

All right, hey everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. We have been talking about Kingdom Culture 101. We've been talking about, what is the kingdom of God? What are its values? What does its culture look like? The reason it's 101 is because what we've been talking about is the basic things - the core, the foundation, if you will. This has not been a series of the deep mysteries and the revelation of God. This has been about the basic, core, foundational realities of the kingdom. In other words, we've been talking about the heart. That's why we keep saying in every message that the values of your heart will determine the culture of your life.

Jesus says "The kingdom is not here or there, but the kingdom is within you." It's in your heart, and it starts inside out. If I can be real honest with you, that's why this series has been challenging for so many of us. It's not because it's this deep, profound mystery. No, no, no; it's because God is doing heart work right now. He's challenging. He's exposing. He's revealing. He's healing. He's moving. He's asking us, "Do you value what I value?" The problem for a lot of us is if we're honest, we want to shape and form Jesus into our image and our likeness, as opposed to being shaped and molded into His image and His likeness. We're supposed to become like His heart, not ask Him to become like our hearts. Because the kingdom is all about the heart. We do everything with all our heart in the kingdom. This is true of the kingdom. This is true of our church. Jesus is worthy of our all. It's all about the heart.

Holy Spirit, would you come and capture our heart? Would you keep doing the heart work, the hard things, break us open, set us free, and turn our hearts towards You? You see, after 30 years of being hidden as a carpenter, Jesus began His message with this one simple declaration, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The first thing He did was invite 12 men to come and be His disciples. Twelve men, called them by name, because He saw who they could be, because He believed in them, and He designated them apostles that they might be with Him, and He might send them out to preach the kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out demons.

For three years, they were with Jesus, night and day. They watched Him do things no one had ever done before. They heard Him say things no one had ever said before. They watched Him go places no one had ever had gone before. They were there when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. They were there when He calmed the storms. They were there when He walked on water. They watched Jesus do the supernatural and the impossible. They hung out with Him in the temple. They went with Him to the synagogue. They engaged the Scriptures, they prayed, they shared meals with Jesus for three years, night and day. Then, after three years, at the end of His life, they're sitting in the upper room together, and Jesus looks at them all, and He says, "One of you is about to betray me." They all look at each other and they look at Jesus, "Surely not me Lord, surely not I, Lord. It's not going to be me. Lord, who is it?" He takes the bread, and He breaks it, and He hands it to Judas and says, "What you are about to do, do quickly." Judas gets up and He leaves that meal and He goes and He betrays Jesus and sells Him out for 30 pieces of silver.

Now, if you would've asked Judas three years earlier if he was going to betray and deny Jesus, he would've told you, "No way. This is Jesus. He's my life. I love Him with all my heart. He's everything I've ever wanted. There's no way I would ever do that." But somewhere along the way, Judas stopped guarding his own heart. Somewhere along the way, he led a little bit of darkness in, a little bit of bitterness, resentment, offense, sin, worldliness. We know Judas had the money bag and he was stealing from it, so greed. Like a cancer that got in one part of his heart, it spread rapidly, like mold or yeast, and it went and it destroyed the rest of his heart. But the irony is, from the outward, Judas looked amazing. He acted the part. He said all the right things. He had 11 godly relationships in his life. He engaged the Scriptures. He hung out at the temple of the synagogue. He was in a Circle. He was on a serve team. From the outward, he had it all together. But he wasn't guarding his heart.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." The most important thing in your life is your heart. Guard it, steward it, protect it, watch over it, tend it. Why? Because your heart determines your life. The condition of your heart will determine the quality and the reality of your life. Why? Because the Bible says it's like a wellspring. In other words, whatever is in your heart flows out into any and every other area of your life. Whatever is in your heart, determines what you say, how you act, what your behaviors are, and what your beliefs are. If your heart is full of faith, hope, and love, then that flows into your marriage, into your finances, into your parenting, into your work, into your school, into your perspectives.

