

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

With Heart

October 15, 2018

Twenty-three years ago, a group of people had a dream in their hearts to start a church in Northwest Ohio where people could come and hear the life changing message of Jesus. They dreamt of a church where people would be welcome no matter what socioeconomic status, life issue, or background they brought with them. They dreamt that through this new church, lives would be transformed by God allowing them to experience finally the full life he had planned for them.

Out of that dream, came CedarCreek Church. A place where people are able to come and hear how they can have a personal relationship with God, find freedom from areas of struggle, and discover how their unique passions, personality, and gifts can make an eternal difference to others.

The reason that CedarCreek moved from a dream in people's hearts to a reality was because God made it happen, and along the way he used a group of people whose hearts were in the right condition.

2 Chronicles 16:9 says,

"The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."

Today, God is still searching for people he can strengthen and transform so that they can make a difference. I don't know about you, but I want to be strengthened by God. I want to be transformed and used to make an eternal difference. When God searches the Earth, I want his eyes to land on me. In order for that to happen though, my heart needs to be in the right condition. So, what does that look like?

This past weekend, Ben shared a story from the Bible that helped define what it looks like when our hearts are in the right condition.

Matthew 22:35-39

One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" ³⁷ Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

When a lawyer asked Jesus what the most important commandment in Jewish scriptures was, he answered that it is to love God with all of our heart. We learn from Jesus' answer that it is when we are loving that our hearts are in the right condition.

As we continue this series, *With Heart*, our hope is that you will grow in the area of trusting God. When you love God with all that you are and you trust God with who you are, he will strengthen you and transform your life. Trusting him with who you are allows you to stop trying so hard to fix the condition of your heart. Instead you can trust that God has already given you a new heart. A heart that has eternal life, is free, understands purpose, and is generous.

Over the next few days, we are going to ask you to take time to answer this question, "What is the condition of my heart?" The answer to that question is so important, because the state of your heart sets the direction of your life.

Questions:

What is the dream that God has placed on your heart?

When God's eyes search for people that are fully committed to him, do they rest on you?

Are you trusting God with the condition of your heart or are you working to solve your heart's issues on your own?

Next Steps:

Make a list of the emotions your heart has been feeling this past week. Identify those emotions that are positive and those that are troubled or negative. Ask God to help you transform your heart into the right condition.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, please open my heart to loving and trusting you with all that I am. Please help me to love others as much as I love you therefore transforming and strengthening my heart so that it is in the right condition for you to use me to transform the lives of others. Amen.

What is the Condition of Your Heart?

October 16, 2018

We guard our houses and cars by locking the doors. We guard other expensive possessions, like jewelry, by keeping them in a safe. We guard our money in our accounts with pin numbers. We guard our health by exercising and eating right. We guard our families from danger online by strict privacy settings. So, why are we not guarding our hearts?

Proverbs 4:23

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

In today's times, the heart is known to be an organ in the circulatory system. The heart pumps blood, supplying oxygen and nutrients to the body. If your heart has a functional problem, it can affect other parts of your body. If your heart has a relational problem, it can adversely affect your body as well. But, if you are a Christ follower, your heart is more than just an organ. In biblical times, the heart was not only thought of as a physical organ but was also considered to be the hub of our deepest moral and spiritual convictions, like we would ascribe to the mind. God has commanded us to guard our hearts above all else. Jesus tells us that the heart is a repository of good and evil, and what comes out of the mouth begins in the heart.

Proverbs 27:19

As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person.

Have you ever looked at your reflection in a body of water? Just as we see our reflection, our behavior will mirror our hearts. Our behavior right now is a result of what was previously happening in our hearts. If you keep opening your heart to the wrong things, you will eventually get the wrong results. You will become hard-hearted, and you will have a hard life. Christ spells out the characteristics of this spiritual heart condition as an inability to see, understand, hear, and remember what God has done for us. Pride, setbacks, and disappointments can also cause a hard heart. However, sin is the ultimate cause of hard-heartedness because you trust yourself above God. If we guard our hearts, then our hearts will produce the right things. A strong heart will lead to a strong life. The spiritual condition of our heart will determine the course of our life.

Proverbs 28:14

Blessed are those who fear to do wrong, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble.

Jeremiah 17:10

But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.

Ben also mentioned other conditions of the heart that we should be aware of: *half-hearted* which will produce half a life; *full heart* which will produce a full life; *bitter heart* which will produce a bitter life; *divided heart* which will produce a divided life; and *cold heart* which will produce a cold life. Jesus cares about the condition of our heart, and so should we.

Questions:

How do you know what's in your heart?

Have you been making the condition of your heart of more concern than anything else you guard?

What are steps you can take to keep your heart guarded?

Next Steps:

Examine your heart to see what condition it's in. If you are hard-hearted, recognize the spiritual effect this condition has on your life. If you do not know what condition your heart is in, ask God for guidance. Read Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."

Prayer:

Dear Abba Father, keep me attentive to my heart's condition. Give me strength to keep my heart pure so I do not go astray. Allow me to surround myself with other Christians that will keep me spiritually strong. Keep my heart full of love for Jesus so I may be of service to you. In your Son's name I pray, amen.

A New Heart

October 17, 2018

“Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster,” so says Charles Dickens about one of the most notorious characters in literature. Mr. Scrooge lived a miserly life, always seeking his own self-interest, never stopping to help those who could not help themselves. It is safe to say that he had a hard heart that had no room nor desire for softening. Yet by the end of this novella, it was said of him, “He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew.”

