

Giving Your Heart To God

Lesson 2: Giving Your Heart To God



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Lesson 2:

Giving Your Heart To God

Where is your heart? Hopefully you have been able to honestly evaluate yourself in order to know where your heart is (after our previous study). This is the most important evaluation you can ever make!

Again consider what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

In our first lesson, we discussed that the Bible uses the term “heart” to refer to the functions of our minds – our thoughts, our intents, our emotions, etc. So, as we attempted to discover who/what captured our allegiance, we considered (1) that everything we are stems from our hearts and (2) that where we will spend our eternities is closely connected to our hearts. So, the question of “Where is your heart?” is a vitally important question.

Then, we focused on the fact that there are only two options for the answer to this question. Either your heart is focused on earthly things or it is focused on heavenly things. Finally, we discussed how you can know where your heart is by locating your treasure! In addition, please be reminded of the warning against self-deception.

It is my hope that you have honestly reflected on the question of, “Where is your heart?” and that

you have come to an accurate conclusion. After your evaluation, hopefully you have discovered that you have truly given your heart to God and that you are living your life in obedience to Him. However, perhaps you have discovered that you have not truly given your heart to God. If not, please consider the things we will discuss during the course of this lesson.

Giving your heart to God (for the reasons we established in lesson 1) is not something that happens accidentally. Instead, it is a purposeful decision to follow God’s ways and lay up heavenly treasures rather than seeking your own desires and laying up earthly treasures! Acts 11:23 demonstrates that individuals must have “purpose of heart” to follow the Lord. That is, there must be an intentional decision made in order to make the necessary sacrifices involved in serving God!

It is the purpose of this second lesson to help and encourage you to give your heart to God. We’ll talk about four things that are needed in order to do this: (1) This must be your greatest ambition, (2) you must make Him first in your life, (3) you must destroy all idols, and (4) you must keep your heart.

This Must Be Your Greatest Ambition

One of the questions we used to evaluate where your heart is in lesson 1 was the question: “What is your greatest dream/aspiration?” This question gets to the foundational element of who you are desiring to be – and working toward being. Therefore, if your greatest dream/aspiration in your life is focused on some earthly thing, then your actions will follow. However, if your greatest dream/aspiration for your life is to serve and honor God through your life, your primary focus will be on doing His will in your life! Consider the following four reasons giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life.

Because of who God is

Giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life in recognition of who God is. Everything God is should cause you to desire to give your heart entirely to Him.

This God is the Almighty Creator of the universe! He is the one who was able to say, “Let there be light” – and light was (Genesis 1:3)! He is the one who was able (according to the Genesis 1 account) to create everything in the world around us. Think of the awesome power of this God who had no beginning and will have no end!

This God is a holy God. The nature of this God is such that He is entirely separated from all the works of evil. 1 John 1:5 says that this God is “light” and there is “no darkness at all” in Him. The holiness of God is the reason why mankind cannot live in sin and still please Him!

This God is an All-Seeing/All-Knowing God. There is nothing that escapes His attention. Proverbs 15:3 says, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.” Therefore, “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13). He knows everything that you do, think, and say!

This God is the Judge of the world. Now, it is not just that God has knowledge of everything that you do, think, and say; but, that you will be held accountable for all of these things on the Day of Judgment! Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, “For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.” Based on this Judgment, you will either be rewarded with eternal life in Heaven or you will be condemned to eternal punishment in Hell.

Because of what God has done for you

Giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life in recognition of what God has done for you. This eternal, Almighty, holy, All-Seeing God who is the Judge of the world has loved you so much that He made a sacrifice so that you could be saved from the consequences of your sin!

Romans 6:23 explains that the “wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A “wage” is something that you earn/deserve to receive. In this case, your sin

separated you from this holy God (see Isaiah 59:1-2 and 1 John 1:5-7). As long as you were in your sins, you were destined for eternal destruction in Hell fire (the second death, Revelation 21:8) – and you could not do anything to save yourself (by yourself, according to Ephesians 2:1-10).

