

Program Transcripts

July 2021



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY®

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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JULY 4 – THE HEART

The place where you think, you feel, and you choose what you will do has a name. It's called the heart. What is in your heart will determine your behavior and life. Your behavior and life will determine your destiny. What is in your heart?

JULY 11 – WATCH YOUR HEART

At the most desperate time in His life, the Lord Jesus warned the disciples to watch and pray that they may not enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41). We too must watch and pray that our hearts are not led into sin.

JULY 18 – SINS OF THE HEART

Jeremiah said the heart is “more deceitful above all else and desperately sick” (Jeremiah 17:9). The Lord Jesus explained that out of the heart come many sins and iniquities. For this reason, we need to guard our hearts.

JULY 25 – GOD WANTS YOUR HEART

God wants your heart, your whole heart, and the hearts of your friends and family. God knows that if He has your heart, He will have you; but if your heart is turned away from God, God wants you to come back to Him.

The Heart

The place where you think, you feel, and you determine what you will do has a name. It's called the heart. Today, we're looking at the heart. 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.

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 21:2 says, "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, "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!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). 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.

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. He talks about the need to focus our hearts.

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 (Colossians 3:12-15).

Oh yes, we need such a heart. 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 6:5-6 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. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a king to replace king Saul.

First Samuel 16:6-7 says, "When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, '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 23:7 simply says, “For as he thinks in his heart, so he is.”

The heart is where our minds think, feel, and decide. 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.” This is shown in Mark 2:5-11. “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?’ 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 119:10-11 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 9:1-3, 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.

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 7:2-3 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, “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. Second Corinthians 9:7 says, “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 6:16-18 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.” 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.

Don't be like the hard soil that was by the side of the road, and they cast the seed upon it; the Lord Jesus spoke about it in Luke 8:12. 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, "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" (Mark 12:29). 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 4:4 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! First Peter 3:15 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, "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" (John 13:34-35). 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. First John 4:20-21 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. If we are His sons and daughters, we too should show love even those with whom we differ and disagree.

Colossians 3:12-15 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 4:20-23 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. Second Thessalonians 2:10 helps us understand that we're saved by "the love of the truth." 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, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). 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. First 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 4:7-10 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." It's time to hunger for righteousness with our hearts!

Let's pray. "O 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, "Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart" (Psalm 26:2). Would you want your heart and mind examined by the Lord? Let's remember God knows all about you. Psalm 44:20-21 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, "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?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). 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 6:4), when the Lord adds you to His church, and when you become a child of God, that's in baptism.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one.

Watch Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Since your heart is the wellspring of life, guard it carefully. The Scriptures teach us about the heart of God and how He's dealt with individuals and with humanity through the ages. They reveal His promises and His warnings. They reveal His love and His wrath. The Scriptures also teach us about our own nature, what God desires and what God condemns. In all of this is the nature of the heart, it's what determines our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, and our destiny. That's why knowing what God says about the heart is so vital.

As the wellspring of life, the heart is where so many things in our lives begin. We're loved by others, and it causes us to love them back. We're hurt by others, and it may cause us to strike back. The heart is filled with thoughts and emotions. Some are good emotions like love, joy, compassion, and hope. Other emotions lead to sin and heartache. The Lord Jesus said, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out his evil treasure what is evil" (Matthew 12:34-35). We have to ask, what's coming out of your heart?

The things coming from your heart are the very things that you're feeding into your heart. If you feed on the selfish, the fleshly, the worldly, you'll speak things that are selfish, fleshly, and worldly. Romans 12:2 urges us, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Matthew, 26:36-41, and it points to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Let's pray. "O, Father, help us to have a willing spirit and to say no to our flesh. Help us to have a heart that loves You and wants what is right. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The battle between good and evil, the battle for your soul and eternal destiny, rages within the heart. God Himself says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Because this battle between our willingness to serve God and the weakness of our flesh is real we must watch our hearts and pray that we do not enter into temptation to sin.

Temptations can hit us suddenly without warning or they can lie dormant in our hearts and arise when we're weak. Luke 4:13 says, "When the devil had finished every temptation (that is, on Jesus), he left Him until an opportune time." The devil knows when to appeal to our flesh, our eyes, or our pride. If we're not alert and ready, we can easily fall into the devil's schemes. He's looking for an opportune time! First Peter 5:8-9 says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."

Let's talk about some of those schemes as they relate to our hearts. First, the devil loves to make our hearts angry. The Lord Jesus said, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:21-22).

James 1:19-20 reminds us, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." What do we do when we get angry? Ephesians 4:26-27 explains, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." We must master our emotions and learn to be patient and to bear with one another.

