A PLACE OF CHANGE MINISTRY

THE FULL MESSAGE

HEART BEFORE THE WALL

DR. ERIC THOMAS

52 Days of Rebuilding

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> Dr. Eric Thomas goes behind the fifty-two days to the four months nobody preaches -- and tells the truth about a poisoned heart, a GED, and the difference between a heart repaired and a heart replaced.

THE ONE THING

GOD BUILDS THE BUILDER BEFORE HE BUILDS THE WALL. YOU CANNOT BUILD ANYTHING NEW WITH AN OLD HEART.

Pastor preached this last week. What a word. And pastor revealed to us: before the fifty-two, the man of God spent four months with God.

It gave me a strategy. It was a formula. I saw the formula. The formula was: give God four months with just you and Him, and watch what happens.

So I was praying during the week and I said, God, I know a lot of stuff happened in those four months. But tell me one of the things that happened in that four-month process that I need to know.

And God said: one of the things I was doing during those four months is I was building a heart before I built the wall.

> A LOT OF FOLKS BUILD WITH THEIR HAND. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT REAL BUILDING STARTS WITH THE HEART.
>
> Dr. Eric Thomas

You cannot build anything new with an old heart.



From the deck - Heart before the wall

NEW CITY, SAME HEART

I want you to see that this kid right here was destructive, and I did not even know why. Born in Chicago. By the time I am about sixteen, seventeen years old, I am starting to go to church -- Detroit Center Seventh-day Adventist Church. And no matter how much I go to church, no matter how much I read the Bible, stuff is still happening to me.

And I did not realize it was because of this dude's heart.

Can I say this to you? You can go to a new city if you want to. If you take

the same heart with you, the same thing is going to happen when you get to that new city.

God can drop ten million dollars on you -- if you have got that same heart. You can get a divorce and get with another person, and another person after that, and one more after that, and the same stuff is going to keep happening. Why? Because you are bringing the same heart to the table.

I was trying, y'all. I was going to church. After a few months I started dating DD. I was living in an abandoned building. In the winter I had a kerosene heater. I was walking miles to church -- from Fenkell and Schoolcraft all the way to Puritan and Ward. Every Wednesday night. Every Sabbath.

And nothing was changing. And I did not know why.

And God said: it is your heart. Your heart is not right, son.

Nehemiah spent four months with the Lord. And if I would have just taken four months to spend with the Lord and told the Lord to change my heart --

But I was praying that the Lord change my circumstances. And He said: son, I do not change circumstances. I cannot come to Detroit, I am in heaven. But what I can do is change your heart. And if I change your heart, your circumstance is going to change.

ASK HER WHAT THIS KID'S HEART WAS LIKE

I brought DD up because I do not want you to think I am exaggerating. When you talk about this sixteen-year-old kid, in terms of his heart -- just explain a little bit.

She said: you just did not want to be told what to do. You did not like rules. You did not like structure. You did not like guidelines. Very defiant. A lot of hate. A lot of anger.

That kid was killing me. I was trying to outrun that kid.

Whatever you are looking at that you are trying to change -- it is not going to change unless your heart changes.

CREATE, NOT REPAIR

Let me give you scripture so it makes sense. After his son died, after he fasted and prayed and shaved every hair off his body and put on sackcloth and ashes and would not eat -- and the whole world knew the king had betrayed them, killed a soldier and slept with his wife -- David found himself in a crazy spot.

And the way he changed it was not by doing anything as king. He cried out.

> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
>
> PSALM 51:10

I only say David because God said David was a man after My own heart. If you are going to follow somebody in the Word, follow David. God did not say that about a lot of people.

There are people in the Bible who not only knew God -- God knew them. People say all the time, oh, I know Him. Okay. But does He know you? Can you pick up the phone and will they answer?

David was the person who, when he picked up the phone and called God, God answered. And one of the reasons is that David was transparent with God. He said: God, something is wrong with my heart.

This heart allowed me to kill a man. This heart allowed me to set somebody up. This heart allowed me to take his wife, and not just take his wife, but set him up. This heart allowed me to cover up murder. This heart allowed me to get his wife pregnant, and I lost my son.

