

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

The background of the slide is a collage of four quadrants. The top-left quadrant is light blue and shows a stack of papers. The top-right quadrant is light purple and shows a clock. The bottom-left quadrant is light green and shows a stack of papers. The bottom-right quadrant is yellow and shows a clock. The main title is centered in the top half of the slide.

Reflecting on the Life of Fr. Marcos Marcos: Where is My Heart?

Sunday Servants Preparation Class
St. Mark's Cathedral

FOUNDER OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN
NORTH AMERICA

FR. MARCOS MARCOS

“AS SOON AS THE DAYS OF HIS SERVICE WERE COMPLETED,
THAT HE DEPARTED TO HIS OWN HOUSE”

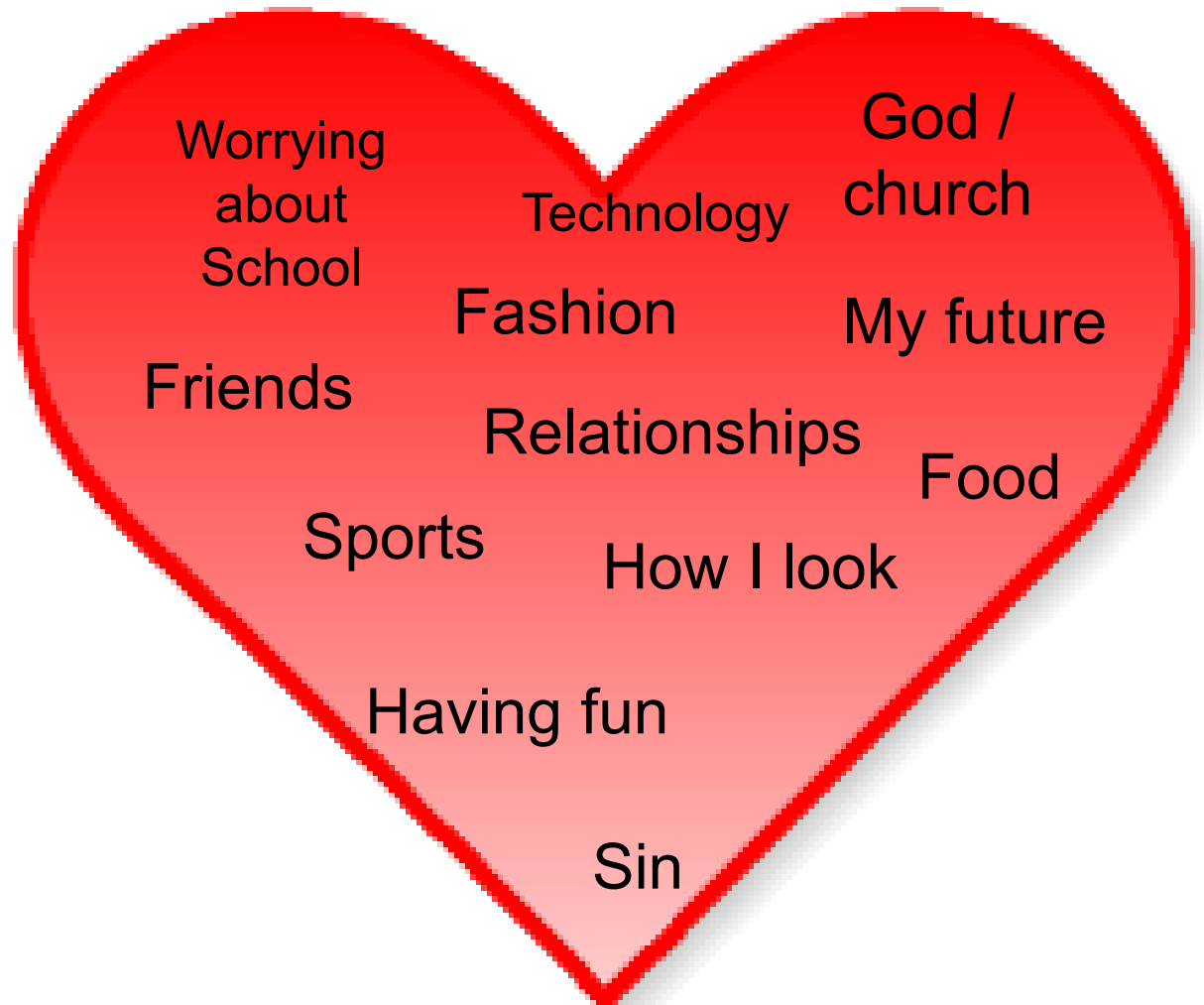
(LK 1:23)

08.21.1929



12.09.2020

What rules your heart?



