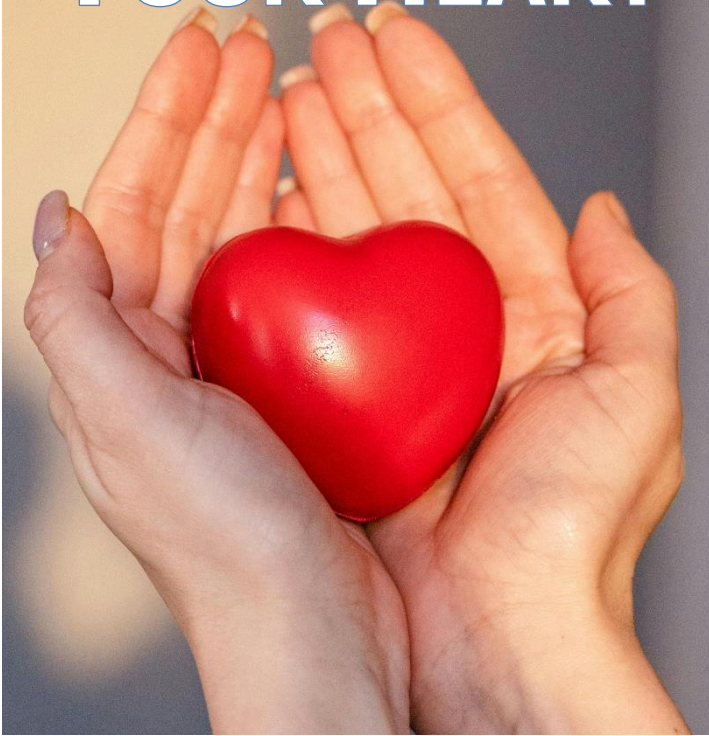


GUARDING YOUR HEART



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‘Guarding Your Heart’
by
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GUARDING YOUR HEART

Do you ever think about guarding your heart? Proverbs 4.23 (NIV) says — *‘Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.’* Because everything we do flows from what is in our heart, we need to be careful about what we allow into it.

Our heart contains our spirit and our soul. When we are born-again, God takes away our old spirit of sin and replaces it with a brand-new perfect spirit which is just like Jesus. He then seals it so it can never be corrupted. (To read more about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet) So when the Bible tells us to guard our heart it doesn’t mean our spirit, but our soul – where we think and feel emotions and react and make decisions.

The Importance of What’s In Our Heart

We all know that things we see and hear and experience can impact our thoughts and emotions for better or for worse. So guarding our heart means being very careful about what we think and feel. You might say that’s impossible, but God’s Word says it is possible, so let’s choose to believe Him. Maybe that’s the first step for you in guarding your heart!

Jesus says in Matthew 15:18-19 — *“the things which proceed out of the mouth come out of the heart.”* What’s in our heart will eventually show in how we talk and what we say. He says in Matthew 12:35 — *“The good man out of his good treasure brings out good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings out evil things.”* Our thoughts and emotions are therefore really significant, so it’s very important that we guard our heart.

The Circle of Living

The quality of the life we lead is largely dependent on what we allow into our heart. What we watch, hear, read and experience affects how we think and feel. And that dictates what's in our heart. Then what's in our heart will come out in how and what we speak. And that will impact how we live. How we live then dictates what we watch, and so the circle goes on. What kind of circle are you living in? Is it a positive one or a negative one?

Obviously things can happen in our lives that we have no control over, but we can choose how we respond to them and therefore how they affect our heart, by how we think and feel about them.

Let's look at the parts of the circle one by one. I'm going to use the words 'good' and 'evil' throughout because they are the words Jesus uses in the verses we've just read. By 'good' I mean anything that builds us up, affirms who we are in Jesus, that adds to our life in a positive way. By 'evil', I mean anything that causes us fear or tries to rob us of our joy or peace, or that undermines relationships, or anything sinful or things that bring negativity into our life in any way. If we truly want to live life in a positive circle which works for us and not against us, then let's be willing to be challenged and make any necessary changes. So here goes!

1. What We Watch, Hear, Read and Experience

What We Watch

Jesus says in Luke 11:34 — *"The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore when your eye is good, your whole body is also full of light; but when it is evil, your body also is full of darkness."* This means that when we are looking at good things, our whole body

is affected by them for good. But when we are looking at evil things, our body is affected by them for evil. If people really believed this was true, they wouldn't watch anything portraying violence, sex, adultery, crime, deception, strife etc. Once again Jesus uses this black and white distinction between good and evil. Do we want our whole bodies to be impacted by evil? Most people would answer, no. So let's decide to guard our heart.

So what about watching the news? It contains so much of the things I've mentioned above. For millennia people got by without knowing what was going on around the world and we can too. Personally, I look at a newspaper to get an overview of what's happening from the headlines and sometimes I read an article. Instead of listening to and watching what someone else wants to tell me and show me, I read what I choose to read. I'm taking control of what enters my heart. As far as possible I've made the decision David made in Psalms 101:3 (KJV)— *'I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.'*

What We Hear

We all know that words are powerful. Proverbs 18:21 says — *'Death and life are in the power of the tongue.'* Words paint pictures which can stay in our minds, whether good or evil. And we all hear words, either spoken directly by others or through media devices. 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) says — *'Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."'* That bad company may be someone you spend time with or it may be programmes you listen to. Once again you might think this verse is harsh and you're strong enough to not let what you hear affect you. But it says, 'Do not be misled.' If you are listening to things that are contrary to God's truth, the more likely you are to be misled and unwittingly open up your heart to evil treasures.

