

# SERMON GUIDE

## Get Wisdom: Guarding Your Heart

### Proverbs 4:20-27



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#### **SERMON NOTES**

All of us here have either entrusted someone with something extremely personal & valuable and asked them to watch it, keep it, guard it, or, someone has entrusted us with something of theirs that is valuable and asked us to watch it, keep it, guard it. I remember 9 years ago when I purchased my wife's engagement ring. I didn't just throw it on my bed or leave it out in the open, I went to my mother's room and asked if I could keep it in her chestnut drawer so it would be safe. I didn't want the ring to be exposed or vulnerable for Nicole to find it while I was with her so my request to my mother was this: guard it, keep it safe, watch over it until it was time to propose.

Side note, maybe a few months after I proposed and we were married, someone broke into my mother's home, literally kicked down the door and actually searched the very drawer that her ring was in. How crazy would it have been if that happened just a few months earlier. Or what about this, for all the mothers in the room, the feeling of entrusting a non-family member with your infant new born child for the first time. For the working mom, maybe it's time to go back to work, or for the stay at home mom, husband is tired of going on dates with the baby begging to nurse, crying, and having to interrupt the romantic evening to change a blow out diaper, so he finally convinces you to leave the baby. The sitter arrives at the house, the 10 step instructions are handwritten on the kitchen counter along with the 5 emergency contacts just in case something happens.

The husband is already in the car honking the horn ready to go, and the mom is trying to figure out how to gently and kindly say, this is my treasure, my everything, this is the first time the baby will be without me, watch him, keep her with your absolute care, guard my baby with your life. Be attentive, no scrolling, no talking on the phone, except when it's with me for our check in that will happen every 15 minutes. Watch, keep, guard my baby with your life.

This emotion of watching something that is very personal and valuable really sets the tone of what King Solomon is teaching in our passage. One of the greatest attributes of wisdom is knowing what areas of life need special attention, care, and focus. There are certain things in life that we must have a more intense focus and delicate care and we simply can't treat it flippantly, or be rough and careless. The way that you carry the eggs and the bread inside from the store is different than how you carry the potatoes. There are areas of our life that require special attention and the wise understand this, but the fools, they ignore that which requires delicate care.

Think about how God created our bodies. God operated with such precision when He created us. He took the dust from the earth and He fashioned our skin to protect our bones, and He created our bones to protect our organs. The skull protects the brain, the chest plate protects the heart, our rib cage protects our lungs. Our abdominal muscles protect our gut, the point is even in our anatomy God communicates this basic truth. There are some things that require special care, it needs protection, it needs something to keep and guard unwanted things to interact with it, touch it, contact it, so God designed our bodies in such a way to protect the fragile and vulnerable members of our bodies.

Lean in church. And if this is true concerning our physical bodies, this must also be true regarding our spiritual bodies. Like there are physical aspects of our bodies that must be protected by our bones, organs such as the brain, heart, lungs, then there are also spiritual aspects that affect our soul that must be protected and require intense watching, keeping, and guarding.

The things God wants us to keep an intense watch over is this; our mind, our affections, our desires, because when our minds and desires get infected, contaminated, when things enter into our mind that are not from God, and when things influence and control our affections and desires that is laced with darkness, we start to make some very bad decisions. We start to allow things into our life that are damning. And even worse, we start to shew away the things that are good, godly, righteous, and pure for us. So Solomon, the second wisest man that has ever lived behind Christ Himself, says this as He is inspired by the Spirit of Christ

### **Exposition**

Keep watch over your heart. In the OT, the heart is all encompassing. It's not just referring to our feelings. When we hear guard your heart, we only think of someone giving us advice while we are

dating but that falls so short of what Solomon is really communicating here. The heart in biblical times is like when we say soul. Like when we say, man, that hurt my soul, or when we say, man that cut me to the core of my being. Or when we say things like, man, you have been on my mind all day, I'm so glad I ran into you.

