

# **THE HEART OF THE MATTER IS THE HEART**

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**Pro 4:23** Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Now as the heart is the fountain whence all the streams of life proceed, care must be taken that the fountain be not stopped up nor injured. A double watch for its safety must be kept up. So in spiritual things: the heart is the seat of the Lord of life and glory; and the streams of spiritual life proceed from him to all the powers and faculties of the soul. Watch with all diligence, that this fountain be not sealed up, nor these streams of life be cut off.

1. There can come a point in any marriage when you get fed up. You've lost your patience with waiting on some kind of change in your spouse. You've forgiven again and again and you're weary of the struggle. You're through with trying to make things better. You're tired of being hurt over and over and waiting for a breakthrough that never comes. Your heart begins to close doors that were once open between you and your spouse. You have decided you are not going to try anymore. You no longer feel love for your spouse the way you did, and you don't even care about getting it back.
2. This can happen in any marriage where one spouse is working to make things better and the other isn't trying at all. Your heart can grow cold and hard like a stone, and it will seem as if the love you once had has died. But the good news is that God has the power to completely turn things around. He is the God of miracles and restoration who makes all things new. Jesus – the ultimate source of resurrection power – can resurrect love that has died and soften your heart toward your spouse. He can bring your marriage to life again, and it can happen quickly.

## UNLOCKING THE DOORS TO THE HOME OF YOUR HEART

1. When you get married, your heart has found a home. But your heart is also a home for whatever you allow into it. The home of your heart can be cold, uncomfortable, miserable, and barren. Or it can be full of warmth, light, love, and life. Sometimes that home is locked up because you have shut out the Lord or your spouse. But you can unlock the door if you have the right keys. Jesus said, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). God had given us keys of authority and the power to change things – even in our hearts.

**Mar 7:21** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Mar 7:22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

Mar 7:23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

2. It doesn't mean you attempt to dominate your spouse or get heavy-handed and make ultimatums. It means you recognize the enemy's footprints and take charge of what is happening by praying for God to break through the atmosphere of your marriage and the condition of your heart with His Love and power. By praying, you open the door and welcome in His healing deliverance, transformation, and restoration.
3. If there is strife, anger, anxiety, sadness, despair, hopelessness, resentment, or bitterness in your marriage relationship, you can take authority over the spirits in the name of Jesus. Because behind those negative emotions are the enemy of your marriage. You can speak to the enemy and tell him that your heart and your home are established for God's glory, and he doesn't have the right to be there because you have full authority over him.
4. Loose the spirit of Love, joy, peace, forgiveness, and hope to be the guest of honor who is poured out in your hearts and your marriage

relationship. It is up to you to do everything in your power to see that hardness does not find a way to move into your heart, because bad things are sure to happen if you don't.

Pro 28:14 Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

5. When you harden your heart toward your spouse, you have hardened it toward God as well. This is a dangerous ground to be standing on. We are not to trust in your heart, because it can grow hard over something you believe is completely justified. God sees hardness of heart as never being justified. That's because when you receive the Spirit of God in your heart, the Holy Spirit will live in your heart and soften it.

Pro 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Eze 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:

6. Ask God to take away the stony heart (or the harden heart) and invite the Spirit of God to give you a tender and forgiving heart.

### **REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS ARE FABRIC OF THE HEART SOFTENERS**

1. Forgiveness is not a onetime thing. There are layers of it that need to be recognized in any situation – especially in a marriage. Sometimes we think we have forgiven, but we don't realize how many layers there are. And if we don't deal with each layer, hardness of heart can set in and build up monumental proportions.
2. King David spoke of his heart often, saying such things as:
  - a. My heart pants (Psalm 38:10)
  - b. My heart fails me (Psalms 40:12).
  - c. My heart is severely pained (Psalm 55:4)

- d. My heart is overwhelmed (Psalm 61:2)
  - e. My heart is wounded with me (Psalm 109:22)
  - f. My heart within me is distressed (Psalm (Psalm 143:4)
  - g. Reproach has broken my heart (Psalm 69:20)
3. When we have suffering in our heart like that in a prolonged and unresolved way, our heart can grow hard. But David's heart didn't grow hard, and the reason that his heart was filled with humility and forgiveness in prayer and worship toward God. Those heartfelt attitudes will always soften a heart to keep it from getting hard in the first place.
  4. A hard heart doesn't happen overnight. It happens little by little, as layers upon layers of crustiness builds up in your heart, and then becomes covered with a seemingly impenetrable coat of armor that is designed by necessity to protect it from being shot through or broken again. Sometimes hardness of heart doesn't fully manifest until later in life. Sometimes your heart can get broken so many times that forgiveness stops flowing and then there is thick scar tissue that forms around the heart, making it hard.
  5. The good news is that no matter how long those scars have been there, they can be completely removed by being in the presence of God, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18). Sometimes you have to go through layers of forgiveness to strip away the layers of unforgiveness that have built up, but it can be done with a heart of repentance and forgiveness that says, "I have not had a perfect heart toward you, Lord, or my husband (wife) either, and I repent of all that. Because you have forgiven me, I can do nothing less than forgive him (her) also.
  6. **Your Heart is not too had for God to soften:** God said to Abraham, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18: 14). Our heart can get hard because we doubt that God will actually do what seems impossible to us when it comes to our marriage. When we start believing that God can't change the situation, or our spouse, or us, we lose heart and hardness sets in.

7. The Bible tells about Rachel laboring in childbirth, saying that she had “hard labor” (Genesis 35:16). Sometimes we have hard labor trying to bring forth new life in our marriage, and year after year it feels as though nothing ever changes. Our heart becomes hard when we have hard labor and we don’t see the birth of anything. But Rachel did give birth to something great. His name was Benjamin, and he would eventually be the head of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The bad news is that she died in the process. Often we have to die in process of giving birth. Often we have to die in the process of giving birth to something great. We don’t have to die physically because Jesus already did that, but our selfishness and pride do have to die.
  
8. If God can make heaven and earth by the power of His outstretched arm, then He can stretch His arm toward you, and soften your heart in an instant. When you become discouraged, say to the Lord. “There is nothing too hard for you Lord” and ask Him to soften your heart (Jeremiah 32:17).