

"God Wants Your Heart"

God wants your heart, your whole heart, and the hearts of your friends and family. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." God wants you to love Him with all your 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 records God speaking to all humanity about the most important things in our lives. God speaks, because He wants us to know Him and to love Him. Our Father in heaven wants to have a close, loving relations with each of us not only in this life but also in the life to come. If we want that relationship, then we must closely and carefully pay attention to the things that He's revealed to us. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Mark 12:28 to 31 says: And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: that 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

God wants your heart, your whole heart, because He wants you. He knows that if He doesn't have your heart, He won't really have you. And the Lord knows if He has your heart, He will get the rest of you. God is not content with fair-weather Christians or part-time church members. Nor is He content with those who listen to the word of God but never obey or practice what they learn. He asks us to love Him with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength. And anything less simply with not do. He expects us to make a total commitment to serve Him.

We offer this study free on how God Wants Your 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 1 John 5:1-3, and explore why God wants our hearts.

Our reading today comes from the first letter of John, chapter 5, verses 1 to 3, and talks about our needing to be people who love the children of God. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." That's a reading from God's holy word, and encourages us to keep the commandments and to love others.

Let's pray together. "Father, help us to be good children who care about the other children of God, who love others, who care for others, and who watch out for others. Bless us heavenly father in every way, and give us strength always to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

What does it mean to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength? Well, this is love in its fullest form with the greatest commitment. Such great love is

not merely a theory; one must also practice complete dedication to the Lord. Let me suggest these four ways to show that complete commitment.

First, God wants your decision to be a disciple. Now, a disciple seeks to learn from and to imitate his master, his teacher. He seeks in every way to be like his teacher. The Lord Jesus cautions us in Luke 9, verses 23 and 24, that "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." When we decide to follow Jesus, we stop putting ourselves first and take up our cross daily to follow Him.

The apostle Paul left his life as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church to become a Christian who serves the Lord. He said in Philippians 3, verse 8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ." In fact, Paul considered himself to be dead to the world, so that he could live with Christ. He said in Galatians 2 and verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ. And it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Christ wants your heart so that you will die with Him to your old self and be raised with Him as a new person. He wants to transform your life.

Some believe in Christ but are never truly converted to Him; they don't want to sacrifice their worldly advantages. Christ is a good thing to them, as long as they don't lose what they have. You remember John 12, verse 42 and 43 observes, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Now such people may see Christ as God's son, but they're unwilling to make it known. You see, confession is a public act, and they didn't want to lose their place in their society, so they weren't confessing Him.

Now some are willing to follow Jesus until He says something they don't like or agree with. They're more committed to their own thinking than they are to the Lord. When Jesus taught something that His followers didn't like, in John 6, and verses 66 to 69 says: As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, well "You don't want to go away also, do you?" And Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

Trusting the Lord Jesus means trusting what He teaches. If you deny what He teaches, you're actually denying Him. He is Lord, He is the Lord, He is the only Lord, and He asked in Luke 6, verse 46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Now wise men hear the Lord and act upon what He says; foolish men hear the Lord and do not act on what He says (Matthew 7:24 to 27).

Second, loving the Lord with all your heart means changing the direction of your heart and life. Well what am I talking about? I'm talking about repentance. Repentance is turning away from the sinful and hurtful ways of life and turning toward God and His righteousness. Many today emphasize grace, and the Lord Jesus was full of grace and truth according to John 1, and verse 14. Now while Jesus was full of grace, He never spoke the word "grace" in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Yet, Jesus spoke of repentance repeatedly during His earthly ministry.

Matthew 4 and verse 17 reveals what Jesus started preaching after His forty-day temptation. What was His message? "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:29 to 30, that "If your right eye causes you to sin, then tear it out and throw it away. For it's better that you lose one of your

members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away. For it's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." Now the Lord Jesus wasn't interested in our losing an eye or a hand; what He wanted was us to repent of our sins. Now repentance is even more important to us than an eye or a hand.

The Lord Jesus speaks of God's rejoicing over a sinner who repents. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:17 to 20 says of the sinful prodigal: "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I'll say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. And I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father." Well, this story of repentance has touched the hearts of millions and called them to repent as well.

When the apostle Paul approached the Stoics and Epicureans on Mars Hill about the true God and Jesus Christ, he ended the message with a call to repentance. He said in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now we'll all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we'll have to give an account for the things that we've believed, for the things that we've said, and for the things that we've done. You can be sure of it!

