Who just refuses to see that he was wrong Say I I am sorry, I wish I would have done that better. Please forgive me now What amazes me about this is that the Apostle Paul had given them no Reason to feel injured and yet they still did feel that way And we shouldn't be surprised that people will feel injured by us when they have absolutely no reason to feel injured or Sometimes they will feel Greatly injured by us when really we've done a very small thing Satan is there not only to create some things out of nothing but also to Amplify and to pump up things that are really very small But friends we need to take our role and be humble be Be quick to ask for forgiveness among our people If we can't be the examples of perfection among them then let us be the examples of repentance But maybe it's even more problematic of what we should do when our people hurt us Have you known a betrayer or two in your congregation Have you known somebody who stabbed you in the back?

Have you known people who they would never do it openly but behind the scenes? it just seems like wherever they go conflict goes and It hurts us as pastors doesn't We can't just act like the cold technical CEO and just say well, you know, it's just a business thing It's not a bit. It is personal for us God wants us to love our people and to extend our hearts towards them and friends having an open heart means that you're going to be hurt sometimes So, what do you do when your people hurt you when you feel I've man what's going on here?

It's like the pastor who said well, how big's your congregation and the other pastor said well, I've got 50 active members 25 are active for me and 25 are active against me But you know, you're going to face some of that and so you just have to deal with it as the cost of ministry you just have to be grown up about it and Say I'm serving the Lord Jesus Christ Lord, even when people injure me don't let my heart become closed Don't let it become contracted because that's always the temptation you hurt me And so I never want to go near you again God forbid To be in the ministry means to lay your heart out on the line where sometimes it's going to get hurt And if you think that you're some unique case just follow the life of the Apostle Paul follow the life of our Lord Jesus follow the life of David in the Old Testament follow anybody's life You'll see that it's just part of ministry the kind of attacks and criticism and things that you have to bear But friends you have to bear it without closing your heart Let me say one other thing before we move on to the next point here in in verse 12 If you're not the pastor But you're in a support role.

I Want you to take special care that you don't let your heart grow closed towards your pastor You see you're involved in ministry with him in a special way Honestly you see things that other people don't see Your pastor is around you in more of his unguarded moments And he may say things that you know, you just have no business being hurt by just forget about it Charles Spurgeon in his wonderful book lectures to my students Has a chapter in there that I recommend to everybody in ministry It's called the blind eye and the deaf ear and the basic theme of it Is there are many things in ministry to which you should just turn a blind eye and a deaf ear And maybe you're in one of those support positions to your pastor and you said well, you know I mean, I never knew my pastor might might say something like that or do something like that Listen he's a man just like you Don't you say foolish things in unguarded moments? Of course you do don't you wish other people would just forget about those things, of course you do Realize that hurts are just part of the ministry forgive him and get over it Plead with God for an open heart This is where it begins So verse 12 tells us in part that hearts are closed out of a sense of injury whether it's justified or not if People have a sense of injury from a pastor They may close their hearts towards him or if the pastor has a sense of injury from the congregation He may close his heart towards the congregation But that's not the only reason Look at it again here in verse 12. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections Say well, what do you mean by that Paul? You know, he's going to explain for us Look at it right here in verse 14. You might be surprised by the context here verse 14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion has light with darkness? You know that passage you've used it many times in counseling You use it many times in teaching and it has a wonderfully broad valid application, doesn't it? But I want you to see Paul's context here He's pleading with the Corinthians that they would open up their heart to him and As he pleads with them, he says listen, I'll tell you what part of the problem is is your worldly You're not thinking in the pattern of Jesus Christ.