I cannot go on with this heart.

That is the problem with a lot of us. You want to keep going on with that heart. That heart is not about to take you to the Promised Land.

> The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
>
> JEREMIAH 17:9 (KJV)

I am sure there is a lot of stuff David did that was not recorded in the Bible. But God said, when you record this, make sure you do not take that out. Put that in there. Make sure My babies know that I know how corrupt they are -- but at some point they have to tell Me how corrupt they are. At some point they have to acknowledge it and stop faking.

I was talking to somebody this week and it was funny, because they were trying to repent. I said, you are repenting, but you are not acknowledging that you are a sinner. You are tiptoeing.

Brother, this process does not work like that. This is not man. With man they tell you, oh, eight hundred credit score -- but if you have got a six-something, they can work with you. This is not that. The earnest money is thirty thousand, but I do not have it, well, we will take twenty-six. This is not that.

He does not take halves. He does not take seventy-five cents. That is what we are used to in the world, so when we come to God we try to play those games with God.

> WHEN YOU COME TO ME, YOU COME WITH A CONTRITE HEART AND A BROKEN SPIRIT. DO NOT COME TO ME PROUD.
>
> Dr. Eric Thomas

THE POISON

So here is what happened, and I did not even know it.

A poisoned heart is not your personality. Something else is in there. I did not know that.

I have been in this church since I was sixteen years old. I went to Oakwood. I have heard the greatest messages in the world. And I have rarely ever heard anybody say that one of Satan's greatest weapons is your heart. I never knew that.

The devil does not have to do anything to you. All he has to do is poison your heart. Once he poisons your heart, it is a wrap. He does not have to do anything else.

I could have been seven. Eight. Nine. I do not even know when. The first time somebody came to me and said, you know that is not your daddy --

your mama is lying to you.

From that day forward, that is when the poison started.

And you know the thing about poison? Poison does not stay in your mouth.

I have seen it multiple times -- a man thinks he is drinking Kool-Aid, he thinks it is Gatorade, but it is antifreeze. And he does not know. He says, this tastes a little bitter, but it is Gatorade. And he drinks several of them. And it goes inside his organs and takes over his organs.

Satan will not tell us that. But that is why the Bible talks about gossip. What gossip does is it poisons like antifreeze. It is not loud. It is subtle. You say certain things, it gets in somebody's ears, and then -- poison.

And my heart started to turn against my mother. The people who were whispering to me knew that would happen, because they were grown and I was a child. They intentionally wanted to poison me, because they knew the best way to get back at my mama and hurt my mama was to hurt her son.

They were strategic Christians. Mature, grown Christians. And my heart turned against my mom -- and I did not even know it had turned against my mom.

WHEN SOMEBODY STABS YOU, YOU KNOW YOU GOT STABBED, SO YOU GO GET IT HEALED. WHEN SOMEBODY POISONS YOU, YOU DO NOT EVEN KNOW.

Dr. Eric Thomas

Here is how you always know it is gossip: they never said what they said to me around my mother. They only said it when I was by myself. And they would always tell me, do not tell your mother we had this conversation.



From the deck - What the poison built

WHAT THE POISON BUILT

So I was getting poisoned, and I became defiant. Rejected authority. Rejected correction. Sought control through rebellion. Aggressive. Bad attitude. Indifferent.

We were going to other churches to fight. One of my boys got baptized, and we knew the crew on the east side, we already knew they had guns, we already knew what was up -- and we still went. I was out of control.

I withdrew. I isolated myself in those abandoned buildings. I refused to get help.

I underperformed in school on purpose. I self-sabotaged anything that was blessed in my life. I ran from opportunities. I stayed inconsistent -- start and stop, start and stop. Went to Oakwood. First semester did okay. Second, third. Fourth -- and eventually dropped out.

I hurt myself to hurt my mother. I used my potential as a weapon. I sabotaged what mattered most.

My mom did not care about anything but school. My mom would read a six-hundred-page book in two days. She loved school. And I said, oh, okay -- since you love school so much, I am going to hate it.

Do not punish other people with your future.

You are not getting back at anybody but yourself. Everything I did to destroy my mother came back to me.

