

"The Heart"

The place where you think, you feel, and you determine what you will do has a name. It's called the heart. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're looking at the heart. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Bible is an inspired message from God's heart to our hearts. The Scriptures have commandments, timeless truths, and promises from God, all of which is designed to bless each of us and all of us. We cheat ourselves of the most precious things, when we overlook or ignore the Scriptures. Some think we don't need religious teaching, but the worst environment of all is the environment without God. We know the value and the joy, and the love found in knowing God and His word. That's why we focus on the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." What you think, what you feel, and what you choose matters, because your heart determines what your life will be like. When your heart is right, your life will prosper. When your heart is evil, you'll find life harsh and unforgiving. We often think we know how we ought to live but we ignore what God teaches in the Word. Proverbs 21, verse 2 says that "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts." God not only sees what we do; He sees inside our hearts.

God, speaking through Moses, said in Deuteronomy 5:29, "Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" God wants us to have the kind of heart that takes His teaching seriously and is willing to practice what we've learned. His word will bless us, if we are willing to live it out in our lives.

Now we offer this study free on the importance of the heart. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3:12 to 15, and explore the importance of the heart.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Colossians, a letter that would be circulated not only there, but in other churches as well. And he talks about the need to focus our hearts. Colossians 3, verses 12 to 15. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." Oh yes, we need such a heart. And I hope that you'll take these words seriously.

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You always give us the information that we most need to direct our lives in the very best way, and to bless everyone around us. Help us to have a heart that pleases You, and does Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The first time the word "heart" is used in Scripture speaks of the hearts of humans and then the heart of God. Genesis 6:5 to 6 says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Here the word heart refers to

the inner person. You can see here how the heart has the ability to think, to feel, and to choose what it will do. Your heart reflects what you are more than any single thing.

This is why God chose David, the youngest son of Jesse. You'll remember that God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a king to replace king Saul. 1 Samuel 16:6 to 7 says, "When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, 'Well, surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" The heart is the true "inner self." Proverbs 23, verse 7 simply says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so he is."

The heart is where our minds think, feel, and decide. And Jesus knew the hearts of others. John 2:25 says that Jesus "didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Now this is shown in Mark 2, verses 5 to 11, it says, And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He's blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" Well immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.'"

We must give our hearts and our minds to serve the Lord and avoid evil thoughts. Psalm 119, verses 10 to 11 says, "With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."

Proverbs 23:12 tells us, that we ought to "apply our hearts to discipline, And our ears to words of knowledge."

The heart is also where our emotions and feelings begin to take place. Paul expresses grief in his heart in Romans 9, verses 1 to 3, over his kinsmen rejecting Jesus. He said, "I'm telling the truth in Christ, I'm not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Paul desperately wanted people to know the Lord and to be saved.

Now how we feel in our hearts often determines how we live. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad." Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life." We can't always choose how life treats us, but we can choose how we react to the things that we cannot change. In many cases, the experiences of our hearts teach us great lessons. Ecclesiastes 7, verses 2 to 3 says, "It's better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, Because that's the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy."

We make our choices in our hearts based on what we know and what we feel. We should make good choices from our hearts. When God asked Israel to build the tabernacle, Exodus 35:21 says, that "Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the LORD'S contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments." They gave freely and willingly. 2 Corinthians 9, and verse 7 says, that "Each one must do

just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

The priest and scribe Ezra in later years also had that motivation. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” We too should be like the psalmist who said in Psalm 119:112, “I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, even to the end.”

Our choices do matter. We'll either choose to serve the Lord or serve sin. Romans 6:16 to 18 says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you're slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” Now this passage teaches us that even when we are slaves of sin, we can change and become slaves of righteousness. You can decide to do what is right.

Now, don't be like the hard soil that was by the side of the road, and you remember they cast the seed upon it, well the Lord Jesus spoke about in Luke 8, and verse 12. I says, they hear the word, but the devil “takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.” It's better for us to be the good soil. Luke 8:15 says, “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.”

What kind of heart does God want for us to have? First, God wants a heart that wholly loves Him! The Lord Jesus said in Mark 12:29, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” God expects a total commitment from us: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Half-hearted Christianity that follows Christ when you like Him and then ignores Christ when you don't like what He says is no Christianity at all. You can't hang on to the world with one hand and the Lord with the other.

James 4, and verse 4 says to Christians with wrong motives and selfish desires in their hearts “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Half-hearted, half-converted people presume upon the grace of God and never consider that they have become an enemy of God.

We must recognize the Lord Jesus for who He is! 1 Peter 3, and verse 15 says, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” When Christ is Lord of our hearts and our lives, people notice; and when other things rule our lives, people also notice! We must never let anyone or anything else rob us of the holy place that Christ has in our hearts. If Christ is Lord, then we cannot tolerate a challenger to His place.

Second, God wants a heart that loves other people! The Lord Jesus said in John 13:34 to 35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” When we love like Jesus loves us, we'll sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. When we love some and dislike others, we fail to be like Jesus; He loved everyone.

Sadly, some fail to love others who differ with them and even become hateful and mean; they're filled with prejudice and malice. 1 John 4, verses 20 to 21 says, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he's a liar; for one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God

should love his brother also." God loves and sends His sun on the righteous and the unrighteous. And if we are His sons and daughters, we too should show love even those with whom we differ and disagree.

Colossians 3:12 to 15 says, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, and whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called one body; and be thankful."

Third, God wants a heart that loves the truth! Proverbs 4:20 to 23 says, "My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." Some would rather believe a lie than hear the truth. Some would rather put their trust in a false hope than in what the Scripture says. 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 10 helps us understand that we're saved by "the love of the truth." And those who reject the truth are actually rejecting the truth of the Lord and cannot be saved.

Fourth, God wants a heart that mourns over sin and hungers for righteousness. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5, and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." We live in a culture seemingly satisfied with sin and hardly hungering for righteousness. They forget that the pleasures of sin are always temporary; and slavery to sin will deceive them, it will harden their hearts, and cost them their souls. Many today celebrate sin, but no one will be celebrating sin on Judgment Day. We ought to mourn our sins and hunger for righteousness. 1 Corinthians 13:6 reminds us that love doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It's hard to stand in the shadow of the cross and rejoice over the wickedness of the world. Habakkuk 1:13 reminds us that God's "eyes are too pure to approve evil, And God cannot look on wickedness with favor."

James 4:7 to 10 says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." I tell you, it's time to hunger for righteousness with our hearts!

Let's pray. "Oh Father help us to love You, to love others, to love the truth, and to hunger for righteousness. Help us to have hearts that glorify You in every way, and do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

David asked God in Psalm 26:2, "Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart." Would you want your heart and mind examined by the Lord? Let's remember God knows all about you. Psalm 44, verses 20 and 21 says, "If we had forgotten the name of our God, Or extended our hands to a strange god, Wouldn't God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart."

Moses said in Deuteronomy 10:12 to 13, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?" The Lord is also saying to us today, that He does what He does for our good! We find blessing when we follow the Lord's way! Love means trusting Him enough to do what He says. We don't serve God by rewriting His commandments or His teaching. We serve Him by trusting and obeying Him.

Believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you're crucified with Him in baptism, God raises you up with Him to walk in newness of life. That's when you're born again (John 3:5 and Romans 6 and verse 4), when the Lord adds you to His church, and when you become a child of God, that's in baptism.

We hope today's study about what we do with Jesus in our hearts, has stirred you to consider your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633.

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So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.