

Giving Your Heart To God



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

Giving Your Heart To God

Learn how to give your heart to God

Watch the free video or listen to the audio of this study @ www.godsaidso.com/dgw19

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW19

Written by Eric Krieg

About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

Copyright: Copyright © 2018 GodSaidSo Press. Please use this material to God's glory and honor. Feel free to copy and distribute this material in any way that will bring God glory and help souls to be saved. However, you may not take any of the material out of context or change the material in any way. Please provide the author with the proper credit for the material.

Scripture quotations: Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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.

**FIND MORE FROM THE DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES @
WWW.GODSAIDSO.COM**

Giving Your Heart To God

Lesson 1: Where Is Your Heart?

Lesson 2: Giving Your Heart To God

Where Is Your Heart?

Where is your heart? This is probably the most important question you can ever consider! It is a question that has to do with your allegiance. Who or what have you pledged your allegiance to?

Look at what Jesus taught 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 these two lessons, it is my desire to help you understand the importance of your heart – and the importance of giving your heart to God. Furthermore, I hope to provide useful steps that you can take in order to make sure that you have given your heart *entirely* to God!

In this first lesson, the goal will be to focus on the significance of the question, “Where is your heart?” Then, we will consider the only two options which are identified in the Scriptures and you will find your heart in one of these two places. Finally, we will spend some time honestly evaluating where our hearts are so that we can be prepared to take the appropriate action! After we establish where our hearts are (in lesson 1), we will use the second lesson in this study to give our hearts to God.

The Importance Of The Question

Why is the question, “Where is your heart?” so important? Why does it have such a significant impact on the way in which you live your life and whether or not you are pleasing to God? Let’s evaluate.

What is the Bible “heart”?

Understanding how the Bible predominantly uses the term “heart” will help us appreciate the significance of where our hearts are. We tend to think of the heart as the blood pump for the body. When we think of it in this way, our question does not make any sense to us! We would think, “My heart is right where it’s always been – near the center of my chest!”

However, when the Bible uses the term “heart” it usually means something quite different than this. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* says that the Bible “heart” is: “the inner self that thinks, feels, and decides. In the Bible the word heart has a much broader meaning than it does to the modern mind. The heart is that which is central to man. Nearly all the references to the heart in the Bible refer to some aspect of human personality” (page 466) [Lockyer, Herbert Sr., et al. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1986. Print].

Some Bible passages will help you to see this to be true. Examine each one of these passages closely and notice the specific things that are said to be functions of the “heart.”

(1) John 16:6: “But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.” As Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure from the earth (saying that He was going to the Father), He says that sorrow filled their hearts. Now, this cannot be literally true. The physical heart is an organ filled with blood to pump into other parts of the body. It is not filled with any kind of emotion! However, whatever the “heart” is (according to the Bible), it is something which can be filled with sorrow.

(2) Acts 11:23: “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” When individuals in areas well beyond Jerusalem heard the word of God, many turned to the Lord. Then, when the church in Jerusalem heard about their obedience, they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. Whenever, he arrived and saw those who had received the grace of God, he encouraged them to continue to follow the Lord with “purpose of heart.” Now, the physical heart (the blood pump) only works to sustain our physical lives. It cannot do anything to influence our spiritual lives and service to God! However, the Bible here speaks of purposing our hearts to follow the ways of the Lord!

(3) Colossians 3:15: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” As Paul wrote to the Christians in the ancient city of Colossae, he told them to let the peace that comes from God to rule in their hearts. In Philippians 4:6-7, this peace is described as surpassing all understanding. Furthermore, we are told that it will guard our “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Certainly, the physical blood pump of the body is not guarded by the peace of God! However, the Bible “heart” can be guarded by this peace which surpasses all understanding – and it can be given complete rule in our hearts!

(4) 1 Peter 1:22: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” Here is a God-given commandment concerning how we must use our hearts. We must have pure hearts to use to love our brethren fervently. Yet, as we noted earlier regarding sorrow, our physical blood pumps are not capable of any kind of emotions. Though our hearts are often used in our culture to depict the idea of love, our physical hearts actually are incapable of such an emotion or decision! However, God commands us to use our hearts for the purpose of loving our brethren fervently. Is He commanding something we cannot obey? Certainly not! The Bible’s use of the term “heart” makes us fully capable to use our hearts in this way.

From these (and many other passages) we can plainly see that the Bible frequently does not use the word “heart” to identify functions of the physical organ located in our chests. Instead, as demonstrated in the quote from *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, the Bible refers to the various functions of the mind – including our thoughts, our emotional responses, our decisions, etc.

Hebrews 4:12 should help to make this clear. The passage states: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Notice that God’s word is a discerner of the “thoughts and intents of the heart.” So, the Bible “heart” is applied to the same part of man which can think and have intentions. Obviously, this is a reference to our minds – as each of the previous examples have also demonstrated.

So, having established this truth, we need to revisit the question we are considering in this lesson: “Where is your heart?” It should now be clear that we are searching for our allegiances. We want to know where our thoughts and intentions are focused.

Everything you are stems from the heart

Now, why does it even matter where our hearts are? Isn’t that our own personal business? The fact of the matter is that where your heart is *does* matter – because of its impact on everything that you do in your life! You see, if your heart is not in the right place, your life will not be pleasing to God. However, if your heart is in the right place, you will dedicate your life to please God!

Look closely at Matthew 6:19-21 again: “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.” Specifically, focus on verse 21. Jesus says that when you locate your treasure, you will have located your heart. This is because your treasure (the result of the

things you have done) have been determined internally!

Other passages also identify the connection between our hearts and our actions. Consider the teachings of each one of these passages.

(1) Proverbs 4:23: “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.” While this passage is focused on the importance of keeping your heart (which we’ll focus on in lesson 2), it demonstrates the connection between your “heart” and all of the “issues of life.” Put another way, the NIV (2011) says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” So, there is no “issue of life” that is unconnected with the location of your “heart”!

(2) Proverbs 23:7: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, But his heart is not with you.” The connection between your heart and your actions could not be more clear than it is stated in this passage! Your life (i.e. your decisions, actions, words, emotions, etc.) are going to reflect the things that are in your heart (for the good or for the bad).

(3) Matthew 15:19: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Notice the kinds of wicked things which are brought about by the “heart.” A focus on evil things will produce evil thoughts. A focus on things like greed, envy, hatred, and lust will produce murders, adulteries, fornications, false witnessing, and blasphemies. Certainly, the things mentioned in this passage just scratch the surface. However, it does provide wonderful insight into the types of activity that is produced because of a heart that is not focused on God!

(4) Romans 8:5-8: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Notice that those who are spiritually minded (i.e. have hearts set on spiritual things) live according

to God’s ways. However, those who are carnally minded (i.e. have hearts set on physical things) live according to their own fleshly desires and refuse to submit themselves to God’s ways!

The Scriptures could not be any clearer about this principle truth – that our hearts are intimately connected with the decisions that we make and the ways in which we will live our lives. However, in addition to *stating* the truth that our hearts determine our actions, the Bible also *demonstrates* this truth – in positive and negative ways. Consider this with me briefly.

Consider each of the following negative examples to see the connection between the heart and actions. I would encourage you to read each one of the passages listed with a specific focus on this point. (1) Cain killed his brother Abel because of the envy that was in his heart (Genesis 4; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:10-12). (2) Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery because of their jealousy (Genesis 37). (3) The Israelites determined not to go into the land of promise initially because they believed the discouraging report 10 of the spies brought back to them (Numbers 13-14). (4) Naaman initially did not dip in the Jordan River so as to be cleansed of his leprosy because he had thought he would be healed another way (2 Kings 5). (5) David’s adultery with Bathsheba stemmed from his lust for her (2 Samuel 11). (6) Ananias and Sapphira lied to God because of their determination to deceive and keep back part of their profit for themselves (Acts 5). (7) Jesus Christ was crucified because of the envy of the Jews (Matthew 27).

Now, consider each of the following positive examples to see the connection between the heart and actions. Again, I would encourage you to read each one of the passages listed with a specific focus on this point. (1) Joseph did not commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife because he had determined not to sin against God (Genesis 39). (2) King Josiah tried to restore many things in Judah to be pleasing to God because his heart was tender and he humbled himself before the Lord (2 Kings 22-23). (3) Paul’s faithful life of preaching and service for the Lord stemmed from his dedication to give himself as a living sacrifice to God (Galatians 2:20). (4) Jesus Christ did

not sin because He had determined to accomplish the Father's purpose (Matthew 4:1-11; John 17:1-5).

So, as you consider all of these passages and examples, it should be entirely clear that where your heart is will greatly impact how you live your life – and whether you will be pleasing to God or not!

The connection between your heart and your eternity

Why are the decisions you make in life significant? Why does it matter whether you choose to obey God or disobey God? Surely it is because of the coming Judgment and eternity!

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” You will stand before Jesus Christ and be judged for how you have lived your life on this earth. Everything you have done while you were on the earth will be judged – including everything that you thought was done in secret (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Then, based on the outcome of your judgment, you will either be rewarded or punished for all of eternity. To those who lived their lives pleasing to God, Jesus will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). However, to those who failed to live their lives pleasing to God, Jesus will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). Then, Matthew 25:46 says that the wicked will “go away into everlasting punishment” (in Hell), but the righteous will go “into eternal life” (in Heaven)!

Think back over the connection between your heart and your actions that we established earlier in this lesson. Now that you recognize that you will be judged by God on the Day of Judgment for how you have lived your life on this earth, you should appreciate the fact that your heart will have a tremendous impact on whether you spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell! Romans 8:6 directly states this to be true: “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Those who are focused on earthly things will participate in sinful

things and will experience spiritual death (separation from God). However, those who are focused on spiritual things will do the things that are pleasing to God and will experience spiritual life (and peace)!

Realizing this, consider what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19-21 again: “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.” Consider the long-term value in the things we choose to pursue and focus on.

Jesus says that if our hearts are focused on earthly things and accumulating earthly treasures, all of our efforts and focus will be worthless! They simply will not benefit us beyond this earthly life. All that we will have focused on and worked for will be taken away from us. Specifically, in Jesus' statement, Jesus said that your earthly treasures can be stolen from you and can be destroyed – even during your own lifetime. However, your earthly treasures will certainly be taken from you when you die (as demonstrated in Luke 12:13-21)!

In contrast, Jesus says that if our hearts are focused on spiritual things (heavenly things) and accumulating spiritual treasures, all of our efforts and focus will be a source of reward for us! These treasures can never be taken from us, rust, or be destroyed. Furthermore, whenever your earthly life is over, you will be “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) because you will have been diligent to pursue spiritual things!

Therefore, when you stand before the All-Powerful God of this universe on Judgment Day, this question of “Where is your heart?” will have had a tremendous impact on where you will be spending your eternity – either in Heaven or in Hell! However, on that Day of Judgment, it will be too late to change your focus and positively impact your eternal destiny! Instead, you must carefully evaluate your life and your focus *now* – so that you will be prepared to stand before God on the Day of Judgment and so that you will not be found to be spiritually bankrupt on that Day!

Remember, as you answer the question, “Where is your heart?” that God knows exactly where your heart is. Though you may be successful in deceiving others (and may even deceive yourself), you will never fool God! Acts 15:8 informs us that God “knows the heart” of man! What will God know about your heart on the Day of Judgment?

Two Options

Now that you recognize the importance of the question, “Where is your heart?,” let’s really focus on determining the answer to this question. But, how can you possibly tell where your heart is?

There are only two options

Look again at the passage 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.”

There are only two options regarding where your heart will be – and you must make a choice! Your heart will either be on earthly things or it will be on spiritual things! Romans 8:5-8 also made it perfectly clear that you will either be spiritually minded or carnally minded. These are your only two options. You will simply need to make an informed decision to focus in one of these two areas. In the Old Testament story of Joshua, he told the people, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Then, he said, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)!

You cannot remain “undecided” throughout your life. In fact, to choose to be “undecided” is a choice to pursue the things of this earth because you will have competing allegiances in your heart. Consider what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:22-24 about the need for a single focus and a single Master during your life: “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is

in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

It is my understanding that the reference in this passage to a “good” eye is to an eye that has proper vision and a single focus – while the eye that is “bad” has “double vision.” So, the emphasis appears to be on the need for a single focus throughout the course of your lifetime! This is further emphasized, then, in verse 24, when Jesus says that it is impossible to effectively serve two different masters. Instead, it is necessary to have a single focus during your life and dedicate yourself entirely to God!

Consider an example in Revelation 3 concerning some Christians who had failed to have this single focus in serving God in their lives. When Jesus spoke of the church of the Laodiceans, He spoke of a group that was “lukewarm.” In verses 15-16, He said, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” Therefore, this was a group of individuals who had devoted some of their lives to the Lord; but, who had not made a complete dedication to God. Notice that Jesus said He would vomit them out of His mouth – and calls upon them to repent in verse 19!

So, you must choose today! You must choose where you will put your heart! And, you only have two options. Furthermore, you simply cannot serve two masters. So, you must make a choice – and you must choose wisely! In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asked, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Understand that nothing and no one is more valuable than your soul – and you must not exchange your soul for anything or anyone!

On heavenly things

The first option of where you can set your heart is on heavenly things. Setting your heart on heavenly things would involve seeking to glorify

God in all things and being obedient to His instructions. Seeking heavenly things puts God and doing His will absolutely first in your life – all of the time!

What results from a heart that is set on heavenly things? First, your earthly life will be one of sacrifice and devotion to God – doing what He desires rather than seeking to gratify your own earthly desires. Galatians 2:20 records Paul's dedication as he set his heart on heavenly things: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Second, if your heart is set on heavenly things, you will be eternally rewarded when this life is over. Your spiritual "treasures" will never be taken away if you are faithful to God (see Matthew 6:20). Therefore, you will receive an eternal home with God in Heaven (as described in Revelation 21-22:5).

On earthly things

The second option of where you can set your heart is on earthly things. As we discuss this, please remember that what we are talking about is setting your heart on the pursuit of these things (as not all of the things I will mention are sinful in and of themselves). Instead, we are talking about making these things the focus of your life and elevating these things above God and your pursuit of heavenly things!

So, setting your heart on earthly things could involve seeking earthly treasures (i.e. money, possessions – houses, cars, boats, electronics, etc.). It could involve seeking earthly pleasures (i.e. entertainment, recreation, sex, drugs, alcohol, food, sports, hobbies, etc.). It could involve seeking your own personal desires or interests – whatever those desires and interests are. It could involve seeking relationships with others (i.e. with parents, with a boyfriend/girlfriend, with a spouse, with children, with friends, with co-workers, etc.). It could involve seeking earthly power or standing (i.e. promotions, membership into "elite" social clubs/groups, recognitions, achievements, etc.). It could involve seeking anything that is on (or about) this earth! Anything and anyone on this earth could become an

idol in your life that steals your focus away from God and from heavenly things!

What results from a heart that is set on earthly things? First, your earthly life will receive its good things. This means that as you are focused on fulfilling the desires of your own flesh, you will receive whatever good will come to you – while you are living on this earth. This was true about the rich man in Luke 16:19-31. Jesus said that he received his good things while he lived on the earth. Second, when this life is over, you will be eternally punished. These physical "treasures" will not be of any spiritual benefit to you – as they will not survive this earth. They will be taken from you at death (if not before). This can also be seen regarding the rich man in Luke 16. In verse 25, he was shown the contrast between himself and Lazarus (a beggar who had lived at the same time): "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented." Clearly, the physical things he had enjoyed on earth were of no benefit to him (as was the case in Luke 12:13-21 regarding another rich man). Likewise, if your heart is set on earthly things, you will be sentenced to eternal destruction in Hell fire (see Revelation 21:8) – and none of your earthly treasures will be of any benefit to you!

How Can You Tell?

There is an obvious and definite need to determine where your heart is – prior to your death (so that you can make any changes that need to be made before it is too late)! But, how can you tell where your heart is? Jesus told us exactly how we can tell in Matthew 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Now, as you study through this section, please do not misunderstand my point. I am not saying that you cannot enjoy any earthly things. If God blesses us physically, it is not wrong to enjoy those blessings *in right/lawful ways*. As Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and concluded that it is vanity to pursue after earthly things (concluding that our true purpose in life is to fear God and keep

His commandments), He also said, “Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24). Enjoying earthly things has its right and proper place. But, we must keep it in its proper place and refuse to allow it to become something God never desired it to be!

The problem of self-deception

One of the things which complicate the matter of determining where your heart is – is the problem of self-deception. The Scriptures warn about this problem – as it is not an uncommon problem! Certainly, there are many individuals who justify their actions as “enjoying God’s blessings” when they have actually allowed physical things to become idols in their lives. So, you must be careful to observe and heed the warnings about self-deception. Consider the following passages.

(1) Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Whenever we act as if our actions and decisions have no consequences, we have deceived ourselves. We may deceive ourselves (or may be deceived by others) so as to believe that what we do and the decisions we make do not affect our eternal homes. Yet, God promises that we will each reap according to what we sow on this earth!

(2) James 1:22: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Whenever we hear God’s word but do not take the appropriate actions, we are guilty of deceiving ourselves. We may even begin to believe that we are living right because we know the right things; but, we may be failing to live in a way that is pleasing to God!

(3) James 1:26: “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.” Whenever we think we are religious but do not do the things He has required of us, we have deceived ourselves. Again, we may claim to be religious and honor Jesus as Lord of our lives; but, we may actually be living in ways that deny Him or that only please Him *some* of the time!

While these passages help us understand some things about self-deception, we can just as easily deceive ourselves about where our allegiances are! We may attempt to justify our actions by saying, “I am just enjoying the things of this life” or “I have earthly responsibilities” or “I am not like ‘X.’” However, we must be willing to honestly examine ourselves to see whether our hearts are truly set on heavenly things or on earthly things! 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.”

Some tests

Let’s take a few moments for a period of self-evaluation. Let’s ask some questions to help determine the answer to the question, “Where is your heart really at?” Please keep in mind that only honest answers will be helpful to you. It will do you no eternal good to lie to yourself or attempt to justify yourself!

(1) Who/what is the most important thing in your life? Who/what occupies first place in your heart? Is it your job, family, friends, a hobby, or other earthly things? Or, is it God and doing His will?

(2) What do you spend your time on? If you categorized every minute you have spent during the course of the past month/year, what would that show about your priorities/allegiances? Is it family, friends, hobbies, entertainment, recreation, unnecessary secular work, or some other earthly endeavor? Or, is it God and doing His will?

(3) What do you spend your money on? If you categorized every cent that you spent during the course of the past month/year, what would that show about your priorities/allegiances? Is it a hobby, entertainment, luxuries, recreation, or some other earthly thing? Or, is it God and doing His will?

(4) What do you worry about? What consumes your mind to the point that it makes you anxious (more than just concerned)? Is it your finances, politics, health troubles, death, or some other earthly thing? Or, do you seek God first in your life and cast all your cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:25-34)?

(5) Who/what do you run to whenever things get tough? Who/what is able to comfort you as you go through difficult times more than anyone/anything else? Is it a friend, a family member, food, sports, entertainment, or some other earthly thing? Or, is God the only one who is able to supply the *ultimate* comfort to you?

(6) What is your greatest dream/aspiration? If you could be anything, what would you be? If you could do anything, what would you do? Would you desire great riches, fame, pleasure, or some other earthly thing? Or, would you aspire to accomplish something for the Lord?

Evaluating the results

Again, let me stress that I do not believe and I am not teaching that we cannot enjoy any earthly things or that we do not have earthly responsibilities (i.e. toward work, family, etc.). However, I am wanting you to evaluate if any of these things have left their proper places! Have they become idols in your life? Have you given them any more significance than God has given them? Have you forgotten/replaced the one true God with one (or more) of these earthly things? Is God being crowded out of your life by any earthly thing? Do you have a heart that is either altogether pursuing an idol or one that has a divided allegiance?

I encourage you to take a moment and reflect back over your answers to the questions that have been asked (the 6 questions in the test above) and use them to help you evaluate where your heart is *really* at! Again, it will not be helpful to you to attempt to justify yourself or to deceive yourself. Instead, honestly evaluate where your treasures are – so that you can identify where your heart is!

Conclusion

Where is your heart? Does your heart *really* belong to God? Do you care? I hope that you now understand that this question has a tremendous impact on how you will live your life and whether you will spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell.

In our next study, we will attempt to build upon the information that you have gathered during this first lesson, as we will discuss how you can give your heart to God!

Study Questions

Where do you think your heart is?

1. The Importance Of The Question

What is the Bible “heart”?

What is the connection between your heart and your actions/decisions?

What impact does your heart have on your eternity?

2. Two Options

Are there *really* only two options?

What does it mean to have your heart set on heavenly things?

What does it mean to have your heart set on earthly things?

3. How Can You Tell?

Is it (necessarily) wrong to enjoy earthly things?
Explain.

What is the problem of self-deception?

Answer the following tests (honestly) to see where
your heart is *really* at:

1. Who/what is the most important thing in
your life?

2. What do you spend your time on?

3. What do you spend your money on?

4. What do you worry about?

5. Who/what do you run to whenever things
get tough?

6. What is your greatest dream/aspiration?

Now, honestly evaluate your answers to see whether
any earthly thing has left its proper place. List your
findings.

***Where is your heart?**

Giving Your Heart To God

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?