When we give our lives to Christ, we also experience a drastic heart change. We may not go around “bah humbugging” everyone we meet, but sometimes our heart is just as corrupt. According to Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV), “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” **Yet, when we come to Christ, we are given a new heart!**

Ezekiel 36:26-27

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

We have the promise that God will replace our stony heart and give us a tender, responsive heart. A heart that is free from fear. Fear can manifest itself in many ways in our daily lives: hovering over our loved ones and trying to control every outcome; being close-fisted before God when it comes to our time, finances, or resources; desperately trying to please and impress others so we are not left alone with our thoughts. But this is our old heart. When we embrace the new heart God has promised us, we are no longer selfish, afraid, or defensive. We can live a life that is generous, trusting, and inspiring. We have been promised eternal life ultimately, and nothing can compare to that.

Questions:

How has your heart changed since becoming a Christ follower? Are you living open-handed before God or close-fisted with your time, resources, and finances?

What area of your life do you need to allow God to transform? Is your life ruled by fear, selfishness, or defensiveness?

Next Steps:

Think about the state of your heart before Christ. List the ways you have changed to become more like him. List the places where you still need to allow him access.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for changing my heart when I accepted your gift of salvation. Thank you for promising to create a new and clean heart in me when I come to you. I ask you now to remove from my heart anything that keeps me from living the life you have called me to. Convict me of the sins I hold in the depths of my heart and give me the strength to let them go so that I may live a life wholly devoted to you. Amen.

Spread the News: You Matter!

October 18, 2018

You matter. At CedarCreek Church, you matter to us because you matter to God. In this world of social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram—often we only portray the good parts of our lives. We hide behind our screens and show all the happy and wonderful moments but don't show the rest of ourselves. God sees through our screens to our hearts. And he loves us anyway. The Bible says that God knows us so intimately that he knows how many hairs are on our head (Matthew 10:30). Jesus doesn't care about your past; he cares about your heart.

Throughout the Bible, we see time and time again that Jesus cares about people. He spent his entire ministry reaching out to every person. Jesus and his disciples would walk for days at a time, through the hot desert, to spread the message of hope and salvation to people in different cities. Jesus was known to associate with the outcasts, the poor, and the sick. Jesus spent time with children. Everyone was important to Jesus. *Everyone IS important to Jesus.*

One of Jesus' most famous teachings is known as The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Before his final ascension to the right hand of God the Father, Jesus gave these important instructions to his followers:

Matthew 28:19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus wanted to make sure that everyone on Earth heard the message that "You Matter." Jesus told his followers to ignore religious divides, ignore cultural divides, ignore social divides. We are told to go to "all the nations." If you have surrendered your life to Christ, you already have a heart of generosity living within you. Now take the next step. Tell someone that they matter to you, and they matter to God.

Questions:

Why is it so hard for us to believe that “You Matter”?

Do you care about the things that Jesus cares about?

Next Steps:

Find someone who needs to hear that they matter to God and invite them to CedarCreek Church as we continue the series *W/Heart*. Pray for this person by name daily.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for loving me as I am. I know I'm not perfect. I know I've made mistakes, and I will make more mistakes in the future. Yet, you still love me. Help me to show your love to someone else this week. Amen.

God is Good

October 19, 2018

I finally allowed Christ to have his rightful place on the throne of my life 39 years ago. However, it was not until thirteen years ago that I gave my first tithe. Throughout those first 26 years, the Holy Spirit consistently placed on my heart the verse from Matthew 6:21: “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”

My conscience was bothered by this verse because I struggled to trust God with my finances. I would make excuses and ignore it because in all honesty, I couldn't let go of the false sense of security I associated with “my” money. The consequence? I was missing out on the full life that God had for me.

Then one day, my husband announced we were going bankrupt. We had two mortgages and \$126,000 in credit card debt. Now THAT was a wakeup call. It was frightening and overwhelming, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, I gained knowledge, wisdom, and discipline and lost my stony, stubborn heart as it pertained to finances.

As a result, we decided to tithe while still deep in debt. The Lord chose the day after we wrote our first tithe check to have the owners of a company my husband no longer worked for turn up to give him a \$10,000 bonus check they had wrongfully withheld from him in 2002. We wept, we laughed, and then we tithed 10% of that bonus check before putting the rest toward our now shrinking debt. Faith really does mean letting go of self and giving ourselves over to God's care.

More important than the windfall of money (because we do not give as a means to get) was how we continuously experienced, every day, and in every situation, that this one small step of obedience had unfettered our hearts and brought us into a closer, deeper relationship with God through prayer and Bible study.

Now, thirteen years later, joy and spiritual growth continue in my life. **God is good.** You can't out-give God, but you can grow that “tender responsive heart” we receive at the moment of salvation by thanking him for all his blessings and by using your finances to serve him.

Questions:

What does the Bible say about the blessings that come from obedience?

Has fear ever kept you from giving generously of your finances?

Next Steps:

Check out these verses and commentary by Bob Lotich, founder of SeedTime.com.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-lotich/5-encouraging-bible-verse_b_4804405.html

Pray that God will help you see your habits and sins honestly and show you the way to obedience and provision.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for loving me so much that you sent your only begotten Son to save me from condemnation and to open the way for me to love and serve you. I pray you will fill me to overflowing with a generous heart as we, your church, strive to help others and introduce them to you. I pray this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.