

**Proverbs 4:23**  
**Heart Check**  
**Proverbs: Wisdom for Life**

**A few months ago – I had a really bad dizzy spell one day – that left me on the ground for about 15min**

A) Ended up it was a bad case of Vertigo – not sure what brought it on.

B) But **doctor ordered an EKG test** – fine

1) **EKG stress test** – treadmill – did great – Shave

C) My heart is in good shape!

D) Doctors tell us that Heart health is key to physical health

1) But Heart health is key to your spiritual health as well.

Title of our message today is Heart Check!

**Last week we began an 8 week study in the book of proverbs! 1<sup>st</sup> two studies foundational – rest practical**

A) Invitation from two ladies – Lady Folly – Seductress – all looks no substance

B) Lady Folly – Dine on you – Devour

C) Lady Wisdom – She offers that which is of Value – She promises life – substance

D) Really an invitation to dine with Jesus

**Key Verse in Proverbs**

Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

**The Fear of the Lord? 2 words**

A) Reverence = Awe and respect

B) Adoration = A heart of love that moves us to not want to do anything that would cause God grief.

C) The thing we want to establish today – is all of this begins with the Heart!

D) Heart of the problem is a heart problem – when the heart is right everything else is right!

**It all begins with the heart**

A) When we talk about your heart in English modern culture today, - emotions, affections, and feelings.

B) And in the Bible, your heart includes that, but it's broader than that.

C) Biblically the heart refers to your deepest moral and spiritual convictions,

1) your heart is talking about what's really deep inside of you, what makes you and who you are.

D) Your heart is Mission Control -

**The heart has an appetite: Desires, yearnings both good and bad.**

A) You feed your heart – how and what you feed it conditions your spiritual well being.

“The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly. (15:14)

**B) THE HEART SHAPES THE ACTIONS**

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23

C) Diligence speaks of a focus – Priority

ESV Keep your heart with **all vigilance**, for from it flow the springs of life.

**D) Vigilance speaks of effort – activity!**

1) Both ideas are accurate

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it NIV

NLT <sup>23</sup> Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

**Answer 3 questions today:**

A) #1 What does it mean to Keep or Guard your heart ?

B) #2 Why do we need to guard our hearts ?

C) #3 How do we go about guarding our hearts?

**#1 What does it mean to Keep or Guard your heart?**

A) To guard your heart above all things is paying attention to what's going on in the deepest core of what is inside of you.

**B)THINK OF it this way - What do you guard or protect ? Valuables right?**

**C)Family - Married – wife – Kids – grandkids**

**1)Imagined altercation with Josiah**

**D)I sure most of you locked your house when you left for church today**

**1)Locked your car when you came into church**

**Why do we do that? We don't want anyone to steal our stuff**

**A)We protect what is valuable to us!**

**B)Your heart is more valuable than any of that!**

**C)Now some of you Bible students might be thinking but is the heart really a thing of Value?**

Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can understand it?”

**D)That is true – The Lord did say that about our hearts**

1)But reading a little further in Jeremiah – he spoke of the NC that would be established when Jesus came <sup>31</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:31-33

God is saying – when the NC is established – it is going to be an inward thing – heart thing – starts there in the heart

**Affects our actions!**

**The Prophet Ezekiel gave this further insight**

<sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My

Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. Ezekiel 36:26

**So here is our hearts now under the NC**

Romans 5:5, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Romans 6:17, “You have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you are committed.”

Hebrews 10:22, “Let us draw near [to God] with a true heart and full assurance of faith.”

**Now Even though the Lord has done this new work in our hearts doesn't mean – not a Battle**

James 3:14, “If you have bitter jealousy “and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.”

Or James 4:8, “Purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

**A)Even more the reason to Guard our hearts**

**B)Our hearts are like a musical instrument: You tune it, and you've got it just right,**

1) and then you hang it on the wall for a few days and it goes out of tune.

**C)Or you tune it, and then something bumps it and it's out of tune again.**

**Our hearts are like that: they can be right with God and then something disrupts them,**

**A)Quickly goes out of tune**

**B)Or we neglect our hearts for a few days – they begin to stray – get out of tune**

**C)To guard it above all things is to pay attention to what's going on in the deepest core of what is inside of you.**

**# 2 Why should we guard our hearts?**

For out of it spring the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23

NLT 23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

A) Picture your heart is like a stream of water!

B) A spring or a river flowing out to touch/ impact people around you that you come in contact with

C) Is the river of your heart producing Joy or sadness

1) Pain or delight

That is the picture I think Jesus had in mind when he said: Luke 6:45, A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

A) What you say and how you act are both connected to your heart condition.

