



A Change of Heart

Reflecting the glow of recovery from Starlight at Tamassee

By Jon Holland, CEO of Tamassee DAR School

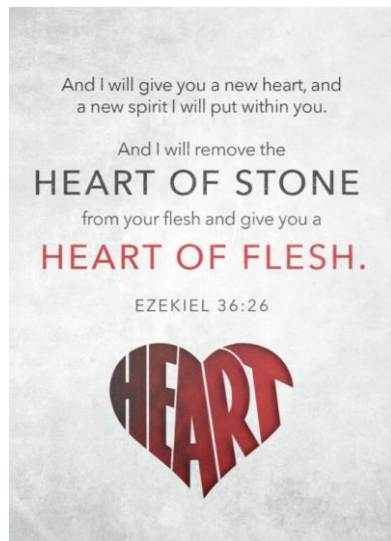


Last year, a beloved friend of Tamassee passed from this life to be with the Lord. He was a generous donor and a devoted, wise, and faithful Board member. We miss him greatly. He was quite the Renaissance man. He served his country in Vietnam, attended an Ivy League university, became a cardiac surgeon and a medical school professor, opened and ran a low-income medical clinic in Appalachia, and read voraciously. He even performed the first heart transplant surgery in the history of the state of Kentucky.

I often think of recovery as a heart transplant. Not of our physical heart of course, but of our spiritual heart. Addiction is both a response to a wounded heart and the cultivation of a heart-level way to be human. Recovering from addiction requires such a transformation of our hearts that it feels like transplant surgery. In fact, as complex as it must be for a cardiac surgeon to accomplish a physical heart transplant, I believe the spiritual metamorphosis of recovery is an even greater feat.

We often use the word heart metaphorically to refer to the essence of who a person is, the seat of their unique personality, and the source of their emotions and desires. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Guard your heart above all else, for from it flow the springs of life.” As we grow up, our hearts are shaped by several important factors. The experiences we have in relationships, especially with parents and family, determine much about the kind of heart we develop. If we are well loved, we are likely to have a healthy, loving heart. If we experience trauma, we are likely to have a broken heart and broken ways of living. Those relational experiences drive our thinking and feeling, and our beliefs and emotions further mold our hearts.

If we’ve known trauma in our relationships, addiction can easily drive the sensations in our brains and bodies, lies and negativity in our thoughts, and shame and fear in our emotions. What kind of heart do you expect a traumatized person to have? A broken and diseased one. We need a heart transplant. This is what recovery offers us. A whole new heart. The miracle can be given in a moment of spiritual experience, but the transformation can also be won in the slow, steady cultivation of new habits. Either way, the hard work of living from a new heart takes years of effort. Wounds need to be healed, healthy attachments formed, new thinking cultivated, loving emotions nurtured, and new desires disciplined.



Yet, this work can be done! Through the Jewish prophet Ezekiel, God promised, “I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them.” Jesus invited us to be born again from above into a relationship of love and trust with him (John 3) – in other words to have a change of heart. At Starlight at Tamassee, we believe in heart transplants for mothers and children broken by addiction. To learn more about Starlight, visit www.starlight.tdarschool.org, or contact us at 864-944-1390 or starlight@tdarschool.org. If your church or civic group is interested in a presentation on recovery, contact Jon Holland at jholland@tdarschool.org.