



Guard Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23

Study Helps and Application

We had the pleasure of sitting under the teaching of Dr. Wayne Grudem and Randy Alcorn this weekend in our *Clarus* conference. Since Dr. Grudem preached from Proverbs on the “heart,” this is a good time to review what we mean when we are talking about the heart of man. We’ll also take this as an opportunity to make numerous references to notes in the ESV Study Bible--General Editor: Dr. Wayne Grudem.

Try to focus most of your time in Discussion 3 material. The rest is laying groundwork.

Discussion 1: The heart of man. Before we get to the good news, the bad news is important to grasp (so that we see the good news for how great it really is!)

– *Read and discuss the following texts and comments.* [handouts will have this box]

Heart of Man

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:10** "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."

This is often mistaken for “good news.” While it demonstrates God’s character in perfect justice, it is not good news for man. Note the *preceding* verse:

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Man-centered religions and philosophies would have us look “inward” for meaning, guidance, and the answers to our problems. Jesus says this inner man is actually the source of our problems:

^{ESV} **Mark 7:21-23** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

We are *fallen*, but not without hope...

– (Optional/if it comes up:) *What about unregenerate people who do good works?* [It is no surprise that people made in the image of God do good works. The problem is that these “good works” are impure because they come from an impure source and are polluted by impure motives, etc. These works are as “filthy rags” before God who is Holy.]

Discussion 2: The heart we are to guard. Now for some good news!

Jer. 17:9 heart. A metaphor for the human will and emotions (cf. vv. 5–7). deceitful. Tortuous, uneven, and crooked like a bad road. desperately sick. Medically incurable (15:18; 30:12, 15; Job 34:6; Isa. 17:11; Mic. 1:9). who can understand it? A rhetorical question expecting a negative answer. **However, this strongly negative assessment of the human heart is not intended as a description of the heart of a believer under the new covenant, where God promises to write his law on people's hearts** (Jer. 31:33; 32:40; cf. Ezek. 36:26; Rom. 5:5; 6:17; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:21). [ESV Study Bible, Crossway, Note from Jer 17:9-**emphasis added**]

- *Read and discuss the following texts.* [Note God's initiative and how changing (even replacing!) the heart is a work of God ...]

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 31:33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 32:40** I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

^{ESV} **Ezekiel 36:26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

[Is there some disagreement with applying promises to Israel to the Church? Refer to "Who is the Israel of God?" <http://objectivegospel.org/iron/IsraelOfGod.shtml>]

^{ESV} **Romans 5:5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

^{ESV} **Romans 6:17-18** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- *Does this stir you to gratitude for what God has done (is doing) to your heart?*

Discussion 3: Guarding your (*new/free/sprinkled-clean/Law-engraved/God-fearing/flesh-not-stone*) heart.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 4:20** My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.²¹ Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.²² For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.²³ Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.²⁴ Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.²⁵ Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.²⁶ Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

Prov. 4:20–23 The commands in vv. 20–21 all encourage internalizing wisdom. ***Heart in Proverbs regularly refers to the center of one's inner life and orientation to God, from which a person does all thinking, feeling, and choosing.*** Taking words of wisdom into the heart is vital (they are life, v. 22), and wisdom's presence in the heart is worth guarding because out of the heart flow all the thoughts and words and choices of a person's life (from it flow the springs of life, v. 23; cf. Mark 7:21–23; Luke 6:45).[ESV Study Bible Note-***emphasis added***]

[Sensitive to the makeup of your group, it is a good time to ask tough questions.]

- *What is the condition of your own heart [this evening]?*

[Leaders--Lead out in confession and repentance.]

- *In what ways do you continue to pollute your heart?*

[Sensitive to the makeup of your group, it is a good time to ask tough questions... Encourage strongly that men and women have accountability partners. Pornography is rampant not only in our culture, but in our churches--and yes, among women as well as men. Workplace romance temptations--Are you taking those inappropriate thoughts to the foot of the cross?]

- *In what ways can we support one another in guarding our hearts?*

[Remind of how Grudem opened with “above all guarding” ... this is a critically important aspect of the “one anothering” of the Body of Christ. Openness, transparency, courage to confront sin, ... accountability partnering with tough questions... Man up!]

