

*Your Beautiful Heart*  
Discussion Guide

foreword by jason kennedy

your *beautiful* heart



31 reflections on love,  
faith, friendship, and  
becoming a girl who shines

lauren scruggs

with lisa velthouse

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# Your Seeking Heart

## 1. A Heart at the Center

1. Look up 1 Samuel 16, especially verse 7. What is happening in this story? What does verse 7 tell us about God's perspective?
2. In what ways does our world center on looks? What should it tell us when our world's focus is so different from what we find in God's Word?
3. "God is obsessed with your heart." Do you believe this? Why or why not?

## 2. A Heart That Is Loved

1. The message that Jesus died in our place and freely gives us his righteousness is known as the *gospel*, which means "good news." Why is the word *gospel* and its meaning so fitting?
2. Have you ever thought that God is like a cop on patrol? How does the story of his love change that?
3. How does it impact you, knowing that God loves you as much as he does?

## 3. A Heart That Receives

1. What does it mean that God's grace is free? What does that tell you about how much God loves people?
2. "He put every ounce of pressure on himself. It's silly to try to pick up some of it for yourself when he has already carried it all." Do you think of God's forgiveness in this way? Explain.
3. What can you do to keep your obedience thankful and focused joyfully on God's grace?

## 4. A Heart That Believes

1. One criminal on a cross beside Jesus was promised paradise. What was that criminal's perspective of Jesus? What was the other criminal looking at?
2. "We make sense of our circumstances by looking at God." What does this mean?
3. What is difficult in your life right now? How can you remember God's goodness and trust him in spite of difficult circumstances?

## 5. A Heart That Worships

1. “If people under *these* circumstances can so easily put an idol in God’s place, that’s saying something about people. It’s saying something about . . . us, too.” What about the Israelites’ circumstances should have made their commitment to God particularly strong?
2. “An idol . . . is the thing that, if you lost it, would make your world fall apart.” What idol or idols are you most attracted to? What attracts you to it/them?
3. How have you seen, either in your own life or in someone else’s, that idols are never satisfied? By contrast, where do we see that God’s love is satisfied?

## Your Changed Heart

### 6. A Heart That Says Thanks

1. Do you ever focus on what you *don’t* have instead of being grateful for what you *do* have? If so, how can remembering God’s forgiveness change your heart?
2. Is God’s forgiveness a constant source of life and strength for gratitude in your heart? If not, what do you think that might suggest about how you view God’s forgiveness?
3. What blessings in your life have you failed to recognize as blessings? What has God given you today and this week and this year that you haven’t yet praised him for?

### 7. A Heart That Knows

1. Read Psalm 1. What does it have to say about knowing God? How rooted would you say you are? How rooted would you like to be?
2. How often do you have God’s Word with you and in your heart? Would you be willing to memorize Psalm 119:11 this week?
3. Following means letting God speak first and *then* responding with action. What’s one particular challenge you face, where you need to hear God’s voice? What does the Bible have to say about that kind of challenge? (If you’re not sure, it’s a great idea to ask a trusted pastor or look up some passages with a Christian mentor/friend. Sometimes a simple Internet search can help get you pointed in a useful direction too.)

### 8. A Heart That Listens

1. What’s one weakness in your life where you can rely on the Holy Spirit for strength?

2. Are there emotions or areas of selfishness that you find easier to listen to than the Holy Spirit? How can you trust the Holy Spirit to outshine those things in your life?
3. Do you trust that God will lead you toward only what's best for you? Why or why not? If not, what do you think is wrong about your perspective?

### **9. A Heart That Heals**

1. Read Psalm 34:17-19. What does this passage tell us about how God responds to our hurts and troubles?
2. What kind of pain are you facing, and how does that struggle reveal your need for God?
3. David asked for the help he knew God could give. In what way(s) can you ask God to be your help through trials or suffering? In what way(s) can you move forward with praise, remembering and trusting that God has been good to you?

### **10. A Heart That Overflows**

1. Have you avoided talking with others about God and faith? If so, whom have you avoided? Why?
2. This chapter talks about how *we* are the Samaritan woman. What does that mean?
3. Read Matthew 28:16-20. These are the last words Jesus spoke to his followers before he went back to be with God. What does he tell them to do? How does he encourage them? How can we be challenged and encouraged by this too?

