

Follow Jesus, Not Your Heart

Part 2: We Cannot Serve Two Masters

(preached 5/5/24)

Please turn to *Proverbs 3*.

Part 1: Deceitful & Vulnerable

- The WORLD says “follow your heart” but the Lord says to follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd.
- The heart is the part of us which is most easily deceived.
- The heart is the part of us that **does** the most deceiving and not just to others, but to OURSELVES.
- It always wants more than it has and is rarely satisfied.
- It dwells on what it doesn’t have and stews on what it feels it’s being denied.
- Eve represents the heart of humanity—both men & women.
- Despite a great relationship with God, a good husband, and living in Eden, she wanted more.
- The Serpent deceived her into believing God was denying her something, so she ate the FF despite knowing & quoting God’s commandment.
- The heart wants what it wants and will lie, live a lie, steal, abuse, be abused, cover up, rebel, cheat, justify, and betray to try and meet its own needs.
- It doesn’t care about the truth, what the Bible says, or God’s commandments.
- God told Jeremiah the heart was “deceitful and sick” the latter word meaning FRAIL and VULNERABLE.
- We’re the most vulnerable to deception and delusion when our heart is STARVING & NEGLECTED.
- Our heart is the creator of our imagination where it tries to meet its own needs by creating empty idolatrous fantasies that are false.
- Have you ever envied someone else’s relationship with God? I’ve heard people do this consistently in my 19 years as a pastor.
- They ASSUME that so-and-so’s relationship with God must be hunky-dory and wish theirs was the same.
- TRUTH is they have no idea what so-and-so’s relationship with God is like!
- Have you ever coveted someone else’s marriage or spouse?
- “*I want a marriage like so-and-so’s*” or “*It would be great to be married to so-and-so.*”
- **We have no idea what their marriage is like.** We don’t really know what it would be like to be married to so-and-so.
- ***It’s our hearts deluding us.*** Creating a balloon that seems to have lots of substance, presence, and volume...when in fact it’s nothing but full of hot air.
- These delusions are **not** harmless: they’re robbing from our relationship with God, our spouse, our families, and other Christians.

- **It's with the heart that one believes**...either the amazing truths of God, or something from the Serpent.
- The heart is the one who resists believing God's Word and promises, causing our spiritual eyes to be blind and spiritual ears to be deaf.
- The OT prophets, Jesus, and NT Apostles had more to say about the heart than any other part of us.
- In a future sermon we will see how God can, will, and does flow through our hearts to express Himself.

TODAY we're going to hone in on making sure **we're serving the right Master**, Who is Jesus Christ.

We're going to zero in on **bringing the heart under submission.**

We must lead it instead of allowing it to lead us.

[Luk 16:13 KJV] No servant can serve two masters: for either he will **hate the one, and love the other**; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

We cannot serve Jesus and our hearts at the same time, any more than we can serve both Christ and our flesh simultaneously.

Years ago there was a TV series called ***"Band of Brothers"*** about WW2. In one episode actor David Schwimmer (Ross from *Friends*) plays the commanding officer of a platoon of men in active combat. ***Problem is Schwimmer's character is a terrible leader who knows nothing of combat, leading, or tactics!*** The men following him know this and realize that 1) they could be killed and 2) the mission they're on will fail. Thus every time Schwimmer barks an order, one or more of the men challenges him. Sure enough, Schwimmer's incompetence leads to disaster and some of the worst fears of his men come true just as they predicted.

Let me ask you all this: have you ever been a situation similar to this? **Where you were supposed to follow a boss or someone in an authoritative position who had no leadership** skills or abilities? They didn't know what they were doing, were indecisive, didn't inspire people, etc. Whether this was at work, church, or within some club/org what was the result? ***It's a disaster.***

There's a famous song called "*Jesus Take The Wheel*." **When we allow our hearts to take the wheel, the result will be a wreck.** Here in America we've proven the experiment to the nth degree. We've followed our feelings to the point where you can be any gender you want, or have none whatsoever. You can change your age and even your species: if you want to be an animal, it's all you. Fascinating that the Apostle Paul predicted all this 2000 years ago in Romans 1.

We've allowed the needs and wants of the heart to bring the USA to the place of **MOST MEDICATED COUNTRY** in the world. If MS Copilot is to be believed:

The United States holds the distinction of being the most medicated country in the world. According to data from **The National Center for Health Statistics**, approximately 50% of the U.S. [population uses prescribed medications](#)¹. Antidepressants are commonly provided to those under 60 years old.

