

“Testing the Heart”

John 11:17-27

In 2020, my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. As part of her treatment, the oncologist recommended several infusions of chemotherapy drugs. But before the drugs were administered, the doctor ordered an EKG, that is an electrocardiogram. He wanted to test the health and strength of her heart because one of the side-effects of the chemo drugs is they can damage the heart.

The test showed that her heart was healthy and strong, so she went ahead and followed the chemo regimen. After those treatments and surgery, by the grace of God, she is now cancer free as far as we know.

Hello friend, I'm J. Mark Horst, your host and this program is *Hope for Today*. It is produced by Heralds of Hope, an international Gospel media ministry. Each week the Bible teaching broadcasts of *Heralds of Hope* circle the globe in English and 22 other major languages. Thousands are tuning in each week to receive spiritual nourishment and blessing. We receive many exciting testimonies of people who have come to faith in Jesus by listening to the programs.

If you're tuning in for the first time today, we are currently being led through the Gospel of John by the teaching of the late, Dr. J. Otis Yoder. He was the founder, first president, and Bible teacher for *Hope for Today*. He went home to be with the Lord in the year 2003.

But he taught the Bible in such a way that his teaching never goes out of date. And so, we're rebroadcasting his teaching from the Gospel of John. We are confident that, if you tune in each week, you will be blessed by the clear, simple presentation of biblical truth. And that truth, if you accept it, will change your life now and for eternity.

In just a few moments, Dr. Yoder will come to share his teaching about Jesus. It's titled, "Testing the Heart." But before he does that, let's pray.

Gracious God our Heavenly Father, we come to you in the precious name of Jesus. It is alone through Him that we have access into your holy presence. His blood, shed on the cross at Calvary, is the only sacrifice that is acceptable to you to wash away our sin.

And now, Father, as Dr. Yoder comes to teach us from the Word, open our hearts to receive your truth. Help us to see the importance of allowing your Holy Spirit to test our hearts. This I ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Whenever you go to the doctor for an examination, he most likely will check your heart. He will test your heart. He will listen and he will check your pulse. I want to talk to you about TESTING THE HEART in another way.

We all have certain standards by which we measure or test the propositions we hear or the articles we buy, the clothing we buy. We make certain tests, and we want to be sure that what we buy is of good quality.

In life we must also make certain tests to determine the realities that we have to deal with. We are so made that the inner part of our being must undergo some of these tests. That's why I'm talking about testing the heart. The conditions in life sometimes form those tests.

From John 11:17-27, we read of an experience of two sisters' hearts that were tested.

17 *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

18 *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:*

19 *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

20 *Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.*

21 *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

22 *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

23 *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*

24 *Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

25 *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

26 *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

27 *She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

From Martha's experience I discover certain APPROACHES to the testing of the heart.

The first approach is by **The Limitation of Friends**.

The neighbors came. This text told us the neighbors came to comfort Mary and Martha. It was what you might call a community of comfort. But what could these people do? The brother was dead. So all they could do was try to sympathize. Well, I'm sure the sisters appreciated this, but it didn't restore the brother or help a great deal in lifting their sorrow. Here was a real test of heart, to be able to endure this trial. At the same time these friends tried their best to comfort.

Then Martha heard that Jesus was coming and she quickly went out to meet Him. But Mary sat still in the house. Mary mourned alone. But Martha quickly went to meet Jesus, the comforter, the real comforter.

Here the heart was being tested by the limitation of the friends. All of us likely have had similar experiences. We have appreciated everything our friends could do. But the real test of the heart meant that we in some way could not actually receive all the comfort that our community of friends offered to us. It can go only so far and that's as far as a comfort of friends can go.

There's a second approach to the test of the heart and that is by **The Stimulation of Hope**.

Martha made a very strong statement when she met Jesus. She said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Evidently Martha believed if Jesus had been there, He would have done something so that their brother would not have died. She expressed this ray of hope. She made this statement of trust. Then she went on to say, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

That is a really outstanding statement of trust. Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Here was that stimulation of hope. Here was Jesus firing up in Martha's heart a ray of hope. She expressed herself like this, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But Jesus meant something more than that. He was helping Martha to build her hope.

The stimulation of hope is an approach to the test of the heart. Yes, "Thy brother shall rise again", Jesus said to Martha. And that was indeed a ray of hope.

There's a third approach by **The Formulation of Faith.**

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

I'm asking you the same question that Jesus asked Martha. Do you believe this? Jesus in this statement is saying much, much more than many people attribute to Him. He is more than a prophet. He is more than a good teacher. He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life". Now weigh His words carefully, dear friend, because you should follow in the same way that Martha followed with an affirmation of faith. She said, "Lord, I believe." She said, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world."

There Martha formulated her faith in a marvelous statement. I believe the heart is tested by this formulation of faith.

My friend, by these approaches, your heart is tested, too: by the limitation of friends, who can only go so far; by the stimulation of hope from the Lord Jesus; and by the formulation of your faith, I believe.

I urge you to follow Martha in these approaches and believe like she did, that Jesus is the Son of God who should come into the world.

Thank you, Dr. Yoder for showing us from this portion of Holy Scripture how to test our hearts, how to make sure our hope and faith are placed firmly in Jesus. My friend, have you placed your faith and hope in Jesus for eternal life? He is the only one who can provide that for you.

Now, if you were blessed by this teaching and would like an audio CD or a printed copy of it, just write and ask for the teaching "Testing the Heart." We would be happy to send a copy to you as soon as we receive your request.

The quickest way for you to contact us is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. That e-mail address is m-a-i-l@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember, you can request a printed manuscript or an audio CD of this teaching, "Testing the Heart." We'd be happy to send one to you.

And when you contact us, you can request our newest publication, *Hope Herald*. It is a study guide that follows these radio programs and will help you learn more about what we are studying from John's Gospel. So, ask for your free copy of *Hope Herald* today.

Here's the contact information again. The quickest way to reach us is by at this address; mail@heraldsofhope.org. Or write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember; you can request a free copy of this teaching, "Testing the Heart." It's available in print or on an audio CD. And you can also request a free copy of our newest publication, *Hope Herald*. It will help you gain more value from our study in John.

And don't forget our Bible teaching programs are available to you all the time and any time at the website, twr360.org. That's twr360.org. Thousands are logging on to the site for spiritual nourishment and blessing. You can join them and be blessed too!

Now, I urge you to tune in next week as Dr. Yoder continues our study from John's Gospel with an important message titled "Thinking Right." You won't want to miss it. And until then, I urge you to keep looking for that blessed HOPE.