But if bitterness, resentment, and darkness are in your heart, then those things flow into your parenting, and your work, and your marriage, and your finances, and your perspectives. We need to learn to take authority over our own heart because no one else is responsible for the condition of your heart but you. You don't get to blame the reality of your heart on anyone or anything else. Why? Because you've been commanded by God to take authority over your heart. Because as your heart goes, so your life goes. You say, "Well, what does that mean to guard my heart?" Well, it means you have to be careful what you let into your heart. You have to be careful what you allow to stay in your heart, and you have to be careful of what you let your heart focus on. You have to be careful what you let into your heart, what you're looking at, what you're listening to, who you're hanging around with, which means you're going to have to look away from some things, you're going to have to turn some things off, and you're going to have to break off some relationships, because we want to hide God's Word in our hearts, not the word of this world.

You've got to be careful what you allow to remain in your heart because no matter how hard we try, there's still going to be junk in our hearts, bitterness, resentment, sin, pride, offenses, whatever those things are. We can't let those things stay. We've got to have confession, and repentance, apologize, forgive, give thanks, worship God. Why? "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Oh, God." Then, you've got to be careful what your heart is focused on, what it's dreaming about, what it's drifting towards, what

it's pursuing. Why? Because the attention and the affection of our heart is not supposed to be on the things of this world, but on Jesus. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean, not on your own understanding and all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." We have to take authority over our heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Here's my question for you: How's your heart?

How's your heart? Come on, after two years of COVID chaos, the great resignation, quiet quitting, and all this stuff, like, how's your heart? Is it full of apathy and lethargy and defeat and discouragement? Are you tolerating some things that you shouldn't? Are you accepting the unacceptable? Is the worldliness and religion getting in on the backside of your heart and starting to affect everything else? Is your heart healthy, whole, and free? Or is it worn out, beat down, discouraged, and in despair? How's your heart? You see, like Judas, we can look really good on the outside. But if we stop guarding our heart and one area, like a cancer, it gets in and it begins to spread. We look at each other, and sometimes people look at us and they say things like this, "How did they just get divorced?" "How did that person just have an affair?" "How did they just start getting that deep into pornography or just start drinking a full bottle of wine every single night?" Or, "how did they just walk away?"

Hear me there is no "just." It didn't just happen. It happened a long time ago, when one area of your heart stopped being guarded. Like a cancer, it got in there, and it began to eat everything from the inside out. This is why it's fascinating how we can go into the same situation, circumstance, or experience. Two people can have the exact same experience. In one person it hardens their heart, and in another person it softens. One person gets offended and one person gets broken before the Lord. Why? Because whatever is happening around us accelerates what's already happening within us. That's why, in this series, two people can be looking at it totally different. Why? Because it's just accelerating what's already in here. I mean, I love what David says. He says, "I would have lost heart unless I believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord and the land of the living." He says, "I would have lost heart if I would have lost my hope."

Have you lost your hope? Because if you've lost your hope, you've lost your heart. We lose our hope when we stop guarding our heart. But David says, "No, I guarded my heart, by God's Word, by God's promises, and by God's faithfulness, so I still have heart, even in this hard and broken world." Come on. Do you remember when the teacher of the law comes to Jesus one day, and says, "Jesus, out of all the commandments, which is the most important one?" Jesus looks back at him, and He sums it all up for him, and He says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." He says the greatest command is to love God with all your heart. If you love God with all your heart, you will naturally and effortlessly walk out God's commandments.

If God has your heart, you will walk in God's ways. It's what He says. There it is, again. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." When God has your heart, you naturally and effortlessly do what pleases Him. Anywhere in my life, that I'm not walking in God's ways, it's because God doesn't have my heart. It says, love God with all your heart; not half your heart, not a divided heart, not the leftovers of your heart, not the numb pieces of your heart; with all your heart. God wants your heart. That's why it says, "The sacrifice you desire as a broken spirit, you will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God." God wants your heart. He doesn't want your money. He doesn't want your time. He doesn't want your religion. He doesn't want your stuff. He doesn't want your family. He wants your heart. And you say, "Well, He didn't want all those things?" Now, no. He knows that if He gets your heart, He's got all those things. He's not an egomaniac. He knows that if He has your heart, it is the only way that you will have peace and joy and live free in this life.

What God wants is your heart. Think about the Pharisees for a second. The religious guys in the Bible. They get this rap - we pound on them because of who they were. They kind of deserve it, to be honest with you. They did all the right things. They dotted every "i", they crossed every "t". They knew the Word. They kept the commandments. They were in the temple. They went to the synagogues. They offered the sacrifices. They kept the Sabbath. They tithed. They had rules upon rules upon rules to make sure they didn't mess it up. They trained up their children to walk in those same rules. They removed themselves from the Gentiles, the broken, sinful people of this world. Yet Jesus says of them, "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." That's a devastating verse.