You're thinking after the pattern of this world You are too closely joined to the thinking and the actions of this world And that's one of the reasons why you've closed your heart to me I'll put it this way closed hearts can also be caused by worldliness I've never heard it myself Maybe you have but but it would be

new to me if somebody said I am so in love with Jesus that I can't stand my pastor and that's why Paul deals with the unequally yoked section immediately following this And the problem with the Corinthian Christians was as I said a little bit earlier. They loved too much You see it. Well sure they loved Paul, but you know, their love towards Paul was cooling off because what they really loved was the world But they also loved themselves too much And when Paul tried to deal with them, they responded in a selfish worldly attitude We have to in ourselves in our congregations draw ourselves and our people so close to Jesus that their hearts will be open Friends if you're really close to Jesus, I can't see that you have a closed heart To whatever degree your distance from his love from his heart from his fellowship that's going to be the same to degree your hearts closed We live in a very cynical age It's worldly thinking that makes people say well, you know, I know the pastor says he loves us But he really doesn't there has to be another motive Now he must be in it because he can't get another job He must be in it for the glory Right the glory That kind of cynical thinking is is unequally yoked to the worldly thinking of this age and Because the Corinthians didn't have the mind of Christ.

They were unequally yoked I Guess what? It means is that when we see Closed hearts in our congregation. We have to exhort them to a close daily walk with Jesus Now I want to are you really walking with the Lord closely and is your fellowship sweet and beautiful with him? I Would say probably most the time not if they're closing their heart towards you But friends it also applies to the pastor You Must be exhorted to a close daily walk with Jesus It's not as easy in the ministry as many people think is it? It's possible just to get in that mechanical routine We don't want that We want our own Experience with Jesus to be fresh and beautiful and filled with life Where we love him and we're not connected with the things of the world But rather we're just so close to Jesus that our hearts are open The heart of Jesus towards his people towards your congregation. Is it open or closed? He loves them He sees all of their faults.

He sees him better than you do He knows it all and he loves them with an open heart Well, if we're close to the heart of Jesus our hearts going to be open to now for the next point look at verse 13 Now in return for the same I speak as to children You also be open That's another very important point We can make an appeal to the closed heart You can't just say well, okay, sir. Ah, sir. Ah Whatever will be will be if it's open.

It's open if it's closed. It's closed I think we can do what Paul did it won't always work to be honest We don't really know how well it worked among the Corinthians with Paul, but we can appeal to people in love Look again at 2nd Corinthians chapter 7 verse 2 where Paul says Open your hearts to us Literally in the ancient Greek Paul says make room for us in your heart You know there used to be room They used to sit and listen to you and get so fed Now what why don't they anymore? Is it because you've suddenly become a terrible Bible teacher? Probably not It's because something has probably happened in them a sense of injury not walking as close to Jesus as they should and So now their hearts closed and they'll look you square in the eye and say pastor. I don't get fed by you anymore It's strange how people will say that sometimes Now I understand completely that not every teacher is for every person There are some people that you're going to get more from than others Some people will connect better with just the way you think and and your bizarre mind than than other people will But I I scratch my head Sometimes if I hear somebody said well, you know a pastor Chuck doesn't really feed me What are you talking about? That's I say well reading the Bible doesn't really feed me Enough not that Chuck speaks the oracles of God just like the scripture.

I would never want to imply that of course But you know what when a man has a track record like that This is a man who feeds the sheep It's not like he's not on a valuation anymore He's proven it's like the person

who goes to the to the Art Museum and they're looking at the Rembrandt And I'm trying to decide if I really think this Rembrandt guy can paint anything You know, it comes to the point where it's not the painter that's on trial. It's you and your judgment and so the point is is that people can make room for us in their heart as pastors and Then suffer from a tightening or a closing of that room and it can come back. I Think sometimes we need to just appeal to them.

It's something that we as individuals have some control over. It doesn't just happen to us sometimes we want to tell ourselves and we follow again a worldly way of thinking when we think this way that having your heart open or closed is like being in love or out of love and You know what the world tells us look either you're in love or you're not in love if you're in love There's nothing you can do about it. If you're not in love.

Well, there's nothing you can do about it It's in people apply that same thinking to having an open or closed heart towards the pastor Hey either I have it or I don't if it's open. Well, praise God nothing I can if it's closed nothing I can do about it. It's not true.

