

SERIES: MAKE A DIFFERENCE
PART 3: UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN HEART

Do you know why the mushroom is the happiest plant in the world? Because he's a fungi. Welcome back home, CVCHURCH family. We are a multicultural and intergenerational church. To all of our guests, we're so pleased that you are our guest today. We love and welcome you and consider you family with us. Today we continue our series entitled MAKE A DIFFERENCE. We're going to look at how to understand your heart and then engage your heart in the purpose and plan He has planned for you.

The Bible says a lot of things about your heart. Jeremiah 17:5-10 says, **“This is what the Lord says; ‘Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the Lord. ⁶They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. ⁷But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. ⁸They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit. ⁹The human heart is the most deceitful of all things; and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? ¹⁰But I the Lord, search all hearts**

and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.’”

Our hearts, even after we surrender our hearts to Jesus Christ, can trend towards selfishness, anger, meanness, apathy, lust, and a host of other wicked thoughts and motives. God tells us in Proverbs 4:23, **“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”** God uses Solomon who wrote this verse and ultimately did not follow God’s wisdom. 1 Kings 11:3-4 says, **“He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. And in fact, they did turn his heart away from the Lord. ⁴In Solomon’s old age, they turned his heart to worship other gods instead of being completely faithful to the Lord His God, as his father, David, had been.”** The Bible says Solomon did what was evil in God’s sight by refusing to follow the Lord completely like his father David did. In 1st Kings 2:3-4 David told him explicitly, **“You are to observe the requirements of the Lord your God, and follow all His ways. Keep the decrees, commands, regulations, and laws written in the Law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and where you go. ⁴If you do this, then the Lord will keep the promise He made to me. He told me, ‘If your descendants live as they should and follow Me faithfully with all their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.”** When he was young, Solomon was humble and God granted him his request for wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and discernment. He was the wisest man in his time. Loved ones, here is the tragedy. Over time, his desire for wealth, fame and sexual pleasure caused one of the worst demises in human

history. He failed to heed his own advice. Why must you understand your heart, which includes your ability to think, feel and act? Because it is your heart—your control center, your mind, emotions and will—that ultimately will determine the path and course of your life.

Jesus says in Luke 6:45, “**A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.**” To have a good heart, you can only get that from Jesus Christ. He will give you His nature when you repent of your sins, but then you must renew your mind according to God’s Word and agree with His laws, His commandments, His ethics, values and morals. You demonstrate your good heart by your words, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Proverbs 27:19 says it perfectly, “**As a face is reflected in water; so the heart reflects the real person.**” In other words your heart, your words and thoughts, feelings and actions don’t lie. This is why it is so important to understand your heart—surrender it to Jesus every moment of every day.

When I do what God **shaped** me to do I **enjoy** it, and I’m **good** at it.

I. What keeps you from protecting and following your heart?

A. Disappointment

When you get hurt, disappointed or betrayed, you will tend to either pull back into your shell, or you will become aggressive and mean-spirited and unforgiving. Then you give up on your dreams. You give up on God's plans for your life. You give up on your interests and your passions. You pull back into a protective mode that says, "Don't get hurt is the number one goal of my life." It is very unwise to let setbacks and disappointments cause you to doubt God's love, care and purpose for your life. You're simply living in self-imposed prison. The Bible says that when I have an expectation, and then it doesn't turn out the way I intended it to go, I can get demoralized, disappointed and depressed. Proverbs 13:12 says, "**Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.**" If you don't succeed the first or second or third time, welcome to the human race. When you allow a disappointment to sabotage you, it interferes with your heart.