He says, "They do all the right things on the outside, but their heart wants nothing to do with me." Come on, if we're honest, this is sometimes when I think our lives can look like... this is sometimes what my life can look like. This is religion, it's doing all the stuff, but having no heart. Have you ever been in a relationship with someone that did all the right things, but didn't bring their heart to the table? Maybe in your marriage or in a work relationship or in a friendship they do all the -- dot all the i's, cross all the t's; technically, they did everything right, but they have no heart, so there's no life. Because your heart is the wellspring of life. Even if you do all the stuff, but you don't bring your heart there's no life. You are your heart. You are not your body. Most of us think we are this body, but your body is just an expression of your heart. God gave you a body so we could experience and interact with and engage your heart.

You're not your body, you're your heart. That's why, if you lose your arm, you're still you. But if you lose your heart, you're gone. You're your heart. We have to learn to think different about this in Jesus' name. In fact, this is why Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" He says, a whole lot of people in the end are going

to say, "Lord, Lord, look at all the stuff I did," and He's going to say, "But I never had your heart."

The kingdom is all about the heart. What you have to remember is that when you and I are born into this world, we're born with a broken heart, a hard heart, a sinful heart, a rebellious, prideful, resistant, difficult, dead heart. But in Jesus, look at what He wants to do. "And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart, so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people and I will be their God." In Jesus, He wants to take away our stony and stubborn heart and give us a single, undivided, fully devoted, tender and responsive, obedient heart. This is why, on the cross, when Jesus hung there, they put a hard spear into His soft heart so your hard heart could be made soft, tender, and responsive. "Then they will truly be My people." In other words, a tender and responsive heart is the evidence that we really belong to God and are walking with Him.

God didn't give you a new heart so you could spend your life numbing it. He gave you a tender and responsive heart and a hard and rebellious world. He asks you to guard it and to steward it. The problem is, James tells us, "Come close to God and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world." Our problem is we have divided hearts. We want both God and the world. In fact, James tells us, before this, he says, "Friendship with the world is being an enemy towards God." We want it both. We want Jesus and... we want Jesus and our money, Jesus and our sex, Jesus and our comfort, Jesus and our convenience, Jesus and my life the way that I want it to be, Jesus and my perspective, Jesus and my opinion, Jesus and my religion, Jesus and my politics.

We want Jesus and —. We're divided between God and the world, and then we wonder why we're so broke up inside. What you have to understand is, this is two kingdoms in conflict. Where's the conflict happening? It's not out here. It's in here. The last two years of chaos and conflict that we've all thought was out there, and if they would, and they this, and those people that, and all this... the conflict was in here. One of these two kingdoms will win out in your heart. Which one is growing? Judas had a conflict in his soul, and eventually the kingdom of darkness won. God wants His kingdom to win. In fact, I love what Joshua says, "So fear the Lord and serve Him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols, your ancestors worshiped when they lived in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone." He says, come on, fear the Lord, live with a whole heart, and put away your idols.

Idols are not little statues that you bow down and worship to. They're the places of your heart that are not submitted and surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. The idols your ancestors worshiped, things that have been with you for years in your life or generations that have been handed down to you. He says, take authority over them, get rid of them, serve the Lord alone, have a whole heart devoted to Him, break that off in Jesus' name. We're watching that happen

in this series. I'm literally watching people say, "I know I have a divided heart, so I need to get rid of my social media, because it's sucking me into the world." I'm watching people quit jobs to say, "I can't do that job anymore because it's become like an addiction, and I serve it and I need to break away from it." I'm watching people get rid of possessions and hobbies and things because they know it's dominating their heart from the inside out. Because they have this deep desire to say, "I want to learn how to walk with the Lord with all my heart."

If you're sitting here and you're like, "I know I don't walk with God with all my heart, but I want too," that is such a great place to be. Because now you can just position yourself before the grace of God. "But by the grace of God, I am what I am," this is the apostle Paul, a guy who lived with all his heart, "and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me." He says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." It's the grace of God that changes your heart. It's the grace of God that moves your heart, turns your heart, draws your heart. It's the grace of God that gives you a tender, responsive heart that longs to obey God. Grace is like the active ingredient in your heart that's working to change it and turn it towards the Lord. Grace teaches you to say no to ungodliness and worldly living and live an upright, self-controlled life in this present age. It's grace that does that.