Second, when anger continually burns in the heart, it leads to hatred, bitterness, and revenge. Bitterness describes the twisted way individuals respond to painful events. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." The Lord Jesus faced all kinds of horrible injustices, insults, and cruelty. While suffering, He didn't "threaten, but He continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus left us this example, so that we might follow in His steps."

Revenge is paying back evil for evil. The Lord Jesus taught, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38-39). Christians depend on God to deal with evildoers. Romans 12:17-21 says, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." A heart that must take revenge only leads to more anger, hatred, and violence. We don't overcome with vengeful violence; we overcome by showing the love of Christ.

Third, Christians are to love and treat everyone with respect. God doesn't show favoritism; He is no respecter of persons. The Jewish apostle Peter went to the Gentile home of Cornelius at God's direction. He told the people, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35). It doesn't matter to God who you are or where you came from, God will welcome you when you fear Him and do what is right.

God doesn't see us like man sees us. He knows what's in our hearts. He doesn't look at outward appearance; He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He knows our hearts determine what we say and how we act. God is fair and He treats everyone alike. He will "render to each person according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6). Why, because his deeds reflect his heart.

When Jesus died upon the cross, He died for every person in every nation for all time. Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). He himself is the propitiation (that is, the atoning sacrifice) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The Father wants everyone to be saved and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). It's clear from Scripture that God treats every person fairly and wants what is best for all of us.

Not only that, He wants His children to follow His example. He wants all of His children, every Christian, to want all others to be saved and to know the truth. The Lord Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said,

'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:43-45). If you call yourself a child of God, and then act like a child of the devil, then you're doing the wrong thing. Why now show love to all people? Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." A heart that loves God and loves others is like a fragrant offering; it's pleasing to both God and to man.

Sadly, some fail to love and respect people who differ from them. They love those who are like themselves and dislike everyone else. This failure to love others who are different is not unique to any one group; and it can tempt any individual, any class, or any race. It's easy to point your finger at others and miss your own failings. Be careful how you judge others; because you yourself may be guilty of doing the same thing (Romans 2:20-23). Prejudice, bias, and hate can tempt anyone. Stereotyping and labeling an entire class—any class—is both unwarranted and unfair and unchristian. No class, no group, and no individual are so elite that they may show partiality to other human beings.

James 2:8-9 says, "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, that 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you're doing well. But if you show partiality (that is, respect of persons), you're committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." So, let's examine our own hearts, watch our own mouths and behavior towards others that we may not disrespect anyone, anywhere at any time. Each of us can change our hearts, and perhaps that will lead others to change.

Prejudice takes place when someone judges another before hearing the evidence. This is not fair or kind, but presumptuous. Since we don't know the motives of other people's hearts we've got to be careful not to judge ignorantly. The Lord warns us against unfair judging of others, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that's in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that's in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

Some, who ignore the behavior of the judgmental Pharisees, think Jesus is here saying that we should never judge anything; but Jesus is here speaking of unfair judging. He's speaking against how some in those days were judging others by human standards and not God's. The Lord Jesus also said, "Don't judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). There is a time to judge righteously, but make sure you know all the evidence. Some look only at the surface without getting the whole story. They jump to conclusions quickly and assume the worst. Proverbs 18:17 says, "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."

The apostle John tells of the man who put himself first and thought he was in charge of the church. John said, "I've written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, doesn't acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I'll bring up what he's doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church" (3 John 9-10). The authority that we must acknowledge today is not in man but in God and in His inspired Word. Pride led Diotrephes to trust in himself rather than listen to God. Please see the difference between man-made laws and God's laws. God will judge us according to His inspired teaching found in Scripture, and all the pride and arrogance in the world cannot change what God says.

Fourth, some have hardened hearts. I've known some whose heart has hardened against God and against the Word of God. They say, "I don't care what anyone says, and I don't care what the Bible says. I'm going

to do what I want.” You can't reason with such people. People who oppose what the Lord clearly says in Scripture reveal this stubborn heart and place their souls in jeopardy. Some don't want to admit sin is sin. Some would rather listen to some human myth rather than hear God's teaching; they have no desire to obey. They've removed God from their hearts.

Matthew 13:14-15 describes the hard-hearted Jewish leaders in the days of Jesus, “Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but you'll never understand, you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’” Where is your heart? Have you allowed it to be hardened against God, against Christ, against God's morals, or against God's church?

Let's pray together. “O, Father, help us to have hearts that are softened, and willing to listen to the things that You teach. Help us Father to be dedicated to doing Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.”

Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” Without realizing it, we can let our hearts become hardened against God. When people fall to temptation, they may grow to love sin more than they love God. This love for sin will deceive them about God and about their souls.

