

The Motives of the Heart: Guarding Against “Painted Graves”

Sunday, February 8, 2026

Foundation scriptures:

Galatians 5:22 (NLT) But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 (NLT) gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NLT) Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

1 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT) or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

1 Corinthians 13:6 (NLT) It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

1 Corinthians 13:7 (NLT) Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

1 Corinthians 13:8 (NLT) Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

1. Love as God Defines It Exposes Our Motives

God’s definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 tests not just what we do, but why we do it.

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NKJV) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but **have not love**, I have become **sounding brass or a clanging cymbal**.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (NKJV) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and **understand all mysteries and all knowledge**, and though I **have all faith**, so that I could remove mountains, but **have not love**, I am **nothing**.

1 Corinthians 13:3 (NKJV) And though I **bestow all my goods** to feed the poor, and though I **give my body to be burned**, but **have not love**, it **profits me nothing**.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) For the **word of God** is **living and powerful**, and **sharper** than any two-edged sword, **piercing** even to the **division** of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner** of the **thoughts and intents of the heart**.

Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV) And there is no **creature hidden** from His sight, but all **things are naked and open** to the eyes of Him to whom we **must give account**.

True love, as God defines it, forces us to ask not only, “What am I doing?” but “Why am I doing it?”

Matthew 6:1 (NKJV) “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, **to be seen by them**. Otherwise **you have no reward from your Father** in heaven.

Matthew 6:3 (NKJV) But **when you do a charitable deed**, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 (NKJV) that **your charitable deed may be in secret**; and **your Father who sees in secret** will **Himself reward you openly**.

2. The Fruit of the Spirit Begins in the Heart, Not in Behavior Management

The fruit of the Spirit describes inner transformation, not outward behavior we pretend to have

Galatians 5:16-23 (the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit contrasted)

Mark 7:21-23 (NKJV) For **from within, out of the heart** of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders... All these **evil things come from within and defile** a man.”

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV) **Keep your heart** with all diligence, For **out of it spring the issues** of life.

The fruit of the Spirit is not moral makeup on the flesh; it is the proof that God has changed the center of who we are.

3. Christlike Love Demands Authenticity, Not Religious Performance (*Religious appearance has deception at its root.*)

Matthew 23:27-28 (NKJV) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you are like whitewashed tombs... you outwardly appear righteous** to men, but **inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness**.

Matthew 15:8 (NKJV) ‘These people **draw near to Me with their mouth**, And **honor Me with their lips**, But their **heart is far from Me**.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NKJV) ... **the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance**, but **the Lord looks at the heart**.”

4. Faith and Love Both Flow from the Heart

True faith is a matter of the heart, and it always expresses itself in love

Romans 10:9 (NKJV) that if you **confess with your mouth** the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart** that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 (NKJV) For **with the heart** one believes unto righteousness, and **with the mouth** confession is made unto salvation.

We are not called to mimic His motions, but to mirror His motives

Motives = Love God and Love man. (Matthew 22:37-40)

1. Jesus loved the Father and He loved the world. (John 3:16, 14:31)

2. He only did what pleased the Father. (John 8:29, Hebrews 11:6)

Galatians 5:6 (NKJV) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith working through love**.

“Faith working through love,” meaning true faith shows itself by loving others, not only by rules or outward religion.

1 Timothy 1:5 (NKJV) Now **the purpose** of the commandment is **love from a pure heart**, from a **good conscience**, and from **sincere faith**,

This reminds us that faith and love are closely joined and both must be real in the heart. So when the heart is right with God, both faith and love will flow in a powerful way.

5. Walking by the Spirit Means Heart-Level Surrender, Not Surface Reform

To walk by the Spirit is to surrender our desires and motives to Christ, not just to modify our behavior.

Galatians 5:24-25 (NKJV) And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Our relationship with God must be deeper than "surface reform," where someone only changes habits but keeps the same heart.

Romans 8:13 (NKJV) For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:14 (NKJV) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Real change happens when we depend on the Holy Spirit to put sin to death and to lead us into God's ways (Romans 8:13–14)

James 4:8 (NKJV) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

"Crucifying the flesh" means rejecting the desires that used to rule us. God is after the motives, not just the outward conduct.

6. Jesus and the Attitude of the Heart

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus consistently moves from the outward act to the inward attitude

Matthew 5:21 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

Matthew 5:22 (NKJV) But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus taught that God cares about what is happening in our hearts, not just what we do on the outside.

He said anger and hatred in the heart are serious, even if you never physically hurt someone

Matthew 5:27 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

Matthew 5:28 (NKJV) But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

He also said lust begins in the heart, even if a person tries to look "clean" on the outside

Matthew 6:1 (NKJV) "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:2 (NKJV) Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:3 (NKJV) But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 (NKJV) that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Matthew 6:5 (NKJV) "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:6 (NKJV) But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Jesus warned us not to do good deeds just to be seen and praised by people—He wants us to pray, give, and obey with pure motives and genuine love for God

We will never produce lasting fruit unless we allow the Holy Spirit to help us deal with our heart motives

The renewing of our mind goes much further than learning some scriptures and some Christian language. It must penetrate deep enough to completely change the way we think which will in turn change the way we act.

God is not looking to judge all of our impure actions, motives, desires, and secret thoughts. He has given us access to everything we need to change.

7. How These Truths Guard Us from Being "Painted Graves"

Putting it all together:

- **1 Corinthians 13** love tests whether our service is selfless or self-serving.
- **The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5)** reveals who really rules the heart—flesh or Spirit.
- **Walking by the Spirit** brings our motives and desires to the cross.
- **Jesus' teaching on the heart** shows that God judges from the inside out.
- **Heart-faith** that produces **heart-love** is the opposite of hypocrisy.

Personal Response (Practical Steps from Scripture)

1. **Confess wrong motives**
 - **1 John 1:9** – Agree with God about where your heart has been wrong; trust His cleansing.
2. **Ask God to search and purify your heart**
 - **Psalms 139:23–24** – "Search me, O God..."
 - **Psalms 51:10** – "Create in me a clean heart, O God..."
3. **Endeavor to yield daily to the Spirit**
 - **Galatians 5:16–17, 24–25** – Consciously side with the Spirit against known works of the flesh.
4. **Abide in Christ, not in self-effort**
 - **John 15:4–5** – Stay in Christ through His Word and prayer, trusting Him to change your heart, not just your habits.