Following our hearts and its desires has resulted in a symbolic train wreck full of toxic chemicals that have spilled out all over the place. **It's time for the heart to take its rightful place: in full subjection and submission to God.**

[Pro 3:1-6 ESV] 1 My son, **do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments**, 2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. 3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; **write them on the tablet of your heart**. 4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. 5 **Trust in the LORD with all your heart**, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Let's break this down and explore the proper role God created for the heart:

Verse 1: The heart is a KEEPER not a leader.

The word "keep" translates to "[to] preserve, [to] watch, [to] keep close, [to] guard/hide."

Other verses refer to the heart in the same context by calling it a TABLET—**something that stores knowledge** whether an ancient one made of stone or a modern one like a cell phone. Your contacts list on your phone is a keeper of information and we all know we keep our phones nice and close to us!

GUARDING is similar in the sense that the **INFORMATION STORED IS IMPORTANT TO US**. We don't want someone to steal or corrupt it in any way.

WHAT is the heart supposed to keep/store? What information is it supposed to guard [from being stolen/corrupted? Solomon tells us: the Word of God.

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,”

TEACHING gives the listener the opportunity to **learn/store more of God’s Word** within the heart.

It’s with the heart that one believes or doesn’t. When we believe something—anything—that “teacher” is writing on the tablet of the heart and the heart accepts it as truth.

Our teacher isn’t always God, reading the Bible, or our pastor. Other people, “life experiences,” society, and even our own desires “teach” us. When we believe those things, what they communicate is written on our hearts and become our beliefs.

Verse 2: “for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you”

IF OUR HEARTS BELIEVE, FOLLOW, AND LIVE OUT THE WORD OF GOD THEN WE’LL BE BLESSED. We’ll have peace instead of anxiety. Perhaps the reason America is addicted to anti-depressants is that we no longer trust in the Lord.

“3 Let not steadfast **love** and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.”

What does the heart seek above all else? What does it need more than anything? LOVE. To be loved. Love = value. When we feel loved, we feel valuable...worth it to someone.

A heart starved of love becomes dangerous to itself and those around them.

Is the answer to demand, manipulate, threaten, guilt, pout, and rebuke our spouse and family into loving us more and in the way we need? NO. The love Solomon is referring to in verse 3 is the love of God and His faithfulness.

WHEN WE SEEK HIM AND THE LOVE HE OFFERS FIRST, then all these other things we think we need so badly will come to us.

That's for another sermon in this series and if your heart has been starved and neglected, you'll need to hear that one as well as this one.

For now: **favor and success comes when we seek to meet the needs of hearts from God first and most.** Anxiety, frustration, disappointment, and depression are the result when we depend on the people in our lives to be the main suppliers.

“5 **Trust in the LORD** with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Here are the 2 famous verses, quoted often and it's important we go deeper into them.

Verse 5 is all about *Who is supposed to be leading and who is meant to follow* and can be reworded this way: **our hearts follow [trust in] the Lord.** It's the classic shepherd-sheep relationship which is why Solomon says in verse 6 “make straight our paths.”

Our Good Shepherd Jesus opens the door to the sheep pen and lets us out, then He leads us through Death Valley, green pastures, still waters, and even among enemies. If Christ is leading us, **think of all our parts that make us up as a flock of sheep: our brains, hearts, bodies, and spirits.**

EVERY MEMBER OF THE FLOCK NEEDS TO SUBMIT ITSELF TO THE LORD AND FOLLOW HIM.

That includes each of their needs and desires, which are very different from each other.

- Our bodies know they need to eat and drink.
- Our minds need intellectual stimulation and activity.
- Our hearts need to be loved and cherished and to express the same to others.
- Our spirits desire God and the supernatural.

TRUSTING in our Good Shepherd means **He's aware of all these needs and will provide all.**

IT'S WHEN WE STOP TRUSTING IN HIM THEN WE “GO ASTRAY”

which I explained in part 1 of this series.

- If the body is hungry and doesn't think the GS will lead it to green pastures, it will head out to find its own.

- If our hearts are feeling starved and neglected they'll do the same whether into fantasyland and/or real life.
- Just like Eve who had God's 1 commandment written upon her and even quoted it, our hearts will go after something that will hurt us, our relationship with God, and that with the people around us.

Remember what Genesis 3 shows us: **the FF didn't start looking good until Eve allowed Satan to write on her heart and replace the Word that God had written there.**

That doesn't make her evil, just vulnerable and weak.

The Lord has put you and I in charge of our hearts and not the other way around. We're the managers of all our inward parts, like a parent to a group of kids. We're the under shepherds to our internal sheep.

