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A Heart That Burns Large

“I will run in the way of your commandments,
when you enlarge my heart!”

Psalm 119:32

IN WELL-TRAINED ATHLETES, THE HEART enlarges and strengthens, pumping more blood with each beat. This lowers the resting heart rate (often into the 40s or 30s bpm) and improves the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to muscles. The result is enhanced endurance, greater stamina, improved cardiovascular efficiency, and faster recovery. This natural enlargement is the body’s way of expanding capacity – a perfect metaphor for spiritual or emotional “largeness of heart.”

In 1 Kings 4:29, it says that “God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the seashore.” A large heart is open, wise, generous, and full of God. It’s capable of understanding deeply, loving widely, and responding obediently. I believe a large heart is a heart that burns with a passion so radically

encompassing and generously fervent that the love inside it spreads like a wild fire.

LARGE, GENEROUS AND FREE

Larger-than-life people are impressive, so remarkable that they surpass ordinary expectations. I have a friend like this. You know when he is near; you can hear his all-consuming laughter within what feels like a five-kilometre radius. When you speak to him, he locks eyes and engages. He makes you feel like the only one who matters. He listens intently, encourages freely, and constantly looks for ways to give – often quietly and without fanfare. More than once, he’s paid for our meal at a restaurant without ever sitting at our table. At church, he’s a favourite among the children, known as the one who tells them to get whatever treats they want – “on him.” He’s also that guy who keeps all the beggars on the street in business. He finds ways to bolster people, always offering business advice. Everyone wants a seat at his table. He is a “larger than life” character who lives a blessed life, pouring generously over everyone he meets. Like Solomon in the Bible, he has a largeness of heart that spreads warmth that others catch and continue to spread. His heart is enormous, and his life, ablaze.

The world, along with the enemy, works hard to keep our hearts small, confined by fear, distraction, and self-focus. Just as athletes must rigorously train for a race, we are called to flex some spiritual muscles and discipline ourselves in God to develop a heart capable of carrying the weight of His purposes. Isaiah 60:5 says, “Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy.” We weren’t created for a mundane, limited existence. When we open our hearts wide to Jesus, He enlarges our capacity, filling us with vision and supernatural strength to run the race set before us. This is the gift of God to those who fix their eyes on Him and reflect His glory.

I felt Jesus highlight generosity and courage as key ingredients for a heart that burns large. A life ablaze is a generous and courageous life. Proverbs

1:25 says, “A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”

Growing up, I was one of five children. I shared the role of “middle child” with my twin brother. My incredible parents always provided for us and taught us the importance of working hard. I was working as a waitress from the age of thirteen. I learnt how to steward income by saving and sowing. However, I have realised that, despite what my parents modelled for us in terms of hard work and living generously, I had to decide my attitude toward money, realising this was directly linked to so much more than money itself. But instead, a litmus test of the heart that determines the course of my life and impacts the fire that burns in me. A fire with the power to either impact others or sap life.

WHAT WE FOCUS ON GROWS

Opening the door of our hearts to Jesus means letting a “poverty spirit” walk out the door simultaneously. Earlier in this book, I spoke about the table laid, a meal for two, and a place reserved for Jesus and you – a safe place of acceptance, approval, and identity security. What is a “Poverty Spirit”? Linked to pride, a poverty spirit accesses our hearts when we fail to place our identity in the creator, and we begin to put our identity in creation. In our ability to provide. Our ability to perform and deliver. A poverty mindset denotes introspection versus an outward, open, and generous way of living. It’s the opposite of generosity, as it gives reluctantly under compulsion. It grumbles, compares and competes.

In some cases, it’s greedy and critical. It’s a product of its circumstances and shies away from living large. People with a poverty spirit are self-reliant and have a mindset that there is not enough, so they must hold on tight to what they have. What we focus on grows. If we focus on limits, the limits increase; however, if we focus on abundance, we will experience abundance.

A poverty spirit often causes individuals to feel like victims of circumstances or other people’s actions, leading them to believe they are powerless. This mentality can prevent them from taking initiative or embracing growth opportunities or new seasons that God would open up. Proverbs 23:7 says,

“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he”. The poverty mindset limits personal growth and opportunities because this person believes they are unworthy of abundance or success. They may not admit this in words, but in action, their reluctance to live generously paves the way to a smouldering, flickering flame, a passionless reality. We are all vulnerable to the trap of living with a fear of lack, a mindset that leads us to abandon the essence of who we are created to be as we adopt a small-minded approach to life. A life stewarded well and surrendered in generosity in finance has the length and breadth to go “larger”, further, and reach higher. To burn brighter.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FIRST FRUITS

One way to enlarge our hearts, living generously as God calls us to, and expel a poverty mindset, is to adopt the principle of the firstfruits. Robert Morris explains the spiritual and biblical significance of this principle in his book, *The Blessed Life* (Morris, 2002). Proverbs 3:9 says, “Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops, then your barns will overflow. Your vats will brim over with new wine.” Faith is “locking eyes” with Jesus at the table of the heart and saying, “I trust you with this offering.” Do with it what you desire. Our giving demonstrates a conviction that everything we have is a gift from God. Our obedience opens our hearts to be set on fire. We take on the “manager” role, not “owner”, as He alone owns everything. We are simply caretakers of that which is His. This understanding stretches our hearts and allows His grace to work in ways far beyond what we can do in our strength.

