

Where Is My Child's Heart?

Where is my child's heart? We'll look at two avenues in this article. **Who** has their heart and **what** has their heart. As we see these two avenues we can more clearly see how we can cooperate with heaven to regain the lost hearts, regain those rebellious, disobedient hearts in our homes. Bringing our children to a surrender of all selfishness is the most important work on this earth. This heart work must be done not only with Christ but more importantly **in** Christ; there is a difference.

Who has your child's heart right now? Is it toward the world or is it toward God? By looking at his behavior, attitude and countenance parents can evaluate accurately "by his doing" (Prov 20:11) **who** has his heart. "Ye shall know them (my people) by their fruits." Matthew 7:16-20. Does Christ and right doing possess his heart or do you see Satan's selfishness possessing his words, disposition and deeds? Galatians 5:16-25 lists the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit to guide your fruit inspecting to know which Spirit is leading your child.

Satan is prince of this world since the fall of Adam and Eve and he possesses the heart of our child by nature **unless we redirect** our little ones, our youth to give their heart to Christ and follow His laws instead. Satan takes control of every mind (heart) that is not decidedly under the control of the Spirit of God. If we are not actively directing our children to Jesus, they are automatically under Satan's control! Unaided by the divine neither child nor parent can do anything but serve sin and selfishness. How important it is for a parent to bring their Disrespectful Danny to Jesus that He can redeem him from Satan's service. Christ longs to empower and direct parent and child alike in the ways of righteousness. Who will decidedly take up this work?

My heart ached as I heard my two boys, ages ten and twelve, on the back porch one Sabbath afternoon with other Sabbath

believer's children, entering into foolish, inappropriate talk and laughter. My heart ached, not that they were laughing for we know Sabbath should be a happy, pleasant day but they were laughing about someone not present, inappropriately making fun of someone else. Older children were leading this conversation, but my boys knew that was not right, yet they listened to and followed the older children and appeared to be enjoying it, that hurt me. Where is their heart? It's not under God's control. I thought **they knew better?** Why aren't they doing what they know is right?

I was teaching (telling) them what was right. I wasn't training them. Training deals with their will, their heart and sees to it they do what they know is right, as it is in Jesus. I didn't understand the importance of bringing my child to a firm decision to do right, and let Jesus direct me in the way to take so He could change their heart.

The heart represents the thoughts, feelings and behavior. The words and deeds of my child tells me his thoughts. The character of his thoughts tell me **who** is on the throne of his heart influencing his doings. It's either Christ or Satan there is no middle ground. "He that is not (actively) with me is against me." Matthew 12:30

Fruit inspecting showed that Satan had my children's heart! Satan's voice was heard (the flesh), they responded and cooperated with these thoughts thus producing this behavior. The problem was my boys **didn't understand God's voice** at this time in their life, so they didn't respond to Him, thus they followed another master. I want Jesus to have their heart! "What must **I** do Lord?"

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest ..." Matt 11:28. "I will instruct thee and teach

thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with Mine eyes." Ps 32:8

Christ must become a **personal friend and companion** to you the parent, like He was with Enoch. Become sensitive to **recognize the voice of God** to your conscience and then you must teach this relationship to your child by example, instructions and disciplines. Christ must be on the throne of your heart; that means by a willing surrender you will filter all your thoughts and plans through God, then do His will not yours. He needs to be a personal Lord and Saviour.

If Jesus has your thoughts and feelings, then He has the root fibers of your heart and can transform everything else to serve righteousness; your reactions, your desires, your disposition, your habits, conduct, even your affections can serve right in this way. **Christ must** have access through the voice of your conscience to **lead you** and **you must learn to follow**; by actively choosing to serve God, by actively surrendering the fleshly way, and by actively cooperating to do right. Only in this way can Christ possess your heart and make His abode with you. When Christ is abiding in this way, He can recreate you into His image. Only by acquaintance and association with Christ, can you become like Him. As you learn this life of surrender in Jesus, teach this to your children. (Deuteronomy 6 + John 15)