We don't just step back, and just say, "I'm just waiting on grace to change me from the inside out." No. "I worked harder than everyone else." In other words, when I realized who I want to be and where I want to go in what God has invited me to, I then put my energy and my effort with it, so God's grace can do its work within me. Come on, by God's grace you are what you are. You know who you are in Jesus? Let me just remind you today - you are a new creation, with a new identity, and a new nature. You're a part of a new kingdom, a beloved son or daughter. You've been empowered by God to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, to make disciples, to destroy the works of the devil. The Spirit of God is in you. The kingdom of God is in you. You are the head; you are not the tail. He who began a good work within you will be faithful to complete it. You know who you are? In Jesus, you have a tender and responsive heart that longs to obey God, no matter how broken or beat up or hard it might feel in this moment. In Jesus, He has made it tender and responsive and obedient.

Thank You, Lord, for the new heart that we have in You, and we want to partner with that. You with me on this? Paul goes on to say, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Whatever you do... whatever you do... whatever you do, do with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men. Now, this is really easy to do when it's fruitful, and it's joyful, and we picked it, and it's exactly the situation or circumstance that we want it to be. It's really hard to do this when things feel fruitless and futile. We think, why bother? Who cares? It doesn't matter anyways.

Yet, he's writing this verse to slaves. Not because he condoned slavery, but because what he is saying is in whatever situation or circumstance you're in in your life, you do it with all your

heart, as unto the Lord. The problem is, is for a lot of us, we do things not as unto the Lord, we do them as unto our level of logic, reason, understanding. If it makes sense to me, and I can see the fruitfulness in it, I'll go for it. But if it doesn't work for me, I'm just not going to waste my time there. As opposed to having a heart that says, "Okay, Lord, because you say so, I will do it." Whatever you do. What do you do? How about your marriage? Are you doing your marriage with all your heart right now? Are you loving, and serving, and sacrificing, and meeting needs, and building up even if your spouse isn't worthy of it? Jesus is!

How about parenting? Are you parenting with all your heart right now? Are you engaged? Are you teaching? Are you correcting? Are you shaping? Are you molding? Are you saying no to what needs to be said no to? Are you engaged in the battle? Your kids might not be worthy of it, but Jesus is. How about work? Are you doing your work with all your heart? Do you show up early? Do you stay late? Do you do the details? Do you do it with excellence? Do you do more than is asked of you? Do you honor your boss? You might say, "My boss isn't worthy of it." But Jesus is. Come on students, school? Are you doing school with all your heart? Or are you just kind of slough-in and slough-out? Do you kind of sit there and stay on your phone all day? Are you like, engaged? Are you taking notes? Do you turn the tech off? Do you pay attention to the teacher? Do you do your homework? Do you do it with excellence? You might say, "My teacher isn't worthy of it." But Jesus says... Come on, how about our church? Are you doing our church with all your heart? Are you engaged? Are you growing? Are you taking next steps? Are you meeting new people? Are you responding to what the Lord is doing? You might say, "We're not worthy of it." And we're not, but He is.

Whatever you do... whatever you do, with all your heart. You say, "Well, what does it look like to do it with all my heart?" It's really tough to look around and see other people modeling that in this season. Because most of the world is doing things with apathy, lethargy, quiet, quitting and celebrating it. To do it with all your heart, I think it's three really simple things. One is, I think you have to be present. To do something with all your heart, I actually think you have to be present. We're so often there in body, but we're not in heart. Like right now, you might even be sitting here, you might be here, but you're somewhere else. Alright, that's not with all your heart. Think how many times we're having a conversation with someone and we're on our phone. You understand what your phone is, is actually a portal. It's a portal and it takes you to somewhere else. You might be there in body, but like we already said, you are not your body, you're your heart.