All of these are saying the same thing. We often disconnect our minds from our hearts but that is not how they would use the word mind and heart. When someone has been on your mind all day there are deep feelings connected to it. When we say man, my heart hurts so bad when I heard what happened. That doesn't mean all we have is feelings for that person, it also means we have been thinking about them all day.

So when Solomon says the heart, he is not just referring to our feelings. He's referring to our inner being, our soul, our core, the control seat of every thought and every decision. The things that shape our dreams and fears. Our hearts, souls, minds, Solomon is saying guard it, focus on it, protect it. Don't let ungodly things come in contact with it. Because not only is the heart connected to the mind and the mind connected to the heart. Both your mind & hearts are what ultimately influences our decisions. Our actions, what we do and don't do. It's all connected and traced back to our hearts & minds.

Your heart is delegate, and needs nourishment. Your heart, your soul is like a starving new born baby that will drink anything that it comes in contact with. If you feed it poison, it will drink it indiscriminately and die. But if you feed it that which is good, your heart will drink it and it will flow out of it living water. So here is what we are going to do for the remainder of our time, we are going to ask three questions that our passage answers for us:

### **Application**

- 1. What does it practically mean to guard our hearts/souls**
- 2. What are some measurements to know if I'm doing a good job guarding/keeping my heart/mind**
- 3. What do I do if my heart/soul is too damaged & contaminated to walk in the righteous path God has for me?**

**V20-21 – <sup>20</sup> Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; <sup>21</sup> at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks**

Solomon tells us to be attentive to his words of wisdom. The word attentive means mentally focus, our minds must be locked in on wisdom. Then there are two words that are important for us. He uses the words ear and sight. We must not let wisdom escape from our sight and we should incline our ears to it. I believe what the Scriptures are teaching is very simple, if our ears are always hearing wisdom & if our eyes are always seeing wisdom, it increases our chances to walk in wisdom. What we constantly hear and see shapes us. We can only be attentive to what is before us. We have heard the saying before, out of sight, out of mind.

Our chances of walking in wisdom exponentially increases the more we hear wisdom, and the more we see it. Listen to this statement:

The Eyes & Ears is the gate to one's Heart, Soul, & Mind. If you wanted to do an X Ray on someone's soul. If you wanted to investigate someone's mind. If you wanted to examine what was in the heart of a person, check their ears & eyes. What is the person constantly watching and listening to? Who are the role models of the person? What words are constantly being spoken into the ears of the person? What example is constantly being modeled in the sight of the eyes of the person? Once we know that, you know everything you need to know about the state of one's heart?

A heart filled with lust is the result of undisciplined eyes. A soul that is timid, anxious, & insecure can be traced to ears who are not inclined to encouragement. A heart that is always coveting, discontent, & jealous is in the body whose eyes are never looking at the gifts they do have, but only looking at the things they don't have. The mind that is filled with hateful & bitter thoughts is the one who doesn't have the eyes to see the love & beauty of God that is all around them. We have also heard this statement before, what you behold is what you will become. You become what you behold This is why Jesus says in Matthew 6:22-23

**V22-23 – <sup>22</sup> The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”**

But remember church, it doesn't just stop with our thoughts and hearts, it bleeds into our actions. What we do is important, and what we don't do is just as important. The hands of the lazy are attached to the body of the person whose eyes have no vision. The feet of the sluggard are connected to the body whose eyes are focused on temporary pleasures so he doesn't know how to delay instant gratification for long-term satisfaction. The list goes on and on so when we go back to our first question, what does it practically mean to guard our hearts, minds, & souls? The most practical answer is this:

Are you watching what you are listening to and seeing because your ears & eyes are the path to your soul. It's the gate to your mind. It's the gps to your heart. Standing guard over your soul may sound too spiritual for some of us, let's make it more practical then, watch what you listen to and hear. This means entertainment, music, people we hang around, podcasts we listen to, people we look up to, the advice we hear, it doesn't matter what it is, we must be like watch & guard dogs. Let's see if this illustration connects with some of us, everything our eyes see and our ears hear, we must examine it like we examine meat that is on the last day of its expiration date.