You know, it's not true in terms of romantic love You know that in a marriage where romantic love is dead that if those people will follow what the Bible tells them to do There can be a beautiful and a glorious resurrection of romantic love in that marriage Many of you have lived that It's the same way in the relationship that people have with their pastor You see the person with a closed heart likes to think that there's nothing that can be done about it Oh, and I've seen pastors that way before their congregations They have closed their heart to the people that they minister to and that pastor wants to act like well There's nothing that can be done about it. No Pastor your heart can change you see when when we encounter closed hearts This is what we will endeavor to do. First of all, I think we need to pray intelligently You know when I started to understand of some of what Paul said here in 2nd Corinthians I think one of the greatest Encouragements it was for me was in my prayer life because I felt like I had a handle on something to pray for Not only in those people but in myself Lord have I injured those people in some way? Let me let me Lord help me to deal with that Lord help them to have an open heart I remember it once was open and and and it saddens me to see it closed Lord open up their hearts again I think the first thing we need to do is take this understanding and use it to pray intelligently But the second thing we need to do Is make sure our own heart is open Pastor isn't that where it always begins Doesn't good ministry always flow through us God's done a work in us and then can move it through us to other people So check your own heart get down on your own knees before God and say God open up my heart to this person I know they've hurt me But help me to be much like my Lord Jesus who even when he was hurt he opened up his heart towards other people If you want an illustration of Jesus with his marvelous open heart picture Jesus Putting forth that special piece of bread that denoted special honor and privilege and holding it out to Judas That's an open heart So first we pray intelligently secondly, we make sure our own heart is open third.

We try to remove any sense of injury My friends you you can't always do this Because if they were felt injured by the Apostle Paul, and he did nothing sometimes there's nothing we can do about it, but we can try We can do whatever we can before the Lord to try to remove any sense of injury that that person may have towards us Fourth I think we exhort them to an on-fire walk with Jesus. We make sure that we're in the same place Then fifth we we passionately appeal if that's the direction that God leads us to You know Maybe if the Lord would lead you with that Particular person that you can't get out of your mind as I've been speaking on this subject here this morning Maybe you need to sit down and have a little Bible study with them From 1st Corinthians chapter 6 verses 11 12 and 13 And say you know what? I'm wondering if if

hearts aren't getting closed here when God wants them to be really open But you can make a passionate appeal to the folks Then finally after all of that's done. What do you do next? Well, you leave it with Jesus You really do because you can appeal to their heart, but don't ever think for a moment that you can change their heart That's the work of the Lord alone, isn't it? But you can't appeal to their heart.

That's what the Apostle Paul did But at the end of the day all you can do all you really want to do is leave it with Jesus the real key my friends is with our own heart Open hearts will be hurt Sometimes I tell people about the ministry. I tell them that The ministry will give you the greatest joys you can imagine and It will also break your heart It will it's just part of it. That's that's where God wants us to be With hearts that are open and vulnerable enough so that they could be broken Open hearts will get hurt from time to time but friends open hearts are the ones that are close to Jesus And that's where we want to be Father I pray you would touch my heart Make it always open before my brothers and sisters Help me to have an open heart before my congregation God and Lord, especially with difficult people There are always a few Lord that That especially need an open heart for me, but God I pray for a deep work of your spirit among us now We've heard your word.

We understand it God You know Lord doing it is not easy And so we plead with you to keep our hearts open I pray especially Lord for the pastors wives Lord oftentimes they bear hurt and injury That that just seems so far out of proportion That God we pray that such a beautiful work of your spirit would take place And That you'd mend some broken hearts and keep them always very open before you I Pray for the person here this morning Lord That even if they never put it in these words, they vowed that they would never have an open heart again They're just tired of being hurt Give them the heart of Jesus Keep us close to the heart of Jesus and thank you Lord for the ministry that you've given us We pray this God in Jesus name Amen

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