Of course God doesn't want us to completely shun every negative person — they need to hear the Gospel. But what do we listen to? Who do we choose to spend time with? Do they speak positively or negatively? Are they promoting good or evil? Are they putting good treasure in our heart or evil? Colossians 2:8 says — *'Be careful that you don't let anyone rob you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elemental spirits of the world, and not after Christ.'*

It is inevitable that we will hear evil spoken sometimes. So what do we do when it happens? Isaiah 54:17 says — *'you will condemn every tongue that rises against you in judgement.'* Note that we're not to condemn the person, but the negative words they say. If you can't say that you refuse to accept their words in the person's presence, then do so as soon as you can. Don't give negative words time to get in your heart.

We hear our own voice too. Romans 10:17 says — *'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'* This again shows us that what we hear is powerful. When we hear God's Word by speaking it out loud, faith comes in our heart.

What We Read

Everything I've already written applies to what we read as well. We form mental images as we read. Are we forming good or evil images in our heart as a result of the things we choose to read?

What We Do

What sort of things do we choose to do? What activities are we involved in? Do they build us up positively or do they pull us down in some way? Do they produce good thoughts and emotions or evil ones?

2. What and How We Think

Our thoughts are fed by what we watch, hear, read and do. And what we think settles into our heart. Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) says — *‘For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.’* Our thoughts impact the kind of person we are. It is when we look at our thoughts honestly, that we can assess what we are truly like. Colossians 3:2 says — *‘Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth.’*

Here’s a verse to help you decide what to focus your thoughts on. Philippians 4:8 says — *‘Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report: if there is any virtue and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.’*

3. What and How We Speak

What we think in our heart will eventually come out of our mouth. Proverbs 16:23-24 gives us a positive example — *‘The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. ²⁴Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.’* If we have God’s wisdom in our heart, we will talk about good things. We know there is power in our words and this verse tells us that speaking pleasant words even impacts our health. What we speak ultimately directs our lives.

The other extreme is in Proverbs 13:3 says — *‘One who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.’* This person just lets anything and everything come out of their mouth. The end result is ruin.

To guard our heart, we need to guard what we say. Proverbs 13:3 starts with — *‘He who guards his mouth guards his soul.’*

4. How We Live

What is in our heart will ultimately direct how we live. The Bible so often tells us to live by the Spirit which is according to God's Word. But if we don't guard our heart, we're not going to be able to do it. Remember, Jesus says in Matthew 12:35 — *"The good man out of his good treasure brings out good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings out evil things."*

From time to time we all find ourselves in situations that have the potential to affect us negatively. If we have God's Word in our heart, then His wisdom will tell us what to do. Again, if God is calling us to take the Gospel into a particular situation, then we can trust Him to guide us. But unless God is directing us, it's important not to walk into negative circumstances knowingly or to stay in them when we find ourselves in the middle of them.

How to Get the Evil out

I've said a lot about not letting 'evil' treasure into our heart, but none of us have done everything perfectly and all of us have allowed negative stuff to come in at some point. It can be easy for our thoughts to spiral off into self-condemnation, fear, anger, bitterness, or onto unhealthy images. So what do we do about it when it's already in our heart?

2 Corinthians 10:5 says we are to be actively — *'throwing down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'* We can't do this by sheer will power. The more we try not to think those thoughts, the more we are actually focusing on them. We cast them down by turning away from them and replacing them with thoughts that line up with

God's truth in Jesus. It's not always easy, but the more we do it, the easier it becomes, and the sooner we recognise when we're thinking something 'evil', the easier it is to cast those thoughts down. And when you fail, don't condemn yourself and give up. That's putting evil in your heart. Just turn back to Jesus and go forward again. He is on your side and He will help you.

In John 8:31-32 Jesus says to the people who had believed Him — *"If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. ³²You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* The answer to everything we need is in God's Word. If we turn our focus away from the 'evil' we've allowed into our heart and fix it on the truth in the Bible, seeking to understand it and believing it and writing it on our heart, then it will eventually push the 'evil' out and set us free. That's good news.

How to Put Good Treasure in Your Heart

So how do you write the truth of God on your heart as Proverbs 7:3 tells us to — *'Write them (God's words) on the tablet of your heart.'* We need a writing implement and Psalms 45:1 tells us that — *'My tongue is like the pen of a skilful writer.'* We've already seen how powerful spoken words are. So speak God's Word out loud. Use your tongue to write the truth on your heart and you will be storing good treasure in it.

Romans 12:2 is such a hugely significant verse — *'Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.'* If we conform ourselves to this world or allow others to conform us to it, then we are putting 'evil' treasure in our heart. Instead, let's be transformed to be more and more like Jesus by renewing the way we think and

what we think to line up with the truth of God's Word. Then we will be in tune with God and understand more and more of His will for us.

Guard Your Heart

To a much bigger extent than we realise, our future is determined by what's in our heart. Let's decide to guard our heart from the evil and take in the good. Proverbs 4:22 says — *'My son, attend to my words. Turn your ear to my sayings. ²¹Let them not depart from your eyes. Keep them in the centre of your heart. ²²For they are life to those who find them, and health to their whole body.'*

Being Born-Again

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says — *'If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart — "Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour."

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you'll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

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What we watch, hear, read and experience
affects our thoughts and feelings
and they eventually come out in what we say.
And what we say impacts the path of our life,
which in turn directs what we do.
Choose what to allow into your heart
and live in a positive circle
instead of a negative one.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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