Some of us here if it's close to its expiration date it's going in the trash. (my wife) All it takes is to receive food poison once and we will never trust that date again. No sane person would ever put food inside their body when they know it is spoiled. We give it the eye test, any discoloration, any mold, does it have freezer burn. Then we give it the smell test. And if your wife is pregnant like mine, the husband is always doing the smell test. There are multiple tests we put the meat through before we will ever consume it. Church this is how we must be regarding what we allow to enter into our hearts, souls, & minds. We cannot put that which is spoiled into our souls. If we do, we will foolishly allow our eyes and ears to stay locked onto ungodly advice and behaviour. Our eyes and ears all have signs that yell out this, hey, my soul is this way, here are the coordinates to my affections, desires, & dreams, here are the shortcuts, here is the path.

Solomon knows this and says, "the first step in guarding your heart is by starting with what you see and hear. So make sure your ears are inclined to wisdom, make sure your eyes don't let truth escape your sight. Which goes to the next question:

**Am I doing a good job at this? How do I know? What are some measurements I can use to further dissect how I am doing in this area of guarding your heart?**

See, this question is really important because we are easily convinced to think we are better off than we actually are. Many of us are naive into thinking yea, I guard my heart pretty well. It's like budgeting our finances. We can say yea, I'm conservative with my spending, I rarely eat out and don't splurge or any of that. But it's not until we check our bank statement and we say oh snap, taco bell the other night, chick fil a for breakfast lunch and dinner. Speedy burrito and oh yea, there was that half of sale that I spent \$300 on. We also do this spiritually, at first thought, yea I'm guarding my heart, duh, I go to church every week, but we actually need to have some real measurements to check and I believe this is why Solomon says what he says in.

**V24-27 – <sup>24</sup> Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, <sup>25</sup> because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, <sup>26</sup> I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, <sup>27</sup> when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.**

You see in this section, there are two emphases that we haven't talked about yet. It's in our speech and actions. He says in v 24 put away crooked speech and devious talk. In vs 26-27 he talks about our feet and the path it is walking on. Listen, if our Eyes & Ears is the pathway to our heart, mind, & soul, then our Speech and our Actions is the manifestation of our hearts, mind, & souls. Another way of saying it is this: Our ears and eyes are how good or evil gets into our souls. But our souls, our hearts, our minds don't just receive, they also distribute. Our souls are like sponges, sponges absorb as well as pour out. Our hearts absorb through our eyes & ears and they pour out through our words and deeds, our speech and actions.

Earlier I said our souls are like new born infants, desperately thirsty, so thirsty that it doesn't discriminate. You put poison in its milk and it will drink it. Our souls are also like toddlers learning to speak. When our toddlers say bad words that rhyme with grass, luck, & sit, we know they are pouring out words that they have recently absorbed. It's like the toddler who cusses in public and the mom says Johnny, where did you learn that word, we all know who they learned that word from. Bad words come in through the ears, and out through the mouth.

Bad behavior comes in through the eyes and out through the feet. This is why Solomon says ponder the path of your feet. Meaning measure your steps, process your actions. When the bible talks about feet and path it often refers to our action, deeds. Where are you going and what are you doing? So v 27 says when you are walking, don't swerve to the left or right. Why? Because Jesus tells us in the gospels that the pathway to righteousness is narrow. Too many steps to the left will have you in darkness. And too many steps to the right will also have you in darkness. So don't swerve. Walk straight. Turn your foot from evil.

So, our measurements are our words & deeds. We need to do a bank statement on our words to see if it is crooked or devious. We see the connection here with our actions and words. Crooked speech and swerving steps is conveying the same thing but manifested differently. If the truth of God is wisdom and symbolically communicated as straight. Then our words should not be crooked and our steps should not be crooked, swerving from left and right. If so, then this is a measurement that we are not guarding our heart.

But here's the thing, we have to make sure we know examining our speech is way deeper than just not saying words that rhyme with grass, luck, and sit. Crooked and devious speech is saying words that are not true.