If I'm on my phone and I'm supposed to be doing something with you with all my heart and I'm looking at hunting, I'm actually not here, I'm in the tree stand. If I'm, if I'm hanging with you and I'm supposed to be doing something with you, I'm supposed to be at work and I'm doing this and I'm watching sports. I'm actually not here, I'm actually at the game. If I'm with you, and I'm supposed to be doing something with my family, and I'm sitting there and I'm looking at old boyfriends and old girlfriends, just catch, on date night, I'm not actually with you, I'm actually with them. It's a portal that takes you somewhere else. To do it with all your heart, you

actually have to be present. Sometimes I think it's the portal that makes us distracted and divided and takes us somewhere else. Sometimes I think it's regret of the past and fear of the future that keeps us from being present, in the now. Come on. Jonathan's armor bearer says to you, "I am with you heart and soul." To do it with all your heart you have to be with - not in body, but in heart. Second thing is, not only do you have to be present, you have to be passionate. To do with all your heart, there has to be passion. God's given you a heart for life. There has to be the sense of enthusiasm and energy and like, "Let's go make this happen."

Caleb, it says over and over about him. With his whole heart, he wanted to go and take the land, saying, "We can defeat those giants. They got nothing on God. God's going to work on our behalf." There was this enthusiasm, this passion, this sense of cost, this willingness to suffer because you believed so much in it. Then the third thing is there has to be a sense of purity. To do it with all my heart, there has to be a pure motive. Not to get something from God, but just to honor God. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." The pure in heart, don't try to get something from God, they just want to experience more of God. One of the greatest ways you guard your heart from the things of this world is by doing whatever you do with all your heart. Because when you're doing it with all your heart, there's no room for apathy, or worldliness, or religion, or darkness to get in. Because you say, "O Lord, I will do it."

What is that? It's worship. It's actually worship. In this world of apathy, and lethargy, and everyone just wanting to do things half-hearted, at best, one of the greatest things you can do right now in God's kingdom, is just do things with all your heart because it's worship. "You are worthy," they might not be, but He is worthy, "Our Lord and God to receive glory, honor, and power, for you created all things and for your pleasure they were created and exist." It's a beautiful verse. When was the last time that you stopped to just realize that you were created and exist for God's pleasure? Not the animals and the sunrise and the sunset and the moon and the stars. No, no. When was the last time you stopped to realize you are created and you exist for God's pleasure, and what does He want? Heart, and that's worship.

What one person can see as meaningless and beneath them, another person sees it as an opportunity for extravagant worship. Jesus goes to the Pharisee's house, and he saw washing Jesus' feet as meaningless and beneath him. But the sinful woman came in and saw an opportunity for extravagant worship, and took her jar of perfume and her hair and her tears and washed Jesus's feet on her knees, knowing full well that the moment He walked out of that house, His feet were going to get dirty in the mud again, but she didn't care. Because in that moment, it was with all her heart as extravagant worship unto the Lord because she knew she was created and existed for His pleasure. With all her heart. What does that take? That takes faith. Being certain of what we don't see. It takes faith to do things with all your heart when you can't see how it's going to work out. It takes faith to farm even though you're not seeing any fruit. It takes faith to build something knowing it's going to be torn down.

It takes faith to clean something, knowing it's going to get dirty. It takes faith to fix something knowing it's going to get broken again. It takes faith to do something, knowing no one else is ever going to see it or ever care about it or ever acknowledge it. But I'm not doing it for them, doing it for Him. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It's when we do it with all our heart as unto Him that He is pleased and honored and worshiped. That is why we exist and that is what the kingdom is for. All this is about Lordship. "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." Every place in your heart where you and I don't do things with all our hearts, we have apathy, resistance, we cut the corners, we don't care, is a place where Jesus is not Lord. In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord.

We think we need to make Jesus Lord of our finances, Lord of our family, Lord of our work. No, no. He says, "Make me Lord of your heart. Because if I'm Lord of your heart, I will flow into your work, I will flow into your family, and I will flow into your finances." Every place where we're hard, and we're resistant, and we're apathetic, and we think it doesn't matter and who cares, and why bother - is an invitation for you to just stop and say, "Lord, what are you trying to do in my heart right now?" Instead of being angry and making it about someone else, and shaming your boss, getting mad at your spouse, taking it out on your kids, saying, "This is stupid." What if you just stopped, and said, "Lord, what's the heart work you're trying to do in me right now?" Come on. Think of David; a man after God's own heart. David did everything as unto the Lord. That's why he's so inspiring to us.

