

“Follow Your Heart!”

David Flatt

As Americans, we are taught to follow our hearts. We are to be guided by our feelings. Our emotions instruct us in what we think we most need. We are told that our hearts will always tell us the truth. Regardless of what we have been taught or what others think of us, we should always follow our hearts. Otherwise, we will never realize who we truly are.

This philosophy has been captured in pop culture for many years. For an earlier generation, this message was promoted in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, “The Sound of Music.” Julie Andrews’ character, Maria, struggles to find her identity. One of the songs she sings is “Climb Every Mountain.” The chorus says, *“Climb every mountain. Ford every stream. Follow every rainbow till you find your dream.”*

A more modern example of the philosophy of following your heart is in the 2013 animated movie “Frozen.” Elsa, the main character, is tired of trying to meet everyone’s expectations and concealing who she truly is. But she can’t hold back anymore. She is going to *“Let it go. Turn away. Slam the door. I don’t care what they are going to say...It’s time to see what I can do. To test the limits and break through. No right. No wrong. No rules for me. I’m free.”*

Following our hearts as these lyrics indicate is destructive. The seeds of this philosophy were planted in the Baby Boomer generation. Today, those seeds have fully grown. We are reaping the harvest of division, brokenness, and discord. There is breakdown within every area of society. The family has been redefined, homosexuality has been normalized, gender is being redefined, religious affiliation is in a downward spiral, technology has produced isolation and loneliness, depression is rapidly increasing, mass shootings are a way of life, teenage suicide is at all-time highs, and so it goes.

But, why? Are the distortion, destruction, and death due to rules, norms, and order? Is our societal mess the making of happy homes? Are hard-working fathers and homemaking mothers to blame? Is this the fault of school districts enforcing uniformity and discipline among staff and students? Are churches that preach against sin and show people the Way to a better life and eternal hope to blame?

The devil is the adversary to everything good, just, and holy. He seeks our demise. To accomplish his sinister purposes, he deceives the human heart. He distorts the truth. He persuades people that he is not real. He says that sin is good and satisfying. And when he convinces us to obey him and we are harmed, he says, “Don’t look at me! I can’t help you! You belong to me!”

The devil has effectively deceived millions upon millions that they can have everything they need if they just follow their hearts. Be warned of the danger of this delusion! Consider the some Biblical warnings for our hearts.

Warnings for the Heart

1. Following your own heart is idolatry. The nation of Israel was chosen by God to be the light of the world. Sadly, they often rejected God. In His place, they sought their identity and fulfillment in idols. Their idols were nothing more than a reflection of their warped hearts. In a tumultuous period of their history, the Bible says, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Rather than serve God, like the Israelites, many have chosen to do what is right in their own eyes. Many have rejected God and attempted to assert themselves in His place. Such conceit does not end well. Idolatry is expressed through sin. Sin produces decay and culminates in death. The breakdown of truth in society does not stem from God. He is not the One responsible for our sin-sick society. We are responsible. We must heed the warning of Samuel: “And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty” (1 Sam. 12:21).

2. Don't follow your heart. Follow your God. The Bible warns against following our hearts in the place of God. In the days of Jeremiah, Israel refused to listen to God. Instead, they followed their stubborn and evil hearts (Jer. 11:8). This produced such immorality and injustice within Israel that God poured His cup of wrath on them (Jer. 49:12).

God wants us to follow Him. Like a shepherd, He leads us to everything we need (Psa. 23). God wants us to follow Him through our awareness of who He is. This awareness is called faith. Our belief in Him as our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer will transform our minds and reshape our hearts.

3. Bring your heart to the God who built your heart. When God is not present in our hearts, our hearts will become corrupted. Jeremiah wrote, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds” (Jer. 17:9-10). As the maker of our hearts, only God knows how they are to be properly filled.

There was a time in his life when David followed his heart. He looked upon a woman with lust in his heart. He followed his heart and committed adultery. Then, his heart was filled with fear. Fear in his heart led him to conspire with murder to conceal his adultery. In the aftermath of his adultery and murder, David begged, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10).

God rebuilds our hearts through His Son and the Spirit. This work requires our faithful commitment to properly defining our desires. Rather than impulsively seeking self-gratification, our hearts must become instruments to glorify God.

Conclusion

On the surface, the philosophy of follow your heart sounds promising. This is one of the problems with this philosophy; it is deceitful and superficial. Our hearts cannot be fulfilled or made content through lust and pride. No amount of wrong sex, money, possessions, status, or power can fix our hearts. We need the Creator. We need the Savior. We need the Spirit.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

Proverbs 4:23