

Discipleship Questions

What is the “heart” that is being discussed?

Why is the heart critical to being right with God?

Why must the heart be guarded above everything else?

How can you guard your heart?

How will your treasures reveal the location of your heart?

Why should your heart be set on heavenly things rather than earthly things?

How is a change of heart central to a change in life?

Why is it critical to remain loyal to God with a devoted heart?



Giving God Control Of Your Heart

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your heart. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

Matthew 15:10-20

The “heart” commonly refers to the inner part of a person’s being that is central to their lives (i.e. the part that thinks, feels, decides, etc.). It is the very core of your being! In this passage, Jesus addresses the source of what defiles a person spiritually (i.e. previous discussion about unwashed hands, vv. 1-9). What is taken into the body physically eventually leaves the body, while that which is in a person’s heart impacts everything about your life. So, a person who is not truly devoted to God in his/her heart will be defiled before God by the evil thoughts and actions that will be produced. A person, therefore, might be an outwardly religious person who is committed to observing various religious traditions (i.e. like the Pharisees), but then not be fully committed to God in the heart (15:7-9; Matthew 23:25-28)! Therefore, to give God control requires that you *not* just give God control of some external components of your life, but to let Him control your heart (Matthew 22:36-40) – which will then impact everything you do!

Proverbs 4:20-27

The heart must be guarded diligently above everything else about your life because it is the source of life. Just as people carefully and diligently watch over the source of their water to make sure nothing taints it, you must carefully and diligently watch over your heart. As you would not want

anything to poison the well/spring because of how it would endanger your health/life, a heart that is tainted with rebellion toward God will endanger everything you do, think, say, decide, etc. by giving sin an opportunity! However, carefully guarding your heart above all else will produce good fruit that pleases God throughout your life in all these same areas (Matthew 12:33-35). You guard your heart in this way, in part, by diligently paying attention to God's words so that they inform and mold your heart the way God desires it to be and fight against any influences that run contrary to it (Psalm 119:9-11; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)!

Matthew 6:19-24

You must take an honest assessment of where your heart is right now. For, it can be easy to deceive yourself and others to think you are right with God because of some religious and good things you may do, while your heart is actually far from God. Jesus says you can locate your heart by locating your treasure (i.e. what you value most). Therefore, look closely at your life (i.e. decisions, words, actions) to see whether you are more focused on the things of this life or the things of God. Consider, for instance, how you spend your money and your time. Since these are two precious resources, honestly looking at them can show your priorities. If you find that your heart is set on the things of this world, you must recognize that you can't serve and please God in that condition (i.e. serving God and money). Instead, you must fully set your heart on the things of God, treasuring heavenly things above earthly things! For, the things of this world simply do not last, while heavenly things do (Luke 12:16-21)!

Ephesians 4:17-24

Those who are not living as God's people ("Gentiles") live in the ignorance and hardness of their hearts regarding the things of God. These are callous (without feeling) toward the things God desires from them and give themselves over to wicked ways that please themselves. However, coming to know Jesus Christ changes everything – including the heart! For, knowing of Christ's love and the opportunity to be forgiven of sin should have caused you to turn your heart and life over to His control (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Central to this transformation that involves taking off the old self (that was focused on the deceitful desires of the flesh) and putting on the new self (that is focused on being made into the likeness of God in righteousness and purity of the truth) is the renewal of the heart (spirit of the mind)! Any changes that do not address the heart will ultimately fail to result in a life that is pleasing and devoted to God! The heart must be turned from selfish and evil desires to a desire to honor and

serve God. This only happens by letting the word of God (the gospel) change it (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21).

Acts 11:19-26

The initial transformation that happens in obeying the gospel is only one part of the process. God desires more than just the seed of His word to be initially accepted by willing hearts; but for it to grow and produce a continual harvest of fruit in His service (Luke 8:4-8, 11-15). This requires you to remain true (loyal, faithful) to the Lord with a devoted heart. However, there will be many challenges you will face to remaining loyal to Jesus (i.e. temptations, trials, peer pressure, discouragement, etc.). Therefore, you must resolve firmly in your heart that you will be faithful and true to Christ no matter what challenges come your way (Revelation 2:9-11; Hebrews 12:1-2; Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)!

Conclusion

Giving God control of your heart will impact every other aspect of your life. While your heart has been rebellious toward God in the past and many things are trying to influence your heart contrary to God, firmly establishing God as the only one who gets to mold your heart is critical to living a life that pleases Him. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God's instructions about your heart.

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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