

Proverbs 22:17-21

The Cure for the Passionless Heart

Are you a mountain person or a beach person? That question varies by personality. My wife was raised in the mountains and so she loves the beach. We went to the beach every year and so I love the mountains. So I have picked a solution for both of us - We are moving to California so that we can have the best of both worlds! But the other day we were out buying shoes for Titus and Adalee and we met someone in DeKalb County from California. My first thought when we engaged her was, why on earth would you want to move from California to Georgia? But that is just the way things are isn't it? You have sunshine you want rain. You have snow you want warmth. In the middle of summer you are looking for fall. When spring time finally arrives you can't wait for the pollen to be over with.

If we are not careful, the absolute brilliance of life can be passing us by without our notice.

C.S. Lewis famously said, "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world." (*Mere Christianity*) Such a confession is the confession that the Christian has and only the Christian has in its fullest sense. No matter if you are a beach person or a mountain person, each person knows there is such a thing as beauty and a longing to experience and know beauty.

What happens when a person knows there is more, has a glimpse of beauty, has access to the ultimate source of satisfaction, and then grows weary of it, grows cold towards it? Such a thing sounds preposterous doesn't it? Could a person have the secret to life and grow weary of it?

Let me ask you a question to see if you can answer this? Do you ever find yourself not desiring God? Sounds silly, but it happens. Do you ever find yourself approaching Scripture with a yawning attitude? Is there anything that you can do?

Today from Proverbs 22 I want to give you The Cure for the Passionless Heart

READ TEXT

How can our hearts grow cold when we consider the great truths of God? I think that Paul gives the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:7 as he reminds us that *we have this treasure in jars of clay*; meaning that we always stand in need of reminding ourselves of the absolute wonder of glory. As the cold blooded chameleon heats himself under the rays of the sun, so we who have this treasure in jars of clay need to ensure that are moving closer to His glory.

Thankfully God remembers our frame that we are but dust (Psalm 103:14) and is patient and compassionate towards us, his children, to include a passage like Proverbs to awaken our hearts.

So this AM we are going to move closer to glory together. Glory has come, God has spoken so we listen. Prayerfully your cold lack of passion will be met with white hot passion.

Four Truths this AM:

1. Incline Your Ear (17)
2. Apply Your Heart (17)
3. Trust in the Lord (19)
4. Encourage Others to do Likewise (21)

1. Incline Your Ear (17)

Proverbs 22:17 - 24:22 is a list of thirty wise sayings that the sage is delivering to the reader to make him wise. This passage opens with a word to hear, a word to listen, before the text goes further. Let's think about just this fact for one moment:

God has given us an absolute treasure by showing us what is wise - by revealing Himself to us. Have you ever considered this great truth - that we have the word of God? Have you ever considered the pages that you have in your hand as revelation, as the very disclosure of God to us? Such a Word, a disclosure, is an act of grace. I am afraid that far too often we don't think of the Word in terms of incredible or Grace. All of us at one point or another are guilty of thinking that we interpret it instead of the truth that it interprets us.

These pages give us a glimpse into the reality of God. This is God's Word and is altogether true. These pages are not God, but are rather God's gracious act to disclosing Himself to us. These pages represent the true story of the way that God has ordered the world, interacted in the realm of the world that he created, and will sum up the world. This is more than a book of stories, this is the true story of the whole world, the true story of all that there is and all that will ever be.

There is a symphony of grace playing from every page of Scripture and for this reason we lean in, we incline or raise our ears. To tune out all other noises and distractions and listen to God's Word and hear these wise words, these wonderful words of life. So we incline our ear, we listen because God has spoken. We are the recipients of this gracious act of disclosure. We must begin here with this fact: God has spoken so we listen.

But, we don't just want to lean in, we want to give our full affections to what is said. The reason for this is because of the substance of what is said. We don't give ourselves to every word that is said, but we do give ourselves to every word that He has said.

Number 2:

2. Apply Your Heart

I understand the heart here to refer to the center of all emotions. The point of this is to tell us not to let these words of life pass us by, but to soak them up, to apply our heart. We don't want our lives to be characterized by life passing us by, we want to have life.

I know from my own experience that this can be so easy with little ones in the house. Each day is a new day of new experiences for me and for them. My children are not sleeping through the night (none of them, we have a 4 year old and a nearly 2 year old). It is easy to get frustrated when they come in the bedroom at 2, and 3, and finally we give up at 5 and let them get in the bed with us. Katie and I, most days, have our senses to realize that there will come a day when we long for our children to climb in the bed with us, so we leave the door open each night.

I will give you another example. For those of you who know me you know that I am pretty particular about things. What may seem like chaos to the rest of you is complete order to me - don't mess with it! I have one highlighter for this Bible and one pen that I use to underline. It must be this way or I get bent out of shape. The other day I come upstairs and see Adalee with my Bible open and with a pen in her hand underlining not one page, not two pages, not three pages, but about five pages of black ink in my Bible. I had just a moment where I was ready to scream but instead, God gave me grace for that moment and I realized that my little girl is paying attention. She sees her daddy writing in books and wants to show me that she can too. And she did a pretty good job! Now when I look at those pages I will see and remember this day.

