

## “Do You Remember the First Heart Transplant?”

Psalm 51:1-12

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January 7, 2001

It was December 3, 1967. In Cape Town’s Groote Schuur Hospital, Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first human heart transplant. He took the heart of a twenty-five year old female accident victim and transplanted it into fifty-five year old South African grocer, Louis Washkansky, who was suffering from a fatal heart disease.

Dr. Barnard and nineteen other team members knew they were successful when the new heart started beating, but Washkansky survived for only eighteen days as the medication given to prevent rejection of the new heart damaged his immune system. A month later, Dr. Barnard tried the procedure again and the patient lived for eighteen months.

Louis Washkansky may have been the first person to receive a new heart, but he was certainly not the first to need or want one. Three thousand years ago, David expressed his desire for a new heart as recorded in Psalm 51: 10. “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

**For what was David asking?** Two things. He wanted a new heart and a renewed spirit. I see a contrast here that I must reveal.

David wanted God to renew his spirit. He wanted God to give him again a desire to do right and a willingness to be obedient to His will. Evidently, David possessed that desire before but had lost it. He wanted God to revive it.

However, he wanted a new heart. David’s word “create” was the same word used in the creation story in Genesis 1:1. He did not want God to repair his current heart but to give him a heart transplant. He did not want by-pass surgery or a new valve. **He wanted a new heart. Why?**

To understand David’s insistence upon a new heart, you must understand the meaning of the word “heart” in Scripture. For Biblical writers, the heart was the seat of emotions, desires, intellect and man’s will. Everything man thought or did originated in the heart and David’s heart had become diseased beyond repair. His heart was filled with envy, lust, greed, selfishness, pride, and deceit. He had broken all ten of the commandments, most recently adultery and murder.

His choices were causing enormous problems for him and others. His quality of life was at its lowest ebb. David realized what other Biblical writers surmised, that the human heart was corrupt, undependable and full of evil. He knew his heart could not be repaired. It needed to be changed completely and only God could do that. This is why he cried out, “Create in me a pure heart!”

David wanted a heart that was not soiled with impurities but instead honest, upright and blameless. He wanted a heart that was focused entirely upon doing what was honorable and right so that his renewed spirit could trust it to lead him in the right direction.

Years ago, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale was on his way to an engagement when his taxi stopped in front of a service station. The sign out front had these words on it, “A clean engine runs smoothly and delivers power.” How true that is not only for cars, but also people. Ask David.

**Did David receive his transplant?** I would like to think so. **How?** The same way we would receive one and that is through genuine confession and repentance. You cannot read Psalm 51 without sensing both from David.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” Psalm 51:1-3,7-10.

I don't know if you remember the first heart transplant performed by a physician. I do know this, though. If you let God give you a new heart, you will never forget it. It will improve the quality of your life in 2001 and all the years to follow. For you see, this transplant will last much longer than eighteen days or months. It will last forever!