Now some, refuse to take in the idea of repentance. They think harshly of a preacher who calls them to repent, thinking that repentance is some kind of a form of punishment. Well, there is an old practice among the monks called "penance," where people punished themselves; but this is not of God, it's of human origin. The Bible speaks of the opportunity to repent as a gift in Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2 and verse 25. Actually, repentance is how our hearts change, and how they change our lives to become what God intended. Repentance heals our broken lives and sets us on the right path to righteousness. Now grace relieves the pain and guilt of sin, but repentance corrects us and heals our lives.

Third, God wants your heart to be devoted in worship. The Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4:23 to 24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 'God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'" God wants genuine worship from our hearts and from our spirits. You see, worship comes from the heart and reveals our praise and thanksgiving to God. Ephesians 5:19 to 20 says that we're to speak "to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Sadly, many today have confused worship, which is something we give, with entertainment, which is something we receive. They think they have worshiped, when they've only heard or watched someone else perform. God wants every Christian to participate in worship not simply a select few. God expects us all to sing from our hearts, commune, and give. We should prepare our hearts for worship and focus on God as we come together to praise and adore our Creator.

Fourth, God wants your dedication in obedience. Romans 6:16 to 18 says, "Don't you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, that you're slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of

teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, you've become slaves of righteousness." Obedience from the heart is not some mindless ritual but an authentic giving of ourselves to the Lord. God doesn't want half-hearted, half-done obedience, where we choose to do only what we like or what we agree with. That's not obedience from the heart.

Obedience from the heart recognizes the form or the pattern of the doctrine, the teaching. And just as Noah built the ark according to God's instructions, and just as Moses built the tabernacle according to God's instructions, and the Lord Jesus always pleased the Father (John 8:28 to 29), so we too should please God from our hearts by doing things like He teaches them. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15, that "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Now He repeated this thought in John 14:23, that "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

You see, obedience is how we love God. Love motivates us to do what God commands. Love moves a person to listen closely and to respond accurately to what God teaches. Keeping God's laws carefully as Christ defines it is not Pharisaical or legalism. It's how we love Christ! 2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15 says, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we've concluded this: that one has died for all, and therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." When we love God, we obey because we want to please Him. We obey even when we don't understand all the reasons why. We obey even when obedience leads us to suffer or to do something really difficult.

We might someday have to say what Jesus had to say in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:37 to 39 explains: And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." Loving the Lord with all our hearts means doing the Lord's will the Lord's way rather than doing what we desire our own way. So, Christians who are faithful say, "Wherever He sends us we will go, whatever He teaches we will believe, whatever He requires we will gladly do. We love Him. And we're not here to argue with Him but to obey Him."

I hope and pray that you love the Lord Jesus with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. That's how the Lord Jesus Christ loves you. He gave Himself for you; give yourself to Him.

Let us pray. "Father, help us always to love You, and to love our Lord Jesus the way that You have loved us, with a full heart and mind and strength. And Father help us always to do Your will, that shows our love. In Jesus name, Amen."

Matthew 27 tells of Pilate's attempt to free Jesus rather than to punish Him. And he proclaimed Jesus' innocence more than once; but when the Jewish leaders insisted Jesus be crucified, Pilate feared the repercussions and gave in to their demands. He knew the right thing to do was to release Jesus, but he gave in to the pressure. Well, I can explain a pagan, non-believer's actions like Pilate easier than I can explain why a person who claims to love Jesus becomes indifferent to Christ. How can people ignore the One who died for our sins and opened for us the door to eternal life?

Does your heart belong to the Lord Jesus? If you love Him, obey Him. Do you believe in Him with all your heart? Have you from the heart repented of sin, and have you turned to the Lord? Will you

confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God? Will you be baptized? Baptism into Christ is the immersion of a penitent believer in water to forgive his sins. When the people on Pentecost wanted forgiveness, Peter said to them in Acts 2 and verse 38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Well they gladly received his word and 3,000 were baptized. They simply obeyed from the heart, because they wanted to be right with God.

Are you a brother or a sister in Christ who's forgotten what God has done for you? Have you become indifferent? Have you stopped worshiping at church? Have you taken up sinful habits? Repent, confessing your sin and ask God to forgive you.

We hope that today's study about giving your heart to God has blessed you. 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. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. Now you can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you to draw close to God and to go to heaven.

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