KEEPING AN OPEN HEART
Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 6:3-13; 7:2,3; 13:7-9,11
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

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

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE CORINTHIANS’ CLOSED HEART

1. SUPERFICIAL in their thinking - hung up on APPEARANCES. 2 Corinthians 5:12; 10:7
2. Perhaps offended by some of Paul’s personal ways. 2 Corinthians 10:9,10
3. Didn’t like what Paul HAD TO SAY. 2 Corinthians 10:9,10
4. Easily LED; easily influenced by others. 2 Corinthians 11:1-6,13-15,19,20

AN OPEN HEART:

1. Is a TENDER heart.
2. An ACCEPTING heart.
3. A FORGIVING heart.
4. A CARING heart.
5. REACHES OUT.
6. Is EAGER for God’s Word and quick to RESPOND.

A CLOSED HEART:

1. Is a HARDENED heart.
2. IMPAIRS our ability to RECEIVE and assimilate God’s truth.
3. Decreases our capacity to CARE, feel, respond and RELATE as God intends.
4. PUSHES people away.
5. Is a heart ripe for DECEPTION and/or MANIPULATION.
6. Is one of the enemy’s most EFFECTIVE ways of getting us OFF TRACK in our spiritual walk and FREEZING our spiritual growth in its tracks.
RESPONSIVE READING
2 Corinthians 6:3-13; 7:2,3; 13:7-9,11

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:

in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness;

in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;

through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us.

As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also. Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one.

I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you.

Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection.

Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.
RELATED SCRIPTURES

We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. 2 Corinthians 5:12

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 2 Corinthians 5:16

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! 2 Corinthians 10:1

You are looking only on the surface of things. 2 Corinthians 10:7

I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." 2 Corinthians 10:9,10

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. 2 Corinthians 10:12

I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. 2 Corinthians 11:1-6

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. 2 Corinthians 11:19,20

I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! 2 Corinthians 12:11-13