The only way that you could be reconciled to God and be forgiven of your sins is through the sacrifice of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. John 3:16 states: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Notice carefully that this sacrifice of Jesus Christ (His death by crucifixion) made it possible for you *not* to perish in eternal Hell fire – and for you to *have* everlasting life in Heaven!

Now, you must allow the love of God which He has demonstrated to you through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to control your life! Consider 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” That is, you must allow yourself to fully consider the meaning of Christ’s love for you – and use it to motivate you to fully surrender your life as a living sacrifice to God (compare with Romans 12:1-2).

Because of the reward/consequence God has promised

Giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life in recognition of the eternal reward and/or consequence that God has promised to you. He has promised that you will either spend eternal life in Heaven or that you will be eternally condemned to Hell fire. However, this reward/consequence is dependent upon how you live your life on this earth – and whether you give your heart entirely to God or not!

Consider the promise made in Galatians 6:7-8: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Certainly, how you live

your life will impact where you will spend your eternity. God says that you must not deceive yourself into thinking that this is not true! It is just like the principles of sowing and reaping. If you plant a garden and sow green beans in the spring, you will reap green beans later in the summer.

So, if you fail to give your heart to God and you pursue after earthly treasures, you will experience the spiritual consequences of your sin. God has promised that those who refuse to obey Him will experience His vengeance. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says that those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus will “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Then, read passages like Mark 9:43-48 and Revelation 21:8 to see what this punishment in Hell will be like.

However, if you succeed in giving your heart entirely to God and pursue after heavenly treasures, you will reap the blessings of God’s grace and mercy. You will be forgiven of your sins and be welcomed into eternal life in Heaven! Revelation 21-22 provides a wonderful description of Heaven as being a beautiful place that is free from all pain, sorrow, death, and evil. Furthermore, the passage describes Heaven as the place in which you will spend your eternity with God (rather than being forever separated from God in Hell)!

Because of your true purpose in life

Finally, giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life in recognition of your true purpose in life. Think about it for a moment. Just why have you been given life on this earth? What is the true meaning of life? What is the purpose of it all?

Is the true meaning of your life to pursue after earthly things? Is the true meaning of life to experience the most that you can possibly experience? Is the true meaning of life to enjoy life to its fullest? Is the true meaning of life to achieve the greatest measures of earthly success? Is the true meaning of life to pursue happiness through relationships with others? These sorts of things are often the things associated with the purpose of life.

However, all of these things end the same way – in death! Remember what Matthew 6:19 taught about physical treasures. Physical treasures are only temporary. They rust, become moth-eaten, are stolen, etc. Then, even if you succeed in keeping them for the duration of your earthly life, they will be taken from you at death! The rich man in Jesus’ parable in Luke 12 (verses 13-21) realized this. When his earthly life ended, he lost everything! Then, Jesus says, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (verse 21).

Rather than putting your focus on earthly things, you must realize that you were created for a much greater purpose! Genesis 1:26-27 describes the fact that God created you in His own image. Since God is Spirit (John 4:24), this means that God has created mankind with a spirit/soul which survives physical death. And, having this spiritual element to your existence, this means that you have the ability to seek God. Acts 17:26-28 says, “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’”

What do all of these truths about man’s spiritual nature mean? The book of Ecclesiastes helps us to understand. Throughout the book, Solomon (the author) explains his search for the true meaning of life. He tries to find the true meaning of life through the pursuit of physical things; but, he only discovers that all of those things end in death. So, all such endeavors are vanity and chasing the wind! Then, as he closes the book, consider what he states in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.” He says that the only thing which really means anything is to give yourself entirely to God – to fear Him and to obey Him, because of the coming Judgment! Therefore, to spend your life in pursuit of anything or anyone else

is to waste your life! Remember, Matthew 6:19-21 demonstrates that earthly treasures are only temporary; but spiritual treasures are eternal!

Giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life!

Because of who God is, because of what God has done for you, because of the reward/consequence God has promised to give to you, and because of your true purpose in life, giving your heart to God must be your greatest ambition in life! There is no greater or higher calling than to use your life entirely to the glory of the one who gave His life for you!

Make Him First In Your Life

In order to give your heart to God, not only must you make it your greatest ambition in life, but, you must also make God first in your life. Nothing and nobody else must be given this most honored position in your life. Only God can occupy this position – if you truly desire to give your heart to Him!

First and only

Take a moment to consider what God commanded the Israelites in Exodus 20:3-6: “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

This was a core part of the foundational ten commandments for the nation of Israel God gave to His people. They were not to put any other gods before the one true and living God. In fact, they were not even to have any other god. Not if it was the more convenient thing to do. Not if everyone else around them was doing it. Not if it seemed like the best thing

for them to do at a given moment in time. Not for any reason! God required that He be put first in their lives – and that they do not give their worship or service to any false god!

Now, what exactly was God requiring of them? Does this commandment mean that they could have idols in their lives – just as long as they would position them under God? Did this mean that they could worship Baal on Thursday evening (just one day out of the week)? Did this mean that they could worship an idol if they would have a visiting idol worshiper come among them? Could they worship an idol periodically in order to participate in the feasts and earthly pleasures which commonly would have accompanied such?

To answer this question, let’s find out what it means to truly put God first. To do this, let’s consider what Jesus identified as being the “greatest commandment.” Take a moment to read Mark 12:28-31: “Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments 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, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’”

Loving God is plainly identified as being the “first” (and greatest) “commandment” (followed by loving your neighbor as yourself). However, what exactly does it mean to love God? Jesus said that to love God properly, you must love Him with ***all*** your heart, ***all*** your soul, ***all*** your mind, and ***all*** your strength! Now, what’s left if you are focused on loving God with ***all*** that you are and ***all*** that you have? Absolutely nothing – which is precisely the point! Also, please realize that loving God necessarily involves keeping His commandments. 1 John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

So, whenever God says that there can be no other gods that come before Him in our lives, He is saying that there can be no other gods – period! Why? Because there’s nothing left to devote to them! We have given ourselves entirely to God! Now, please realize that though this passage is recorded in the Old Testament Law (which we are no longer obligated to observe), the principles of putting God first and making Him the only God in our lives is carried over to the New Testament. Furthermore, idolatry is identified as being a sin under the New Covenant just as it was under the Old Covenant (see Revelation 21:8)!

What it means to seek God first

God wants your entire commitment. He wants you to serve and worship only Him in your life. Now, consider a few passages regarding the things Jesus taught about this commitment to follow Him absolutely first in your life to develop a greater understanding about the nature of this relationship!

(1) Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

This statement by Jesus comes in the context of Jesus saying that we must not even seek the earthly necessities for life first. Instead, Jesus instructs us not to be focused on the pursuit of such earthly things – and put our entire focus on seeking God (His kingdom and His righteousness). Then, if we will dedicate ourselves to Him in this way, He will provide for our earthly necessities (i.e. food, clothing – Matthew 6:31). The reference to God’s kingdom would be all that pertains to God’s reign over His people, including becoming a kingdom citizen (member of Christ’s church) and honoring Christ as the King! The reference to God’s righteousness would be all that is in line with His standard of righteousness (remember, that He is a completely holy God – and He calls upon us to be holy, see 1 Peter 1:15-16)!

(2) Luke 9:23-26: “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ‘For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For

what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.’”