Our calling is to point to the Master Shepherd Jesus and tell our flock: "we're following Him....ALL of us."

Part of leading is knowing when to say "no" and when to say "yes."

WE SAY "NO" WHEN PART OF US WANTS TO STOP FOLLOWING JESUS because it *doesn't trust that He'll meet its needs.*

The litmus test for when a "no" is needed are God's commands. If the desire, want, or need of our hearts, bodies, or minds leads us to cross a boundary the Lord has set, we tell that sheep "no."

We wouldn't be in this mess *if Adam had stepped forward*, gently but firmly grabbed his wife's wrist as she was reaching for the fruit, and said "no honey. God said not to eat this one and that it would kill us. We're not doing it."

I believe King David was a heart person and the Bible records he followed it enough to get him in lots of trouble. Therefore his prayers to the Lord were often just like this:

[Psa 119:29-37 NIV] 29 Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me and **teach me your law.** 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness; **I have set my heart on your laws.** 31 I hold fast to your statutes, LORD; do not let me be put to shame. 32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding. 33 He Teach me, LORD, the way of

your decrees, **that I may follow it to the end**. 34 Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and **obey it with all my heart**. 35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. 36 **Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain**. 37 **Turn my eyes away from worthless things**; preserve my life according to your word.

In other words David is praying that **GOD AND HIS WORD WOULD LEAD, AND NOT THE DESIRES OF HIS HEART**. Just as importantly, David is shepherding his own heart and telling it to follow God's Word that's already written on it vs. its own needs and desires.

When do we say “yes” to the needs of the heart? Let me ask that another way: **HOW do we say yes to it?** Because we need to. If we deny our body food and water it will shut down. If we deny our heart love, joy, and peace it will do the same...and that's NOT what God wants.

How we say “yes” is to assure it that God can and will provide for ALL of its needs.

Do you like fruit? When was the last time you went apple or blueberry picking? I think it's loads of fun! With either, when I see the most lush looking one, I stuff it in my mouth instantly. So now imagine a massive and healthy tree growing amazing looking fruits that will taste great and be healthy...would you want to rush up to it to start picking and eating?

That describes God the Holy Spirit:

[Gal 5:22-23 ESV] 22 But the **fruit** of the Spirit [Who is compared to a TREE] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The Holy Spirit is the Tree of Life. In the GOE both trees were in the center: the Tree of Life and that of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Personally: I think they were planted right next to each other. God said Adam and Eve could eat of ANY tree except the latter, which included the Tree of Life.

Thus it is with us. **We keep thinking we need the FF to fulfill us** and meet our needs when the Tree of Life is right there for the picking.

- Do we lack love? Let's get it from God.
- Do we need more joy instead of sadness? God gives joy freely.

- Are we starved for peace and full of stress? The green pasture Jesus is leading us to contains the grass of peace...and it's not pot!

Have we truly been going to God for these fruits, or have we placed the primary burden on the people in our lives? I believe it's the latter. Once upon a time the church asked God to *deliver them from sin* but nowadays we beg God to free us from depression, addiction, and anxiety. And no, they're not the same thing...the latter are resulting emotions and states of being from following our hearts.

THE NEEDS OF OUR HEARTS CAN ONLY BE MEANT BY THE LORD.

We must seek Him on this a lot more than we are now. It isn't just our spouse and the others in our lives who have neglected our hearts, it's us by not plucking the fruit from the Tree of Life.

What is the role of the people in our lives? After all, God Himself said *"its not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him."* The Lord most certainly created marriage, family, and the church and meant for humanity to be together in relationship and build each other up.

Do you remember the last time you were full of the Holy Spirit? ***Were your tanks full of His love, joy, and peace?*** Not just full but **overflowing**? As in *"he anointeth my head with oil and my cup runneth over"* overflowing?

When we're like this aren't we in **THE BEST POSITION TO FULFILL GOD'S TWO GREATEST COMMANDS**: 1) to love God and 2) to love the people in our lives?

Our hearts don't just long to receive the Spirit's Fruit, but **to share it with others**. That's for another sermon in this series and not today.

For today, let's receive the good news that the **Tree of Life has been here all along and its time to start eating from it**. The fruit hanging from it is free, abundant, and healthy.

Today let's determine that we will **direct our hearts to the Holy Spirit and reassure it that our God will meet all its needs** to the point of overflowing. Today let's truly TRUST that good shepherd Jesus really is leading us to green pastures and still waters that will restore our souls.

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