Nehemiah, in those four months, had to get his heart right. Because no matter what opportunity you get, if you have the same heart, you are going to build the same stuff.

My mom tried to get me every counselor. I rejected all of them. First a white woman -- she showed me the inkblot and said, what do you see? I said, ink. She said, no, the image. I said, more ink. Then a white man, he was cool, I said nope. Then a Black woman -- she was dope, and she broke me a little bit, because she said, I do not care anything about your look. But it only lasted a couple of months and I was out.

Any counselor, any help my mom tried to get me, I rejected it. I said, you

are a liar -- how are you going to get me the truth when you are a liar?

Satan had poisoned me.

CORRECTION IS NOT REJECTION

The teacher corrects you. They are not trying to shut you down. Parents set boundaries -- do not turn those boundaries into rebellion. When your parents tell you to do something, trust me, they know your brand. They made you.

I have to tell my son every time I talk to him: I am not coming after you. I am telling you I am you. I played that game. It does not work. This is not judgment. Let me tell you what I did, so you know I am not just beating you down. I just do not want you to go through the same thing I went through.

Coach pushes you. Do not underperform to get even. Whoever it is -- when they push you, do not say, you cannot tell me what to do, I am about to get back at you because you gave me a curfew, because you made me do my homework, because you made me be responsible, because I have to wash dishes. Do not show them with your attitude.

CORRECTION IS NOT PUNISHMENT. CORRECTION IS PRODUCTION ON ANOTHER LEVEL.

Dr. Eric Thomas

> The Bible says God prunes those He loves so that they bear more fruit.
>
> JOHN 15:2, PARAPHRASED

WHAT A HEALED HEART BUILT

Here is what the healed heart did for me. It built trust. It built discipline. It built consistency. It built healthy relationships. It built purpose. It built hope. It built peace. It built freedom.

What did God change as He was changing my heart? I started forgiving. I accepted people for who they were, because of who I am. You missed that part -- you cannot be gentle with others until you can be gentle with yourself.

I took personal responsibility. I stopped putting it on other people. I became teachable.

Tony Knuckles said it before he would teach anybody anything about what Eric became: I need you to understand that I have been doing this for over twenty years for Quicken Loans, and I have not had one student as coachable as Eric was. People want to get to the accolades. He said, no -- we cannot go there first.

Everything he told me to do, I picked up like a sponge. I could have picked it up when I was nine. But I could not pick it up at nine or ten, because my heart was poisoned.

Then humility. Then accountability -- that one took me the longest. Then vulnerability. Then self-control. And then the hard work began.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. That is when everything changed for me academically. When I was not going to school for a grade -- I was going for God.

I went from a GED to a PhD. Why? Because my heart started getting cleansed, and school became a different place for me. When my heart was not right, I hated school.

THIS IS NOT A PICTURE OF ME GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE. THIS IS REDEMPTION.

Dr. Eric Thomas

God gave us our relationship back -- the one the devil tried to steal. Let me tell you something. When you are at odds with your mama, you are at

odds with everybody. There is no other human on the level your mama is on. If you and your mom are beefing, you can beef with any human at any time.

God said, I have to change your heart. I have to give you your heart back for your mama.

You will never get to your New York Times bestseller with a poisoned heart. Whatever is next for you as adults, you will never get there with a poisoned heart. Let that man go out of your heart. Yes, he hurt you. He hurt you twenty years ago and he is still hurting you today. She hurt you ten years ago and she is still hurting you today. Let it go.

Somebody came to me the other day, grown as I am, talking about my daddy. I said, your daddy? You are fifty-some years old. When was the last time? He said, I was sixteen. And you are fifty-six. You mean to tell me forty years later you are still hurt about something that happened when you were sixteen?

Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.

SIT DOWN. WEEP. TELL THE TRUTH.

> And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.
>
> NEHEMIAH 1:4 (KJV)

He built the builder before he built the wall. A lot of you want to build a wall. God said, I need to build the builder first.

When I was homeless, God was so good -- because the conversations me and God had when I was homeless, I never had in my parents' house.

