

The Open Heart

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The Bible often uses the “heart” and the “mind” of man interchangeably. Scripture often extols the virtue of the open heart/mind. In Jesus’ Parable of the Sower. He taught that the fruitful heart is one which is “honest and good” (Luke 8:15). Just such “soil” resided in the 3,000 on Pentecost who “gladly received the word” (Acts 2:41). By Paul’s preaching of the Gospel, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14). The Berean Jews were noble in that they “received the word with all readiness of mind” (Acts 17:11).

On the other hand, God’s Word ever proscribes the closed heart/ mind. The Lord applied Isaiah’s condemnation of the “gross heart” (6:9–10) to the people of His day (Mat. 13:15). The apostles did not understand the Lord on one occasion because “their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:52). The Jews did not understand the types and prophecies of the law concerning Christ because “their minds were blinded” (2 Cor. 3:14). Repeatedly the Holy Spirit warned, “harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). Why is the open heart so virtuous and the hardened heart so dangerous?

1. The open heart is hungering for God’s Word (Mat. 5:6), by which alone one can be free from sin (John 8:31–32). Such a heart “gladly receives the Word” (Acts 2:41).
2. The open heart is free from prejudice. It will give evidence a fair hearing. This is what the Bereans did. Because of their “readiness of mind,” they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).
3. The open heart will not only hear the Truth of God’s Word but will act upon it. The “honest and good heart” is fruitful in its obedience (Luke 8:15). When Lydia’s heart was opened, she did the things commanded by Paul, including being baptized into Christ (Acts 16:14–15).
4. The closed mind struggles along in the blindness of self-imposed ignorance and in the spiritual trap of self-justified sin and error. Thus the Jews generally had so closed their minds to any kind of king and kingdom other than an earthly one that they rejected Jesus as the Christ.

A caution: we must never confuse “open-mindedness” with lack of conviction or doctrinal instability (Eph. 4:14). To be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7) is to be not “open-minded,” but “empty-headed”!

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