Dear Open Door Family,

In our study of the book of Hebrews together on Sunday mornings we have been reminded over and over of the fact that God always planned for more than the rituals and sacrifices of the Old Testament. As much as I love studying and reading about the history of Israel in the O.T. I am thankful that we do not have to offer animal sacrifices any longer. I am even more thankful that since the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has offered to change the hearts and lives of those who come to Him through Jesus. So when we feel distant or that our hearts are hard, all we have to do is cry out to God and ask Him to soften our hearts by His Spirit and by His Word. Let's look at these verses together.

Jeremiah 31:33 (NIV) ...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

I love John Piper's insight on these verses: "What makes love possible between us and a God who commands is that He does not speak from a distance and leave us to our own resources. He draws near and gives us Himself as He gives us His commandments. The New Covenant, sealed by the blood of His Son... When the law, written on stone, meets and unwilling heart of stone, all it does is condemn and kill. But when that same law is written on hearts made soft by the Spirit, the result is life. ...we do not need to shrink back from the 'commandments' of God as though they were cold, distant demands from an impersonal sovereign. We can embrace the full New Testament teaching that the commandments of God are utterly crucial in living the Christian life..." (Future Grace pg. 158)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please keep softening my heart. Help me to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to obey You. Lord, please give me joy during this ongoing journey towards spiritual maturity. Help me to fill each day and each week with meaningful pursuit of You and service for others. Lord, please use me in some way to show people that You are precious, wondrous and of infinite value far beyond anything we could ever imagine.

Pastor Mark Kieft