And this is so important here. Normally when we talk about lying, saying things that are not true we normally only restrict lying to situations like saying untrue things about others to put them down, or saying untrue things about ourselves in order to bring us up. Right, when we hear devious and crooked speech we normally look at it in these few ways:

1. Cuss words
2. Lying to bring someone down
3. Lying to build yourself up
4. Then we can add a fourth one, gossiping. Sometimes we lie to tear someone down, but we also gossip and can say true things about someone, but these things are none of our business but we make it our business to tear someone down.

All of this is obviously crooked and devious speech. But I want to point our attention to something else that is often looked over. This devious speech sounds like this:

Man, God never answers my prayers. Man, I don't have any gifts or talents, I can't serve His kingdom. It's words that say this, regardless if we keep these words in our minds or we say them out loud to others, it's still speech, man my marriage is never going to get better, God can't heal this, He can't fix this. Do we not know these words are also crooked speech and devious talk. It's words that swerve from the truth of God's power to fix and God's care to listen to us. Maybe some of us here are way too holy to ever lie on someone else to ruin their character. Some of us here are way too humble to lie about yourself to make you look better. Some of us are way too peaceful to gossip about someone else. You would never use crooked speech in this way but question, Does your speech doubt the love and power of our mighty and sovereign God? Are you pessimistic about prayer right now because you doubt God cares? Are you a skeptic of God's power to do something in your life? Do you not know these are words that are crooked and devious? Let's be clear, I am not preaching no self help gospel that says if you speak positive words into the universe, positive things will come back to you. No, I am simply preaching wisdom from proverbs that says life and death are in the power of the tongue proverbs 18:21.

Speech that lies and says God doesn't care for me is connected to a soul and heart that is broken, burdened, and dark and if what we have been saying is true, that darkness entered into that soul through the eyes and ears. This person's eyes see nothing but pain and this person's ears hear nothing but the joys of someone else. But man if this person was able to keep their eyes on all of the beautiful things God has given them, maybe their heart and soul would be protected from these self destructive words that it says to him or herself.

We must guard our hearts by making sure we don't listen to worldly and false gospels. We must guard our hearts to make sure our eyes have not witnessed ungodly models because we will become what we behold. It doesn't matter if that model is on the screen or in our homes. How do we know if we are doing a good job at it? We have to look at the receipts, we must check our bank statements. What negative words are you saying about people that are devious and crooked. What negative words are you saying about yourself? And even worse, what devious and crooked things are you saying about

life and God who cares for you so much? We can never forget about the Israelites who missed out on the promised land and wandered for 40 years.

The sin of devious and crooked speech that grumbled and griped and said, man, I'll rather die a slave in Egypt than be here. In Egypt, we ate and drank good, look at where God has brought me now.

### **Close**

As we close, all of this takes us to our last question: if our eyes and ears are the pathway to our heart, mind, and souls. And our words and deeds are the manifestation of our hearts, minds, and souls. What do we do when our hearts, minds, and souls are too corrupt, damaged, and broken? What do we do when we have let too much sin, darkness, and lies enter into our ears? What do we do when we have seen too many things? Maybe someone in this room or someone that you know feels this way?

I can't guard my heart, my heart has already been taken over by darkness. I have done too much, life is too broken, my heart is too twisted. You don't know the words I have said to myself, words I have said about God, words I have said to my wife, words I have said to my own children. I have betrayed people, lied to people, I have even lied about God to other people and said he doesn't exist or if He does exist, He doesn't care.

If this is you, who feels like your heart is too broken, mind is too corrupt, soul is too dark, I have some wonderful news for you. Jesus has a new heart, soul, and mind that He wants to give you. You feel like your heart is too dark, good, if you feel this way then you are actually thinking clearly, your heart is too dark, your soul is too broken, you have seen too much and done too much. God actually wants you to feel this way, this is called conviction from the Holy Spirit.

