

# No Regrets: Week 1 - Welcome to Prison

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** If you don't work on your heart, it will work against you.

## INTRO

How many of you have been in a relationship that you regret to this day? Maybe you never even dated the person, but you made an attempt, and it failed miserably. That's the funny thing about relationships; you never really know if the person you're about to date is going to be "The One" or if they're going to be that crazy person you talk about for the rest of your life.

But there is an adrenaline rush that comes from trying to find someone to date. However a likely reality you will deal with if you choose to enter the dating world...

- You are going to get your heart smashed to pieces.
- You are going to walk away with scars, the dating game is a battlefield littered with casualties and heartache.

The biggest enemy on the battlefield isn't even the people you date. God identifies the enemy like this:

*Jeremiah 17:9*

*The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?*

Remember that time you were supposed to do your homework, but your heart whispered, "One more episode, you need to know what happens next ..."?

Let's be honest, your heart kinda sucks. The issue is that God designed your heart to do good. You were made to reflect the same qualities that God has, but something went wrong when sin entered the picture.

Before you ever date someone, you need to understand that your heart is going to be working in overdrive. Whatever is in your heart is what your are going to see come out in your relationships. So before you work up the nerve to make a prom-posal, I propose we work on your heart. Because, **if you don't work on your heart, it will work against you.**

- When you date someone your heart goes into overdrive.
- Whatever is in your heart will come out in your relationships.
- Before you date you must work on your heart.
- **If you don't work on your heart, it will work against you.**

## WELCOME TO MISHMAR

Your heart was intended for good things, not evil. But something went wrong. The heart is a holding cell for the things that affect our souls. Your heart can be used to be like a river that gives life filled with things that refresh and encourage your soul or it could be like a holding cell of the soul's worst criminals, working to beat down and wear out your soul.

### Proverbs 4:23

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

In Hebrew, that phrase, "guard your heart," is called "mishmar." Mishmar means to guard something like a prison guard keeping watch over a prisoner. If someone comes to visit with a suspicious-looking cake, mishmar will step in and stop the prison escape.

- Guard your heart = Mishmar = prison guard
- The heart is a holding cell for the things that affect our souls.
- The things in our heart are not trying to escape. They are trying to get in to affect us
- The other problem there isn't just one prisoner. There are multiple prisoners.

### Galatians 5:19–21

*... sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, divisions, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.*

- These prisoners can easily dismantle the healthiest of relationships.
- **This is the world's deadliest prison riot, and it's living in your heart.**

You're gonna need some more **mishmar** if you want your heart to survive. If you don't work on your heart, it will work against you. The problem with these prisoners is they won't attack from the outside. They destroy you from the inside out, and given enough time, you will see their attacks appear on the outside.

And if you really want your heart to be something that gives life rather than being your worst enemy, then you'll have to pray something drastic and dangerous.

## THE MOST DANGEROUS PRAYER

Believe it or not, the world's most dangerous prayer isn't the kind that sends you to Antarctica to spread the gospel to penguins. The most dangerous prayer to our culture is this:

### Pslam 139:23–24

*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

- We don't even like our parents having access to our Snapchat.
- David is inviting the Creator of the universe to run a full diagnostic on his heart.

In the final verse, he says something crucial to all of this: "Lead me in the way everlasting."

- He doesn't want God to only identify the prisoners in his heart.
- He wants God to lead him to a way that gives life.
- He's telling God to identify the wrong path he's been living on and to point him to the right one.

If we want to overcome the prisoners that are looking to wreck our lives and ruin our future relationships, we need to be willing to ask God to search our hearts. But more importantly, we need to ask God to lead us. Remember mishmar? There is backup in the fight against the prisoners in your heart.

## ONE FRUIT

Paul clues us in on the backup that God designed for our hearts. Our hearts alone couldn't stand up to the riot of sin, so He gives us a new heart. This heart is packed with the necessary guards to lead us to everlasting life and back to giving us life. He names these guards like this:

*Galatians 5:22-23*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

In order for God to search our hearts, He has to identify what's going wrong. He also wants to show us the right path inside our hearts, because that's where He wants to lead us. So examine each of these attributes and ask if it's missing. When we examine each quality, we see what we need to become whole.

- **LOVE** – Have you been willing to sacrifice for the people around you? Are you willing to lay down your ego for the sake of other people coming first?
- **JOY** – Are you constantly comparing yourself to others? Do you notice what you lack before seeing what you have?
- **PEACE** – Do you feel rested, or are you constantly anxious?
- **PATIENCE** – Are you always in a hurry?
- **KINDNESS** – Do you consider others first? Are you compassionate?
- **GOODNESS** – Are you confident in your standing with God? Do you see yourself as follower of Jesus and not just a fan?
- **FAITHFULNESS** – Do you trust in the promise of God over your own fears?
- **GENTLENESS** – Is your anger louder than your love?
- **SELF-CONTROL** – Is your heart controlling your actions?

When we can answer these questions honestly, we can start allowing God to search us and lead us into everlasting life.

- **But this is not a buffet.**
- You don't get to pick and choose which one you like most.
- **This is the fruit of the Spirit; not the fruits. All of these must be in sync to create a healthy heart.**
- That's what purity is. It's not just a word that describes if you're sleeping around or staying a virgin.
- "Purity" describes the quality of your heart, and when one of these qualities becomes weak, it lets the prison riot in our heart become out of control.

Are you willing to do what it takes to control the prison riot? Will you let mishmar take control so that God can lead you into the life everlasting?

The most dangerous prayer isn't, "Send me." It's, "Search me." But when we make that decision to allow God to search us, it leads us into something amazing. But you have to make that decision for yourself.

## Discussion Questions

- Have you ever been in a relationship that you later regretted? (Small Group Leaders: Maybe add your own story here.)
- How can “following your heart” end badly? Why do you think that happens?
- What do you look for in someone that you want to date?
- In your own words, how would you describe purity?
- How would you describe someone who has integrity?
- How important do you think purity in today's culture? How about integrity?
- How important do you think purity and integrity are in dating relationships?
- Do you believe your heart influences your future? Why or why not?
- How do think we can guard our hearts?
- Read Galatians 5:22–23. Which of the fruits of the Spirit do you struggle with the most? (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)