

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study last Sunday morning, I mentioned that I want to do a couple takeaways from our study of Genesis 3.
2. In Genesis 3, we saw the fall of Adam and Eve as well as the salvation of Adam and Eve.
3. So now they are banished from the garden of Eden, having now been saved from their sin, now what?
4. The first answer to “now what” was a look at Hebrews 12:14 where the writer called on believers to “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”
5. In other words, they were to now pursue holiness and just as you and I are to pursue it.
6. This morning I want to talk about how you do that.
7. Last week I mentioned 3 problems.

8. Today I want to look at the solution.
9. To do that I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles this morning to Proverbs chapter 4.
10. Tucked away in the middle of verses 20-27 is a verse that talks about guarding your heart.
11. This is essential for Adam and Eve now they are fallen creatures.
12. Even though they are saved now from God's wrath and by His grace, they need to guard the very source of their lives.
13. We hear many times people will say you need to trust your heart.
14. I cannot find that in Scripture, but what I do find is this exhortation to guard your hearts.
15. Listen to what Solomon writes in verses 20-27.
16. Proverbs 4:20-27 (NKJV) My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 For they are life to those who find them, And

health to all their flesh. 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

17. If you'll notice in verse 20 that this is the instruction of a father to his son.
18. You see this phrase "my son" 23 times in the entire book but it dominates the first 8 chapters.
19. Specifically speaking this is Solomon exhorting his son to godly character and godly conduct.
20. Solomon...penned chapters 1 to 29 of Proverbs. A man named Agur wrote chapter thirty. King Lemuel wrote chapter thirty-one.¹
21. Now Solomon implores various terms for the body: v.20 "ear", v.21 "eyes", and "heart", v.24 "mouth", v.25 "eyelids", v.26 "feet"

¹ <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/book-of-proverbs-overview.html>

22. The eyes are to stay fixed on right teaching (vv. 21, 25) as the feet are to stay in the right path (vv. 26–27). The mouth and lips must shun using twisted words (v. 24). Above all, the heart must be guarded by sound doctrine (vv. 21, 23). If the son listens to his father, the whole body will be healthy (v. 22).²
23. But from all of these terms, he says only one “springs the issues of life” (v.23) and that is the “heart.”
24. So whatever the heart is, the issues of life come from it. The heart is the source.
25. Jesus said in Matthew 15:19-20 (NKJV) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”
26. Each thing that Jesus lists are “issues” of the depraved heart.
27. Jeremiah added that the heart is “deceitful” and “desperately wicked” in Jeremiah 17:9.

² Garrett, Duane A. [Proverbs. Ecclesiastes. Song of Songs](#). Vol. 14. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993. Print. The New American Commentary.

28. The heart is not the physical organ that pumps blood throughout your body.
29. This is much more.
30. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
31. Your physical heart cannot love anybody but the inner person can.
32. This verse is talking about loving God with all your being.
33. Looking back at our passage in Proverbs 4, the Hebrew word for “heart” is leb and it refers to inner man, mind, will, and emotions.³
34. It includes your inclination, disposition; determination, courage; will, intention; attention, consideration, reason.⁴
35. Leb and its synonym lebab occurs 860 times in the OT.

³ Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs. [Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon](#) 1977 : 524. Print.

⁴ [The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible](#) 2017 : n. pag. Print.

36. It first appears in Genesis 6:5 to speak of man's evil imaginations and thoughts.
37. It occurs in the next verse (v.6) to speak of God being grieved in His heart or His being or disposition.
38. It is used in Deut.30:14 and 1 Sam.16:7 of the inner man and in Gen.17:17 of man himself or his personality.
39. The seat of desire, inclination or will can be indicated by the heart.
40. So as I said the "heart" encompasses the entire person.
41. Now we are also told to avoid a double heart (Ps. 12:2), a hard heart (Prov. 28:14), a proud heart (21:4), an unbelieving heart (Heb. 3:12), a cold heart (Matt. 24:12), and an unclean heart (Ps. 51:10).⁵
42. Whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see that's why we need to guard it.
43. So it's important that we guard it at every point.
44. Verse 20 starts with the ears.