B. Fear

Fear is the 2nd heart stopper. Fear can keep you from being who God wants you to be. Fear is another self-imposed prison. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells us a story about an amount of money called a talent. According to some scholars the sum of the talent indicated a large sum of money. The Bible Exposition Commentary: N.T. says that this sum was maybe even as much as a million dollars in today's currency. This could be why the master was so upset with the servant. The master gives five bags of silver to one servant, two bags of silver to another and one bag to the third. The first two

servants invested their money and doubled what they were given. The master was very pleased. But he was angry with the 3rd servant, because he said out of fear he simply buried his bag in the ground and did not multiply what his master had given to him. One of the lead points of the story was that it was out of this man's fear, because he was thinking wrongly and wasn't willing to take any risks. Loved ones, it is fear that causes you to bury your talent. It is fear that keeps you from living God's dreams and purposes for your life. It's fear that corrals your passion and limits your vision and shrinks your heart. Fear is the 2nd heart stopper. Proverbs 13:12 says, **“Worry (fear, anxiety) weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.”**

C. Guilt

This is a terrible heart stopper. You cannot live under the stress and strain of guilt and pursue God's dreams for you at the same time. Guilt takes an enormous amount of energy. It's like carrying 100 pounds of bricks on your back. It's hard to be confident and sure of God's plans for you when you are overwhelmed with guilt. If you're dealing with true guilt for things you have done wrong, the way you deal with that is to confess your sin to Jesus Christ, and, if you have to, to the person(s) you wronged. Ask them what it will take to make it right, and get it done. If it is false guilt, most likely you need to go back to whatever happened and work through the process of forgiveness. If you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, that is the best eternal decision you can every make. You can make it right now. Psalm 32:3-5 says, **“When**

I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. ⁴Day and night Your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. ⁵Finally, I confessed all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.’ And You forgave me! All my guilt is gone.” This is what separated David from his son Solomon. Solomon didn’t repent of his sin and continued on in his relentless rebellion to God’s principles and truths for him. David, even though he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband so he could have her, repented of his sin and turned away from it and followed God with all of his heart. This is why God called David a man after His own heart.

D. Bitterness

Loved ones, please hear me. Bitterness will eat at your heart like cancer. It is one of the worst spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical diseases you can have. When you become resentful, first you start acting and feeling like a victim. Secondly, you’re looking for ways to exact revenge and to retaliate, and you spend way too much time thinking about how the person(s) hurt you, and it keeps you stuck in the past. You cannot get on to the future that God has for you, because you’re so hung up on what other people has done to you. You must forgive them and move on. They don’t deserve it, but neither do you. You don’t deserve to be forgiven, but God forgave you, and part of your God-given shaped response is to forgive quickly and move on, because if

you don't, bitterness is the fourth heart stopper. Bitterness will put you on the sidelines as quickly or even faster than disappointment, fear, or guilt. Hebrews 12:15 says, **“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.”** Notice also, loved ones, that bitterness not only hurts and harms you, but it will corrupt many around you.

E. Rejection

This is the 5th and might be the most painful heart stopper of all. Anyone who has experienced rejection from a friend or a parent or a former spouse, child, boyfriend or girlfriend, you know how that hurts your heart. Rejection can be terribly painful. We have seen what the Bible says about each one of these obstructions and attacks on your heart. With disappointment, hope that is delayed can make your heart sick. Fear, worry and anxiety will weigh you down and cause you to be depressed. Guilt can make you sick spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically. Bitterness will function like a poisonous root, and, will not only destroy you, but those like your spouse, family and friends. Concerning rejection Psalm 64:3-4 says, **“³They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their bitter words like arrows. ⁴They shoot from ambush at the innocent, attacking suddenly and fearlessly.”** Some of you may have experienced this kind of cruelty while growing up. “You’re not worth anything. You will never amount to anything much. You’ll never be a success. You’re not good at...” and you fill in the

blanks. “You’re uncoordinated. You’re worthless. You’re so stupid. You never do anything right.” On and on and on. And you believed them. They were wrong. Listen to me and look at me. They lied to you. They were lying at you at that moment. You must be willing to erase those old tapes that the devil used through your parents, siblings, spouse, friends, employees, employers, or people from other ethnic groups. You must stop perceiving yourself and building your life on what your critics said about you, and start building your life on what God says about you. God says, “I created you. I made you. I formed you, I shaped you, I planned you. I have a purpose for your life. I have placed certain abilities in you and your heart. I have put specific passions, cares and concerns in your life so that you can advance My Kingdom where you live and in your culture.” My prayer for every one of you is that you will allow God to reveal His shape for your heart. That you will be about what God has shaped you to be so that you can truly make a difference in your marriage, your family, your neighborhood, your CVCHURCH family, your community, and your culture.

