

## **Proverbs of Jesus: Heart of the Matter**

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### **Day One**

Proverbs aren't found only in the Old Testament—and obviously not just in the book of Proverbs. They're also found in the New Testament. Jesus frequently used parables and proverbs as teaching tools. I want to look at some of the proverbs Jesus taught.

A proverb is a short, concise saying that expresses a general truth or piece of wise advice. Many of Jesus' proverbs appear in his most well-known message, the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5–7.

Jesus says: *For where your treasure is there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:21).

I think you and I generally understand what Jesus is referring to here. What you and I value most is where our thoughts and actions are most prominent and how we spend our time and energy. But let's take a closer look at what he means by "your heart."

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it* (Proverbs 4:23).

Heart refers to the center of one's life. It's from this place a person does all thinking, feeling, and choosing. It's that essential to our life. So, yes, above all else we are to guard it. Guard what we hear, watch, say, and do. What is influencing you most right now? If it's not God's Word, then something else has taken center stage in your life.

When Jesus says, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*, he's asking us to consider: What do you truly value? What occupies your time and your thoughts? Who or what are you serving?

Your treasure might not be money or material things. It could be a relationship, a career, status, security, health, comfort, politics, food, or even our physical fitness. None of these things are wrong in themselves. The problem comes when these things are overvalued—when they are treasured above a relationship with God. That's where you and I can get into trouble.

If your heart treasures God's Word and your relationship with him—if you make time with him a priority—your heart will follow. Sometimes you may not feel like putting in the effort. And sometimes it may not seem immediately fruitful. But don't rely solely on your feelings. When you discipline yourself to spend consistent, quality time with Jesus Christ, your heart will begin to treasure that time. Your affection will grow. And your joy will increase—because his joy will be in you.

### **Day Two**

Do you tend to worry about things in the future that have not even happened yet? I know it's easy for me to fall into that mindset. But Jesus clearly tells us not to go there!

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own* (Matthew 6:34).

This is the final verse in a section where Jesus tells us not to be anxious about our lives—not about what we will eat or what we will wear. And what does worrying accomplish? It doesn't add anything to our lives. In fact, anxiety is harmful. Left unchecked, it creates stress that affects us physically, mentally and emotionally.

Now, I'm not talking about the nervousness you might feel before a job interview or a presentation—though we certainly can pray for peace in those moments. I'm talking about chronic anxiety, the kind that takes a toll on your body and mind.

Jesus points us to the lilies of the field:

*And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? (Matthew 6:28-30 NLT)*

Why do you and I have so little faith! We serve a great and awesome God, and we can bring any and everything to him in prayer. The Apostle Peter encourages us to *cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you* (1 Peter 5:7).

Worrying is not only useless but is also evidence of a lack of faith in God. When you feel that anxious thought creep into your thinking, replace it right away with truth from Scripture or with a worship song. Replace it with God's truth. Know that he cares for you and knows your needs; you are worth more to him than anything else.

### Day Three

We've been looking at some of the proverbs Jesus said. Here's another proverb from his Sermon on the Mount.

*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1–2).*

Those words make me pause every time. I find it easy to assume I'm not a judgmental person. But when I slow down and examine my thoughts—the quiet commentary running through my mind, the subtle remarks I may make—I realize I'm not as innocent as I'd like to think. And that's when confession and repentance become necessary.

Jesus isn't telling us to abandon discernment. We are called to think wisely and evaluate situations carefully. There's a difference between discernment and judgment. Discernment seeks truth. Judgment often seeks to elevate self. You and I are not to judge others to build ourselves up. Every one of us has areas to grow. Every one of us has blind spots.

Jesus continues with a vivid picture: *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:3–5).*

It's such a striking image—a tiny speck versus a massive plank. And yet, how often do I focus on the speck?

For me, it's usually the small, internal judgments—the quiet criticisms that serve no real purpose. They don't help the other person. They don't help me. In fact, they only create unnecessary stress and tension in my own heart.

Why am I so concerned about someone else's issue, especially when I may struggle with something similar? Perhaps that's exactly why I notice it so quickly. Sometimes what irritates us most in others reveals something God wants to address in us.

Jesus' words invite humility. Before I point out someone else's flaw, I need to allow the Lord to search my own heart. Remove the plank. Do the work of repentance. Ask him to soften my spirit. Pray as King David prayed: *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting* (Psalm 139: 23-24).

## Day Four

Does this sound familiar? "Cleanliness is next to godliness." While cleanliness is certainly a good thing, this well-known saying isn't actually in the Bible. But Jesus does speak very clearly about what true cleanliness really is.

*What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them* (Matthew 15:11).

To defile means to make unclean or impure. In the Old Testament, there were many dietary laws about what was permissible to eat. By the time of the New Testament, the Pharisees had added even more regulations, creating an elaborate and often burdensome system of external rules.

In this passage, the Pharisees question Jesus because his disciples are not ceremonially washing their hands before eating. But as he so often does, Jesus goes straight to the heart of the issue.

It's not about external rituals. It's about the condition of the heart.

What you eat does not make you spiritually unclean. What flows out of your mouth—your words—reveal what is already inside. Words flow from the heart.

*Jesus explains it this way: Out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them* (Matthew 15:19–20).

That's sobering. There are many proverbs in Scripture warning us about the power of the tongue. James tells us we must learn to tame it, comparing it to the small rudder of a ship—tiny, yet able to steer the entire vessel. In the same way, our words set the direction of our lives.

But the tongue is only the messenger. The source is the heart.

Ask yourself: What are you feeding your heart? What are you allowing into your mind and soul? Because whatever fills the heart will eventually overflow into your words and actions.

True cleanliness begins on the inside. And that's where Jesus longs to do his transforming work.

## Day Five

I've been reflecting on some of Jesus' sayings—his proverbs—and I've noticed how often they return to the posture of the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, *blessed are the pure in heart, for*

*they will see God* (Matthew 5:8). That raises an important question: what does it mean to have a pure heart?

We often assume a pure heart means doing everything right—appearing polished and put together on the outside. But that kind of purity is rooted in our own striving, and it doesn't work. It doesn't last. It isn't sustainable. Scripture tells us the truth about our condition:

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick* (Jeremiah 17:9).

Have you ever surprised yourself with your own reaction—something you said, thought, or felt—and wondered, *where did that come from*? It wasn't how you wanted to respond, yet it was real. The human heart is complex, deceptive, and difficult to understand. But when our hearts are turned toward purity, this posture gives the Holy Spirit room to work in us and through us.

What difference does a pure heart make in the workplace? It shows up in genuine joy when a coworker receives a promotion or praise. It looks like helping others even when it doesn't advance your own position. It means refusing to gossip, choosing authenticity, and living with integrity when no one is watching.

The right heart begins with humility. Scripture often speaks of a broken or crushed heart as a picture of humility. This kind of brokenness is essential, because a hard or stony heart will not submit to God's will. We pray with the psalmist, *create in me a clean heart, O God* (Psalm 51:10).

Jesus promises it is the pure in heart who will see God. And when we invite Christ to dwell in our hearts, everything changes. This is why Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is such a powerful one to pray:

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:16–19).

Oh, that you and I would know this love—love that surpasses everything else—and be filled with it. Press on. Don't be discouraged. The work God is doing in the heart is often slow and unseen, but it is never wasted.