I hear people refer to sinful relationships and sinful behaviors and then use the word “love”, and they think that love justifies them, but they're deceiving themselves. Love doesn't change sin into sinless-ness; it doesn't turn what is immoral into what is moral. Using the word love doesn't change God's Word. Love may explain what one is doing, but it doesn't excuse sin. When someone points out sin as sin, people who practice that sin may react one of three ways. They may humble their hearts and give up their sin; they may dismiss God and His Word; or they may say God's Word doesn't mean what it says, and they get angry at God and strike out against anything that God teaches. We pray that they'll humble their hearts to God and be obedient.

Your heart will determine your choice to obey sin or to obey righteousness. To become a Christian, believe and trust the Lord, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today!

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ that's near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. A number of people have been calling and asking to find a local church.

Sins of the Heart

The Lord said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else" (Jeremiah 17:9). A deceitful heart can easily lead us into sin. Today, we examine the sins of the heart. We're examining God's diagnosis of man's most serious problem that leads to sin and God's solution to that problem. God is honest with people about sin, but He's also gracious to forgive us and to give us a new way of life. The Scriptures help us understand the serious challenge that sin presents to our souls, our lives, and our destinies. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

The great threat to our souls is sin, and the great source of sin is selfishness. When people put themselves first and forget God and others, they usually find themselves in sin. First John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Each of these points to a heart that focuses on self and what I want.

When people neglect God and begin looking for other things to fill their lives, they lead themselves in the wrong direction. People who stop worshiping with the church, stop praying, and stop reading Scripture find their hearts spiritually empty and weak to sin. This is why we urge everyone to strengthen their spiritual lives by worshiping at church, studying Scripture, and praying each day. The best response to temptation is to pray and fill our hearts with God's Word.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Galatians 5:19-24, and focuses on the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit.

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I've forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Let's pray together. "O, Father, help us to guard against the sins of the heart, to not deceive ourselves, and to do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The first step into sin focuses on our desires and ignores God. When people forget God and what great things God has done for us, they cease to honor Him and to thank Him. Paul described the things that led to paganism and idolatry in ancient times: "For even though they knew God, they didn't honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Romans 1:21-23).

One who's not thankful to God for His blessings and kindnesses may turn to cynicism, grumbling, and complaining. Philippians 2:14 says, "Do all things without grumbling and disputing." Paul didn't want them to complain endlessly and fuss about their lives. Complaining means that we've forgotten to count our blessings. I've seen poor people who were happy in life because they were thankful to God for what they had, and I've seen wealthy people who were never happy because they didn't have everything they wanted. When we look into 1 Corinthians 10:10, it reminds us that greed can be a problem.

Second, arrogance is the attitude of exalting oneself so that one is better than others. The Lord God spoke of how offensive an arrogant person is in Isaiah 65:5: They are those "Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do

not come near me, For I am holier than you!' These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day." You've likely been around a campfire where the smoke seems to follow you. It gets in your eyes and nostrils! It's offensive; so is the arrogant person who thinks he is holier than others or better than others.

God calls haughty eyes an abomination in Proverbs 6:16-17 because they show an arrogant pride that puts down others and sometimes puts down God himself. Haughty eyes presume they can do evil and get away with it. Haughty people presume and think the rules don't apply to them. Haughty people think they are above criticism. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate."

Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride comes, then comes dishonor." Insolent pride breeds strife and causes quarrels (Proverbs 13:10). Proverbs 16:5 says, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; And assuredly, he will not be unpunished." Again, Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling." First Peter 5:5 cautions us, "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Third, coveting is an improper desire for more. God's law said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Deuteronomy 5:21). To covet means to desire or crave the property of another, and then they do it to a fault, they do it detrimentally, they do it to such a situation that they long for it and want to take it. Ephesians 5:5 says that a covetous person is really an idolater and has no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

James 4:1-4 says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and you don't have; so you commit murder. You're envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You don't have because you don't ask. You ask and don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, don't you 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." When a person becomes selfish and then hurtful to others, he also becomes a lover of the world and an enemy of God.

Fourth, greed or the love of money can cause sin and heartache. First Timothy 6:10 says, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." People who love money are never satisfied with what they have. Solomon said, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. Oh, this too is vanity. When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?" (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11). The Lord Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (or mammon)" (Matthew 6:24). In fact, Colossians 3:5 says that covetousness or greed "amounts to idolatry."

Luke 12:13-21 tells of a man who loved his possessions: "Someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And then He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.'" He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 'And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 'Then he said, "This is what I will do: I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I'll store all my grain and my goods." And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be

merry.” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Fifth, envy is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing the advantage or prosperity of others. Matthew 27:18 says Pilate “knew that because of envy, the Jewish leaders handed Him over” to be crucified. Envy can cause violence and desires to deprive another of what he possesses. Proverbs 23:17-18 says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the LORD always. Surely there is a future, And your hope will not be cut off.”