## **Your Obedient Heart**

### **11. A Heart That Sees Sin**

1. Have you ever mistakenly thought that obedience is the same as sinlessness? What does the parable of the two sons suggest about that?
2. Do you think that there are things you want from God (blessings, influence, comfort, a good name, etc.) more than you actually want God himself? What's one of the greedy idols in your own heart?
3. Read Luke 15:31-32. What does the father's response to his son tell us about the father? What hope does that help us have, as humans whose hearts are gripped by sin?

## **12. A Heart That Repents**

1. One of the ways we hurt others is by stealing from them, whether their joy, their attention, their material stuff, their relationships, their efforts, their reputations, or their rewards. What are some other ways we might hurt people by stealing from them?
2. What's one thing you've recently taken for yourself at someone else's expense? How does that demonstrate your rebellion against God? How would repentance before God change you and affect this situation?
3. How does turning our focus to God help us love other people?

## **13. A Heart That Rests**

1. One of the Ten Commandments that God gives his people is that they should "remember to observe the Sabbath" and rest from their work one day a week. Do you remember the Sabbath in your life? If not, how do you think things might change if you did?
2. How long did it take for the disciples to begin understanding who Jesus was and what his ministry was about? How can that be encouraging to us? How can that challenge us in the ways we follow Jesus today?
3. What's some of the noise that tends to grab your attention? How does it keep you from listening for God and spending time with only him?

## **14. A Heart That Celebrates**

1. How do you look at the topic of obedience? Do you view it as a celebration, or are you more likely to think of it as a nuisance or a chore? What does that suggest about how you view God?
2. What does God's pattern of "love first, command later" tell us about him? Does that change how you think about his commands? If so, how?
3. What's one area of obedience that you struggle with? Do you think your struggle has something to do with doubting God's right to have authority? Does it have something to do with you doubting God's care? How do you think you might discover joy in this area of obedience?

## **15. A Heart That Chooses**

1. When the Corinthians ask Paul about food, what is his response? What can we learn from his reply?

2. What is one behavior in your life that you're not sure is right or wrong? How much have you thought about whether it's right or wrong?
3. With that one behavior in mind, ask yourself the questions in the paragraph that begins with "When you have a choice to make." What becomes clear after asking these questions? How do you think you should respond? (If you're still not sure, ask a trusted Christian friend or mentor to help you think through these questions.)

## Your Heart for Others

### 16. A Heart That Gets Vulnerable

1. What's the connection between forgiveness from God and vulnerability with other people? How do we see that in Jesus' story of the tax collector?
2. What's a weakness in you that you have a hard time letting others see? In what ways is it difficult for you to be vulnerable with people?
3. How should remembering God's forgiveness help you be more vulnerable with others? What's one way that you can practice that this week?

### 17. A Heart That Is Wise

1. If you could ask God for one thing, would it really be wisdom? Why or why not? What does that suggest about how you feel about God and about yourself? (In answering these questions, it might help to compare your responses to Solomon's.)
2. What might your friends and family say is a destructive behavior pattern in your life? What makes it destructive? In what ways does it show an absence of wisdom?
3. Read James 1:5. What would be the first thing that would change about you if you had an understanding heart, one that knows the difference between right and wrong? Are you willing to ask God for that? Why or why not?

### 18. A Heart That Serves

1. Why do we tend to care for ourselves before caring for others? What does that say about how much we're thinking about what God has done for us?
2. Can you think of a person you would have a difficult time serving? Why is it hard to imagine serving that person? How should the story of Jesus' sacrifice change how you think about

that person?

3. What's one specific way you can follow Jesus' example by serving someone else?

### **19. A Heart That Is True**

1. In what way(s) are you fragmented and divided? Have you welcomed Jesus into your life, while at the same time giving your primary focus to something or someone else?
2. Have you ever changed yourself or hidden aspects of yourself in a way that doesn't glorify God? In that instance, who was the person or what was the thing you were glorifying instead of glorifying God?
3. How does accepting God's love help us be true in our other relationships? What's one specific way that God's love could help you be true in another relationship today?

### **20. A Heart That Uplifts**

1. Have you ever seen another person give to others, at a cost to himself or herself? How did that affect you or those who were served?
2. In his letter to the Philippians, what does Paul say church community should look like? Do your relationships with people in your life look like that?
3. How does an attitude like Jesus' impact our actions? How does your attitude lately compare with Jesus'?