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W. [*Be Skillful*](#). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996. Print. "Be" Commentary Series.

LESSON

I. Guard What You Hear (vv.20-23)

“My Son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.”

The first step in guarding your heart is to...

A. Listen to Your Earthly Father (v.20)

1. This is a theme in Proverbs

- a) “My son” occurs 11 times in Proverbs as instruction from a father to a son
(Prov. 1:8, 10; 2:1; 3:1; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1; 23:15; 24:13; 27:11)
- b) In a few of his exhortations to his son, he calls him to listen to his words:
 - (1) He exhorts him on how to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God

Proverbs 2:1-5 (NKJV) 1 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my

commands within you, 2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

(2) He warns him about the immoral woman

Proverbs 5:1-4 (NKJV) My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, 2 That you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge. 3 For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; 4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

(3) He warns him about co-signing on loans

Proverbs 6:1-5 (NKJV) My son, if you become surety for your friend, If you have shaken hands in pledge for a

stranger, 2 You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth. 3 So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; for you have come into the hand of your friend: go and humble yourself; plead with your friend. 4 Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids. 5 Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

2. We are to honor our parents (Ex.20:12)

3. We are to “obey” our parents (Col.3:20)

It's clear from verse 22 that the Holy Spirit is referring to more than listening to your earthly father. He wants you to...

B. Listen to Your Heavenly Father (v.20)

1. Give attention to His words

“Attention” (Heb.qsb) (imperative) means “to listen attentively, to pay attention, to heed

His “words” are also described as “sayings”

2. Listen to His sayings

“Incline your ear to my sayings”

- a) Psalms 78:1 (NKJV) Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- b) Matthew 17:1-5 (God says “Hear Him!”)
- c) Ephesians 5:6-12 (NKJV) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

To guard your ears you have to discriminate between truth and error.

To do that your focus has to be on one thing: truth

d) Philippians 4:8 (NKJV) Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, 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 praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

(1) The Bible, which is God's Word, is said to be true

(a) Jesus said in John 17:17, "Your Word is truth."

(b) The psalmist uttered these same words when he said in Ps.119:142, "Your law is truth."

(c) In verse 151 he said, "All your commandments are truth."

- (d) In verse 160 he continued by saying, “The entirety of Your Word is truth. And everyone of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”
 - (e) Since it is the truth it is also perfect. Ps.19:7 says, “The Law of the Lord is perfect.”
- (2) Thinking on **whatever is true** means reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God. The remaining seven virtuous categories of thought are all based on the truth of God’s Word. All of them are ways to view the truths of Scripture.⁶
- (3) What is true is found in God (2 Tim. 2:25), in Christ (Eph. 4:20, 21), in the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and in God’s Word (John 17:17).⁷
- (4) You do not have to look very closely to find the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 8.

⁶ MacArthur, John F., Jr. [Philippians](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 2001. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

⁷ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

Everything that is **true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report**, virtuous, and **praiseworthy** is found in Him.⁸

3. Do not let them depart from your eyes (v.21)

Don't close your ears to truth nor look away.
Keep your eyes fixed on them.

- a) Proverbs 3:21 (NKJV) My son, let them not depart from your eyes—keep sound wisdom and discretion.

- b) Proverbs 7:1-5 (NKJV) My son, keep my words, And treasure my commands within you. 2 Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye. 3 Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” And call understanding your nearest kin, 5 That they may keep you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words.

4. God's words are life (v.22)

⁸ MacDonald, William. [*Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

“For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.”

1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV) having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.

Not only do you need to guard what you hear but you also need to...

II. Guard What You Say (v.24)

“Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you.”