As unpacked in Proverbs, the “firstfruit offering” refers to the “redemptive portion.” It is our best offering, revealing the size of our hearts as we give it. Abraham, in a place of humble obedience, committed to sacrificing his firstborn son on the altar. God redeemed the situation by providing a lamb in exchange, just before the fire was lit to take Isaac’s life. Our Father God sacrificed Jesus, His firstborn son, on the cross. Jesus Christ was our redeeming portion, who, through the ultimate sacrifice, opened the way to our freedom and eternal union, intimacy, and connection with God.

The first thing given is never lost; any first thing not given is permanently lost. What comes first measures what we prioritise, and sowing into Kingdom expansion through the church expands our hearts for a greater flame. Ephesians 3:10 says God chose to reveal His manifold wisdom to the church. Tithing means “a tenth”, and sowing this into the work of ministry through the church is what Jesus refers to as giving of our firstfruits. Our tithe opens the door to what has an eternal impact. Matthew 6:19 encourages us to store “treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy.” These treasures are lives, souls, and people transformed through God’s work carried out through His bride. The work of saving souls is always God’s top priority, so finding a Bible-based, Gospel-centred, Spirit-filled church committed to reaching lost hearts with the love and truth of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross is where the firstfruits of our income should go. In Exodus 23:19, God says: “The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.”

MIRACULOUS PROVISION

It was a sunny Monday morning in May 2023. I sat on the plush leather bench seat at Bellevue Cafe in Kloof, killing time as I waited to see a client. Kloof is about a forty-five-minute drive from where I live in Salt Rock. Here, I was introduced to an elderly gentleman named Ben. He and I chatted, established our social connections, and bonded instantly. It was as if this moment were heaven-ordained. Midway through our delightful conversation about where I lived and what I did for a living, this man stopped me and boldly declared, “Bonita, you are going to buy my house.” I giggled at the thought, as I had just met this man, and unbeknownst to him, I had already planned a beautiful renovation of the house we had been living in for four years before this moment. But somehow, I was intrigued and allowed him to continue. I was in awe as he described this incredible home in great detail. I discovered that it was an investment property of his, one that had previously been owned by someone who had worked for him. He then asked me how

much I would sell my house for. I took a wild guess. He looked me in the eyes and said, “Bonita, you can have my house for that amount.”

I was gobsmacked by the miracle of this moment. I told him that if this moment were real, it would be a miracle and an answer to my prayer from Ephesians 3:20, which I had committed to praying over my life since the start of the year. This Scripture says: “Now to Him who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power at work within us, to Him be glory.” He agreed, left the table and then returned five minutes later. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. He looked at me and said, “Now look at what you’ve made me do.” I responded, “Oh no, not me... you’re the generous one.”

The following Monday, we went to see the house in Salt Rock (remember, we met this man in Kloof) and made an offer for Ben’s house. It was as if it was made for us, with every detail of my desire in a home met. The house was on the market for over double the price we ultimately paid, and the miracle of this story reinforced my knowledge of God as Jehovah Jireh. The house we had been living in was too small, and if we were to renovate it, it would have been an enormous financial and emotional stretch and strain for us. We would have had to move out for about 8 months to renovate, and ultimately it would not have been a wise financial decision. God undertook for us and overwhelmed us with His generosity through Ben.

GENEROSITY REQUIRES COURAGEOUS FAITH

Jehovah Jirah is one of the twenty names used to describe who God is in Hebrew, and it means: “The Lord Will Provide” (Hebrew: YHWH Yir’eh or Yahweh Yireh). God took our impossible situation (the need for a spacious home we could afford) and did what only He could do. This miracle was beyond my ability. No amount of striving, social networking, saving, or scheming could have ever conjured up what God did there.

Solomon asked for wisdom and was given a generous heart (Psalm 119:32). I want to give more than expected, never reluctantly or under compulsion, but faithfully and consistently so that my heart will always burn.

Luke 6:38 says, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

I love that when God describes the heart through Scripture, He shows us His. Jesus has the largest heart that conceived our existence for one reason: love and connection with Him. He is a God whose heart capacity was enough to complete the requirements of the ancient law and the ultimate sacrifice required for our freedom from the penalty of sin. He modelled the sacrifice He calls us to make for a heart on fire as He demonstrated the sacrifice of His son.

So often, our affections restrict the expanse of our hearts. Generosity is not simply about finances; it’s a posture of the heart. It’s rooted in faith and marked by courage. It takes faith to step beyond your comfort zone – to speak life when others remain silent, to wait patiently when others rush ahead, and to be present when it’s easier to stay inwardly focused on our pursuits.

Courage doesn’t mean the absence of fear. Instead, it means choosing to act despite it. Joshua 1:9 (NIV) reminds us: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Choosing courage in the realm of generosity is a direct challenge to fear, and more often than not, courage is needed most in our relationships.

