

**Introduction:** The morning we continues our serious on biblical counseling (broadly defined as any believer seeking to help another person to grow more into the image of Christ) we come to address matters of the heart. Specifically, what does Scripture say about the heart. What is it, what does it do, what should we do with it.

- Some of our most well known Scriptures include things about the heart:
- The great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. We are to keep our heart with all diligence. We are promised through prayer that God will guard our heart. We are to hide the word in our heart so that we might not sin against God.

## I. WHAT IS THE HEART?

- Used some 700x in Scripture. Two things we will see it is not in Scripture, the physical organ nor exclusively the emotions (though certainly vitally bound up with them).
  - A synonymous term with a number of other terms. By synonymous, I don't mean exactly the same. In one sense, few synonyms mean exactly the same things, or it would just be the same word.
- 1.) Soul – Psalm 13:2; Proverbs 2:10; Lamentations 1:20; Hebrews 4:12
  - 2.) Spirit – Exodus 35:21; Joshua 5:1; Psalm 34:18; 51:10; Proverbs 17:22
  - 3.) Mind – 1Chron 28:9; Job 38:36; (or kidneys Psalm 73:21; Jeremiah 17:10)
  - 4.) Thoughts – Genesis 6:5; Deuteronomy 15:9; Jeremiah 4:14; Luke 9:47
  - 5.) Strength – Psalm 28:7; 84:5; 38:10; Ephesians 3:16
  - 6.) Inner man – Ephesians 3:16-17 (only use)

## II. WHAT FLOWS OUT OF THE HEART?

- **Illustration:** A fountain breaking out of the ground which has its spring deep in the earth.
- 1.) Other thoughts – Matthew 15:19
  - 2.) Emotions
    - These are initially inward, though they frequently express themselves outwardly. Some of the major emotions: anger (Jeremiah 23:20), hate (Leviticus 19:17), fear (Deuteronomy 5:29; Psalm 27:3), reverence/fear (Proverbs 28:14), sorrow/sadness (Nehemiah), and joy/happiness (Deuteronomy 28:47).
    - They are the response to our interpretation of stimuli. They can result in mental and physical responses. Though they can become a habitual response, they are first developed through the mind. One can develop almost "hard-wired" responses, that shouldn't be taken lightly or thought of as silly. (i.e. trained fearful response)
    - Emotions, in and of themselves, are inherently sinful or righteous. They are physical energy created in the body for the purpose of motivation to action. The object to which they are directed (a person, a circumstance, words, weather, God), in relation to God's instruction, defines which it is. What does God say our thoughts should be about those things? The goal is not stoicism, a neutering of emotions to become subhuman. This is to bottle up and destroy inwardly. Rather, it is to think rightly and have the right emotional responses to those things..
  - 3.) Verbal communication – Matthew 12:34
    - One of the frequent things heard is "I didn't mean that." The example of someone screaming "I hate you." What they could rightly say is that they don't generally hate them, but at that moment they were certainly doing so. This applies to all kinds of speech. If there is love in the heart, then loving things will come out, even if ineloquent. The problem isn't merely techniques of communication (though they can certainly help), but what is in the heart?
  - 4.) Actions – Mark 7:21-22
    - We do what we do, in good circumstances or in bad, as a result of what is in our heart.
    - A primary part of the solution in dealing problems isn't just new behavior, new techniques or masking emotions, but dealing with the issues of the heart. Otherwise simply dealing with fruit rather than root.

## III. WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH OUR HEART?

- Much of our culture might think that this is a nonsensical question. It is assumed that you can't do anything about it. It (defined as emotions) is considered the infallible compass of decisions. The influence of Eastern thinking in popular culture encourages to by-pass the mind and use the feelings.

### A. Recognize What It is By Nature – Jeremiah 17:9

- The great problem is the deceitfulness of our heart. It is made unclean by sin, resulting in ungodly thinking, emotions, and actions. This is what we are by nature. Proverbs 28:26 says that trusting in our heart (disconnected from God's truth) is foolish.
- We must also recognize that we cannot cleanse it ourselves, by our own resources Proverbs 20:9. No amount of self-reformation, plans for new behavior, nor attempts to change our lives can do this.
- It is only God who can do so Psalm 51:10. It brings us to see the desperate need we have for God to change us and make us something we aren't by nature. He does so through faith in Jesus Christ Acts 15:9.
- This is true conversion. While there will be the reality of remaining sin, it no longer reigns in our hearts, because God has cleansed us and set us free.

- What is fundamental to true spiritual growth (into the likeness of Christ) is that one is a Christian. Calling upon God and asking Him to change.
- Then for the Christian, what are we called to do?

### **B. Love God with All of It – Matthew 22:37**

- This is the great commandment above all others. All else is to flow from this.
- I love my neighbor out of love for God. I cannot love my neighbor rightly, no matter how self-sacrificially I do it, unless it is out of love for God. This is why bare humanitarianism falls short, because it leaves out the most important factor: GOD!!!
- In dealing with thinking and behavior we have to be constantly recognizing this, because ultimately it is a lack of love for God that we sin and fail.
- Scripture tells us that God judges not merely the outward actions, but fundamentally the heart. We may fool others, but God is not fooled. This brings us to desperate necessity for the following things in changing it.

### **C. Reorient it With God's Truth – Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 3:5**

- This highlights several things. First, the importance of a prayerful and thoughtful reading and memorization of the Scriptures. We will not be changed without God's Word. It is His means for our transformation (Romans 12:1-2), by the renewing of the mind.
- Second, the need to seek counsel from godly well-experienced Christians who themselves are full of Scripture. We see the example of godliness in their life, and we hear the truth of the Word in their mouth.
- Third, the need for us to use Scripture in giving counsel to others. To actually look at the Bible and use it, not just "miscellaneous thoughts" about it. Have them turn to Scripture and look with you. Someone's attitude of "yeah, yeah" may just indicate that they aren't taking it seriously. Contrast this to Samuel's disposition, "Speak Lord, for Your servant hears." (1Samuel 3:10)
- What is necessary in conjunction with this is that God would give His Holy Spirit to illuminate (give light) that which we cannot fully understand without Him (Ephesians 1:17-18 eyes of your heart)
- It sounds so simplistic to some to say "you need to get into Scripture and to pray", but as I get older I realize just how profound this is. The counsel isn't just read more and say prayers, but the dynamic of a living relationship with the living and true God.

### **D. Keep It with Diligence – Proverbs 4:23**

- Input into our heart influences. What we read in words (books, literature, magazines, Internet), what we hear (music, lyrics conversation), what we see in images (movies, TV shows, TV ads, magazines, Internet) all have influence on our heart. There are some things that we have to be exposed to, and others that we are exposed to by choice. Regardless of which, there must be an active and discerning engagement as opposed to a passive absorption. If it is not active and discerning, it will influence for bad.
  - We should be thinking and discerning Christians. The Scriptures answer to our dealing with the world in which we live in is not absolute separation or fear, but an engagement to have an understanding of our times. But we must be careful in the process that we aren't just making spiritual sounding excuses to partake of ungodly things.
  - We should be asking ourselves, and the Lord, to show us how these things are affecting our heart.
- We see then from all this that one absolutely crucial concept in biblical counseling is that not only the "what" of behavior should be addressed, but also the "why" behind it. Specifically "what was going on in the heart that brought about this behavior. This is also a crucial concept in parenting.