Do you remember how Cain killed Abel? Genesis 4:3-5 says, “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain “and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.” John explains, “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother Abel’s were righteous” (1 John 3:11-12).

Jacob favored Joseph over his brothers; and Genesis 37:4 says, “His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; so they hated him and couldn’t speak to him on friendly terms.” Envy that grows in the heart causes the worst to come out in people and leads to heartache. Jacob didn’t fully realize what loving Joseph more than his brothers was doing to Joseph’s brothers.

Sixth, jealousy desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for oneself. Love is not jealous (1 Corinthians 13:4). Jealousy and envy often lead to selfish ambition. James 3:13-16 says, “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” The Scriptures never speak anything good about selfish ambition.

That’s the seventh point, selfish ambition, which is a contentious struggle for personal profit or power, with no redeeming hint of service to others. Selfish ambition battles others for immediate gains and empty honors, which have no eternal value. A person who is selfishly ambitious will often step on others to make his way to the top. He doesn’t care about anyone but himself. Such people are hard to love and often very lonely. Selfish ambition leads to strife and contentiousness. Romans 2:6-8 says that God “will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, to them wrath and indignation.”

It’s much better to recognize there are things bigger than ourselves. As Christians we are to be servants of our Lord and servants of one another rather than arrogantly making ourselves better than others. Selfish ambition leads people to think only of themselves and regards everyone else as inferior. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

We’re to have the mind of Christ. The Lord Jesus emptied Himself and took the form of a bond-servant. “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And for this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:8-

9). God will humble those who exalt themselves and will exalt those who humble themselves. So humble yourselves before the Lord.

Thankfully, God helps us to have good hearts, when we focus on Him and His Word. Psalm 119:1-2 says, "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart." Like the psalmist we should say, "Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes!" (Psalm 119:5). Later, in verses 9 to 11 he observes: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word have I treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."

Each day we choose whether we give our hearts to God or spend our time in selfish pursuits. We can allow the passions of our hearts to lead us into selfish pleasure or turn our hearts to the will of God. If you turn to selfish pleasure, in no time you'll be a slave to your own desires. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Let's pray. "Heavenly Father, help us to sow to the spirit and not to the flesh, help us to live for You, and to love You, and to serve you every day of our lives. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen."

God asks us to think within our hearts about our choices. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You'll eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 1:18-20). What we choose to be, to say, and to do matters. We'll either follow the way of the Lord or the ways of the world. If we follow the world, we'll lose sight of God and end up with hardened hearts against Him.

So, decide today, who you're going to follow. You don't have to obey sin; you can have a heart that loves and follows the Lord. When we give ourselves to God in obedience, God promises to give us new hearts. The Lord God said in Ezekiel 36:26, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

When we obey the Lord, we will place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we'll repent of our sins, we'll confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and we'll be baptized (that is, immersed) in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, just as they did in Acts chapter 2. When we're baptized, God will wash away our sins (Acts 22:16), He'll unite us with Christ, and give us newness of life (Romans 6:4-7). Won't you turn to the Lord today?

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one.

God Wants Your Heart

God wants your heart, your whole heart, and the hearts of your friends and family. God wants you to love Him with all your heart. 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 relationship 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.

Mark 12:28-31 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. 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. Anything less simply will not do. He expects us to make a total commitment to serve Him.

Our reading today comes from the first letter of John 5:1-3, 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? 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. 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, "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" (Luke 9:23-24). 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 served the Lord. He said, "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" (Philippians 3:8). In fact, Paul considered himself to be dead to the world, so that he could live with Christ. He said, "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" (Galatians 2:20). 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 12:42-43 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." Such people may see Christ as God's son, but they're unwilling to make it known. Confession is a public act, and they didn't want to lose their place in their society, so they weren't confessing Him.

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, John 6:66-69 says: "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, '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 only Lord, and He asked, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). 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 7:24-27).

Second, loving the Lord with all your heart means changing the direction of your heart and life. 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 1:14. 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 4:17 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, "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" (Matthew 5:29-30). The Lord Jesus wasn't interested in our losing an eye or a hand; what He wanted was us to repent of our sins. 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 15:17-20 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. 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." 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, "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" (Acts 17:30-31). 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!

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. 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 2:25. 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. 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, "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" (John 4:23-24). God wants genuine worship from our hearts and from our spirits. Worship comes from the heart and reveals our praise and thanksgiving to God. Ephesians 5:19-20 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 6:16-18 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. 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 8:28-29), so we too should please God from our hearts by doing things like He teaches them. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). He repeated this thought in John 14:23, "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."

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! Second Corinthians 5:14-15 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 26:37-39 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. 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. 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, "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" (Acts 2:38). 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.

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. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one.