Proverbs 21:23 (NKJV) Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

A. Put Away a Deceitful Mouth (v.24a)

1. Whatever is in the heart will ultimately come out of the mouth (Matt. 12:33–34)
2. We must be careful to have “sound speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8), speech that’s

gracious and “seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6, NKJV).⁹

3. It’s a worthless person who, according to Proverbs 6:12-14, walks with a perverse mouth; 13 He winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers; 14 Perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord.
4. Proverbs 11:9 says “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor....”
5. Proverbs 15:2 says “...the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”
6. This is all the more why we need to guard our tongue from evil and speak truth

B. Put Away Perverse Lips (v.24b)

1. Proverbs 17:4 (NKJV) An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.
2. Proverbs 19:1 (NKJV) Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W. [Be Skillful](#). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996. Print. “Be” Commentary Series.

his lips, and is a fool.

3. Proverbs 12:8 (NKJV) A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.
4. Proverbs 15:4 (NKJV) A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

III. Guard What You See (v.25)

Eyes and **eyelids** that **look straight ahead** suggest a walk with singleness of purpose, one that does not turn aside for sin or for anything that is unworthy.¹⁰

A. Look Straight Ahead (v.25)

1. Keeping the eyes straight on the path of wisdom is the responsibility of the one who trusts the Lord to make the path straight (3:6).¹¹
2. So don't look to anything else - Proverbs 23:4-5 (NKJV) Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! 5 Will you set

¹⁰ MacDonald, William. [Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

¹¹ Sproul, R. C., ed. [The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version \(2015 Edition\)](#). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015. Print.

your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

B. Do Not Turn to the Left or Right (v.26)

All along the highway, **to the right** and **to the left**, there are side streets and alleys which lead to the haunts of sin. “Let’s be true to Jesus, though a thousand voices from the world may call.”¹²

So in verse 26, the idea is that one should not be distracted from the way of wisdom (v. 25).¹³

1. While at Mount Sinai, God told Moses to say to Israel in Deuteronomy 5:32 (NKJV) “Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”
2. Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 28:14 (NKJV) So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

¹² MacDonald, William. [Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

¹³ Garrett, Duane A. [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#). Vol. 14. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993. Print. The New American Commentary.

3. Joshua told Israel the same thing in Joshua 23:6 (NKJV) Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left.

IV. Guard Where You Go (vv.26-27)

A. Ponder Your Path (v.26)

“Weigh your conduct as in a balance; before acting, consider the consequences and nature of the act.”¹⁴

“Ponder” literally means “to make level,” and so some say “Make a level path for your feet,” meaning “be careful as you go.”¹⁵

1. Psalms 119:59 (NKJV) I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.
2. Ephesians 5:15-17 (NKJV) See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁴ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. [Proverbs](#). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909. Print. The Pulpit Commentary.

¹⁵ Reyburn, William David, and Euan McG. Fry. [A Handbook on Proverbs](#). New York: United Bible Societies, 2000. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

3. Verse 26 is saying to remove every obstacle which may impede or render insecure the way of moral life, and thus avoid every false step.¹⁶

B. Remove Your Foot from Evil (v.27)

In ver. 25, the gaze is to be concentrated. So here the feet are not to deflect nor turn aside to byways.

Nothing is to be permitted to draw one off from the right way, neither adversity, nor prosperity, nor anything which can possess the power of temptation (Bayne and Wardlaw).¹⁷

1. Proverbs 16:17 (NKJV) The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul.
2. Romans 12:9 (NKJV) Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

¹⁶ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. [Proverbs](#). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909. Print. The Pulpit Commentary.

¹⁷ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. [Proverbs](#). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909. Print. The Pulpit Commentary.

CONCLUSION

1. Are you guarding what you hear?
2. Are you guarding what you say?
3. What about what you see or where you go?
4. If not, you're not guarding your heart.
5. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov.4:23).
6. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."
7. Paul said we are to "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5, NKJV).
8. The Lord is weighing our ways (Prov. 5:21) and our hearts (21:2), as well as our actions (1 Sam. 2:3), and we had better do the same.¹⁸
9. Do you know Jesus this morning?
10. Is He your Lord and Master and Savior?

¹⁸ Wiersbe, Warren W. [Be Skillful](#). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996. Print. "Be" Commentary Series.

11. You can enter into a relationship with Him right now by turning from your sin and surrendering your life to Him.

12. Let's pray.