I experienced God redeeming my heart (thoughts and feelings) from fearing the bears to trusting Him to keep the bears; down to the level of my thoughts and feelings was I delivered. So I took my son, I'll call him **Angry Aaron** to Jesus and instructed him how to surrender his heart in prayer. I had to discipline him, led of God before he'd cooperate to pray. The flesh doesn't like to be restrained. Next I told him he'd have to trust Jesus would change his feelings in time. But for now, even while wrong thoughts and feelings were still there, he could still choose to speak loving words in place of hateful words because Jesus would make it possible. When he chose to obey (surrender) and speak the opposite of his present thoughts and feelings Christ took away his anger and put love in his heart in its stead. Jesus put love down to the level of his thoughts and feelings. Jesus did this little miracle every time my son listened to me and his own conscience and cooperated. By repetition he was beginning to recognize the voice of God to his conscience. Jesus possessed my son's heart in place of Satan. He was redeemed from Satan's servitude and so much happier. With heart communication with Jesus, the back porch incident need not be repeated, for Jesus would direct them aright. Who has your child's heart?

"Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good." Rom 12:21 "In Him was life ... to as many as received him to them gave He power to become the sons of God." John 1:4, 12.

What character trait **has your child's heart?** "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right." Prov 20:11.

Many toddlers, children and youth have joined Satan's rank

because they do not experientially know Jesus to be their Saviour from self. Many professed Christian's children are in open rebellion against law and order in the home. They walk contrary to the ways of God because Satan leads their thoughts and feelings and they are following him. There is Rebellious Rufus, Temper Tantrum Tommy, My Way Willy, Sassy Suzy, Interruptive Ivy and Selfish Sarah. They walk in the broad path with Satan as their companion because they know no other way. The parents commonly excuse their behavior for this or that reason. There is no excuse for sin and selfishness, God hates selfishness and tell us to uproot all of it. Our children are this way because we are too busy to tell them about Jesus and take them to Him and train them how to walk the narrow path in Jesus. How sad!

They will grow into these traits with repetition, not out of them as Satan has suggested to the world.

Do not allow Satan to come into our home ranks and take our children unto disobedience and wrath without a fight! Eph 6:12 says it's a war with powers and principalities, its not just flesh and blood we're fighting. We must get in Jesus first, then with a firm hand in His, deny ungodliness in our home. We must cultivate and train our children to live valiantly for God, to be servants of righteousness as it is in Jesus. They will love us and respect us for this in due time.

As I committed myself to personal **daily study time and prayer** God spoke through His Word, and His impressions to my heart, of my

need to pull the weeds of unrighteousness. I was convicted I was allowing the weeds of disrespect, slothful work habits, lazy brain study habits, anger and poor me attitudes to grow in my home by allowing them to be expressed and acted out. God said He would be with me but I must pull these weeds; deny them firmly, give consequences for uncooperativeness, without harshness and anger of the flesh but **in** Christ. I could be a barrier against allowing these evils in my home and Jesus would fight the flesh for me. Exodus 14:14 With fear of failure, trepidation and timidity I followed Christ and He did fight for me and in time my boys each gave their heart to Jesus and were delivered from all these ways. God led me to the replacement principle which was leading them to think and act out the opposite trait of character as it can be in Jesus. Instead of "coming up" God taught me how to "train them up" in Him. **What** weeds of character **has your child's heart?**

Parents you too must **study for yourself, no one else can learn this for you** because it must become an experience, not just an intellectual knowledge. It was by reading and talking with God that I saw the error of my ways of letting my children **"come up."** I thought, what comes up? In an unattended garden weeds come up, thorns and thistles come up without any care from the gardener. These undesirable fruits steal the nourishment and choke out goodly plants by crowding.

Wrong character traits; as disrespect, poor me thoughts, etc.

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that we allow in our children, are the bitter fruits of letting our children "come up." These things come up without any care on our part. It takes time, effort and planning to cultivate in goodly plants of righteousness, to provide time with God, to feed, nourish and challenge them to upright thinking, speaking and acting. Will you let Satan crowd out God in this way? Or will you redirect their ways, see to it they get time with God and "train them up" to do the right?