Worrying
about
School

Technology

God /
church

Fashion

My future

Friends

Relationships

Food

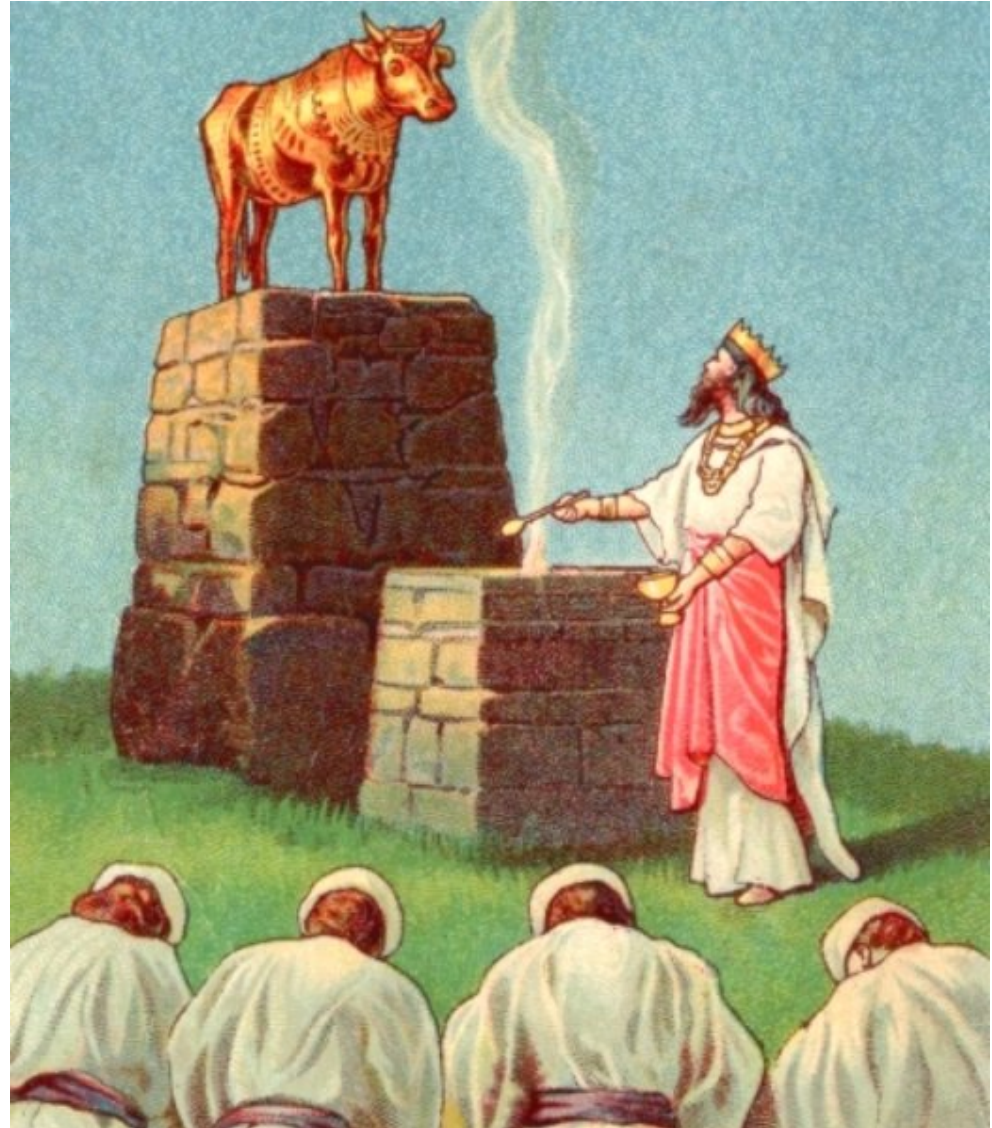
Sports

How I look

Having fun

Sin

What are today's idols?