Do not run from the uncomfortable. You are running from God stripping you of everything. I promise you, whatever it is you think you need to be what you need to be -- it is a distraction. God took the house. God took the clothes. God took the car.

God is so good that He overrode my mama. My mom was hurting because I was homeless. She called one of my homeboys and said, find my son and put my son on the phone. I called her. She said, son, where are you staying? I said, I am living in the streets, Ma. She said, come home. I want to give you my car.

And in the old school there was an ashtray. I opened it -- I do not even know why, because I do not smoke. And my mom had some money in the ashtray.

A week later I got into a car accident and totaled the car.

God said: give Me the car. Give Me that money. I want you to

have nothing -- because you will never talk to Me the way you need to talk to Me if you have something.

Some of you think it is punishment because God has taken everything away from you. He is actually taking it away so you can have the most important thing you need to be successful. And that is Him.

My relationship with God started when I sat down and I wept. I said, God, how did I get here? How did I go to school for twelve years, from kindergarten to eleventh grade, and quit my senior year?

I wept. I am in this relationship and I am about to lose this young lady. She is going to college. There is no way I can go to college -- you need an SAT for that, you need an ACT, you need credits. Back in the day I did not think you could get a GED and go to college.

I sat. I wept. I mourned certain days. I fasted. I prayed.

We do not have to go any further. God wants to get you to a point where you sit. Where you weep. How did I get here?

Not coming outside dressed up. When you come out, you want people to see that you have got it together. God says, you are not ready yet -- you are still worried about what they think.

God said to me years ago: how is it that you care so much about what they think, but you do not have the same care for what I think? How did humans get that important to you? I told you to make a decision, and you are tripping on how they are going to respond to what I told you to do.

Number one, sit down. Number two, tell God your real

circumstances.

Stop trying to fake it to yourself and fake it to the world that you are somewhere you are not. Because real healing cannot happen if you will not say where you are.

I asked somebody the other day: when you get sick, what is the first thing you do? They said, take medicine. No. What is the first thing you do? It took ten minutes for them to say: go to the doctor.

I am not sitting there with my son going, I think he has a cold, I think he has the flu. I want somebody who is an expert to say what is really going on. Do not self-diagnose.

Go to God and tell God, I am sick -- and let God tell you. Yes you are, but it is about four generations of sickness. Do not trip. Your grandma had it. Your great grandma had it. And I have got the remedy for it.

> Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
>
> PROVERBS 4:23 (KJV)

What is in you comes out in what you build.

Your bank account is not the issues of life. Your credit score is not the issues of life. Your business is not, your marriage is not. They may reveal them -- but they are not the issues of life.

Your heart is.

FIVE WORDS

Honest. Empty. Ask. Replace. Maintain.

HONEST -- say what is really there.

EMPTY -- you cannot clean what you will not let go of.

ASK -- create in me a clean heart, Lord. Every day.

REPLACE -- let go of the old way. Let God's way rule.

MAINTAIN -- it will not stay clean on its own.

And to my babies, when you go back to school, I want you to pray for your love for God. Because the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. That is when everything changed for me.

DO NOT JUST READ IT

THIS WEEK'S ASSIGNMENT

MONDAY

Sit down and tell the truth

Write one page, for nobody but God, answering: how did I actually get here? No spin, no explaining, no blaming. Nehemiah sat before he ever moved. You are not allowed to start building this week until you have been honest about the ruins.

TUESDAY

Name what comes out under pressure

Go through today and track your reactions - the snap, the shutdown, the sarcasm, the silence. Write down the top three. What comes out of you under pressure is what is going to come out in whatever you build.

WEDNESDAY

Find the poison

Name one thing somebody said about you, or to you, that you are still carrying. Who said it, how old were you, and what has it cost you since? You cannot get healed from a wound you keep calling your personality.

THURSDAY

Take one correction without defending yourself

Ask one person who actually knows you: what is one thing I do that gets in my own way? Then say thank you and nothing else. Do not explain. Do not give context. Correction is not rejection - it is God refusing to let you disappear.

A PLACE OF CHANGE MINISTRY

KEEP BUILDING.

Saturdays at 11:00am.

Notes, slides and the full transcript every week at apoc.kapturedpixel.com/message