If you do this, you will **need much time with them** to become their companion, confidant, and regain the respect you need for authority over them. You must win them by love and much prayer, but never letting down the standard of righteousness. Rather uphold firmly the right in and with Jesus, ever pointing your child to Jesus who is able to change them in heart and life. They will fall in love once they come to know Jesus their Saviour from selfishness. A neat and orderly home doesn't come up without a **work plan** to get it in order and daily disciplines to keep it that way, does it? It's the same with our child's character traits. The plan is, there is a need to daily come to Jesus to soften their heart, to water the goodly plants, to nourish the right and to keep it all clean.

Ecc 8:11 says discipline and denying self is important. "Because sentence against an evil (selfish) work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Any wrong permitted to be done will grow and strengthen with exercise and repetition. Then parents need to be diligent to pull the weeds when they are little and more easily removed. Prov 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod, **hateth** his son." When conflicts arise and discipline is necessary, you need Jesus to direct you aright in this warfare!

My studies showed me that **evil** is anything that is against the will of God; it's any and all selfishness. Lord help me with this great heart work! It's not simply behavior modification I need for my children it's a "new heart," therefore, I need you to direct me in this warfare!

I experimented to apply what I was reading on **union and communion with God**. I took God with me in my homeschooling endeavors. He would be the Principal and I would be the under-teacher. It was an excellent method. Christ did put thoughts in my mind how to direct my boys to a true heart surrender. It takes time and effort. Without Christ I only gained outward conformity in obedience. But with Jesus leading, He obtained the heart of my son and obedience. This obedience came from the heart, the inner man, how sweet it was. When Christ possessed the heart all unrighteous thoughts had to leave; all the I can'ts, I don't want to's, all fears of failure and all tears were cleansed away. With Christ on the throne of his heart righteous thoughts came in; I can do my math, I enjoy English, I'll get this done as quick and as well as I can, let's see how good I can do on my math timed tests, I need not fear it. Its wonderful to have Jesus have my heart and gain the heart of my son in

our day to day life. Its time well spent. Communication with Christ is as vital as breathing is to sustain our life.

What has their affections? Is it heavenly or earthly? Look at what is on their bedroom wall. A weird sports hero? Is it some ugly music group, muscle men or fashion queens? It ought to be you! Their affections are on this stuff instead of you! With whom do they spend their time? With associates of the mind set you see on the wall? Why are they attracted to these associates, to these ugly things of earth? Its often because they are accepted as they are by these associates and they want to please them by liking what they seem to like. They have a need to belong, feel a part of something and since you weren't around to be interested in them, or direct them, the world had more time for them and as a result they gave their time and affections (heart) to them. Since they didn't have a family they joined these drug fellows and learned to like what they like.

This is so sad because it need not be so. Their walls ought to have some pleasant nature scene that reminds your child of their special outing with you or the family on the wall, or some sweet animals, or some meaningful scripture verse. Their affections should be in the family and with Christ. They need to belong, to be loved, it should be in heavenly ways in their own home by their parents. Parents, it's up to you to bind their hearts to yours! Regain their hearts, let Jesus change your story.

If you gain their heart then their affections will be towards you. They will love to talk with you, spend time with you, work with you, play with you. Their greatest joy is to be by your side, they feel loved, appreciated, and desire to please you. They can discuss anything and everything with you, nothing is a secret from you. They have found you now to be so trustworthy that if you disagree on some matter they know you have their best interest in heart and will work through the situation with a heart seeking for what is right. This is the fruit of spending much time with your child. They know they are a priority in your life.

On the other hand, a disrespectful, disobedient child gives evidence that the parent does not have their heart. **Where did you loose your child's heart?** Children want their parent's love, approval, and support. Often the father is too busy elsewhere, has time for others but not his child. The child gets the unsaid message that they're not important or loved. Then the host of negative attributes comes from the influence of that substitute associate that took your place. Do you want your son, your daughter's heart back? Our girls as well as our boys need father as well as mother. Give them You, your time, not things! I believe all youth can be won back. Don't let the Devil make you think that yours can't be!