What are today's distractions?



LUST



FASHION

What rules YOUR heart?



THE IDEAL SITUATION



GOD

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
(Matthew 6:21)

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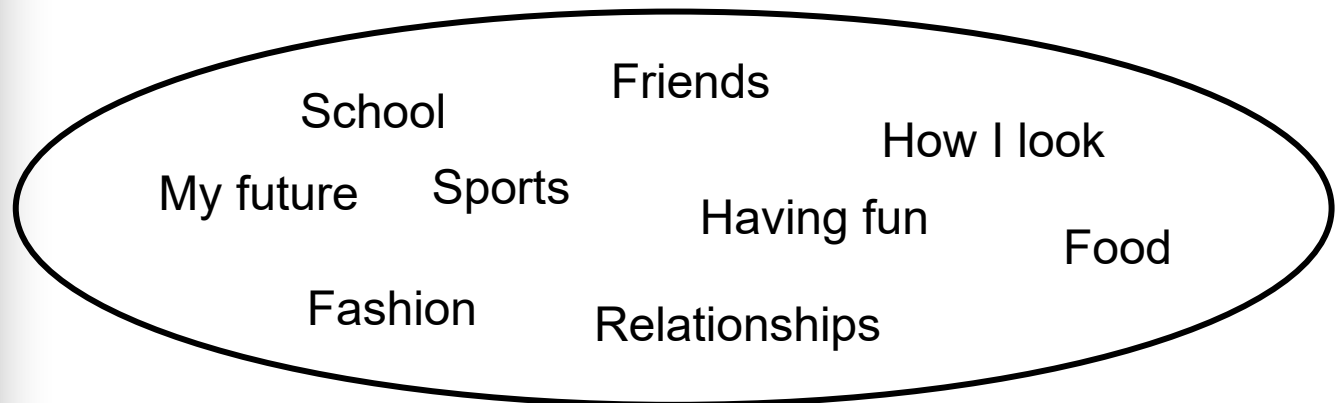
THE IDEAL SITUATION

If your heart looks like this...



But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

God will take care of all of this ...



PRETEND YOU'RE A BIRD...



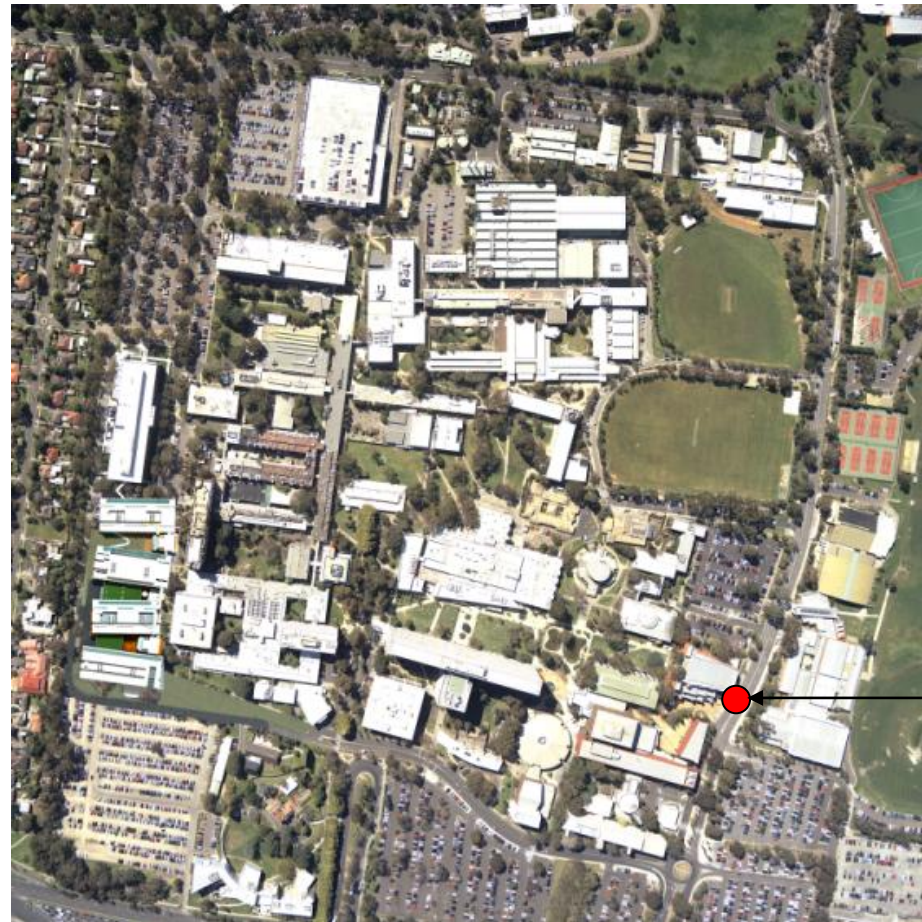
PRETEND YOU'RE A BIRD...