If you desire to follow after Jesus (i.e. if you desire to give your heart to God), Jesus states that you must (1) deny yourself (of anything/everything that is contrary to God’s will for your life), (2) take up your cross daily (bear the burdens which are attached with following Jesus Christ every day – not putting the cross down), and (3) follow Him (wherever He leads and doing whatever He commands)! Then, notice the extent to which this all must be done. First, notice that this is a daily activity. There are no “days off” as a Christian to live only for yourself and refuse to listen to God or suffer for Him. Second, Jesus says that this must be done even if it costs you your own physical life! But, what if you are not willing to commit yourself to God in this way? Jesus says that your life will have been of no value if you lose the only thing that really matters (your soul) – even if you would gain the entire world! If you desire to follow after Jesus, this is what He requires of you!

(3) Luke 14:25-27, 33: “Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.’”

If you desire to be Jesus’ disciple (if you desire to give your heart to God), here is what He requires of you. You should notice that the type of commitment He requires of you is a complete commitment, not a partial one! He requires that you put Him absolutely first – and says that nothing and nobody can be more important to you than following Him. So, He must come before your own pleasures, your own earthly possessions, your own relationships, and even your own physical life! If you refuse to give your heart to God in this way, Jesus says that you cannot be His disciple!

Surely, then, the type of commitment He requires you to make is a complete commitment. Remember (from lesson 1), you cannot serve two Masters (Matthew 6:24). God is not pleased if you attempt to partially follow Him or only partially give your heart to Him. Being a “lukewarm” follower of His is not enough to please Him (go back and read Revelation 3:15-16, 19)! Instead, Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matthew 12:30). You must fully commit yourself to Jesus Christ.

Choosing to seek Him first in your life necessarily involves being obedient to the gospel’s plan of salvation. Obeying the instructions God has given you is how you become His disciple and give your life over to His control – and access all of the spiritual blessings provided through Christ. In order to be saved, He instructs you to (1) Hear His word. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” (2) You must believe. In John 8:24, Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (3) You must repent of your sins. Acts 17:30 says that God “now commands all men everywhere to repent.” (4) You must confess Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (5) You must be baptized. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Upon being immersed in water (baptized), you are added by God to His church and are forgiven of your sins (see Acts 2:37-47)!

Destroy All Idols

Now that giving your heart to God is your greatest ambition in life and you are devoted to seeking God first – and now that you have obeyed

the gospel’s plan of salvation, you must work diligently to destroy every idol in your life!

As we have just seen, repentance of past sin is a necessary part of giving your heart to God (Acts 17:30). And, just like those to whom the apostle Paul was speaking, you must turn away from every idol that you have worshiped and served in your life in order to truly give your heart to God! Even after you have become a Christian, you cannot worship and serve multiple gods. You must truly give your heart to God by tearing down every idol in your life!

What is an idol?

I believe that many people (even many professing Christians) have idols in their lives – and do not even recognize it! Sadly, we often think of idols as being limited to a specific thing or groups of objects. For instance, we most commonly think of idols as being statues and carved images made out of things like wood, gold, silver, or bronze. However, in limiting our definitions of what an idol is, we fail to identify the idolatry that may be in our own lives.

Certainly, an idol can take the form of a statue or carved image. This was the case in Exodus 32. In this text, Aaron received the gold from the Israelites and “fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf” (vs. 4) that the Israelites would bow before and worship! There are many examples of these sorts of idols in the Bible.

However, idols can come in all different shapes and sizes! They are made out of many different materials. In fact, anything and anyone can become an idol. Notice two passages that make this plain.

(1) Colossians 3:5: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Similarly, a covetous man is called an “idolater” in Ephesians 5:5.

So, these passages indicate that coveting after *anything* can make you an idolater! Furthermore, notice that it is not even a specific item that can be an idol in this case – but the very covetousness itself!

(2) Romans 1:24-25: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their

hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

Earlier in the context, this passage describes how that these individuals could have known the truth about God; but, that they rejected it. Instead of worshiping and serving only the one true God, they exchanged the truth of God for the lie – and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. So, this text helps us to appreciate that idolatry is worshiping and serving that which is created rather than He who is the Creator!

