



"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

—C.S. Lewis

31-Dec-10

Where Is Your Heart?

When speaking with a new client, career counselors, after getting all the pertinent information on job history and the like, will often ask their clients, "Now, what do you *really* want to do? Where is your heart?"—or as the self-help book asked, "What color is your parachute?"

They probably receive a lot of wild responses such as, "Well, I have always wanted to run away to the circus." Or, "I actually enjoy ironing!" Or, "All my life, all I have ever wanted to do is sing!" A good counselor, after hearing what the client would like to do, will put him through a battery of tests to see if his talents and aptitudes actually match his dreams.

Often, it is not the case. The tests may show that the man who wanted to run away to the circus would actually do well as an accountant, and the woman who loved ironing would make an excellent TV meteorologist. The singer should perhaps not quit his day job.

The question, though, is a good one: "Where is your heart?" We are considering, not the thumping muscle in the center of one's chest, but what has been called "the heart of hearts," our deep-down desires, goals, dreams,

hopes, aspirations. What do you enjoy doing? What would make you spring out of bed every morning, other than a strong cup of coffee?

It can be put another way: What are we invested in? We should not think of this only in terms of money, but also in terms of time, resources, loyalties, hopes, etc.

On the annual holy days, we frequently read the instructions in [Deuteronomy 16:16-17](#) on giving an offering to [God](#). Verse 17, however, applies to this question of "Where is your heart?": "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you." On the surface, it may not seem to be relevant, but it indeed comes into play because what we are able to give depends on where we have placed our priorities. And we place our priorities where our hearts are.

Business people make sure that the resources of the company are expended on their core missions. They have to know what they really want to accomplish so that they can allocate the necessary resources to those chief operations or goals. A firm may direct a large portion of its resources to marketing, so it can get its name out before the demographic that will buy its products. For other enterprises, the priority might be research, as they want to put more money into making their products better and developing new products that will serve their clientele and increase profits. Yet others, perhaps those in service industries, may consider people to be the most important part of their business. These organizations emphasize customer relations and satisfaction. Where the priorities are decided where the resources go.

In the same way, a family may budget its resources for necessities: food, energy, rent or mortgage, clothing, automobile, education. Our priorities, however, are not always necessities, and this is where we may begin to go off the track. We can convince ourselves that certain things that are not really necessities *are* necessities. Food on the table, a roof over our heads, and clothing on our backs are necessities. High-definition televisions, DVDs, convection ovens, iPhones, PlayStations, and all the latest whiz-bang gadgets are not necessities, but we often convince ourselves that they are, having completely swallowed the drivel of advertisers.

This should lead us back to asking ourselves, "What are our priorities?" What is truly important to us? What do we really need versus what do we merely want? Where are our hearts?

Notice Jesus' instructions from Luke's version of part of the [Sermon on the Mount](#):

But seek the [kingdom of God](#), and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ([Luke 12:31-34](#))

Our Savior succinctly explains what our priorities are—where our hearts should be. Earlier, He had advised that we should not even worry about necessities. Nevertheless, what does He tell us to do here? He says, "Sell what you have, and give alms," so one element of our priorities is giving. This is not a command to give all our money away. What He says is modified by what His instruction concerning providing ourselves money bags: He does not want us to make ourselves destitute. In fact, He wants us to gather and increase treasure!

[Jesus](#) instructs us to spend our resources—whether it is time, energy, our concentration, or even our money—on the things that really matter, that will propel us toward the Kingdom of God, that will secure for us heavenly and eternal benefits. That is where our hearts should be: in the things that God also prizes.

Isaiah provides a clear and succinct description of what that treasure is: "The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the LORD is His treasure" ([Isaiah 33:5-6](#)). God's treasure is the fear of the Lord, and that is where our hearts should be also.

Theologians sometimes quibble about the precise definition of "fear of the Lord," but a more general, more encompassing one may be better for our purposes. Simply put, the fear of the Lord is perceiving and accepting where we stand in relation to God and then acting appropriately. It is recognizing that God is vast and we are minuscule. He is magnificent, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing—among other things—and we are but worms. And once we have this fact firmly embedded in our minds, we live every second in the humility and fear of this awesome Being, for one with the proper fear of the Lord puts God, His will, and His goals first.

When we do this, the rest of life falls into place. This is not to say that all of our problems disappear. Certainly not. Nevertheless, we now have a template for making wise, godly decisions in ordering and conducting our other concerns, for "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" ([Proverbs 9:10](#)). When our hearts are first and foremost unflinchingly loyal to God, we have set our course to achieve the greatest goal a human can desire, to please God and dwell eternally with Him in His Kingdom. Is that where your heart is?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Fear of God](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The church at large has downplayed the fuller dimension of the fear of God by emphasizing awe, respect, or reverence, while ignoring its other dimensions such as fright, dread, or terror. Consequently, many have inadvertently adopted a soft concept of God, disrespecting and showing contempt for God's authority and power. Mistakenly, we transfer or appropriate our fear to human beings, who cannot revoke the penalty of death hanging over us. When Moses and Isaiah recognized God's presence, they became aware of their own vileness in comparison to God's holiness and power. By legitimately fearing God, we lose our human terror, finding sanctuary in God Almighty. Godly fear is a gift given to us as a result of His

calling, compelling submission to His purpose and leading to godly knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Faithlessness is the essence of mankind's general character at the end of the age. However, faithfulness is to be a hallmark of a true Christian. How can we become more faithful? How can we be true to the course God has laid out for us?

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