

Matthew 15:16-20 (NLT)

16 “Don’t you understand yet?” Jesus asked. 17 “Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. 18 But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. 19 For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. 20 These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

7) What does Jesus say defiles a person?

8) How can we do better with this issue of the heart?

9) Let’s be real for a moment; are there things you are putting into your heart that are not helping but harming you? If you are feeling brave share them with the group.

Read Psalm 19:7-14 (NLT)

10) According to this Psalm what can we do to better the health of our heart, and what practical steps can you take to do them?

One final note of encouragement. All these things only come from a relationship and a friendship with Jesus. The closer I get to Him the more He transforms me from the inside out. This is a process so be gentle with yourself as we strive for better. One step better is still better. If I do more chair time this week or am consistent in it, this is moving me closer. If I eliminate something that is feeding my soul garbage, I am making progress. Closer connection to Jesus is my goal. He is the maker and builder of me.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS



Read Psalm 19 and pray about the following questions.

- 1) How can God keep you from sin according to this passage?
- 2) What does He want you to meditate on?
- 3) Thank Him and think about how much He loves you.

The Pursuit of Better

Preparing Your Heart

Pastor Craig Sweeney | January 21, 2024

Thread: The pursuit of perfection isn’t possible, but better always is.

“From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.” **Matthew 16:21 NLT**

Jesus is preparing His Disciples for better.

- He tells them ahead of time to prepare for hardship.
- He tells them ahead of time to prepare for people turning against them.
- He tells them ahead of time to prepare for Jesus to overcome.

“But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. ‘Heaven forbid, Lord,’ he said. ‘This will never happen to you!’”

Matthew 16:22 NLT

Peter tries a work around to the pain and hardship.

- We all understand WHY, but none the less it sets Peter’s heart against the heart of God.

“Jesus turned to Peter and said, ‘Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.’” **Matthew 16:23 NLT**

The truth is Jesus had to go to the cross or no-one would be rescued.

- Hardship must be endured; people will not always walk with you through pain or support you in your hour of trial.
- Hold onto God’s heart, let go of yours.

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?’”

Matthew 16:24 – 26 NLT

Following Jesus is not about living a balanced life.

- It’s about being a specialist at living life at the side of Christ.
- There is nothing balanced about the cross, it’s everything. The cross is a place of surrender where I bring all of me.

- The cross is like an altar we bring ourselves to daily.
 - Offering ourselves on it, in honor of the God who gives me the RIGHT to approach this altar.
 - Romans 12:1 – 2
 - An exchange takes place at this altar —my HEART for His.

Many assume this conversation need not happen.

What are you doing with this relationship?

What do you want for this relationship?

Why do you want it?

How will you get it?

What are you prepared to:

STOP?

START?

HOLD on in FAITH?

SACRIFICE to get what you want?

Challenge:

-What *better* is God calling you to?

-What does *better* look like for you?

-What will you STOP, START, HOLD on in FAITH, SACRIFICE to get what you want?

For practical, cross-cultural Bible studies related to sermon topics, visit Dougbrittonbooks.com/resources

Life Group Homework

The Pursuit of Better (The Heart)

Winter 2024 | Week 2
Message Date 1/21/2024

MY STORY



- 1) Would you rather be, the funniest or smartest person in the room, why?
- 2) If you could instantly master any skill, what would it be and why?

QUICK REVIEW



- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME



- 4) This week we are unpacking the biblical concept of the heart. When the Bible refers to our heart what is it referring to?

Proverbs 4:20-23 (CSB)

My son, pay attention to my words;

listen closely to my sayings.

21 Don't lose sight of them;

keep them within your heart.

22 For they are life to those who find them,
and health to one's whole body.

23 Guard your heart above all else,
for it is the source of life.

- 5) What does this passage tell us to do with our heart, and why?
What are some ways we would do that?
- 6) What does it mean to lose sight of something, and how does it tend to happen?

Jesus is teaching His disciples in this passage about eating meat that was considered unclean. The pharisees were making a big deal about cleanliness issues connected to the law. They were arguing that unwashed hands defiled a person, but Jesus makes a clear distinction about what makes a person defiled.