### **21. A Heart That Confronts**

1. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy." How does this verse relate to the chapter we just read?
2. God's love confronts sin. What does that suggest to us if we want to share God's love with others?
3. Sadly, we often become aware of sins in others because we've sinned along with them. Are some of the sins you've seen in others' lives sins that you need to repent of too?

### **22. A Heart That Forgives**

1. What are the two messages that Jesus presents in the story of the woman caught in adultery? (Hint: One is to the religious leaders; one is to the woman.) Why is it necessary for us to see

that *both* these messages apply to us?

2. Who is someone in your life that you need to forgive? Do you think of yourself as a sinner, just like they are, or do you tend to think of yourself as better than they are?
3. Hurts happen in every relationship. How can you foster a spirit of forgiveness with the people you care about most? With the people who've hurt you most?

## Your Distinctive Heart

### 23. A Heart That Delights

1. What are some of the insecurities you face? According to this chapter, what is at the root of them? How do you see that this is true?
2. How does Ephesians 2 show us that we don't need to be afraid of being unworthy of God? Do you believe that? Why or why not?
3. How would things change for you if you thought of yourself as God's masterpiece? How would knowing you have God's approval change some of your insecurities?

### 24. A Heart That Fills Up

1. When you think of the word *beautiful*, what do you typically think of? In what ways have you seen yourself or others living as if beauty equals fullness?
2. When the people ask Jesus for bread, how does he respond? What does his response teach them about himself? What does it teach them about themselves?
3. How did God use Lauren's conversation with her dad to help show her what "beautiful" really means? How might having a correct understanding of "beautiful" change how you look at yourself?

### 25. A Heart That Dreams

1. What are some of the dreams God seems to have placed in your heart? Have you ever doubted that God could work through them?
2. What positions did Joseph hold throughout his story, and how did God use them?
3. Looking at Joseph's life, how do you think we should understand the word *ministry*? What does that mean for potential ministry opportunities in your life?

## **26. A Heart That Dares**

1. What are some of the obstacles that hinder or keep you from following God faithfully? How do they typically get in the way?
2. What does it mean that God didn't let any obstacles get in the way of his love for us? How do we see that?
3. Knowing how God dares for us, how should that change how we dare for him? What's one area of your life where you want to dare for God? How can you start?

## **27. A Heart That Includes**

1. Have you ever excluded someone else or gone along with excluding someone else? Why? What kept you from standing up for that person?
2. In the time of Abraham and Isaac, what was so remarkable about how God's covenant worked? What does that say about God?
3. What does it mean that we all deserve to be outsiders because of our sinfulness? Since we've been given God's acceptance anyway, how should that change the way we think about including others?

# **Your Heart Looking Forward**

## **28. A Heart That Trusts**

1. Have you ever seen your own plans for your life fall flat? When and how? Has God taught you something through that experience? If not, what do you think you could still learn from him because of it?
2. Read Acts 9:10-19. What was Saul doing before Ananias went to visit him? What do you think we can learn from this?
3. Do you trust God's plan for your life? Are you more interested in his glory than you are in your own plans? If not, how do you think that it would help to find his glory in them?

## **29. A Heart That Fears**

1. "Typically we have a hard time thinking of fear as a good thing." Why?
2. According to the Bible, what kinds of fears are bad fears? Why does this make sense, given what we know about God?

3. What circumstances, people, or things are most likely to make you afraid? How should fearing the Lord affect that?

### **30. A Heart That Hopes**

1. If it's true that "everyone has a struggle," what's yours right now? What's the hardest or most painful part of your current struggle?
2. What does it mean that in spiritual training, pain is a signal? Do you react to trials and struggles in this way?
3. What's so great about perseverance? Why should we want to consistently rely on God's strength in our struggles? How do you think you can begin doing that or keep doing that today?

### **31. A Heart That Waits**

1. In the Old Testament, the Israelites sacrificed animals. What did that signify about God's love for them? How did Jesus' death demonstrate God's love to an even fuller extent?
2. What does it mean to live both in the "already" and the "not yet"? What has God given us already, and what has he promised that hasn't happened yet?
3. What's one way that you can remember to be thankful for the "already"? How can that thankfulness change the way you think about the "not yet"?