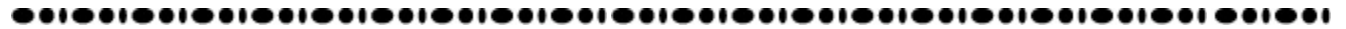


Week Three

# THE SEARCH FOR [SECURITY]



## HEARTS SET FREE

*Command.*

What goes through your mind and heart when you read the word *command*?

It's a sturdy word.

We can't honestly say we like it.

We don't like to be commanded.

We don't treasure commands. We don't enjoy commands. We don't seek commands. We avoid commands. We skirt commands. We look for ways around commands.

*Freedom.*

What goes through your mind and heart when you read the word *freedom*?

It's a liberating word.

We can honestly admit we love it.

We love freedom.

We treasure freedom. We enjoy freedom. We seek freedom. We don't avoid freedom. We don't skirt freedom. We don't look for ways around freedom.

Commands and freedom. Freedom and commands.

The two words seem in opposition. They don't look like friends. We wouldn't expect them to hang out together. But Scripture has an odd way of pairing unlikely companions.

Consider the following...

*I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free (Psalm 119:32).*

That's odd.

A heart set *free*. We like that. Running in the path of God's *commands*. We're not sure we like that.

Freedom? Yes.

Commands? No.

THE SEARCH FOR [SECURITY]

But the two are paired. Oddly coupled, some might think. And take note, it's that word again: *heart*. The psalmist runs to God's commands, "For you have set my heart free."

Where did we begin?

*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23).*

We're to take care of our hearts. Our hearts drive our lives. Now we hear the heart experiences liberation by running to God's commands.

There's something in this we must understand.

## **THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT**

We don't like rules. Commandments don't exactly turn our cranks. They often come in thick books with dreaded detail: covenants for the neighborhood, regulations for the football league, codes of conduct for the university. Yuck. They don't inspire us. They don't speak to our souls. They don't beckon us to read and reread.

Christ took a different approach. Profundity is often found in the simple. Christ made it simple.

All God's commands hang on two hooks.

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).*

Love God. Love People.

That's profound. There's something in that. What is it? Let's get after *Love God*.

Why love God? Take a step back for a moment. As profound as it sounds, it's also odd. Why would God command us to love him? Is he some sort of insecure God wishing the world would just give him some attention? Why look to the people you've created and demand their love?

## **GOD'S COMPETITION**

To get after these questions, consider another odd thought. For a moment, consider God's competition.

Competition?

Yes. Competition.

There are obvious contenders for God's greatest competition. What might we love rather than love God? Christ said we're to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. What else might capture the attention of our heart, soul, and mind?

How about money?

There's no question, money captures the imagination of hearts and dreams. Money gains the full and undivided attention of souls and minds.

## **THE SEARCH FOR [SECURITY]**

What will it be?

*Love Almighty God or Love the almighty dollar.*

Christ paired the two...

*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money (Matthew 6:24).*

Notice the word *love*?

Why do people *love* money?

A list of reasons could be considered. Somewhere near the top of the list would be something about *security, personal well-being*. Money is loved because it offers a degree of security.

Let's evaluate this competition of God's.

Scripture is not so naive as to belittle money. Contrary to popular opinion, Scripture reveals a great deal of street wisdom regarding money. Much more is addressed than just giving money away. We're told how to make it, spend it, save it, use it, and yes, give it. We're told that money will be involved in everything we do (Ecclesiastes 10:19). The most noble of causes involves a budget. Money is neither good nor bad. Like all tools it's a matter of how it's used. Money is often used for great good in the world.

But what happens when financial security is our ultimate security? What happens when it's the foundation of our lives? What happens when we love money in a manner that only God must be loved?

When we do this, money is effectively our god.

The result?

Something deep within us knows we're vulnerable.

Why?

Because there's never enough money to bring impenetrable security. There's always something, someone, somehow that could cause us to lose it all. There are countless needs money can't meet. Money is loved for the security it brings, but there are holes in that security that breed a great deal of insecurity.

## **FRIENDS**

*"Certainly not me; I'd never be so greedy as to make money my god. I saw previous generations do that. I'm not buying into it."*

How about friends?

Friends?

Yes. Friends.

But friends are real. Friends are important. Friends give life meaning and purpose. Even more, the second greatest command is to love people.

True. Right. Good.

Dangerous.

What happens when ultimate security is wrapped up in finding the ideal spouse? Is our well-being resting in the hands of a strong relational world? Is life finally secure when we have friends down the street, a spouse in bed next to us, and kids in the back seat?

It's clear how money can effectively become our god; relationships hold the same potential. We've all experienced friends who cling to us in a way that doesn't feel healthy. We've witnessed parents whose identity is wrapped up in their children. Maybe we've been that friend or parent. Maybe we've looked to others for something they just weren't capable of giving. We hoped they'd satisfy something in us they just were not capable of satisfying.

What's that about?

Make a friend into a god and the friendship will be terribly disappointing. Turn a spouse into a god and the marriage will suffer, if it makes it at all. Squeeze prospective spouses too tight and they run for the hills.

Why?

We instinctively know we're not qualified to do the god-thing.

Yes, we were made to be in relationship with others, but others were not made to be god.

A friend? Yes.

A god? No.

Why love God? Many reasons. Here's one...

We love those things we trust.

Our ultimate trust is our god.

## THE HOOK

Christ said this command to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, is a hook upon which other commands hang. Consider another command. Consider the first command of the Ten Commandments.

*You shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).*

Fascinating. Do you see it? It's virtually the same command as "*Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.*" When we love something else with all our heart, soul, and mind, what have we done? Put simply, we've placed another god before God.

