

Direct Your Heart

By Jon Bloom

FOLLOW your heart" is a familiar phrase — essentially a pop cultural creed — representing a belief that our heart is a kind of compass that will lead us to true happiness if we just have the courage to listen to it. As I've explained previously, I think this belief is both misleading and dangerous.

It's misleading because "follow your heart" can sound like a sacred quest — as if not following your heart violates your truest self — when all it really means is "pursue what you desire." And stated that way, we can all more clearly see what makes the phrase dangerous, since desires arising from remaining aspects of our fallen nature are "deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9) and can lead us into deep trouble.

I believe a much more helpful phrase for Christians is "direct your heart," which is given us in Proverbs 23:19: "Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way."

Direct your heart. This more accurately captures the way Scripture as a whole instructs us to relate to our hearts, the part of our inner being that loves or hates, that treasures persons or things or despises them. According to the Bible, our hearts, when left unchecked, follow that love or hatred in all sorts of directions (Matthew 6:21, 24). Therefore, our hearts need to be directed away from following deceitful loves and treasures, and toward what is truly lovely and valuable.

We all know from experience that our affections "are at war within [us]" (James 4:1). The new self "delight[s] in the law of God," while the old self "wag[es] war against [God's] law" (Romans 7:22–23). So, because we experience both of these selves for now, the Bible generally encourages us to direct our hearts rather than follow our hearts. We direct our hearts away from the corrupt, destructive things that delight our old selves, and toward the pure, profoundly wonderful realities God has designed to delight our new selves.

The better counsel is captured in Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." This is both the promise and the increasing experience of the new self, the regenerated Christian. The more we delight in the Lord as our great Treasure — the more we see and savor all God is and promises to be for us in Jesus — the more we will grow to love "whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable" and excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Loving him directs and purifies all our other loving.

Jesus gives us a picture of this transformation in Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

When we are born again, we glimpse and desire the Treasure: God himself. And the more we see of him, the more we desire him and all he desires for us. And the more we grow to hate all that might rob us of that Treasure.

So, direct your heart. Most importantly, direct your heart to delight in the Lord. For if you do, God himself will give you the desires of your heart.

the **word**

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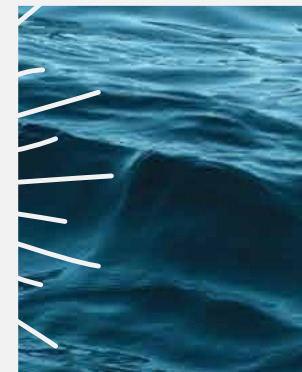
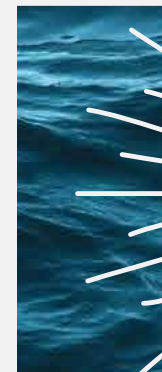
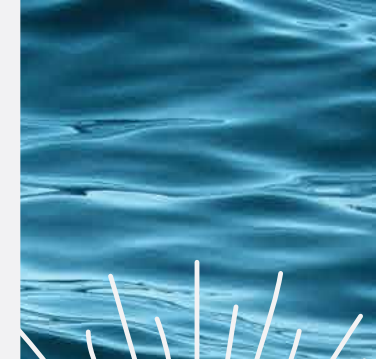


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