All these moments are moments that awaken my heart and my wife's heart to a great and gracious gift that God has given us - our Children. We don't want life to pass us by, we want to enjoy every moment, to have every one of our emotions tuned into our children in every moment. This is what Proverbs 22 is encouraging us

to do - to soak in every moment, to be embraced and overcome by the truth of the Word of God to such a degree that we don't just listen but we move our entire selves in the direction the Word is pulling us toward. We see beauty and then savor the beauty.

The Word of God bends us to itself. We don't bend it to ourselves, we apply ourselves to it not the other way around. The Word speaks to our joy, speaks to our sin, our failures, our triumphs and is the standard for what life is all about. The Word of God is the determining factor for the whole universe. If you don't apply yourself to the Word, allow it to bend and shape us to God's order.

How are you applying your heart to God's Word? I can't apply your heart, you have to. Does Scripture determine your affections? Does the way that you talk, the thoughts that you entertain show that your life is consumed by applying the center of your being to the Word of God?

Inclining your ear, applying your heart, is all to serve a purpose - so that our lives will be formed by trusting in Him.

Number 3:

3. Trust in the Lord

Trusting in the Lord is a matter of faith. Our lives as believers are marked by faith, are conditioned by faith, the life that we now live is a life of faith. This is the point of the whole passage, the reason that God wants us to pay close attention - so that our lives will be ordered by trusting in Him. Remember that God is interested, according to Romans 8, to conform us into the image of His Son - the Word of God, the ultimate disclosure of God to us.

My favorite Proverb is found in 3:5-6. The reason that I love this Proverbs is because it shows us that faith is not something that can't be grasped but is the substance of everything that we are. In other words, when we speak of trusting in God and having faith in Him it is not simply just a blind trust. Our trusting the Lord is like going to the beach and seeing the surf. Have you ever been to an ocean beach and not seen waves? So too is the ways of God's Word. Trusting in His Word is the most sure thing in the world.

C.S. Lewis said one time, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by I can see everything else." God's Word is given to us to form us according to His way, to direct our paths as we trust in Him. In other words, trusting or not trusting in God's word is a choice filled with great consequences. Trusting in God means life, not trusting in God means ruin.

Here is the bottom line, God is not interested in you or I saying that we trust in Him, we show that we trust in Him in the way that we order our lives. Are our lives ordered by inclining our ear and applying our heart to "thus says the Lord"?

Trusting in His Word is the response of a passion filled heart. Not trusting in His Word is the mark of a heart grown cold. This has huge implications not just for us but for the whole world.

Look at verse 20 and 21. Before we read them together, it is a safe and fair assumption to understand that Proverbs 22:17 is instruction for the believer. This passage is a call for the believer to ensure that their hearts are pulsating with vigorous joy that comes from knowing God. It matters not just for us but also for those who are looking to see if these great claims are true.

Fourth and finally today. The last cure for the passionless heart:

4. Encourage Others to Do Likewise

Rinse, lather, repeat. Incline your ear, Apply your heart, Trust in the Lord, spread the truth.

I wonder what the world thinks about us people who claim the name of Christ. How can we bear witness to the wonderful truth of God's word if we are not ourselves being formed by it? We should be overcome with sadness at the great tragedies of the world, but the greatest sadness should come from within our churches, within this church, the lack of thirst for God, the passionless people of God not inclining their ear, applying their heart, and trusting in God.

It is only when we do these things that we will encourage others to do likewise. Listen to me carefully, when we read a passage like this we remember that God meets our stubbornness and apathy, and cold callousness with yet another opportunity to turn ourselves wholly to Him.

How can we do these things? How can we right ourselves so that we can serve our world?

We approach Scripture for what it is - the Word of God. Such a fact leave us with deep humility. He has spoken so we listen. We pray as we take our Bibles. *Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from your Law* (Psalm 119:18).

We have confidence that God will open our eyes because Jesus has saved us by his blood and said that when we ask we will receive. What did Jesus say: When the Spirit comes he will guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We need the Spirit because left to ourselves we will not desire God. But yielding ourselves to Him will mean that He does the impossible in us so that he can do the impossible through us - to let our lives bear witness to this fact - We have a word from God. See the beauty, savor the beauty, and then speak of this beauty to the world looking for an answer, looking for hope.

As we close today I want to show you a clip of a little 8 month old Jonathan. Jonathan contracted bacterial meningitis at 4 months which made him deaf. The disease was spreading rapidly towards ossifying (hardening) his cochlear which would have made him irreversibly deaf within weeks. The parents decided to give him a cochlear implant. Watch at the moment that his implant is activated for the first time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTzTt1VnHRM>

Did you see the innocence, the reaction? God has spoken and given our deaf ears hardened by sin the opportunity to hear his voice through the ministry of the Holy Spirit speaking the Word of God to us. Incline your ear, apply your heart, trust in God, and then encourage the whole world to turn to God to hear. Run to Jesus, fly to Him, and live.