

The One Thing God Wants From You

Life is a journey of becoming the true you. Which means it is a journey of the heart.

We have to begin with the heart because that is where all the true action is. Your heart is central. It's been battered, and there will be times when it will be battered again. It can cause you great pain and can get you into even greater trouble. You'll be tempted to lock it away, put it on a shelf, numb it or maybe even kill it. Certainly, there will be times when you lose it. But the thing is, you can't truly live without your heart. And you are meant to live.

Your heart is, in fact, the most important thing about you. Your heart is also the most important thing to God.

Surprise! Actually, that's really good news. Jesus came for your heart. To ransom, rescue and restore the true you. He hasn't been moving heaven and earth through all eternity so that you would behave yourself. Fit into the crowd. Mind your manners. No. He wants to woo and win your heart for Himself so that you will love Him with it and live your life from it.

That's crazy good news.

I thought the journey of my life was about getting my act together, blowing it less frequently and being a good girl. Serving people. Obeying. Following the rules. I thought that's what mattered most to God. Boy, was I wrong.

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Above all else, we are told, guard your heart. And guard not like a watchdog, fearfully keeping it in line, but guard as in

tend, protect and nurture. Most of us don't do that. Most of us watch over the number on the scale more closely than we do our hearts. And that is not a wise thing to do because a life without heart is not worth living, and your life matters. Your heart matters.

Above all else, watch over your heart. Seriously? Why? Because as my husband wrote in *Waking the Dead*:

God knows that our heart is core to who we are. It is the source of all creativity, courage, and is the fountainhead of our faith, our hope, and of course, our love. This "wellspring of life" within us is the very essence of our existence, the center of our being. Your heart is the most important thing about you. You can't become who you are meant to be without it.

Remember in Genesis, God said, "'Let us make mankind in our image.' ... In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26–27). You are made in the image of the Trinity! Have you ever wondered, "Where is that image?"

You are made in the image of God in your whole being, but primarily in your heart! You have been created female by God's design. It's his intention that you carry his image to the world as a woman in your feminine heart. Your feminine heart has been created with the greatest of all possible dignities—as a reflection of God's own heart. You are feminine to the very core of your being.

And that is what Jesus has come to restore.

So, when I speak about the heart, I am not speaking about your feelings, your emotions. You do feel deeply with the heart, but you think deeply there as well. When I speak of the heart, I am talking about the place where Christ dwells in you, by faith. The center of you. The core place inside where you are your most true self.

Okay, okay. You may be thinking, Stasi is nuts. You may have been taught that the heart is deceitfully wicked. That's from Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (ESV). Yes, the heart is wicked before salvation. But when a person believes in her heart that Jesus is the Son of God come to save her, and she surrenders herself to God, giving Him His rightful place in her heart, she gets a new one! "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" (Ezek. 36:26).

See, God knows where the problems lie, and he has come to deal with them. He knows we need his help to live well and to love well. He knows our fallen hearts are deceitfully wicked, and he made arrangements for them to not stay that way.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor.5:17)

When you become a Christian, you get a new heart.

As believers with new hearts, we still struggle with sin. Yes. We are called to crucify our flesh every day. But we are not called to crucify our heart. We are called to guard it.

So to begin:

Your heart matters most to God. Your heart needs protecting.

You need to be nice to it.

We can be so mean to ourselves, can't we? We say things to ourselves that we would never say to another human being. We can be harsh. (We see our flaws clearly, but it's much more difficult to see our goodness, right?) Here's the thing: You need to be kind to yourself so that you will be kind to others. Because the way you treat your heart is the way you will treat everyone else's. That's how it works.

I recently had the honor and the sorrow (yes, at the same time) of being at the memorial service for my friend's 24-year-old son.

The service was holy. And I do mean . Grieving his passing. Celebrating his life. Thanking God for the truth that there is a day coming when all will be restored. No more good-byes. Ever.

At his service, nothing was shared about how he did or did not pick up his room. If he made his bed. Put his clothes away. Nothing about how old he was when he got his driver's license. Not a word about his grades, his roles or his titles.

Tons were shared about how people felt in his presence. There were lots of stories about his sense of humor. Words flowed about how he loved people, how he lived passionately from his heart and the joy he brought by being and offering his unique, quirky, imperfect, wonderful, on-the-road self.

It was his heart that mattered. And it's yours that matters.

So how are you doing today? How's your heart? How are you treating your heart? Are you being kind? Encouraging? Loving? To yourself? Jesus wants you to be. We are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. The thing is, we will. We will love others as we love ourselves. So if we are harsh to ourselves, we will be harsh to others whether we want to be or not. It will leak out.

Jesus loves you. He thinks you're worth protecting, pursuing, guarding, investing in and giving his life for. He wants you to love you too, even while being keenly aware of areas in your life that you want to change.

Take a moment now and thank God for your life. Ask for his help to love yourself.

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