

GUARD ONE ANOTHER'S HEART

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According to *Pew Research Center*, out of the professed Christians who don't go often go to church, 37% say, "I practice my faith in other ways."

Someone said: You can't do two things alone: Marriage and living the Christian life.

Two facts we have understood:

- The Christian life is hard due to trials and temptations.
- Our hearts are prone to wander away from the Lord.

So, what's the antidote (Dual Responsibility):

1. Guard your heart (Heb. 3:7-12)
 2. Guard one another's heart
- ❖ **Hebrews 3:13**, But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," **that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

1. THE NATURE OF SIN

- **Hardens the heart**
 - no sense of the conviction of sin

Remember: When you draw closer to the heart of the holy God, you will be horrified at the wretchedness of your sinful heart and live every day confessing your sins and finding comfort at the cross of Christ.

- no obedient response to God's voice (word)
 - Israelites in the wilderness reached this pathetic state.
- **Deceives the heart**
 - **What is deception?** Phishing: "'Private, confidential information, such as your CVV, passwords, OTP, PIN and card number should never be shared with anyone over call or SMS," caution Banks.
 - **C S Lewis makes an interesting point:** "Nothing can deceive unless it bears a plausible resemblance to reality."
 - Anything deceiving is not obviously evil. It looks good in appearance while evil lurks behind.

Features of deception: [appearance, not in reality]

- ❖ **Genesis 3:6**, So when the woman saw that the tree was **GOOD [right]** for food, and that it was a **DELIGHT [pleasing]** to the eyes, and that the tree was to be **DESIRED [wanting to achieve]** to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate **[HARDENNESS OF HEART]**, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate **[CONTAGIOUS]**.

We live in an atmosphere of deception:

- **Satan** is the deceiver (Gen. 3:13)
- The **world is** deceptive (Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8)
- **Sin** is deceptive (Heb. 13:3)
- Our own **heart** is deceitful:
- ❖ **Jeremiah 17:9**, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Fact: The only absolute truth is God and His Word.

How does sin deceive?

- If God is good, why do you suffer? What’s the point of praying and having faith in God?
- The Holy Bible is not practical and relevant to life. You direct your own life and live a religious life.
- Your heart is not prone to wander. You are strong.
- God cannot love you and accept you because of your sins.
- Your spouse does not satisfy you. It’s okay to watch porn and masturbate.
- Your parents are choking your freedom by restricting it. Rebel and indulge.
- Your family is more important than church. The church is more important than family.
- Religious experiences with no reverence and obedience to God’s Word.
- If you are offended by people, don’t confront them; just ignore them and leave the church. [Spiritualize, we prayed about it]
- Why should you practice accountability in the church? You are directly accountable to God and do not need church.

Caution: You can’t see the evil by yourself. We are prone to blindness to our flaws.

So, what’s the antidote: Church is God’s blood-bought gift to us.

2. THE NECESSITY TO EXHORT ONE ANOTHER

Hebrews 3:13, But **exhort one another** every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Exhort (Parakaleo) includes warning, correction, comfort, and encouragement [WITH LOVE AND HUMILITY, NOT WITH CRITICAL, BELITTLING ATTITUDE].

Note: The author of Hebrews is doing what he is exhorting here—Exhortation.

Peter O Brien: The author believes that an important remedy to the danger of a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the Living God is mutual admonition.

Who should do the exhortation? Only pastors/elders? ONE ANOTHER. Believers, including pastors.

Deception: It’s not your job as a believer.

Church covenant confession: We will hold one another accountable in **Christian love**, and submit ourselves to both the encouragement and correction of our fellow believers so that we would not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Caution: Fellowship with people who help you grow in sanctification. Be cautious of people who are grumbling, gossiping, bitter...for they will have a bad impact on you unless you are in a position to impact them without being impacted by their attitude.

Disposition: We must carry a welcoming and humble attitude for the practice of mutual exhortation. This cannot be possible if we are—self-justifying, over-sensitive, get upset, silently avoid, and aggressively react.

John Piper: God has appointed a means by which he will enable us to hold our confidence firm to the end. It is this: **Develop the kind of Christian relationships in which you help each other hold fast to the promises of God and escape the deceitfulness of sin.** Exhort one another day in and day out to stand fast and put on the whole armor of God.

How does exhorting one another take place practically in the local church?

1. **Preaching of God’s Word** (don’t miss the opportunities to hear God’s Word: church gathering, men’s & women’s gathering, bible studies, seminars)
 - Consider what’s happening whenever we come together & listen to the WOG?