Memory Verse

^{ESV} **Proverbs 4:23** Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Additional Resources

- *Playing for Keeps - The Gravity of Guarding your Heart* by Phil Johnson -- mp3 audio series
<http://www.thegracelifepulpit.com/PJ-CDA22.htm>



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- *Read and discuss the following texts: Jeremiah 31:33;32:40; Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 5:5; Romans 6:17-18; Hebrews 10:22*
- *Does this stir you to gratitude for what God has done (is doing) to your heart?*

Discussion 3: Guarding your (*new/free/sprinkled-clean/Law-engraved/God-fearing/flesh-not-stone*) heart. **Read: Proverbs 4:20-27**

Prov. 4:20–23 The commands in vv. 20–21 all encourage internalizing wisdom. **Heart in Proverbs regularly refers to the center of one's inner life and orientation to God, from which a person does all thinking, feeling, and choosing.** Taking words of wisdom into the heart is vital (they are life, v. 22), and wisdom's presence in the heart is worth guarding because out of the heart flow all the thoughts and words and choices of a person's life (from it flow the springs of life, v. 23; cf. Mark 7:21–23; Luke 6:45). [ESV Study Bible Note—**emphasis added**--Dr. Wayne Grudem, General Editor]

- *What is the condition of your own heart [this evening]?*

- *In what ways do you continue to pollute your heart?*

- *In what ways can we support one another in guarding our hearts?*

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Keep Your Heart with All Vigilance

*Proverbs 4:23--Dr. Wayne Grudem
(taken during sermon... not from Dr. Grudem)*

1. What does it mean to keep your heart?

“above all guarding” or “with all vigilance” -- highest priority thing to guard

Implication: there is something worth guarding... some goodness there

Wait a minute! -- ^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:10** "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."

“I don’t think this refers to a regenerate heart”.

^{ESV} **Romans 5:5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

^{ESV} **Romans 6:17-18** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

“We can’t just follow our hearts” --they are not yet perfect (*will be: 1 John 3:2*)

^{ESV} **James 3:14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ---to believers.

2. Why should you keep your heart?

Our hearts can go astray -- “get out of tune analogy” [musical instruments-- neglect or jarring...]

If you don’t keep your thoughts and desires in check, it could lead to actions you will regret--and affect others around us.

a. The reason from this verse ... because from the heart flow the springs of life (the “outgoings” of life)

^{ESV} **Luke 6:45** 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.

^{ESV} **Mark 7:21-23** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

“When someone cuts you off in traffic and you open your mouth ...” -- Is it to bless or to curse? What is in your heart will be manifested in your words, tone & actions.

“Why do people do evil things?” ^{ESV} **Genesis 6:5** The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

It *begins* when people’s hearts begin to stray...

Charles Hodge--two year study into the slide into theological liberalism:

“Holiness is essential to the correct knowledge of divine things and the great security from error ... Wherever you find vital piety, there you find the doctrines of the fall, of depravity, of regeneration, of atonement, and of the deity of Jesus Christ.” Hodge then exhorted seminary students, “keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life ... Holiness is essential to correct knowledge of divine things, and the great security from error ... When men lose the life of religion, they can believe the most monstrous doctrines, and glory in them.” [David B. Calhoun, Princeton Seminary: Vol.1: Faith and Learning, 1812 - 1868 (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1994, p. 123)]

b. The teaching of the whole Bible on the heart ... The heart is important to God.

Tested Adam & Eve in the garden, ... David “a man after God’s heart” ... failed to guard his heart and sinned. Repented: ^{ESV} **Psalms 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ... Solomon also failed to guard his heart ... ^{ESV} **1 Kings 11:4** For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

^{ESV} **2 Chronicles 16:9** For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

“God is still testing hearts.”

^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 2:4** but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

3. How can you keep your heart?

Exhortation to keep your heart--Implication: you can know about your heart’s condition.

Examine your heart; ask God to reveal your heart. Know what it feels like when your heart is not right/is at peace (discerning the Holy Spirit’s conviction)

Even in ministry work--be aware pushing for your way in the flesh. *Gave example of his discerning God telling him to just shut up...*

[Avail yourself to ...] means of grace--read, study, pray, discuss God's truths

"Don't pollute your heart." (movies, shows, Internet sites, ... *don't go there*)

Conclusion

"Will you keep your heart?" ... life of blessing ... His delight will rest upon you...