II. How to follow your heart

A. Open your heart to Jesus

This means that you’re willing to surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That you admit that Jesus Christ has not been first in your life, and you now repent of your sins, and you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son, your Savior, and you believe that with your heart, which means you

believe in the Gospel about Jesus, you allow what He has done for you to impact you emotionally, and you commit with your will to follow His word and commands. In doing so, you open your heart in such a way that God puts you into a right relationship with Him. Then you confess Jesus Christ with your mouth, and you receive the salvation that Jesus Christ died and was resurrected from the dead to give to you. Once you do that, you will always need to keep your heart open to God's Holy Spirit, as you read His Word daily, as you pray and as you relate with other brothers and sisters. If you struggle with hurts, habits and hang-ups, we have an incredible ministry here called Celebrate Recovery. If you struggle with co-dependency, failed relationships, anger, bitterness, jealousy, drug addiction, alcohol addiction, sex addiction, food addiction, or whatever addiction or harmful activity you're involved with, you will find a family here at CVCHURCH to love you and at Celebrate Recovery. CVCHURCH is a place to belong, believe and become. If you aren't quite ready to make that commitment, I encourage you to keep coming and be a part of what God is doing here every Sunday. Get into a small group. Encourage your children to go to Kids' Place!. Your youth to go to EPICC. Last week, in our LD 101, I always take time to go around the tables and have each person tell us their name, how long they have been attending CVCHURCH, how did they hear about us, and what is one benefit or value that they have received. It is always a very special time. Some said their marriage is better. Their children love it here. Some parents have said recently, "Our children didn't like the other churches we have gone to, but they love CVCHURCH.

Invariably, they mention how kind, loving and caring you all are. It's all about living our lives together to influence and impact others so they can open their hearts to Jesus Christ. Revelation 3:20 says, **“Jesus said, ‘Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.’”** This is why we live our lives together the way we do. It is so other people, the people we all live by and influence that one day they will respond to Jesus' knock on their door because of how we love Him, each other and how we love them.

B. Ask God to heal your heart

Loved ones, every one of us here has had their heart broken in some way. It may be by disappointment, fear, guilt, bitterness, or rejection, but you have experienced your heart being broken. I say to you as your friend and as your pastor, I am truly sorry that you have experienced the hurt and pain that you have. I truly do care about you, because Father God cares about you. He's hurt with you. As you have wept, He has wept alongside of you. In fact, it is in your pain that God is closest to you whether you realize it or not. Psalm 34:18 says, **“The Lord is close to the broken hearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.”** How does He do that? He gives us a new heart because of what He accomplished when He took our place on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:14b-17 & 21, **“Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ¹⁵He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no**

longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now! ¹⁷This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!... ²¹For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” When you surrender your life and heart to Jesus Christ He gives you a new heart, and He creates a new spirit within you, and, at the some time, because you still have memories, hurts, habits, and hang-ups from your sinful life, God desires to come as you call to Him, and He will heal, restore and reconcile who you are to Him. Loved ones, there is nothing you have experienced in life that Jesus Christ cannot heal if you will let Him. Let Him love you through those in this church. Get involved with CR. Join a small group. Get honest with several who show themselves trustworthy and let them into your life and watch what Jesus will do in you and through you. He loves you, and you were made to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE because YOU’RE SHAPED TO SERVE.**

C. Listen to your heart

One of the problems with so many of us is that we’re going too fast, and you don’t have time to listen to God to see what He has placed in your heart. As you learn to put Jesus Christ first in your life, and you place as much of God’s Word as

you can in your mind and heart, your heart will begin to lead you into God's plan. Romans 12:3 says, **“Don't think you are better than you are really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.”** This is where you get alone with God every day, and you just take time to listen to what He wants to say to you and what He wants you to see and to feel. With your new heart, when you listen and heed the direction of the Holy Spirit in your life and heart, He will lead you in His paths and directions. Proverbs 3:5-8 says, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take. ⁷Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. ⁸Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.”**

