



The Heart of the Matter

By Jeff Bedwell on May 19, 2021

TODAY'S READING: Mark 7

It has been said that "the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart." Jesus spoke of the heart in today's reading. He confronted hypocrisy in worship with these words, *"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me"* (vs. 6). He spoke of the priority of the heart when explaining what truly defiles a person. *"What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man..."* (vv. 20-21).

Proverbs encourages us, *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life"* (Proverbs 4:23, ESV). When Solomon refers to guarding the heart, he is referring to the inner core of a person -- the thoughts, feelings, desires, will and choices that make that person who he/she is. I want to share with you seven "heart prayers" that I came across a few years ago. You may want to adopt or adapt these prayers into your private prayer practices to help "guard or keep your heart."

- **Delight:** Whatever it takes, Lord, give me *delight* in You as the greatest treasure of my heart. (Psalm 37:4)
- **Desires:** Whatever it takes, Lord, align the *desires* of my heart with Yours. (Matthew 6:9-10)
- **Dependence:** Whatever it takes, Lord, increase my awareness of my *dependence* on You in everything so that I will live continually by faith. (John 15:5)
- **Discernment:** Whatever it takes, Lord, teach me to discern good from evil through the rigorous exercise of constant practice. (Hebrews 5:14)
- **Desperation:** Whatever it takes, Lord, keep me *desperate* for You because I tend to wander when I stop feeling my need for You. (Psalm 119:67)
- **Discipline:** Whatever it takes, Lord, *discipline* me for my good so that I may share Your holiness and bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Hebrews 12:10-11)

- **Diligence:** Whatever it takes, Lord, increase my resolve to do Your will with all *diligence*. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

In addition to these prayers, what are some other practical ways you will "keep your heart with all vigilance"?

PRAYER: Spend time today offering yourself to your Heavenly Father by using the suggested "heart prayers" above.

TOMORROW'S READING: Mark 8

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