

A STUDY OF THE HEART

The Heart is the target. ¹

1. The heart is active. It shapes and controls our behavior. It is the central cause of your life. It drives all your thoughts, motives words, affections, and choices.

Luke 6:43-46

The fruit

The root

Fruit Stapling:

The heart of the issue is the issue of the heart.

2. Whatever rules the heart exercises inescapable influence over life and behavior. Our hearts are always ruled by something.

Ezekiel 14:1-5

Idol in the heart → stumbling block before the face

The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols.

Ask yourself, “what is effectively and functionally ruling my heart in this situation?”

3. Whatever controls me is what I worship.

Romans 1:25

Idolatry is a great exchange . We exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of his creation.

4. Whatever I worship is what I treasure.

Matthew 6:19-24, 33, 34

Everyone lives for some kind of treasure.

Whatever you treasure will control your heart.

Whatever controls your heart will control your behavior

Therefore, it is important that I identify what effectively and functionally rules my heart. If lasting change is going to take place, it must take place through the heart

¹ This information is taken from Instruments of Change Leader’s Guide by Resources for changing lives.

Every man is appointed by the Lord to be his own keeper²

Proverbs 4:23-27

Doctrine: Every man is appointed by the Lord to be his own keeper. He is to guard or keep his heart, lips, eyes, and feet.

Reason 1: If you will not keep yourself, all the world will not be able to keep you. Not pastors, parents, spouses or friends, no one.

Reason 2: If you will not keep yourself, the devil will be your keeper. He will keep you to your wickedness, if you will not keep yourself from it.

While it is true the Lord is your keeper (Psalm 121:5; 127:1; 1 Peter 4:19), and we have other keepers, that does not free you from the obligation to keep your own heart. To say, "I commit the keeping of myself to God, and yet will not take care of myself" is the same as saying, "I commit my soul to the custody of Satan." The devil is a keeper, but not a protector; he is a jailor, the keeper of prison.

Reason 3: If you will not keep yourself, then you will never keep those who are committed to your keeping. What kind of parent, what kind of a neighbor are you likely to be if you are careless of yourself? He who neglects himself and his own soul, how will he mind the souls that are committed to him?

Use 1: No man must be a sleeper or loiterer. (Deuteronomy 4:9)

You are a keeper, O man, a keeper of your own soul and life. Is all safe? Is all in good order? Look inside yourself and see into what a miserable condition, for lack of good looking after, you have grown. Conscience, which is your wall or fence is broken down; that little good that was in you, your flowers are withered and plucked up, and how weeds such as pride, lust and covetousness abound in you! Behold your case is growing worse and worse, your eyes more blind, your heart more hard and senseless daily. Get up and be doing something...lest you let all run to ruin so long that it is past recovery.

Use 2: Every man must give an account of himself. (Romans 14:12)

What will you say for yourself when God shall demand of you how you have kept that vineyard which was committed to you, how you have kept that soul of yours, how you have ordered your life?

² Outline and quotes taken from Richard Aielene's *Instructions about Heartwork* chapter 1.

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Week 1 Discussion Questions:

General:

What is your goal in attending this Men's Leadership Training?

If the heart drives behavior, is it possible to do the right things for the wrong reasons. What implications does this have for us as we live the Christian life and engage in ministry? See Matthew 23:25

Give some examples (good and bad) of your heart overflowing in your words and deeds. What kind of fruit stapling have you tried? When have you seen real change?

What are some idols and treasures that challenge the Lord for control of your heart? How have they shaped your interpretations of certain events and relationships in your life?

Have you been keeping/guarding your heart? How would you describe the condition of your heart if you were to compare it to a garden? (see Use 1 as an example)

Read Romans 8:28 together. Next week we will try to recite it to one another.

Close in prayer as group asking God to give you the desire and diligence to guard your heart and to reveal the functional idols of your heart.