D. Look at your options

This is where you find out about what the interests are that God created you for. This is where you prayerfully consider what are the different passions, gifts, creative bents and desires you have to serve Him and others with what you have been given. You study it. You do your due diligence. Proverbs 19:2 says, **“Enthusiasm without knowledge is no good; haste makes mistakes.”** The ESV says, **“Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with their feet misses their way.”** God cautions us against being impulsive. We're not to act before thinking and planning the right way. In other words, if you don't know

your target you can't hit it. God wants us to be fruitful for Him. Two weeks ago we heard from Jenna Caress who is **SHAPED FOR SERVICE**. What caught my attention was when she said, "I kept trying other ministries to serve in, but I always ended up back in the nursery." Why? That is her God-given shape. I had a chance to volunteer for three hours during an event for our J:127 ministry, which is our Foster and Orphan care, in the nursery so parents could get some needed time out. I spent the three hours with a team. Two of the team members were Matt and Jenna Caress. It was an absolute great honor to watch how they attentively paid attention to all of our children and just how much they loved and cared for them, and they knew just what to do with each child when the child was discomfited or upset. I just sat there and marveled at their huge servant's hearts. God willing we're waiting on our insurance department to give us the green light to start our own chapter of TRAIL LIFE here at CVCHURCH. Matt has had this desire for a long time to have a place for dads and their sons. If you haven't noticed yet, loved ones, masculinity is absolutely under attack. What some of our leaders are saying about manhood and masculinity is absolutely ludicrous and slanderous. If you're a man and you have a son, sons or no sons but you would like to look into this brand new ministry, please stop by our TRAIL LIFE table after service at our ministry fair. If you are a man, this is one of the best options we can offer to make a difference in your son's life, other boys and men from our CVCHURCH family and also from families in our community. We believe this will be a huge outreach to our community.

E. Step out in faith

After you have opened your heart to Jesus, step out in faith every day. This is not a one time event. You ask God to bring ongoing healing to your heart. Then you can begin to listen to your heart as you are in alignment with God's heart. Then you look at your options of where God wants you to serve. Now you're in a place where you can expect God to bless what He has put on your heart to do. Why would He not bless it if He has created you with His SHAPE for you? If He put it in your heart to do it, and you go do it, obviously He's going to bless it. Just know there will be a huge fear factor once you start following God's leading that He has placed in your heart. There will be a test to your faith, but if you're going to follow your heart there will many barriers of opposition to test your faith. But God has given you the most amazing promise in Psalm 37:4, **"Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires.** To delight in Father God means to put Him and His purposes and plans for your life and for His Kingdom first. Here is what will happen for you and to you as you understand your own heart and then engage your heart full throttle into God's plans for you. When you start living by and following your heart you will stop worrying about status, and you will start enjoying significance. As you start following your heart you will stop competing for position and start enjoying the great pleasure and joy God has made for you to experience. As you start living and following your heart, you will stop obsessing over money and you will start focusing on meaning. Meaning

trumps money every day of the week. You will say along with the psalmist in Psalm 4:7, **“You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine.”**

As we pray, which of these heart stoppers has been stopping you from following your heart and choosing to serve Jesus with all of your heart? Disappointment? Fear? Guilt? Bitterness? Resentment? Ridicule? Rejection? Slander? Lies about you? Loved friends, I have good news for you today. Jesus wants to unclog your heart today. In John 10:10 Jesus said, **“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”**

Let’s pray. I ask You, Father God, to heal my heart. This morning (afternoon). Dear Jesus Christ, I open up my heart one hundred percent to you today. You made it. You know what’s in it. You know all about it. I open it to You. You’ve been knocking on my door today, and I invite You to come into my heart, I ask You, Father God, to heal my heart. Heal those areas of my heart that have been bruised, broken and beaten, and I ask that You begin to heal the wounds of disappointment, any fear, guilt rejection and bitterness. I’m asking that You give me a new heart today. Help me to listen to my heart, because that is where You speak to me. Help me to engage the me You have made me to be. Guide me as I go to the ministry fair after service, and lead me to the different options that I will be drawn to. Today, I say, my heart is Yours. I have been shaped to serve You, and I want to do that the rest of my life. It is in Your name, Jesus, I pray.