In fact, the Lord says, "Do not consider his appearance or his height... The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." There it is again. God doesn't care about the outside. We care about the outside. Judas fooled all of the disciples, but he couldn't fool Jesus. We might be able to fool everyone else in our life, but we can't fool Jesus. He's saying, don't worry about David's outward appearance. He's a small, ruddy shepherd boy; but look at his heart. He did everything with all his heart. He went and shepherded his father's sheep with all his heart. He went and carried cheese to his brothers on the front line with all his heart. He played the harp for Saul, a guy who wanted to kill him, with all his heart. For 10 years, he ran and lived in rocks and caves and holes and still honored God with all his heart. Because he was willing to do the little things with all his heart, God could give him big things to do with all his heart. Because he did the pasture with all his heart, God could give them the palace to do it with all his heart.

This is why Jesus says, "If you are faithful in the little things, you'll be faithful in large ones. But if you're dishonest in the little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities." In other words, if you don't do the little things with your heart, you're not going to do the big things with your heart. It's heart. This is why Jesus says, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was a stranger, and you invited me. I was in prison, and you came to see me. Whatever you did, for the least of these you have done onto me." In other words, whatever little thing you do in your life, like making sandwiches for the kids, and cleaning up that thing, and just being

honoring to that request that's made of you. Jesus says, you did it for Him. For Him! We look at David's life and we think, "Man, he was special and had this power and these gifts in his life now." No.

David was so regular like you and me, he just had heart. There is an anointing that is only given to the whole heart. There is a biblical anointing that is so powerful and so strong, it can only be released on the heart who is fully committed to the Lord. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "The eyes of the Lord ranged throughout the earth, looking for those whose hearts are fully committed to him, that he may strengthen them." There is an anointing that is so next level it can only rest upon those whose hearts are fully committed to the Lord. I don't know about you, but I want that. I want that. Come on, stay with me. I love what God says, "I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." All your heart is being willing to do everything God wants you to do. I have been thinking about this verse all week, and I've been thinking about what God would say about my life. I don't know what you want this verse to read in your life, but in my life, I want it to read, "I have found John, a man after My own heart, He will do everything I want him to do." I don't want it to read, "I have found John, a man who has lost heart. He doesn't do anything." I don't want it to read, "I have found John, a man with half a heart. He does some of what I want him to do." I don't want it to say, "I have found John, a man with a hard heart. He does whatever the world wants him to do." I want to be a man after God's heart. For whatever this is worth you, I'd spend more time working on my heart than probably anything else in my life.

I'm constantly working on the heart - forgiving, apologizing, giving thanks, worshiping, putting God's Word in there, meditating on it, acknowledging the dark things that are in there. Like we work on so many beings, we work on our skills, and we work on our gifts, and we work on our finances, and we work on home renovation projects, and we work on our hobby, and we work on our talents, and all those things are good. My question for you is, "Do you ever work on your heart?" Because as your heart goes, so the rest of your life goes. It literally is the most important thing in your life. I think it's the thing we spend the least amount of time working on. Listen, I do this with my kids, I do this with our team. I fully acknowledge I do this with our church - constantly working on the heart. That's why our church is not really the most comfortable, convenient, just sit here, let me always leave feeling great. I fully acknowledge that.

Why? Because we're trying to become men and women after God's own heart. That requires some heart work that sometimes puts some light in the dark places, exposes some things, reveals some things. That's why we teach so much of God's grace, because you don't have to be afraid of it being exposed. You can say, "Ah, Lord, help me with your grace," and He will. Now, look at it, I'm almost done. "A man after my own heart," what does God's heart look like? Huh! Have you ever asked yourself that question? Man, after God's own heart, what does God's heart look like? There are very few places in the Bible that actually teach us what God's heart looks like, where He actually tells us, "This is what My heart looks like."

Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus says, "If you want to know what My heart's like, it's gentle and humble." It's gentle. It's soft. It's tender. It's open. It's receptive. It's responsive. It's flexible, and it's humble. It's secure. It's strong. It's healthy. It's whole. It's submitted and surrendered. We're supposed to learn from Him and grow in having a gentle, tender, soft, responsive, receptive, open, flexible, and humble, humble heart. Remember, pride is lifting yourself up, but it's also putting yourself down. Pride is exalting yourself, but it's also putting yourself down with shame and condemnation, because what you're saying is, is that your failures are greater than God's grace. No, no, that's not humility. Humility is agreeing with what God says is true.

