

# Engaging the Heart: Understanding the Treasure Within

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## Introduction: Game of Hearts

In the summer fun of vacations and special visits to her grandparents, one day late in the afternoon a little girl heard a familiar sound she had awaited. Her grandfather was finally home. His long day in the mines now seemed brightened by this ray of sunshine that danced on his porch in anticipated joy. She had heard the sounds of his coming home as he turned onto the long gravel driveway at the farm.

Throwing the door open and being the first to meet him on the porch, the game of hearts began. Dancing with feet of anticipation and swirling on the large cement porch, the little girl waited for the routine greeting of exchanged love.

Opening his truck door, her grandpa cheerfully yelled, "Who is the prettiest girl in the world?" Skipping down the path, she confidently yelled back, "Me is, Grandpa! Me is!" Lovingly picking her up with his hard-working arms and now twirling together in the dance, he asked louder, "Who is the prettiest girl in the world?" Answering with giggles and seeming to hear the loving question for the first time, she joyfully said, "Me is, Grandpa. Me is!"

Laughing and with hugs and kisses, he never corrected her poor grammar. His once hard, grim face now softened with smiling eyes and a tender heart of approving love.

Effortlessly, the changing seasons with birthday celebrations advanced the clock and surroundings for this little girl.

It was in Mrs. Ward's first grade class that the children merrily took their seats at their small desks to enter the discovery zone of learning. With stories about a boy and girl with their friendly dog, Spot, the reading corner was her favorite. Songs, instruction, coloring, foundational exercises and life skills made a busy school day. The six-year-old elementary girl ran to school expectantly each morning. New friends and endless activities made the days go by quickly. However, one dreaded moment came each Friday afternoon. During clean-up time, the teacher would lead the first graders in a song about loving friends. At the end of the chorus everyone knew to point to the one they liked. Each and every Friday, the young girl would anticipate the upcoming phrase and move fast to jump under her desk to avoid her admirer's choice.

A little boy, with a name too long to spell that tickled her lips to repeat, had set his heart on her. He stood near her to point her out as his choice love. Her speed and nervous anticipation helped her find a safe place under her desk until the song was over, rejecting his desire. She was not for the choosing—not now at least.

As the years advanced, the young school girl, now college-age, endured the upheavals of

young love, infatuation, changing hormones, influencing peers, and always looking older than her actual age.

The vibrant young lady's strong leadership skills and deliberate heart for God now seemed of little significance as she drove recklessly down the country road, not caring to live. Her flood of tears blinded her view as she drove toward help late one night. The one she had given her heart to had notified her by phone that their dating relationship was over. He was moving on to find new interests. Broken by the shattered pieces of a heart fully given to him, she now entertained new thoughts of ending her life. Never before had these desires entered her youthful heart, as she had always been focused on living life to the fullest. However, no pain had ever penetrated her heart like this one. The unrelenting sorrow now overshadowed her life because of one who had uncaringly discarded her like a used toy in search of a new one to hold.

Anger mounted in her, as she tried to counteract the all encompassing pain. With each throbbing impulse she hated herself for being so vulnerable too fast and too young.

It was only mercy that protected her as she drove at fast speeds, now confused and indecisive between ending her life and finding help to start again. After what seemed like hours, she knocked on the front door of a house. A man appeared at the door, the one whom she once had given her heart to years earlier. She had broken his heart, too, when she willfully looked for affections beyond what he could give her. Now, facing him in tears and returning to his protective love, she fell into the arms of her own father, sobbing. Weeping uncontrollably in the safe haven of his arms, she cried, "He said he doesn't love me anymore."

Innocent, young hearts, along with the most experienced, must embrace discernment and discretion. While anticipating true love you may have to boldly resist unwanted suitors, like the little girl who found refuge under her desk. Choosing to open your heart is as challenging as choosing to guard it. How does one safely engage the heart on life's stage with its many characters? Emotionally stimulating scenes and situations with a heart fully open can be dangerous unless boundaries are set by principles.

Proverbs 4:23 wisely reminds us, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." Have you considered your own heart lately? Who will value it? More important, do you value your own?

Astounding as it may sound, Ecclesiastes 3:11 reveals what your heart is connected to—eternity. Solomon wrote: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."<sup>(1)</sup>

If such a priceless deposit resides within, then who will treasure it?

How will you live—engaging your heart?