The powerful words move me in 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 (ESV), where Paul writes, “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. We do not restrict you, but you are restricted in your own affections. Open wide your hearts also.”

Corinthians is a profoundly emotional letter. Paul is not only defending his apostleship but also pleading for reconciliation. Tension, misunderstanding, and the influence of false teachers had created distance between him and the believers. Yet Paul’s heart remained open. He modelled the very courage and generosity he called them to embrace.

Paul is expressing vulnerability and openness. His fellow workers have been entirely transparent and sincere in their ministry to the Corinthian believers. “Our heart is wide open” speaks of deep affection, trust, and

emotional availability. There is no pretence. Paul says, “We’ve held nothing back from you.” He goes straight to the relational tension and reveals that he and his team have not created the distance – the Corinthians have pulled back. “Restricted in your affections” suggests that their hearts have grown cold or closed off, possibly due to outside influences (such as false teachers) or mistrust. Their limited affection toward Paul is what’s causing the relational strain.

Paul appeals to them with tenderness, even fatherly love. He urges them to respond to his open-heartedness by encouraging them to see from another perspective. To “widen your hearts” is to love freely, let go of fear, bitterness, or reservation, and step back into a relationship. He’s inviting them to mutual vulnerability and restored trust.

OPEN HEARTED AND UNITED

I believe God calls us to speak to one another, as Paul said to the Corinthians. To appeal to one another with deep vulnerability and return to the place of open-hearted courage. To be generous in our affections toward one another, not restricted. Real, authentic relationships require vulnerability, honesty and emotional generosity.

When there is emotional distance, the heart is postured toward selfish ambition and fear. When there is unity, pride falls, offence flees, and past hurts are abandoned for genuine connection.

One of my favourite Scriptures in the Bible is from Psalm 133:

*1 Behold, how good and pleasant it is
When brothers dwell in unity!
2 It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!
3 It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!*

*For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.*

God's anointing oil is released when His people choose to live together in unity. It is that sacred oil that ushers in the power of the Most High and leads us into the Holy of Holies – into deeper intimacy with Him. God Himself gives us the perfect picture of unity through the Trinity: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit – distinct, yet one. In the same way, we as believers are invited to walk in perfect unity, reflecting the harmony of The Godhead in our relationships and community.

If we are to be a people with hearts that burn for Jesus, if we are to be a people postured for Holy Revival, then we ought to let nothing get in the way of our unity with one another.

There is a call to reconciliation. The broader context of 2 Corinthians includes Paul defending his apostleship and pleading for the restoration of fellowship. This moment is a relational invitation, not a theological argument. He says, “We still love you – please love us back.” Spiritual maturity includes relational maturity. Paul speaks “as to children,” not to insult them, but to remind them to grow up emotionally and spiritually. A mature faith involves courageous love, not just correct doctrine. Too often in the church, we see squabbles over doctrine, leading to gossip, slander, and division. This is the devil's ploy to stain the pure white garment of the bride.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul says, “For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” Jesus is coming back for a pure and spotless bride, and it is up to us to open our hearts wide for His return. Jesus is the one who purifies His Church, making her holy and radiant. Are you ready? Is your heart open?

Let us be a people with open hearts – enlarged by love, refined by generosity, and anchored in courageous unity. As we lay down greed, selfish ambition, pride, offence, and fear, we make room for the anointing oil of His presence to flow freely among us. Jesus is returning for a pure and spotless bride, radiant and ready. May we, as His Church, rise with maturity and

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mercy, burning with holy passion, walking in step with one another, and reflecting the heart of our Bridegroom until He comes.

The time is now.

REFLECTION FOR FIRE

1. Journal ways to be generous in all aspects of your life, and remember generosity is not measured by the amount you give, but by the posture of your heart when you give it.
2. Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need. Does your generosity extend beyond comfort and convenience?
3. Are you open to receiving from others with humility and grace? Pride says, “I don’t need anyone,” or “I’d rather suffer than be seen as lacking.”
4. If a mature faith requires courageous love, not just correct doctrine, what am I believing that may be standing in the way of my ability to love others and live with a heart wide open?
5. Journal the ways God is stretching your heart to become larger. Remember that His stretching is not always easy or fun; it is never convenient. This stretching beyond yourself is how God positions you for His revival fire. He wants to use you to touch the lives of those around you with His love.

6. Am I puffed up, or poured out? Write down how you can be more vulnerable with others for authenticity and connection.

A PRAYER FOR MY HEART

Father God, pour out your Spirit upon me so that I might, like Solomon, have wisdom, understanding, and a largeness of heart. Open up the eyes of my heart to see. Search me and know me. I want to see where I may allow self-preservation rooted in fear, pride, and/or offence to get in the way of courageous generosity in every aspect of my life.

Open my eyes to see opportunities for generous giving that paves the way for unity with others. Show me how to honour and connect with people. I want to speak life in places of death and to create environments for myself and others to flourish in an authentic community.

Today, I ask for your oil to pour out over me. Let this be the oil that dripped down Aaron's beard, the oil that covers my life, seals me in your promise, and brings healing and joy to those around me. I love you, Jesus. My heart is yours.

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