

Issues Of The Heart



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The Christian life is first and foremost an issue of the heart.

The part of you that God wants most is your heart.

God is more concerned about our hearts than He is our behavior, our motivations than our actions.

1 Samuel 16:7b for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Jeremiah 17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

The Christian life is first and foremost about your heart and mine.

1. What Does The Bible Mean By The Word "Heart"?

There are 726 references to the human heart in the Bible.

The Bible does **not** make the common distinction between the heart and mind that we do in English.

In the Bible the heart represents the totality of your inner self including your mind, emotions, and will.

a. It is the center of your intellect.

- The heart is where you meditate on God's word.
- The heart is where you think, purpose, plan, and understand.
- Wisdom and understanding are said to be centered in the heart.
 - ◆ The Bible refers to a wise heart and a heart of understanding.

b. It is the seat of your emotions.

- A whole spectrum of emotions is attributed to the heart.
 - ◆ Positive emotions
 - ◇ Joy, gladness, merry, love,
 - ◆ Negative emotions
 - ◇ grief, sadness, regret, broken heart, wounded heart
 - ◇ envy, contempt, anger
 - ◇ faint, fearful, trembling, melting
 - ◇ anxious, agitated, bitter

c. It is the setting of your will.

- The Bible speaks of a hard and stubborn heart.
 - ◆ Like Pharaoh
- It also talks about a heart that chooses to obey and pursue after God.

d. It is also the source of moral evil.

- **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? NKJV
- The Bible attributes pride, hatred, envy, perverseness, wickedness and unbelief to the heart.

2. What Does Jesus Say About The Heart?

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

- Jesus compared the religious leaders of His day to whitewashed tombstones full of dead men's bones and cups that had been cleaned on the outside but not on the inside.
- The pure in heart are those who have been cleansed on the inside.
 - ◆ Their thoughts, desires, and motives
 - ◆ They are pure because they have been cleansed by the blood of Christ.
- **Hebrews 9:14** . . . the blood of Christ, . . . (will) cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God

- **Acts 15:9** and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.
 - ◆ I once talked to a man who had spent a lot of time in strip bars before he was saved. Shortly after he came to Christ he went into one of those places and realized he didn't want to be there anymore.
 - ◆ Recently I talked to a couple who are investigating Christianity because Christians are different.
 - ◇ They say Christians are kind.

Matthew 5:28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- It is not just our actions but our thoughts and attitudes that Christ is interested in.
- Our problem is not just our acts but our heart, which is the source of our sin.

Matthew 6:21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- What you and I do with our money reveals what we really value and treasure most.
 - ◆ It shows where our hearts truly are.

Matthew 12:34 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

- Our mouths reveal our hearts.

Matthew 13:15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.

- Some people choose to harden their own hearts because they don't want to see and understand the things of God.

Matthew 15:8 These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

- Some people desire to appear spiritual and talk a good Christian life, but have no heart for Christ.

Matthew 15:18-19 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

- Acts of sin simply reveal a heart of sin.

Matthew 18:35 "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

- It is in our hearts that we retain bitterness and in our hearts that we forgive.
- We who have been forgiven so much by God should willingly forgive one another.
- Those who have an unforgiving heart will experience God's discipline and not his blessing.

Matthew 19:8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

- Hard hearts are the source of fornication and adultery.
 - ◆ Because of these God reluctantly permitted divorce.

Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

- This is the greatest commandment.
 - ◆ Wholehearted devotion and service to God.

Mark 6:52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

- Hard hearts had hindered their spiritual understanding.

Luke 8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

- The hard path beside the road refers to hard hearts. cf v. 5

Luke 8:15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

- These are people whose hearts are tender.
- They are genuinely seeking God with a whole heart.

Luke 18:1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

- Pray keeps us from becoming discouraged and giving up.

John 14:1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

- We need not have troubled hearts because Christ is preparing a place for us in the future.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

- Our hearts need not be troubled and fearful during hard times when we turn to Christ in times of trouble.

John 16:22 Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

- We, like the disciples, will have joy when we see Jesus.

3. What Are We To Do With Our Hearts?

a. Keep watch over your heart.

Proverbs 4:23

- **Proverbs 4:23** Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

b. Don't follow your heart. Proverbs 28:26; cf Numbers 15:39b

- **Proverbs 28:26** He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered.
 - **Numbers 15:39b** (do) not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,
- c. Choose to seek after God with a whole heart. Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 23:13; James 4:8**
- **Jeremiah 29:13** 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.
 - **James 4:8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- d. Ask God to search your heart. Psalm 26:2; 139:23**
- **Psalm 26:2** Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.
 - **Psalm 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
- e. Confess your sin and ask God for a clean heart. Psalm 51:10,17; Isaiah 57:15; Joel 2:12-13**
- **Psalm 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 - **Psalm 51:17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
 - **Isaiah 57:15** For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.
- f. In your heart believe in Christ. Romans 10:9-10 cf Acts 8:37**
- **Romans 10:9-10** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
- g. Spend time with God in His Word.**
- **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
 - **Psalm 119:11** Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!
 - **2 Timothy 2:22** Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

THE BIG IDEA: The Christian life is first and foremost a matter of the heart.

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