Recognizing this to be true, any number of things can be an idol. An idol is simply anyone or anything that steals your worship and service away from God! Remember: He demands your whole-hearted allegiance! So, idols can come in the forms of jobs, promotions, achievements, money, sports, vacationing, hunting, television, the internet, games, cars, houses, technology, food, sex, friends, family members, physical fitness, education, etc., etc., etc.!

One of the things that is often deceitful about these idols is that God does not condemn each of these things – of themselves. In fact, God did not condemn the gold calf the Israelites had made – of itself. The thing was condemned by God whenever they worshiped and served it, stealing their worship and service away from Him! The same thing is true with each of the things I listed (and anything else that can become an idol). They may have their good and proper places in our lives (as part of our service to God). However, when we allow them to leave their God-given places, they become idols – and are condemned by God! So, you must be careful to evaluate whether there is anything or anyone in your life that has become an idol – and has taken away from the worship and service that God alone deserves!

Destroying the idols in your life

If you have identified that there is an idol (or, idols) in your life, please evaluate how you can destroy them and refuse to worship and serve them anymore. As we consider this, let’s consider the

example of King Josiah (who reigned over the nation of Judah in 2 Kings 22-23).

During the reign of King Josiah, the book containing the Law of God was found. Whenever this Law was read to the King, the King recognized that the people had not been keeping the instructions of the Lord. Consequently, he made a “covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book” (2 Kings 23:3). Then, after making this commitment to follow the Lord, he began making sweeping changes in the nation. Included in these changes was tearing down and destroying every element associated with idol worship in Judah (read 2 Kings 23)!

The “steps” taken by King Josiah form a good model for us in destroying the idols in our lives today. (1) Learn God’s law. Take some time to listen to God and hear what He wants from your life. (2) Determine to follow the Lord with all your heart and soul, determining to keep His commandments. Act upon this determination to be obedient to His plan of salvation and begin following Him. (3) Destroy every element that is associated with idolatry in your life! No element of idolatry is insignificant or harmless. None of them should be recognized as being “tolerable” in the life of someone who is committed to the Lord! Only God should receive your worship and your service!

Keep Your Heart

As you recognize that giving your heart to God is your greatest ambition, you put God first in your life, and destroy every element of idolatry in your life, you must also work diligently to keep your heart! Think back to what we studied in lesson 1 – and look at Proverbs 4:23 again: “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”

The importance of keeping your heart

To understand the importance of keeping your heart, go back and review everything we discussed in lesson 1. As Proverbs 4:23 states, everything about who we are and the things we do stem from the heart (as we saw from Proverbs 23:7 and Matthew 15:19). Therefore, if you want to please God, you must work diligently to keep your heart – even after you have given it to God!

Even after you have become a Christian, you must work tirelessly to keep yourself right with God! Revelation 2:10 says that you must remain faithful until death in order to have the crown of life in Heaven! Certainly, the devil is working tirelessly to convince you to allow something to leave its proper place and become an idol in your life. This is exactly what he had attempted to do with Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. The devil wanted Him to rely on something else, worship someone else, and pursue his own desires rather than doing the Father's will. Likewise, Satan is identified as being your "adversary" and walking about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Consider what Jesus said about Satan in John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." The devil's main tool that he will use against you is deceit. This is exactly what he had done with Eve. He told Eve (in Genesis 3:1-5), that God did not mean what He said about dying if she took of the forbidden fruit. This caused Eve to look at the tree differently (more favorably), in Genesis 3:6.

In the same way, Satan is going to try to deceive you to allow some things in your life to leave their right and proper places and become idols. He may try to convince you that a "little" idolatry is not a big deal. He may try to reason with you that "everyone has an idol or two" – and that it's OK if you do as well. He may try to blind you so that you do not even realize that you have an idol in your life. This is why it is so important to evaluate yourself with an honest and pure heart – as we attempted to

do in lesson 1. Allow yourself to honestly examine the facts. Look for your treasure – and you will find your heart! This is a promise from Jesus in Matthew 6:21.

