

Cross My Heart - Part 2

SERIES STATEMENT: Behavior does not indicate what's going on inside of the heart. It can give us hints, but never the full truth.

- In this series, "**Cross My Heart,**" the dangers of not watching after our hearts are made apparent.
- If you **can't seem to figure out why** you're experiencing inconsistencies in your life, then you may need **a change of heart**.

Week #1 - The reason we rarely stop to monitor our hearts is that it was never encouraged.

- As children, we were taught instead to **monitor our BEHAVIOR**.
- If we **behaved properly** good things happened, regardless of **what was going on in our hearts**. We modified our behavior to **avoid pain**
- We've been doing it ever since.
- **Consequently, we become much better at monitoring our behavior** (actions and words) **than our hearts**.

In the English language we have many heart idioms, and a few of them **give away just how sick the heart can get** ... a bleeding heart, a broken heart, pour your heart out, cry your heart out, eat your heart out, rip your heart out, a hard heart, a heart of stone, sick at heart, wear your heart on your sleeve ...

- **(What is in the heart will eventually make itself known!)**

Matthew 15:18 NKJV - But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.

Your **MOUTH** serves as a stethoscope to listen to your HEART.

Matthew 15:19 - For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

We have learned to guard our behavior, but we have never learned to monitor our hearts. That is what gets us in trouble.

Proverbs 4:23 NLT - Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.

We need more than a sophisticated filter for **our BEHAVIOR**.

We are tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from *an unhealthy spiritual heart* while **ignoring the deeper issues**.

But as is the case with the physical heart, ***eventually the root problem will become the real problem***.

Just as a heart attack has the potential to destroy your body, *so spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy* you and your most valuable relationships.

Things that stay in the darkness grow exponentially over time, and finally break through the filter we have put in place.

They cause us to act in ways that others don't understand, and develop habits that even we don't understand (and can't break).

We've already talked about the way these ***"heart attackers"*** work, but **today** we're going to start studying **four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart**.

- **Each one of them causes an imbalance** that makes us "sick."
- And each one of them creates this imbalance through a **DEBT – DEBTOR relationship**.
- Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid –
- It causes an awkward imbalance in the relationship
- ("an elephant in the room") because ***there's a debt***.

GUILT is the first of these factors. And let's say first thing that **guilt should not be part of** the culture of the New Testament church!

John 3:17 - *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Jesus didn't leverage guilt to manipulate people into following Him, because only guilty people use guilt to control others.

- He wasn't guilty!
- **GUILT SAYS "I OWE YOU.**

Think about it – "I owe you an apology" or "let me make it up to you."

Why do we say things like that?

- Because a **DEBT – DEBTOR relationship** has been created!
- For example, **you can't have a relationship** with someone who won't tell you the truth because **they have robbed you** of something important.
- **If someone leaves** their spouse or family, **they have robbed them** of their future, their self-esteem, etc.

Guilt is simply that inner sense that says "I took something from someone"

- **(I OWE YOU)**, but **we don't** experience it quite that accurately –
- **Guilt is simply experienced as** a huge weight that we carry around.
- We carry the unresolved guilt we pick up into all our other relationships!
- **Our guilt** becomes so much a part of us that **we don't even recognize it.**

Underneath **guilt is anger** against ourselves –

- "I let ME down!"
- So the only way **I can excuse me not living up to MY expectations** is to never let YOU live up to my expectations either!
- **That's why** it's almost impossible to please a guilty person.
- Since **I disappointed me** –
- I have to figure out a way for you to disappoint me as well.

BUT I CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST!

- **Yes you can** – because guilt grows in the darkness but it dissipates in the light.
- **But there are only two options** –
- You either have to pay the person back (which is often impossible in relationships)
- Or you have to ask them to cancel the debt!

OPEN CONFESSION BREAKS THE POWER OF GUILT! (spotlight)

The Bible has far more to say about confessing to other people than it does about **confessing to God.**

- **God already knows!**
- You only get rid of guilt when you go to **the person you offended.**

The Lord said to Moses, Numbers 5:6-7 NIV - ⁶“Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty ⁷ and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged.

When we have wronged others, we ought to do more than apologize.

- We should look for ways to set matters right & leave the victim –
- **Better off** than when we harmed them.
- **When we have been wronged** –
- We should still seek restoration rather than striking out in revenge.

Luke 19:8-9 NIV - ⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

- Zacchaeus demonstrated inward change by outward action!
- Following Jesus in your head or heart is not enough.
- You must show your faith by changed behavior.

Has your faith resulted in action?

What changes do you need to make?

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV - ²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

- Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God.
- Our attitudes toward others reflect our relationship with God.

Our relationship with God hinges on our relationship with others!

You cannot resolve your differences **with God** if you are unwilling to resolve your differences with others.

You cannot be in fellowship with God and out of fellowship with others over something you have done.

James 5:16 NIV - ¹⁶ *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

- **The Christian's most powerful resource is *communion with God through prayer*.**

The goal of confession isn't simply a clear conscience, **the goal is *a changed life***.

YOU LIVE FROM YOUR HEART –

- So you have to ***shine God's spotlight*** on its hidden parts to **cure the disease of guilt**.
- **Confessing secretly to God** is no substitute for confessing openly to someone you have wronged.
- **Sins that you only confess to God** *you tend to repeat*, because confession **hasn't changed YOU**.
- Besides, you didn't steal from God, **you stole from THEM!**

But my life is much more complicated – I didn't cheat on a test, I cheated on my marriage!

- Do you know how much it **will hurt them if I confess?**
- **Confession doesn't hurt people**; concealment hurts people.
- They already know something is wrong ... and ***your heart is rotting away!***

This fear of consequences is why we see last-minute deathbed confessions – but **what a tragedy** that **people live their whole life** under such weight.

When you confess, your outside world may become momentarily far more complicated, but **your inside world will become free**.

When you confess, you'll be able to accept others ***with all their failures*** because their failures **won't constantly** remind you of **your own**.

- You will finally be able to ***forgive yourself***. ***You will be free!***

CLOSE: The penalty for our sin has been dealt with once and for all; but ***the consequences of our sins*** are a different matter altogether.

The same Bible that assures us ***of God's forgiveness*** also teaches ***the principle of restitution***.

Forgiveness from God does not erase our need to take responsibility for what we have done.

In fact, ***our gratitude alone*** should compel us to confess and clear the slate.

OPEN CONFESSION BREAKS THE POWER OF GUILT!

Others may very well ***be held hostage*** to ***bitterness and anger*** over ***what you have done to them***.

You're kidding yourself if you think ***everyone you have wronged*** ***has simply forgiven you*** and gone on with their life.

Sure, ***that's what they ought to do*** – but you didn't do ***what YOU ought to have done either!***

If you really want to understand the power of confession, turn it around and put yourself on the receiving end.

- ***Whose apology*** do you most desire and least expect?
- ***Who is it that seems*** completely insensitive to the trouble or hurt they caused you?
- ***Imagine how you would feel*** if you got a surprise visit from that person.

How would you feel if that individual walked in, sat down, and took full responsibility for what he or she had done?

Imagine what might transpire in your heart if, with sincere humility, that person offered to do anything ***within his or her power*** to make restitution for what had been taken from you.

You would never be the same!

PRAISE TEAM:

***GUILT* - GUILT SAYS "I OWE YOU**

Likewise, **YOUR words** may bring healing to a wounded soul.

HOW ARE THINGS IN YOUR HEART?

Do you have any secrets?