On earth, this truck looks **BIG**...



PRETEND YOU'RE A BIRD...

But in the sky, the truck looks tiny...



Truck is here

LIFE WITH GOD...

- **BIG** worries / troubles on earth are tiny when you're with God
- When we live with God, earthly concerns become less important



LIFE WITH GOD

- In fact, God will give us even more than we expect (or deserve!)
 - “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”
(1Corinthians 2:9)
 - “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”
(Psalm 84:11)



THE IDEAL SITUATION

- From my favourite Psalm:

“Because he has set his love upon Me,
therefore I will deliver him;

I will set him on high, because he has known
My name.

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honour him.

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him
My salvation.”

(Psalm 91:14-16)



Growth of Coptic Orthodox Church in Canada... at least 69 churches!



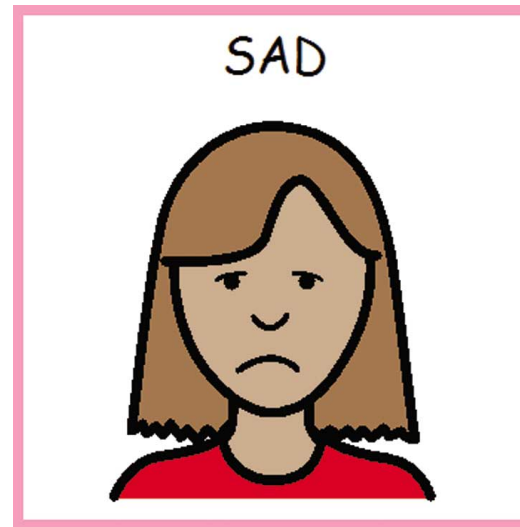
Growth of Coptic Orthodox Church in USA ... at least 200 churches!



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Coptic_Orthodox_churches_in_the_United_States

The Sad Truth...

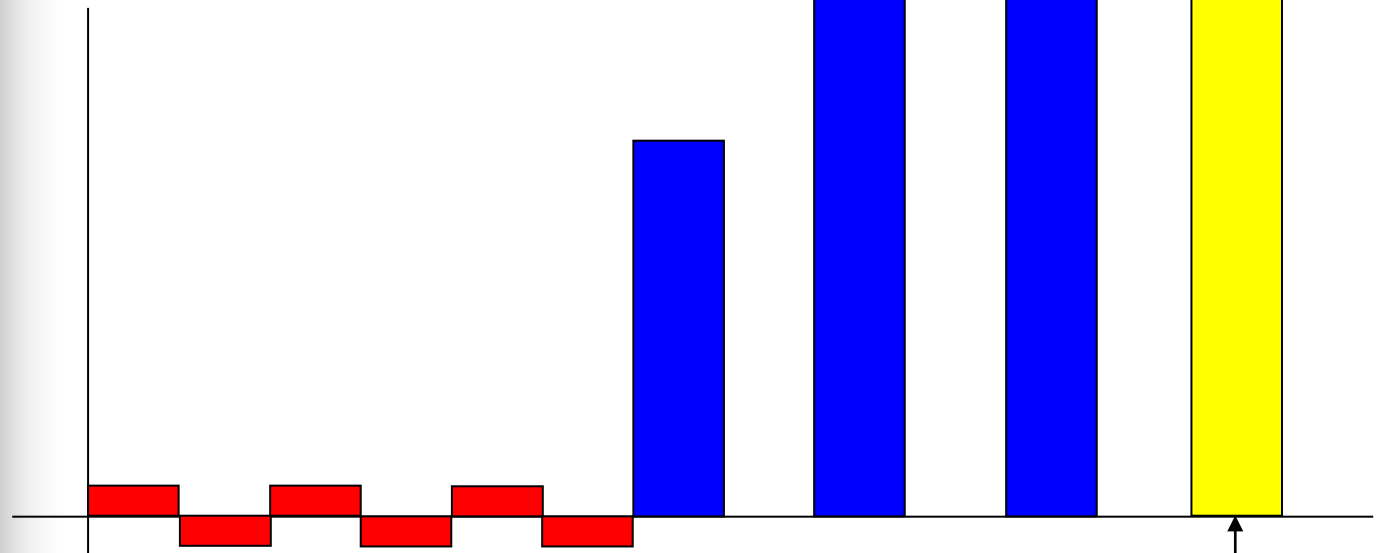
- Unfortunately, we do not allow ourselves to experience the greatness of being with God
 - We allow sin to hold us back