We have a war to fight, only with Christ can we do it. "Ye are not warring against flesh and blood but powers and principalities of darkness." Eph 6:12 Satan wants the heart, the affec-

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tions, the tastes, the thoughts of our children. Are you going to let him have them without a fight?

In order to possess the heart you must **spend time with them** to regain their affections. True love will cooperate with God and lead your children out of this Egypt of selfishness. No matter how much time and effort it takes, having your children's hearts with your heart in Jesus is worth all the effort. If you want them to know Christ, to know the joy of obedience it's really up to you, no one else.

If not you, who?

If not now, when?

Start by making your children a **priority** in your life. Spend quantity and quality time with your children every day, 10 minutes isn't enough! If you don't, I'll guarantee Satan will provide someone to take your place and the associate will take your child away from you and God.

Father, work is not your life—your children are. They need you to work with them, with their hearts, their habits, teaching them the thoughts they should think, and how to come to Jesus and be changed. Listen to their hurts, come to know their interests, and their thoughts. They deserve a goodly place in your time today—not tomorrow. Sacrifice all to have their hearts in yours and together in Christ's. Sell all to regain the lost and straying heart!

Many father's today are deceived, distracted, thinking that their work is everything ... it is nothing if you don't have your children! Just ask business men who have lost their youth to the world. Your children are wearying, waiting for Father to have time for them. If you don't take heed soon they will not have time for you. Many premature marriages are youth striving to get the love they don't get at home. Strangers are not to be given time and attention in preference to your children's needs. Stop, listen, if you've been deceived with this misconception correct it today. God's grace is sufficient for you to change your thinking and direction and His grace is sufficient for mending the hearts of your little ones, even your youth to you today.

Admit your wrong course and correct it. Show your children by your actions now, they are the priority in your life. Yes father has to work to support the home, but come home and give yourself to them regularly in the evening hours, keep your promise to be there; to go camping, to go for a bike ride and you will regain their hearts. If you fail to gain their hearts first, they will not be interested in your Jesus or your rules of life. If you've wounded their hearts, only your actions can speak louder than your words and reverse your course. John 17:19 says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." You must change first, father, for the sake of your sons and daughters!

Mother what keeps you from your children? The telephone, neighborly chit chats, over-work or slow work habits, many trips to town due to lack of organization, or perhaps its your inability to say no to others? Even evangelism is to be secondary to raising your child to follow Christ. Change square about, call out to God, sort it out and follow as He leads you to correct your life today, now. Make your children your business, your priority.

Train up their thoughts and feelings in righteous ways, this is

a good work that no one else will do if you don't. Telling them what is right is only half of this work. Training is the greater work that sees to it they do what they know is right. Training requires your calling out to God for instructions in how to deny the wrong thoughts and feelings and how to cultivate in the opposite trait of character in divine power not just human methods alone. Cultivation requires working up the soil of the heart, and implanting goodly ways in place of the wrong. Training takes the child to Jesus for goodly thoughts to replace the wrong ones. On their knees they must surrender, then they must get up to act out the right. It's in obedience that their hearts, their thoughts are changed by grace. Jesus never intended you and I to do this heart work without Him, in fact we can't. The best humanity can get in behavior modification is outward conformity, without Christ the heart is not made new. So let Christ direct you in this warfare for their hearts.

In corrections, reproof and even giving consequences for disobedience you are saying to your child, "I love you too much to let you disobey, I will not let Satan have you. Come let's go to Jesus to lay down the wrong and pick up the right." Home needs to be an oasis, a fortress against the evil trends of this world, a loving place that upholds firmly God's ways over selfish ways. God in us leading, can cleanse the music, dress, diet, hair styles in our homes and redeem these tastes and affections unto Himself and us. If you do not give consequences and motivations led of God for disobedience you will loose their heart to Satan and unrighteousness. Instead give consequences in Jesus and gain the heart.

Go out and gain the hearts of your children and bind them to yours in Christ!

Power for Living



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