Humility is saying, "I agree with what You say is true of my life, even though I don't feel it, don't think it, and don't see it. But I will choose to agree with it. I will be submitted and surrendered, desperate and dependent. I will be secure and strong, and I will live, like You Jesus, as a servant." My question for you is, where is God trying to help your heart grow in gentleness and humility? This is the heart work. What are you angry about? What are you frustrated by? What are you disappointed in? Maybe that's an invitation where God is saying, "Can you learn from me?" Let me make that a little gentle, and a little bit more humble. We pull it all together with us. In John Chapter 21, Peter is sitting at an empty fishing boat holding an empty fishing net and he's defeated. He's lost heart. He's discouraged. He's overwhelmed. He's worn out. He's broken because Jesus has been, now, crucified, dead. He's buried and He's gone. Nothing has worked out the way that Peter thought.

His whole dream, the whole vision, the whole thing, the way that he thought it was going to be it's over, it's gone, it's done. He's lost heart. The resurrected Jesus comes walking down the shore and calls Peter unto Himself and takes him for a little walk and it's a really interesting interaction. He says, "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You." "Peter, do you really love Me?" "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You." "Peter, do you really love Me?" Peter is hurt. He hangs his head. "Yes, Lord. You know all things and You know that I love You." "Then, follow Me." In other words, Jesus says, "Peter, I know it didn't work out the way that you thought and the circumstances and the situations aren't what you thought they were going to be. But if you love Me then follow with your whole heart. '

Peter stands there and his response is to look over at John standing off in the distance and say, "But what about him, Lord? What about him?" Jesus looks at Peter, and says, "What is that to you? You come and follow me." I tell you that because I think that's where so many of us are. We're sitting in an empty fishing boat with an empty fishing net, and life just hasn't worked out the way that we thought it was going to. Especially in these last couple of years - the situations, the circumstance, the brokenness, the pain, the marriage, your marriage isn't what you wanted it to be, your family isn't what you wanted it to be, your finances, your health, your body, the

future, your dreams, the plans, all of it, none of it is the way that you thought it was going to be.

Yet, the resurrected Jesus comes and finds you and says, "Hey, do you love Me? Do you still love Me in the midst of all of that? Because I still love you, so come follow Me with all your heart. Come follow Me, and learn how to have a gentle and humble heart that you might be whole and free and restored." Like Peter, we point to other people and say, "But what about them?" "What about my wife?" "What about my husband?" "What about my boss?" "What about that person?" "What about that decision?" "What about this circumstance?" "What about those people?" He's going to say, "Well, what is that to you?" Because when we stand before the Lord one day to give an account for our lives, we will never be able to say, "What about them?" "But my spouse never did this." "My boss always did that." "My dad, growing up, treated me like this." That's not going to be what you're going to get to say. "What is that to you? You follow Me? Let Me set your heart free."

"Search me, O 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." Easy verse to read, hard verse to pray. "Search me," it's not about anybody else. This season of time of your life is not about anybody else. It's not about you getting your way, you getting them to change, you getting someone to agree with you about how broken they are and what they did and all that. No, no, it's about you. "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart." "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart." "Above all else, guard your heart." "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart."

How's your heart? How's your heart? Because when we don't guard one area over here, like a cancer, it begins to spread. But when we come back to the Lord and submit and surrender, His grace heals and cleanses and transforms everything. When we have in our heart, the value to do it with all our heart, the culture of the kingdom begins to flow, because the kingdom is not here or there, it's within you in Jesus' name. Close your eyes with me. Come on. Here's the question. What is the Holy Spirit doing in your heart?

I fully acknowledge and admit that talking about the heart is hard and uncomfortable. If you're finding yourself squirming, fidgeting, distracted, resistant, totally, I get all of that because it's the heart. Jesus gives us this tender and responsive heart in a hard and rebellious world, and we spend our lives protecting it, if you will. The problem is we often protect it from the very things that are there to heal it, and save it, and restore it. The kingdom is all about the heart. God wants to do a deep work in your heart because He loves you. He is for you. He already allowed His heart to be destroyed on the cross, so yours could be put back together.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts. Lead us in the way of life, and may we be men and women who are after Your heart and do everything You command us to do. Thank You, Lord,

that You love us with all Your heart. Teach us to be gentle and humble. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen!