

The importance of maintaining a right heart



In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

The degree to which we walk in victory as a Christian and make a difference in this world for ETERNITY greatly depends on the spiritual condition of our heart. Maintaining a soft heart helps us to continually hear the voice of the Holy Spirit

- God has so much planned for every believer's life
- We are now living in a time when the world is full of uncertainties and the threat of terrorism. (Even now in this blessed country of Australia)
- Like never before we can truly be the salt of the earth and light of the world as we minister the wonderful hope that we have in Christ to others



- **God has a unique unfolding plan for every believer's life – We all have a sphere of influence and mission field**

However we must purposely choose on a daily basis to follow God's blueprint for our life

The Apostle Paul wrote,



“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

- Every believer who is willing and *available* to be used of the Lord can make a great difference in this world for eternity – God is able to empower ordinary people to do great things for His glory



The Apostle Paul wrote,

**“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”
(Ephesians 3:20)**

We are now however truly living
in the last of the last days.
The Apostle Paul wrote,



“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**

Jesus Himself said in relation to these times
just prior to His return,



“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” **(Matthew 24:10-13)**

Jesus also said,

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” **(Luke 21:34-36)**



In the book of Revelation we also read the words of Jesus to the lukewarm church in Laodicea,



¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot,^[a] I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ —and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” **(Rev 3:15-19)**

- It is our love for Jesus and our passion for the things of God that will cause our lives to make a great difference in this world for eternity and which is the key to enjoying the life and life more abundantly that Jesus spoke of



- For this reason we need to **continually maintain our spiritual fervour** so that our worship to the Lord never just becomes one of simple lip service unto Him but always comes out of a heart of adoration and gratitude as to what He has done for us. God is a good God and worthy to be praised

We must therefore be careful to protect our heart at all times. We must simply refuse to:

- i. Develop offences towards others and even God
- ii. Foster critical & judgemental attitudes towards others
- iii. Allow the cares of this world to choke the word in our hearts so that our lives become unfruitful
- iv. Allow the pleasures of this life and a desire for the material things of this world to crowd into our hearts and to steal our affections for the Lord, and
- v. Allow fear and unbelief to enter our hearts



So that we can fully embrace God's plan for our life and make a great difference in our world for eternity

The real battle is for the mind. What we think upon will ultimately influence our heart attitudes and the way that we live our life and speak.

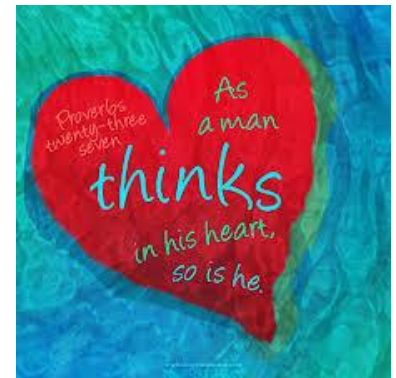
- The enemy will continually try and bombard our mind with wrong and negative thoughts to distract and discourage us in our walk with the Lord



- We must simply refuse to entertain wrong and negative thoughts that will affect our heart attitudes
- We must learn to quickly replace ALL wrong thoughts with Kingdom based thoughts
- We need to continually choose to think upon things that are virtuous and faith building

It is crucial that we QUICKLY take all wrong thoughts captive before they take us captive

- Winning the battle for the mind is a great key to continually maintaining a right and spiritually healthy heart



- Continually renewing our mind with the truth contained in God's Word helps us to win the battle for the mind. The truth in God's Word sets us free from old wrong mindsets and helps to renew our mind with Kingdom thinking

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 10:4-5)



For the remainder of this teaching I will be quickly looking at some keys that can help us to continually maintain a right heart

So how can we as believers continually maintain a genuine and sincere love for the Lord and a right heart in the increasingly materialistic and lawless world that we now live in



1) We need to consistently draw aside to spend intimate time with the Lord

Having a lifestyle of prayer and communion with God helps to keep our relationship with the Lord alive and vibrant - It is in isolation that we receive revelation from the Lord

We need to purposely make time to spend with the Lord in a place where we are not distracted

**King David was a man after God's own heart.
He wrote in Psalm 63,**

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in
a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So
I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see
Your power and Your glory. Because Your
lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall
praise You.” **(Psalm 63:1-3)**



Prayer and intimacy with the Lord is a great key to remaining strong in our faith in the times that we are now living in



King David wrote,

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:3-5)

Jesus Himself said to His disciples,

“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:40)



King David also wrote,

“I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” **(Psalm 9:1-2)**



“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” **(Psalm 16:11)**

Having a lifestyle of private praise and worship helps to keep our faith fresh and alive

- Worship helps us to have God's heart of compassion for people – As we touch God's heart we gain His burden to reach out to others with the gospel
- Worship helps us to get to know God intimately
- Worship also helps to keep our focus on the bigness of our God - A great key to walking in continual victory as a believer



In the book of Isaiah we read,

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.” (Isaiah 26:3-4)



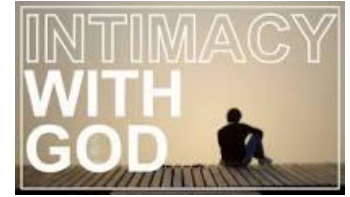
Jesus Himself said,

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” **(John 4:23-24)**



Having a lifestyle of worship helps us to continually have God's unconditional love for others so that we always see the best in others. This is a great key to having healthy relationships in life

Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of spending quality time with Him



In the gospel of Luke we read, “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” **(Luke 10:38-42)**

Intimacy with the Lord is a key:

- To CONTINUALLY knowing and following God's will for our life
- To growing in Christlike Character
- To continually having a great love for others
- To maintaining a sweet spirit
- To bearing much eternal fruit, and
- To growing strong in our walk with the Lord



Without maintaining an abiding and intimate relationship with the Lord our lives will bear little or no fruit

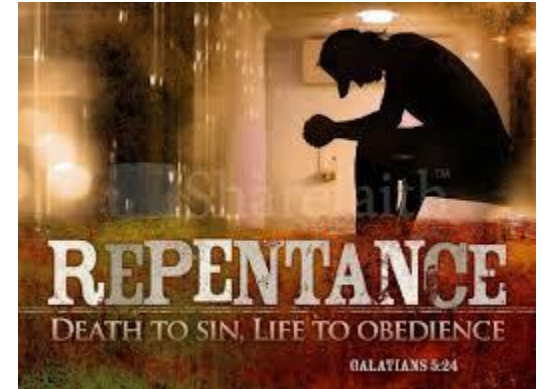
Jesus made this very clear when He said,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” **(John 15:4-5)**



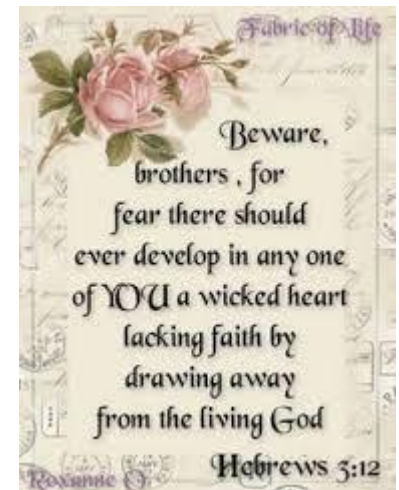
2) We need to **MAINTAIN** a repentant heart

- We need to simply keep short accounts with God
- Unconfessed sin and entertaining sinful habits and attitudes will harden our heart.
- The bible makes this very clear



In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,” **(Hebrews 3:12-14)**



- Keeping short accounts with God helps to keep our conscience soft



- This is a great key to always maintaining a sensitivity to what is right and what is wrong and to what God's will for our life is
- Maintaining a soft conscience is a great safeguard to help us to make good choices in life, so that we escape much pain in life that comes from making poor choices

The Apostle John wrote,

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **(1 John 1:9)**



It is important that we quickly repent of and forsake sinful attitudes and habits so that we can maintain our freedom in Christ and not be enslaved again to old sinful habits

3) The importance of having a lifestyle of simple obedience (This is a great key to continually hearing clearly the voice of the Holy Spirit)



Being continually guided by the Holy Spirit is a great key to seeing God's plan for our life coming to pass. Jesus Himself said,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:13)

Hearing the counsel of the Holy Spirit is a great key to being continually in the will of God for our life

- Consistently disregarding the promptings and leadings of the Holy Spirit will cause us to become less sensitive in hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit
- Immediately adhering to the promptings and leading of the Holy Spirit will on the other hand help us to be continually sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit



Given the times that we are now living in it is so important that we continually hear from the Holy Spirit so that we can make right choices in life and escape the plans of the devil to destroy our lives



The Apostle Peter wrote,

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)

4) Continually meditating on and renewing our mind with the Word of God

- We need to allow the Word of God to go from our head to our heart



- In a world full of deception we need to continually meditate on the truth contained in the Word of God

Jesus Himself said,

“If you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Meditating on the Word of God helps to build up and strengthen our faith



**The Apostle Paul wrote, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
(Romans 10:17)**

As we read the bible the bible reads us. As we meditate on the Word of God we become aware of things in our life that need to be addressed so that we can continue to grow in Christlike character

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)



Consistently meditating on the Word of God helps us to maintain a right heart and to remain strong in our faith in a world full of distractions and temptations



The Psalmist wrote,

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” **(Psalm 119:9-11)**

5) Continually keeping our focus on things above

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

(Colossians 3:1-2)

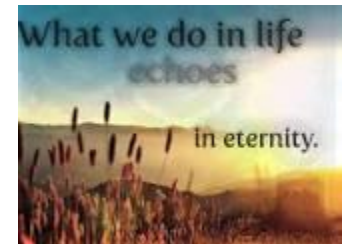


As Christians we are in the world but not of it

We are Christ's ambassadors here on earth

- Continually living with an eternal perspective helps to keep our focus on the things of God

- We have one life to make an eternal difference in the lives of others



- Living with eternity in mind influences the way that we live our life, how we use our resources and time and what priorities we have in life.

OUR FOCUS IS ON LIVING FOR
THE KINGDOM CAUSE



Jesus Himself said,

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” **(Matthew 6:19-21)**



6) We need to be quick to forgive those who have hurt us. We must refuse to allow offences to enter into our heart

- Unforgiveness towards others will negatively affect both our relationships with other people and with God
- We must always be quick to forgive others when they hurt us. This is a great key to continually maintaining a soft and loving heart towards others



- The enemy will always exaggerate the faults of others in an endeavour to offend us and to destroy our significant relationships with those in our church family and at home

- **Jesus emphasised the importance of forgiving others when He said,**



“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
(Mark 11:25-26) AND

7) The importance of being continually in fellowship with other mature believers

- We all need to be encouraged in our walk with the Lord, especially given the times that we are now living in
- We are not meant to do life alone
- Out of fellowship our love for the Lord will quickly begin to diminish



In the book of Hebrews we read,



“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” **(Hebrews 10:23-25)**

We all need love and encouragement from other believers if we are to fulfil all that God has planned for our life