How to keep your heart

After you have given your heart to God, how can you keep it? We have established that the devil will try to deceive you and lure you away from God to some idol. But, what can you do to fight against this lure and live your life faithfully to the Lord? Let me suggest three things.

(1) Guard the "entrance gates" to your mind. Given the significant impact your heart has on your life and your actions, you must be careful as to what you allow to enter your mind. But, how do you accomplish this? You do this by guarding the "entrance gates." These are the five senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight). These are the only ways that things gain access into your mind/heart!

So, you must be careful as to what you put yourself around! Be careful what friends you keep company with. Be careful what environments you willfully put yourself in. Be careful what television programs and movies you watch. Be careful what music you listen to. Be careful what internet sites you visit. Be careful what books and magazines you read. Be careful what games you play! If you're not careful in these ways (and other ways), you might find yourself being negatively influenced by the devil (even though you may not be aware of it)! The devil often does not try to steal you away from God all at once; but, he does so little-by-little in hope that you will not notice or think what you are doing is a big deal! Make up your mind to use the Philippians 4:8 "filter" for your mind – to determine what you should and should not allow to enter your mind: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things."

(2) Control your thoughts. Some things will gain access to your mind that are not appropriate. Some of the evil things in your mind may have

gained access before you began trying to keep your heart with all diligence. Some evil things will gain access into your mind that you do not have control over (i.e. you do not have control of every thing that happens in every environment). Still, you must properly handle these things in order to keep your mind.

You can properly handle these things and avoid the lure of the devil by bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. You must continue to use the Philippians 4:8 “filter,” and refuse to allow your mind to dwell on anything that does not meet this standard! 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

(3) Keep your focus. Satan wants you to become distracted by the vain things in this life! He wants you to think that certain earthly things are more important than they really are. He wants you to be deceived by worldly things and fail to produce fruit for God. Notice what Jesus taught in His parable of the different soils in Mark 4:18-19 (note that the different soils represent how different individuals respond to God’s word): “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

So, you must refuse to become distracted by worldly things – even though they may appeal to you physically, even though you may know others who are involved in them, and even though they may seem like the easier or more convenient ways! You must keep your eyes on the prize and resist the devil (James 4:7)! Consider what John wrote in 1 John 2:15-17 and allow this passage to help you focus on the right things: “Do not love the world or 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, the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Conclusion

Where is your heart? Is giving your heart to God your greatest ambition in life? Have you given your heart entirely to God? Or, have you kept part of it for yourself (or for someone/something else)? Do you have any idols in your life? Are you keeping your heart with all diligence?

These are the kinds of significant questions we have been discussing during these two lessons. Now, it is up to you to make the honest and right evaluations about your heart. Remember, God knows your heart – and He will judge you on the Last Day. You will not deceive Him. Please, do not deceive yourself. Give your heart to God today!

Study Questions

Where is your heart?

1. This Must Be Your Greatest Ambition

How does knowing who God is impact your decision to give your heart to Him?

How does knowing what God has done for you impact your decision to give your heart to Him?

How does recognizing the reward/consequence God has promised impact your decision to give your heart to Him?

How can you keep your heart?

How does understanding your true purpose in life impact your decision to give your heart to Him?

***Where is your heart? Have you given it entirely to God?**

2. Make Him First In Your Life

What does God expect concerning your dedication to Him (i.e. Exodus 20:3-6; Matthew 22:34-40)?

Explain what it means to seek God first.

3. Destroy All Idols

What is an idol? Identify some idols in the world today.

Discuss how the example of King Josiah in 2 Kings 23 can help you destroy idols from your life.

4. Keep Your Heart

Why should you keep your heart? What does it mean to keep your heart?