So is God's command for us to love him an indication of his insecurity? That seems unlikely. Might it be that God has our best interests in mind? Could it be God longs to see us build our lives upon a foundation that is worthy of being a foundation? Could it be that one expression of loving God as our God is letting God be our ultimate security, and God knows other forms of security leave us vulnerable?

It's yours to answer.

## THE SEARCH FOR [SECURITY]

Let's go deeper.

Let's consider a scenario. It's just one example. Thousands could be listed. The circumstances may differ. The result is quite common.

Call it *The Snap*.

## THE SNAP

Dad opens the door. He's greeted by a couple of kids he loves more than he dreamed possible. They're bouncing. They're filled with life. They're thrilled by his presence. He laughs.

It takes mere minutes. Seemingly nothing prompted it, but it happens.

Snap!

The kids weren't exactly behaving, but the response is way out of proportion.

Mom cringes. Dad retreats. Something's off.

As he changes out of work clothes he whispers a quiet prayer, "God, why did I do that? What's wrong with me? I love those kids? Why did I snap?" The thoughts continue as he reenters reality. His mind goes back to work.

It wasn't a bad day. It wasn't a good day. It was just a day.

And therein lies the problem. It was just a day. Any old day. Now he's home. Now they're dancing and screaming and tugging and wanting. But it was just a day. A nothing-lost-nothing-gained-kind-of-day.

But he longs for gain.

He's nervous.

No, he's scared.

Is his work ever going to deliver the life he really wants? Is his job ever going to do what he really wants it to do? Is he ever going to be at a place where the money is real money, the respect is real respect, the rewards are real rewards?

It was just another day.

It takes time. Eventually he identifies a nagging question: Is his work trustworthy? Can his work be trusted to deliver what he wants it to deliver?

We can't answer this question for him, but we can make a couple of observations.

First, maybe the frustration is legitimate. Maybe he's undervalued, underutilized, and underpaid. It happens all the time. It happens to most everyone.

Second, maybe the frustration is *not* legitimate. Maybe he's looking to his job to deliver something this job, or the next job, or any other job will never deliver. Maybe he's looking to it to bring ultimate security, ultimate satisfaction, ultimate meaning. If so, the job's not the problem. The job's doing precisely what a job should do. And more importantly, it's not doing what a job will never do.

It's not being God.

Snap.

## GOD OF OUR SECURITY

Let's come full circle. Let's pull this one together by listening closely to Scripture's counsel.

Three key passages:

First... *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). Our lives are driven by our desires. We must protect and be aware of our desires.

Second... *"I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free"* (Psalm 119:32). Guarding our hearts involves listening to the commands of the Creator of our hearts. These commands are designed to liberate.

Third... *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."* (Matthew 22:37-40). The command to love God, among other things, is a command to let God be God of our security, the center of our trust. Our hearts, our lives, our beings, we are designed to love something, to put something at the center of our trust. Whatever is at that center, that job, that bank account, that relationship, it is effectively our god. They are not wrong things, they are often good things, but they are misplaced. Rival gods, God's competition, are insufficient to truly be God.

## DISSONANCE AND RESONANCE

Remember dissonance? Remember resonance? Dissonance is the result of clashing sounds. Resonance is the result of sounds working together.

We noted previously...

Resonance is when our stated desires are a healthy expression of our deepest desires. They work together. They resonate. Dissonance is when our stated desires are an insufficient expression of our deepest desires. They clash. They create dissonance.

Dissonance is also found when we instinctively know something about our stated trust. We're trusting in something to deliver true security. We look to this thing, this opportunity, this being to bring us the kind of security we were designed to want. The desire is good and legitimate. But dissonance comes when we instinctively know the limitations of the object of our trust. We entrust ourselves, our well-being, but we instinctively know there's legitimate vulnerability. The search for security, the place where we put our trust, is one of several places where dissonance and resonance are clearly seen.

## HEARTSTORMING FOR SECURITY

In our previous Morph Me section we identified desires and sought to trace those desires down to more deeply rooted desires. We grouped these desires and then used the "Why?" question to go from a simple desire to the deep desire driving the surface desire. No two people's pages will look exactly alike, but it's not unusual to have at least one grouping of desires have something to do with security. To be human is to have a deeply rooted desire for security. Even those with a strong bent toward extreme risk or radical adventure have their own form of security; there is a certain kind of life they desire and protect. When the high risk and high adventure person sees his or her passion at risk of expression, their desire to secure their life is clearly seen.

This desire for security, in its varying forms, is healthy and to be expected. Problems arise not from the presence of this desire, but from how the desire is expressed. What do we grab hold of for

security? What do we make our ultimate trust? Is it truly qualified to give the security for which we long? Or is it a partial fit at best?

Partial fits create dissonance.

*“I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” (Psalm 119:32). Might we safely paraphrase this verse that initially seemed like such an odd coupling of the words *commands* and *freedom*? Hear it with a broader perspective: *I run in the path of your commands, the command to love God with all my heart, and soul, and mind because I want a heart that resonates; I want a heart fulfilled in a trustworthy God.**

So now it's time to go deep.

It's time to get personal.

It's time to carefully and prayerfully do that thing we are to do *above all else*.

The pages that follow facilitate an honest consideration of our hearts. You will be encouraged to consider your heart's desire for security. You'll then be encouraged to talk with God and each other about your discoveries.

Revel in these exercises.

Linger and listen.

Let God's Spirit speak to you and guide you as you consider your person, your God, and your heart.

**THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY**

Week 3, Reading, p. 68