



**Guarding Your
Heart**
Message 1

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Outline

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

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

A. Introduction

(Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-31. C/R: Matthew 15:18)

B. Is your heart _____?

(1 Kings 8:61; Proverbs 4:23; Jeremiah 17:9; 29:11-13;
Ezekiel 36:25-27)

C. How to _____ and _____ your heart...

1. S _____.
(Joshua 1:7-8)

2. I _____.
(Jeremiah 2:11-19; Matthew 12:43-45;
2 Corinthians 6:16)

3. N _____.
(Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 4:8)

- 1.) Does your schedule reflect God as your first priority?
- 2.) What is competing for your heart beside Jesus?
- 3.) Is there something/someone you need to create healthy distance from to help increase positivity?

Answers: B. devoted C. cultivate, protect 1. Schedule 2. Idols 3. Negativity

Resource Information: Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. C/R refers to a 'cross reference.' Today's outline and discussion guide are available through the Brookwood Church app.

► Discussion Guide

Use this guide by yourself or with friends to pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus. To connect with others, visit brookwoodchurch.org/adults.

Conversation Starter

When do you usually feel *most fully alive*?

Prayer

Spend a few minutes slowing down. Allow enough time for your mind to stop racing and your heart to experience a sense of calm. As you begin this week's lesson, ask God to reveal Himself to you in new and beautiful ways. Say yes in your spirit to all He has for you.

Bible Study and Group Discussion

Read Mark 12:28-34.

1. What image or words come to mind when you think about loving God with all your heart?
2. Which of these words best describes your heart these days: dead, distracted, dry or devoted? What competes for your heart? How do you prevent internalizing the negativity of the world?
3. Describe a time you felt far away from God. How long did you allow that distance to linger?
4. Loving God (or someone) inherently involves vulnerability. Have you ever found yourself trying to be spiritual (e.g., praying or reading the Bible) to avoid feeling vulnerable?

Read Ezekiel 36:13-27.

5. Ezekiel wrote these words during a time the people of Israel abandoned their devotion to God. How did he describe their hearts? What encouragement did he offer them?
6. What does it mean that God has given you a *new heart*? When are you most likely to experience this sense of fullness? For further insight on living with a new heart, see Matthew 5:8; Luke 8:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Timothy 1:5.

7. How does the idea of having a new heart challenge your understanding of Christianity?

Read Proverbs 4:20-27.

8. What does it mean to *guard your heart*?
9. How does your heart determine the course of your life?
10. Who helps you keep a tender and devoted heart toward God?
11. This passage provides specific strategies for guarding your heart. What are they? Reflect on how each of these can help cultivate a more devoted heart for God.

Spiritual Practice

A spiritual practice is something we can do to help us live in and enjoy God's grace. Our hope is that these would become a regular part of your life, so that walking and talking with God is the most natural thing you do.

One way to grow spiritually is to replace a bad habit (something that pulls you away from God) with a good habit (something that helps you draw near to God). What's one replacement you can make this week? This might be something specific you do or how you spend your time. Resist viewing this as a spiritual checkbox, but instead, see it as a way to cultivate your heart and a deeper relationship with God.

Memory Verse

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

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Daily Reading

Day 1: 1 Kings 8:56-61

Day 4: Joshua 1:7-8

Day 2: Matthew 6:19-21

Day 5: Ephesians 3:16-18

Day 3: Matthew 15:1-20

Prepare for Next Sunday

Next Sunday, April 23, we'll continue the series *Love God · Love People*. To prepare, read **Psalm 103**.