Illustration: A pastor went to visit a man who had been absent from church for some time. He arrived at the house of his wayward parishioner and found him sitting by a fire of glowing coals. The man fully expected his pastor to rebuke him for his tardy attendance at services. But the pastor, not saying a word, drew a chair up alongside the fireplace where the man was sitting, peering into the fire. With tongs,

the pastor reached into the fire and took one of the red-hot glowing coals and placed it by itself on the hearth. The coal quickly began to lose its glow; a few minutes longer and it was black. The man smiled and looked into the face of his pastor, who hadn't uttered a word, and said, "I'll see you at church next week."

2. **Accountability** (formal or informal)

In his book, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, **Bill Hull** writes: "To believe you can make disciples or develop true maturity in others without some form of accountability is like believing that you can raise children without discipline, run a company without rules, or lead an army without authority. Accountability is to the Great Commission what tracks are to a train."

3. **Intentional Small Groups** (some in the church are doing this)

Dave Ramsey, *writer and speaker*: Every Wednesday morning for the past 14 years, unless I'm out of town, I sit at a conference room table at 7 a.m. with 12 of my closest friends. We call it our "Eagles Group" and spend about 90 minutes investing in one another. We talk about our struggles together. We study Scripture together. We read books together. Basically, we've done life together for more than a decade.

4. **Personal Time**

- ❖ **Proverbs 27:17**, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another".
[WHO IS THE IRON OF YOUR LIFE? TO WHOM ARE YOU AN IRON?]

Charles Swindoll: When was the last time you did that for someone . . . or allowed someone to do that for you? This is more than simply making an encouraging phone call or sending a friendly email. It involves spending time with one another, life-on-life—the kind of fellowship one finds in a close-knit church community. You get to know the struggles and temptations of others while they get to know yours. Only then can you begin to exhort and encourage one another in this way.

- Make use of the fellowship meals to know and encourage one another.
- Make use of hospitality to know and encourage one another.
- Make use of personal meetings anytime to know and encourage one another.

Concern: The lack of encouraging one another in the church today is evidence of their lack of personal walk with God.

- The more you spend time with God, the more fruitful your time will be with people.
- The more you talk to God, the more meaningful your talk will be with people.

- The more you are filled with God's Word, the more you fill people with encouragement.

5. Intentionally Seek Help

My mentor's advice: The devil attacks powerfully in secrecy.

- If you are discouraged and doubting God's goodness, pray and seek help.
- If you do not have good personal devotions, pray and seek help.
- If you are falling into any sin, like porn or other addictions, pray and seek help.
- If your family life is falling apart, pray and seek help.
- If you are having problems in the church, pray and seek help.

Two deceptions of the enemy:

1. One of the tactics of the enemy is to gradually take you away from the life of church so that you can become his prey. This he does either by tempting you prioritise other things over the church or by showing the weaknesses of the church and discouraging you from participating in it.
 - People who are inactive in the church neglect to receive and give God's encouragement and finally fall away.
2. Another tactic of the enemy is to let us often spend time together but tempt us to chat and have fun with no room for mutual exhortation.

Caution about gossip and defiling the community: Hebrews 12:15, "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."

3. THE FREQUENCY OF EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER

Hebrews 3:13, But exhort one another **every day, as long as it is called "today,"** that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25, And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and **all the more [meeting/encouraging]** as you see the Day drawing near.

Every day: David L. Allen in his exegetical commentary of Hebrews, notes, "This statement and 10:25 may indicate that the readers met together daily."

Kent Hughes: We are to encourage each other daily, not just on the first day of the week. [Sadly, people don't even encourage each other on the first day of the week].

As long as it is called “today”: Previously, the author said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion” (**Heb. 3:7-8**).

David L Allen: The clause "as long as it is called Today" means that encouragement is to continue as long as "Today" lasts... a sense of urgency is indicated.

- **Imagine** the believers gathering only once a week [**too much if it is more than once a week**] for a short time [**too long if it is more than 1^{1/2} or 2 hours**]. What meaningful, encouraging relationships do we build? Much worse, they don't even connect with one another throughout the week.

Matthew Henry: If Christians do not exhort one another daily, they will be in danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

How long must we guard ours and each other's hearts: Hebrews 3:14, For we have come to share in Christ (heavenly calling), if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end (persevere till either before death or Christ's return).

God's Assurance: Preservation (**John 10:28**, My sheep will never perish)

Man's Responsibility: Perseverance (Guard your Heart and One Another's Heart)

CHURCH IS A SANCTIFYING COMMUNITY, NOT A MERE SERVICE TO

ATTEND: God gave you the church to GUARD YOUR HEART IN CHRIST. You must be committed to the church to GUARD YOUR HEART IN CHRIST. You must practice mutual encouragement to GUARD EACH OTHER'S HEART IN CHRIST.

Christian Journey: Happy exodus—Faith is tested—Guard one's and one another's heart—Christian maturity—Eternal Glorification.