Our Current Situation

GOOD (with God)



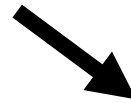
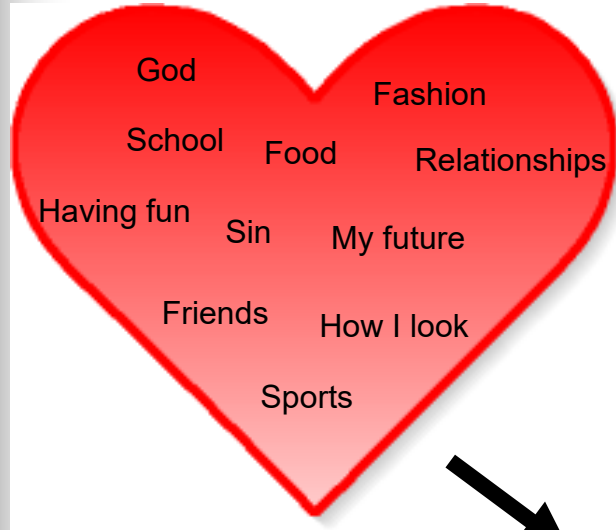
What we're like

The Righteous

Christian Perfection

BAD (away from God)

So how do we fix our hearts?





So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 1: We need to have a clear goal

- We must desire God and His kingdom
 - “One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psalm 27:4)
 - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 1: We need to have a clear goal

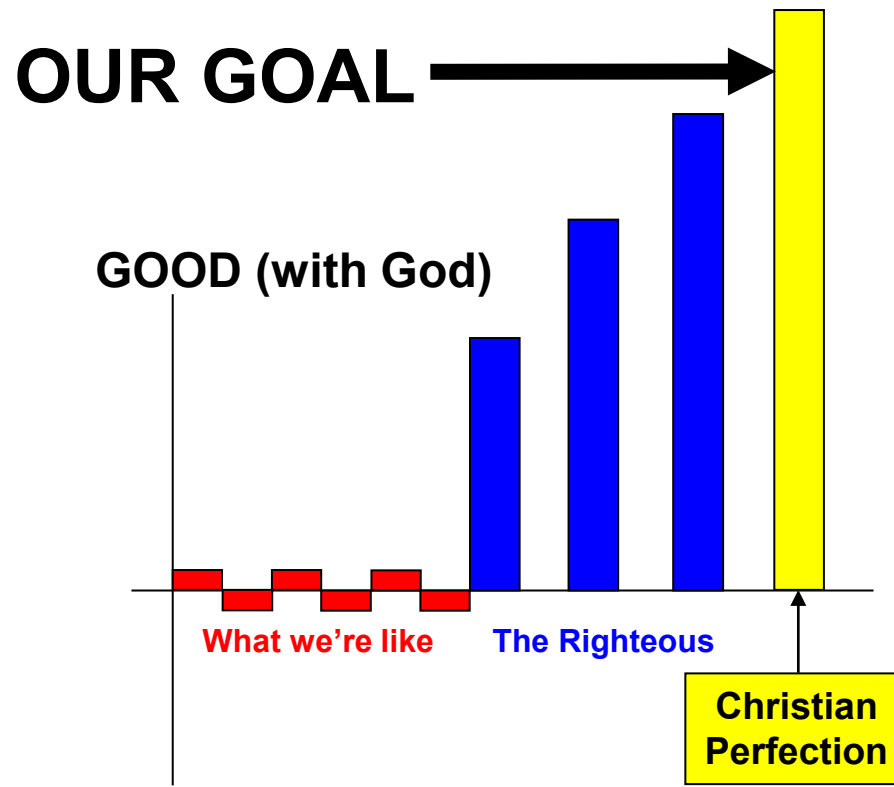
- God must be our #1 goal in all we do
 - Our time directly with God (i.e. praying, reading the Bible) is the most important and favourite part of our day
 - We are happy to read more and more of our Bibles everyday and pray more often
 - We are happy to serve at church
 - Our time on other activities (e.g. at school, with friends, etc.) is used for the glory of God
 - We are hardworking and successful students
 - We are good to our friends, helpful to those who need help

So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 1: We need to have a clear goal

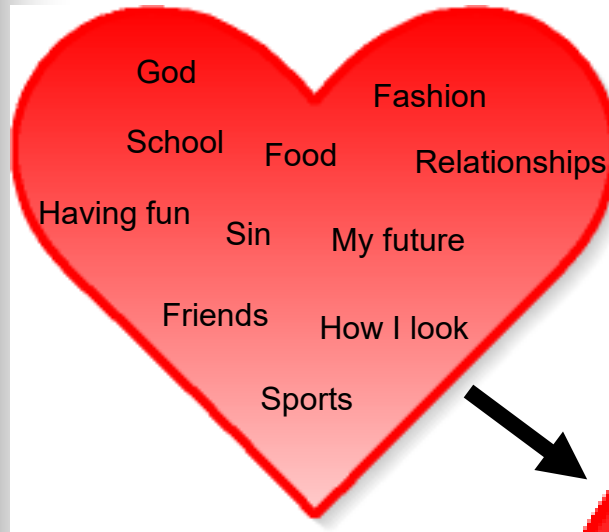
■ Our ultimate goal must be to attain spiritual perfection

- “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 2: We need to remove the aspects of our lives that are holding us back



No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24)



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 2: We need to remove the aspects of our lives that are holding us back

■ **We cannot fully love God and earthly things at the same time**

- “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” (1John 2:15-17)
- “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24)



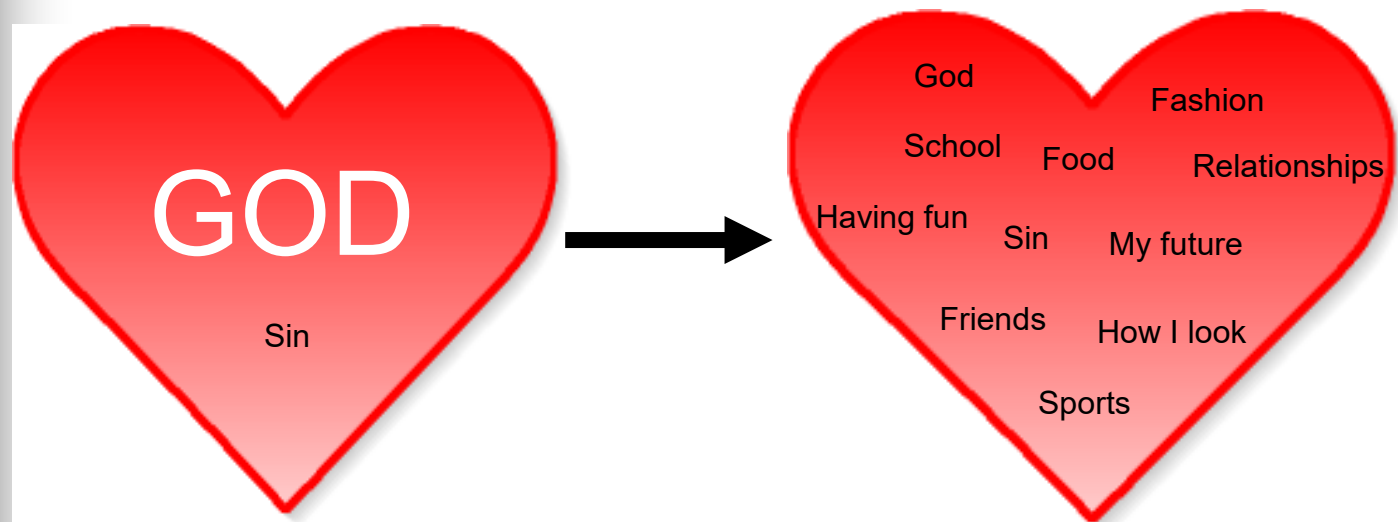
So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 2: We need to remove the aspects of our lives that are holding us back

■ We cannot fully love God and earthly things at the same time

● **Why not???**

- Because the devil will use any opportunity (such as a sin I do not want to stop) to bring a person back to their original state



These can hold us back...



STEP 3: Practical Advice on Developing Your Relationship with God

- You need to have a spiritual mentor
 - You cannot conquer the devil on your own... if you try to do things on your own, you will fail
 - Your father of confession should be your main spiritual mentor
 - LIFE OF REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION
 - Parents and counsellors can also be other mentors



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 4

■ Make it harder to sin

- Make prayer and spiritual reading part of your normal routine... done everyday at the same time
 - After you wake up
 - Before you start studying
- Attend church services regularly and ask God that you do not leave church without a blessing
- Do not go to places or with people/friends that cause you to sin
- Move your computer or TV to a public spot
- Remove apps on your phone that make you stumble



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 5

■ Don't give up...

- The devil will make you feel you're a failure
- The devil will make you feel like it's impossible to succeed
- BUT: "For as often as the righteous man sins, so often does he go on to rise again" (from the Church Fathers)
- I grow from...
 - My mistakes
 - Situations that are not my mistake (e.g. illness, injustice, grief)



So how do we fix our hearts?

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NO PAIN ... NO GAIN



So how do we fix our hearts?

Practical Advice

- Spiritual growth is a very gradual process
 - We progress through tiny baby steps



So how do we fix our hearts?

STEP 6

■ If / when you sin...

- The devil will make you think that you are unworthy to pray.... But:
- Do not let the day pass by without praying to God for forgiveness
 - Sin snowballs & you want to clear any errors immediately
- The most righteous people used sin as a chance to grow closer to God (e.g. St. Moses the Black, David the Prophet & King)



Lessons I Learned from Fr. Marcos

- Life of True Prayer
- Full trust in God
 - God will do great things
- As long as you're doing God's will.... it doesn't matter what others think
- Cheerfulness
- Humility



Life of True Prayer


■ When praying...

- Clear your mind from other things you were thinking about (e.g. read your Bible)
- Talk to God about what matters to you
- Plead & beg to God for help!!!
- Ask for the intercession of a saint who had a similar problem



Lessons I Learned from Fr. Marcos

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- Full trust in God
 - God will do great things



Whatever you ask
for in prayer, believe
that you have
received it

Mark 11:24

Let us see the great things
God will do!



~300
churches
in North
America



Lessons I Learned from Fr. Marcos

- Life of True Prayer
- Full trust in God
 - God will do great things
- As long as you're doing God's will.... it doesn't matter what others think
 - But use feedback to get better
- Cheerfulness
- Humility



Lessons I Learned from Fr. Marcos

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- Cheerfulness
- Humility





Importance of Humility

- But don't be arrogant or proud either when you succeed!
 - The devil will make you feel you're great and that you did things all by yourself
 - All spiritual advancement & success comes from God
 - Pride is what caused Lucifer to fall
 - Pride is what hurts so many people in their spiritual struggles
- What did the demons tell St. Macarius?

Summary

- God has prepared for us a wonderful life on earth and eternal salvation in heaven
 - Sin holds us back from experiencing these
- We need to have God rule our hearts
 - We need to remove the aspects of our lives that are holding us back
- We need to rely on God's grace and the mentorship of our father of confession to grow spiritually
 - We cannot rely on our own abilities
- We need to remain persistent and lead a life of repentance and confession, and a true prayer life



+ To God be the glory forever. Amen. +



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