

Guard Your Heart

A new beginning happens best with wisdom. And if there's anything we should want in times of confusion, it should be wisdom. Other than Jesus, the wisest man ever on earth was Solomon, who offers exactly what we need. Let's revisit the Bible's old wisdom in a new way to give light to a wise path forward.



INTRODUCTION

This week, Pastor Nathan reminded us the importance of guarding our hearts.

STARTER QUESTION

1. What is the condition of your heart right now?

INTO THE WORD

2. During today's sermon, we were told that we must guard our hearts. Why is it so important that we protect our hearts? Consider Proverbs 4:23, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Proverbs 4:14-15, Jeremiah 17:9, Luke 6:45, Psalm 51:10, and 1 Samuel 16:7. Also consider David's betrayal with Bathsheba as a case study for what happens when you do not guard your heart (2 Samuel 11-12).
3. We may take out our frustrations on the people closest to us since we feel most comfortable around them. Read Mark 3:23-25 and 1 John 4:20. What are these verses telling us about living with the people around us?

APPLICATION

4. According to www.biblestudytools.com, the word "heart" appears in the Bible more than 1,000 times and it is the anthropological word that appears most frequently. The word "brain" doesn't appear one time. Why is the heart so important to our physical and spiritual health?
5. For you, what is the best litmus test for how your heart is really doing? What do you do? How do you know if you are doing well or not? Are you able to tell how others close to you are doing?
6. Pastor Nathan mentioned in the sermon that when the pandemic started a lot of us had different reactions such as panic, adjustment, health issues, etc. Some lost their jobs, some lost loved ones, some lost their peace of minds. There has been a lot of political and social unrest as well. At a time where humankind really needs to stick together, there has been more division. What can we do, as followers of Christ, to demonstrate who Christ is and what He stands for?

7. The last verses in Proverbs today talked about being mindful of the path we are on. How do we figure out if we are on the right path, or if we are leading ourselves and others to destruction? If we fall off the correct path, how do we get back on it?

PRAYER

Father God, thank you for bringing us together this week. We thank you for all your blessings, mercy, and grace. We thank you for the things which we do not recognize as blessings. This past year has shown us that good health and strong relationships with friends and family are blessings that we may take for granted until they are not there. We want to thank you for Pastor Nathan's message today. We ask you to help us keep our hearts healthy, both physically and spiritually. We know the heart is essential to life. Help us guard our hearts from outside influences. We ask for your help, guidance, and protection. In Jesus name. Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

In reference to question 2:

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

I looked at a commentary on (<https://www.bibleref.com/Proverbs/4/Proverbs-4-23.html>) and found the following:

To "keep" something, in this sense, means more than simply "to maintain ownership." It refers to maintenance, care, and support. Some translations use the word "guard." A wise person realizes that temptation is real (1 Corinthians 10:13) and takes appropriate precaution. This parallels statements made earlier, where Solomon advises his son to actively avoid evil, and those who practice it (Proverbs 4:14–15).

Scripture places a strong emphasis on the heart as the source of good or evil. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick." Jesus announced: "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

David, Solomon's father, certainly understood how influential the heart is in how we live out our morals and values. Out of the evil of his heart he stole Uriah's wife Bathsheba, committed adultery with her, and then arranged for Uriah's death when he could not hide his crime (2 Samuel 11:2–5, 14–15). However, when he was under heavy conviction about his evil deed, David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). What is hidden in the heart is open to God's eyes. First Samuel 16:7 reminds us that "the LORD sees not as a man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

It is absolutely essential, therefore, to guard the heart.

In reference to question 3:

As a group, discuss how Satan wants to divide groups and isolate individuals to tempt them into certain sins. Our family and close circle of friends can lift us up or tear us apart. Are we allowing them to do good to us, or are we allowing them to tear us down? Are we doing the same to them? If we cannot be in control of ourselves and contribute positively to our friends and family, can we be trusted to do so when it comes to the bigger church? 1 Timothy 3:2-5 talks about that issue.

Another angle to bring up during discussion is asking about Luke 12:51-53. Unity is not always expected as this verse shows, but then we need to have wisdom and use discernment. Are we divided because some are sticking to what God and the Bible ask of us? Or are we letting our hearts run away, chasing garbage, and adding nothing positive to our circles?

In reference to question 5:

For me, a great heart check is to read through, think through, and pray through the fruits of the spirit and match them up with how my life has played out over the last week or month.

Galatians 5:22-23 TPT: *But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit. Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.*

In reference to question 6:

We can demonstrate God's love by showing love and forgiveness to others. **1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 (ERV) says:** *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not selfish, and it cannot be made angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. Love is never happy when others do wrong, but it is always happy with the truth. Love never gives up on people. It never stops trusting, never loses hope, and never quits.*

Also, we can show forgiveness to our fellow man/woman when we feel that they have wronged us. **Refer to Matthew 18:21 – 22:** *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, when someone won't stop doing wrong to me, how many times must I forgive them? Seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, you must forgive them more than seven times. You must continue to forgive them even if they do wrong to you seventy-seven times."*

In reference to question 7:

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a good place to start in the discussion. Are we going to God in prayer and asking about the path we are on? Are we forcing our wills upon situations in life where we need to stop striving and let God show us the way? If we are really wanting to be on the right path, a good starting point is to just ask God about where you are and where you should be. We must be careful of the momentum we've built up on a certain path, we need to be ready to get off it, no matter how long we've been on it.

Consider the sunk cost effect: "The sunk cost effect is the general tendency for people to continue an endeavor, or continue consuming or pursuing an option, if they've invested time or money or some resource in it," says Christopher Olivola, an assistant professor of marketing at Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business and the author of a new paper on the topic published in the journal *Psychological Science*. "That effect becomes a fallacy if it's pushing you to do things that are making you unhappy or worse off."

People keep pushing through when they need to cut their losses. If they keep going on that path, they will incur further loss that could be unrecoverable. Consider instead the benefits of finding God's path for us. Some benefits could be better relationships or finding our calling God has for us. Waking up and knowing you are where God wants you to be in that moment is a huge blessing. The path also implies a journey, so we should also be ready to move on to the next good task God has set up for us, and not become complacent.

Mark 3:23-25: *And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."*

1 John 4:20: *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.*

1 Timothy 3:2-5: *Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle,*

not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

Luke 12:51-53: *Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."*

Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*