For the person who thinks there is still good in their heart, they will try to hold on to it and think it's pure enough to stand before God. But those who see their heart for what it truly is, crooked & devious, these are the individuals who have no choice but to beg Christ for a new heart. What we need to see is the wisdom that we need to be attentive towards, the wisdom that we cannot let out of our sight. The wisdom that we need to incline our ears to is these words right here:

Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, He was born from the virgin Mary and He experienced everything we have experienced. He learned how to crawl, walk, eat, and work, just like us. He endured pain, betrayal, hurt, just like us.

He became us in every way and the most important aspect of becoming us was becoming our sin. He crawled, walked, ate, and worked just like us but He did not sin like us. He is perfect, righteous, and guarded His heart from the enemy and this world perfectly in ways we never did. So He did not sin like us, but He became sin for us. He was crucified on the cross and convicted of sins He never committed. They were the sins we committed. This is what it means that Jesus became our sin. Not through His actions, but through His punishment that we deserved.

He was put to death on the cross for sins we committed. And then a few days later He was resurrected from the dead, from the grave. Death was something mankind was never supposed to experience. Death must be removed from this world and the first step for that to take place was for Jesus to be resurrected from the dead. Jesus' resurrection displays His power that He is in fact the Son of the living God. He is in fact God.

Satan introduced death into this world. Death is our enemy. So Jesus defeated Satan and death by coming to life again. But it gets better, not only does Jesus' resurrection show Christ victorious over death, Christ's resurrection is a first fruit to what is to come. All those who listen to wisdom which is this, place your faith and ultimate allegiance with Jesus Christ and your sins will be forgiven. All those who have faith in Christ will become like Christ. He became like us, our sin and shame, so we can become like Him. Honor and glory. We whose faith is in Christ will defeat death too. We will die and take our last breath in this world and then we will experience the resurrection of our hearts, mind, souls, and body! We will live again like Christ is living now.

But before we experience the resurrection. Before we have a new body and live for all eternity in heaven. Jesus gives us a new heart. This is the doctrine of regeneration. We need a new heart. Why? Because none of us here guarded it and kept it like we are supposed to. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All of us have let darkness enter our soul through our eyes and ears. All of us have manifested this darkness through our speech and actions. Our hearts are contaminated with

darkness and Jesus came to destroy darkness, so what does He do? He gives us a new heart that is empowered by His Spirit.

So Jesus says in John 3:3, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

Wisdom is this: place your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, repent from your sins and follow Christ with all your heart, mind, soul, strength. Listen to that wisdom and v 22 of our passage is something you will experience. You will find life & healing. Only if your faith is in Christ will you have the ability to guard your heart. Only if your faith is in Christ will your heart flow living water.

For all those who are in Christ, I pray we are guarding the new Heart He has given us. For all those who have never ultimately surrendered everything to Christ and are walking in darkness, I pray you see a new heart & life is available to you. There is hope to walk on the path of righteousness where you can be confident that all your ways are sure!



## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



## LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Read Proverbs 4:20-27 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
  - Matthew 7:17-19
  - Luke 6:43-45
  - Matthew 12:34-37

- **DISCUSS**

- What does it mean to “guard your heart” according to Solomon’s teaching?
- Why are the eyes and ears described as gateways to the heart and soul?
- How can we practically guard our hearts in daily life?
- How can we measure whether we are guarding our hearts well?
- What does crooked and devious speech include beyond lying and cursing?
- Why is self-awareness important in guarding the heart?
- What hope does the sermon offer to someone who feels their heart is too broken or dark?
- How does Jesus’ resurrection relate to guarding our hearts?
- What role does faith in Christ play in guarding our hearts?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

## LOOK AHEAD



- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- **How are you making yourself known at church this week?**
- **How are you growing to know Christ better this week?**

- **How are you making Christ known this week?**
- **PRAYER**
  - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
  - **Pray for our team:** Larry Davis (Next Gen Pastor)
  - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
  - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
    - Kenya Team departing on June 29, 2025
    - Europe Student Team departing on July 6, 2025
    - Indonesia Team departing on August 11, 2025
    - Rome Team departing on November 7, 2025
  - **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
    - The Wilsons
    - The Grays
    - The Starks
  - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>