B) What is going on in your heart is going to be played out in our actions

1) Fear/ Stressed out –

2) Depressed – played out – miserable

C) But if our hearts are resting in the Lord – being nourished by the Lord – trusting in the Lord

1) The stream is going to impart life

But an unguarded heart can quickly revert back to that which is ugly and displeasing to the Lord

Mark 7:21, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

A) The pages of the Bible are lined with examples of men / women who didn't guard their hearts –

➤ destruction that followed

B) Judges everyone did what was right in his own eyes – 1) sent the nation on a severe downward spiral of despair and decline

C) David – Guard his heart – not at war – comfort – drops his guard – later in life –

1) commits adultery murder

Solomon – Who wrote these words – 1<sup>st</sup> 20 yrs of his reign amazing

A) God blessed Israel grew expanded his borders First time esteemed by the world

B) Last 20 yrs – neglected his heart – chased pleasure – hedonism

1) Ended up empty – miserable – all is vanity

C) All because he neglected his heart – He got busy and distracted – lost his focus

1) His heart took him down a path of pain and destruction

D) Some of you today- You are on that path –

1) Praying today is a wake up call -

E) But there are always those who think – That is not going to be me I will be the exception to the rule –

1) Please don't be that foolish

Have you ever seen a dog Chase a flock of birds and the beach?

A) Really a futile exercise because he is isn't going to catch them because they fly.

B) At the beach – this dog is running this way and that way!

1) He didn't know which one to chase – circles

C) Pools of water – crash

D) After 20 straight minutes – panting huffing and puffing – with nothing to show for his effort.

Is that a picture of your life? Running everywhere and going no where?

A) Running in circles – and at the end of the week – huffing and puffing – exhausted with little or nothing to show for your efforts

B) Story of a lot of Americans – running a lot – doing a lot – but having little to show for all the effort!

C) That is not what the Lord intends for us AT ALL!

**Principle in Proverbs: Direction – not intentions will determine my destination.**

A) In other words the Path that I am on the and things that I am pursuing {not my intentions} are going to determine where I end up.

B) And the shape I am going to be in when I get there.

C) Example my intention might be to have a great marriage –

1) but if I constantly choose a path that takes me in a direction that is detrimental to my marriage

2) or is causing me to neglect my marriage

D) **That is where I am going to end up-** Even though my intentions are to have a great marriage.

1) the path is leading in the opposite direction.

E) **So The direction I choose is way more important than my intentions.**

**Or If I want to be a great dad**

A) But I am constantly choosing a path that takes me away from my kids –

B) Result – they are not going to view him as a good dad!

C) Earlier I said the heart shapes our actions but the reverse of that is true too.

1) Actions shape the heart

**D) So #3 How do we guard our hearts?**

Proverbs 4:25-27

**25 Let your eyes look straight ahead,**

{Keep your head straight,}

**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.**

**We live in a world that has so many things vying for our time and attention.**

A) Solomon offers some very sound words here –

**Keep your head Straight**

B) What you focus on – or what you allow to capture your heart – will determine your destination.

C) Never going **to hit the target** if I don't know what I am aiming at

**So the first thing we need to do in guarding our hearts is to identify where our hearts are already off track. – Distractions**

A) Two common distractions – hearts off track

**B) 1<sup>st</sup> The desire for human approval**

The fear of man is a snare.

C) If we look to human beings more than to God for our worth and value,

1) we will be trapped by anxiety, by an over need to please,

D) Which can lead us into compromising situations.

1) Allow ourselves to be exploited and manipulated by others – seeking human approval rather than God's

*The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. Proverbs 29:25*

**Live for an audience of ONE!**

**A 2<sup>nd</sup> common distraction our hearts can get us on is when we seek Happiness instead of Holiness.**

A) Our flesh longs for comfort and to be satisfied

B) Our hearts will seek to pull us in those directions

1) Away from God's standard – and will

C) Here is what we have to learn to do – in order to keep our path straight – Guard our hearts

**#1 Follow God's word instead of your feelings. If the Scripture says it is wrong, it is.**

A) Your feelings will try and get you to rationalize in 100 different ways – why it is ok

B) Why it is not a big deal – but listen to God's word and not your feelings

**#2 Follow God's Spirit instead of your natural instincts**

A) The Holy Spirit is going to always support what the word of God says.

**B) Conviction – like an alarm – don't go there!**

**1) The more you listen to the voice of God's spirit – the clearer it gets**

**C) The more you ignore – the more faint it gets**

**God's Spirit is there to lead us in every situation.**

**A) Watching TV – something questionable – HS will say turn it off – turn the channel**

**B) You are talking to someone and the conversation turns toward gossip**

**1) The HS will whisper – change the subject – or leave the conversation –**

**C) The more you listen to the leading of the Spirit – the more your heart will be guarded**

**1) The more your path will be made straight**

**#1 Follow God's word instead of your feelings.**

**#2 Follow God's Spirit instead of your natural instincts**

**#3 Follow the Gospel instead of your emotions**

**A) Listen when you blow it – the enemy will play on your emotions to condemn you.**

**B) He will tell you – what is the use – failure – just give up – give in to the desires of your heart**

**C) Follow the gospel – Jesus died to pay the price for your sins –**

**“If our hearts condemn us, . . . God is greater than our hearts” (1 John 3:20).**

**There is not condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – Romans 8:1**