

Family TableTalk

Conversation 93

Should We Trust Our Hearts?

read

Jeremiah 17:5-10

think

Long before there was social media and memes, thoughts and ideas about how to live one's life appeared on what were called "inspirational posters" that people (in the not-so-long-ago "olden days") would hang on their walls. These posters would feature little sayings printed over top of beautiful photos of an ocean, the mountains, or a flowery field. One poster that I remember said this: "Follow your heart. Life is too short to be sidetracked by things everyone else wants you to do." In

today's world, we see that same message on memes that say things like "Trust your heart. Your heart always knows", "YOLO", and "Listen to your heart." It all sounds like good advice. But is that really the way we should be living?

In the Old Testament book of Jeremiah we read about the dangers of following one's heart. The prophet Jeremiah delivered a message to people who had chosen to follow their own heart rather than following the guidance of the God who had made them and who loved them. In the Bible, "the heart" is not the physical organ that pumps blood through our bodies, but the very center of our being. Our "heart" is the essence of who we are. Our wills, our minds, our emotions, our inclinations, our understanding. . . that's all part of our "heart." In Jeremiah 17, we read about two types of people. The first type (verses 5&6) have hearts that are turned away from the Lord and inward on themselves. Using pictures from nature, Jeremiah describes their lives and futures as being like a plant trying to survive in desert conditions. The second type of person (verses 7&8) is one whose heart is intentionally directed towards trusting the Lord. Using descriptive pictures from nature again, Jeremiah describes a scene that is full of life, growth, and fruitful flourishing.

If the contrast between the pictures of these two types of people is not enough to convince us to distrust our own inclinations and feelings in favor of following God, Jeremiah adds strong words of warning in verse 9: our hearts are deceitful and sick.

I have a little prayer book called *The Valley Of Vision* that includes all kinds of prayers based on the insightful writings of the old Puritans, a group of people who were intent on following God's Word in their lives. The most helpful eight words to pray that I've found in this book are these: "Grant that I may never trust my heart." Perhaps along with praying these words regularly, we would all be helped by pondering these instructive words from the Christmas carol "What Child Is This?": "The King of kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him."

apply

- Besides the memes we encounter on social media, where are some other places that you've heard and seen messages that tell you to trust and follow your heart? Can you think of any examples from movies, television, song lyrics, etc? Have you ever encountered these messages in school?
- Go online and find a picture of a desert. Then search for a picture of a rain forest. Put them side by side. How are they different? How do these two pictures help us understand Jeremiah's descriptions of those who are cursed and those who are blessed?
- While our emotions are a good gift from God we cannot allow them to control our decision-making. What are some strategies you've found helpful to keep your emotions ("heart") in check so that you can allow God's Word to direct your paths?

pray

Almighty God, life is too short to be sidetracked by the inclinations of our deceitful and sick hearts. Make us ever mindful of the fact that our hearts are bent towards sin. Grant that we may never trust our hearts. Grant that we may always trust your will and your way as revealed in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and in the written Word, the Bible. Thank you for telling us who you are, who we are, and what you want us to do in order flourish and bear fruit. Amen.

by **Walt Mueller**

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