

Session 3: HEART

Proverbs calls the heart the very wellspring of life (**Prov 4 v 23**). All our activities and decisions and pursuits in life come from the overflow of our heart.

*'The heart is the place from which all life's activity stems. We could describe it as the core of a person's body, mind, emotions, personality, character and spirit.'*¹

Therefore if we are going to live like Jesus, love like Jesus, lead like Jesus then the question of the heart is going to be foundational – because all else will flow from that.

Where is your heart?

Luke 12 v 27-34: ³²*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'*

Jesus makes a clear link between our treasure and the motivation, focus, and ambition of our hearts.

Where is your treasure?

What is really driving you in life? What is your heart set upon? What is it that motivates you?

As Christian disciples the need is for us to have a heart after God, a heart that seeks first His kingdom and righteousness and to have that as the intentional motivation and ambition of our lives – what could be better!

How do we begin to discern that which we treasure? How do we discover where our hearts really are? 3 things to consider:

1. What we give our time to?

You will always make time for what you value.

What do our chosen activities reveal about how much we treasure Jesus?

Speaking about our media and entertainment habits, Craig Cabaniss says *'The hazard is thoughtless watching. Glorifying God is an intentional pursuit. We don't accidentally drift into holiness; rather, we mature gradually and purposefully one choice at a time.'*²

2. What we fill our thoughts with?

What do our thoughts generally turn to first thing in the morning? What do our thoughts generally turn to in our free time? What do our thoughts generally turn to last thing at night? What do our thoughts generally turn to when we consider the future?

¹ Damazio, F, The Making of a Leader, City Bible Publishing, 1988, p70

² Cabaniss, C, God, my Heart and Media, in, Mahaney, C. J, Worldliness, Crossway Books, 2008, p40

Where is God in all of this thinking? (1 Thess 5 v 16-18 *'Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances...'*)

3. Why and with what purpose do we do what we do?

'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.' (Col 3 v 17) *'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.'* (1 Cor 10 v 31)

Everything should be undertaken with the motivation, intention and desire to honour God and bring Him glory. If we can't do something whilst maintaining this attitude and heart we should not do it. *"For example 'Don't just 'go to work' and 'do your job' – [but] see your job as a way to imitate God, serve God, and love others."*³

Paul said that the Corinthians eating and drinking should be done for the glory of God? How? The principles that Paul outlines can be transferred and applied to direct all of our time, thinking and activities (1 Corinthians 10 v 23-33);

- Is what you are doing **beneficial and constructive** for the impact God wants your life to have on others (v 23-24);
- Are you consciously and genuinely **thankful** for what you are able to enjoy (v 30). God has given us all things richly for our **enjoyment** (1 Tim 6 v 17), so are such things increasing your **appreciation** of the goodness of God and His bountiful gifts to His creatures.
- We must make sure that whatever we do does not cause **temptation or sin**, and does not cause others to **stumble** in areas that they might be weak in (v 32).
- And over all these things our lives must have an overriding **Gospel** related focus and intentionality in all that we do. Not seeking our own good, but the good of many that they may be saved (v 33).

To seek first His kingdom and His righteousness means that your priority in life is wholly shaped by God's priority; His kingdom and His righteousness, walking in His ways, obeying His word, doing His will, growing in His character, responding with His heart, sharing His love. This becomes your priority; this is where your heart should be.

Where is your heart in the decisions of life?

How do you make decisions in life with the ambition of seeking first His kingdom and righteousness? How do you ensure that such a motivation and heart is evident in the decisions of your life? (Practically, how do you know you're doing this, what does it look like?)

³ Mahaney, C. J, Worldliness, Crossway Books, 2008, p158

The world's philosophy is to go bigger and better, this is their ambition and pursuit in life. But as followers of Christ he calls us to a different set of values, a greater ambition, which is not centered around material possessions and prosperity and worldly success. But one which is centered around faithful obedience and trust in Him, one which is concerned more with people than things, one which is driven by a love for God and others and not a love for the treasures of earth, one that is focused on pleasing God and not ourselves.

Where is your heart in the desires of life?

Is it to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, or is it something else?

Where would you like your next move to be? And why?

Where do you want to be in 5 or 10 years time?

What does retirement mean for you?

'For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' **(Matt 6 v 32-33)**

'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.' **(Prov 4 v 23)**

How do we guard our hearts and how do we fill our hearts with good, God-honouring ambition?

It's the work of the Spirit. God says *'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws'* **(Eze 36 v 26-27).**

Jesus says *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'* *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.'* **(John 7 v 37-39)**

Trusting Jesus, coming to Jesus, hungering and thirsting for Jesus is the way to guard your heart and fill your heart at the same time, because it is the work of the Spirit in your life that changes your heart and enables you to live a Christ-exalting, God-glorifying life.