

DEVOTIONAL

HEART HEALTHY

Protection: Guard Your Heart // February 6, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Why does the Bible place such an emphasis on our hearts?

Key Text: “My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. ²²For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. ²³Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. ²⁴Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. ²⁵Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. ²⁶Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” (Proverbs 4:20-27)

There are lots of diseases and disorders that can affect our physical heart that have interesting parallels to diseases and disorders that can affect our spiritual heart.

- **Arthrosclerosis** – Physically speaking, this is a hardening of the arteries due to accumulated cholesterol plaques and scarring in the artery walls.

Spiritually speaking, this occurs when we hear God’s Word, but we refuse to accept it. Our rebellious spirit hinders the free flow of God’s peace and blessings in our life. Psalm 95:8 says, “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*”

Discuss: What kinds of things can lead to a spiritual “hardening of the arteries”?

- **Heart Murmurs** – Physically speaking, a heart murmur is an abnormal flow pattern due to faulty heart valves which act as doors to prevent the backward flow of blood into the heart.

Spiritually speaking, heart murmurs occur when we engage in complaining, gossip, and contention. Rather than allowing God’s goodness to flow through us to others, we allow envy, jealousy, and ingratitude to fester and flow back into our hearts and minds. Philippians 2:14 says, “*Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*”

Discuss: How would you advise a new Christian to refrain from complaining?

- **Congestive Heart Failure** – Physically speaking, this is an inability for the heart to pump blood throughout the body due to weaknesses within its walls. It is caused by high blood pressure, heart attacks, and abnormal enlarging of the heart.

Spiritually speaking, anger, giving in to temptation, and pride weaken the walls of our spiritual heart and keep God’s peace and truth from pumping throughout our spirit. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, “*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*”

Discuss: How can we actively avoid bitterness? Anger? Slander? How can we replace these with kindness? Tenderheartedness? Forgiveness?

Our text for today, Proverbs 4:20-27, provides five practical, proactive steps we can take to guard our hearts.

1. Guard your heart by guarding what you hear.

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.” (v.20)

Discuss: What do Psalm 1:1 and Ephesians 4:5 tell us to beware of hearing?

2. Guard your heart by guarding what you love.

“Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. ²² For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. ²³ Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” (v.21-23)

Discuss: What kinds of hearts are we to avoid according to these verses: Psalm 12:2; 51:10; Proverbs 21:4; 28:14; Hebrews 3:12?

3. Guard your heart by guarding what you say.

“Put away from you crooked speech and put devious talk far from you.” (v.24)

Discuss: What kind of speech are we to avoid according to these verses: Proverbs 4:24; 10:19; 12:22; 20:19; 24:28?

4. Guard your heart by guarding what you see.

“Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.” (v.25)

Discuss: What are we to avoid looking at according to these verses: Psalm 101:3; 119:37; Matthew 14:30; Luke 9:62?

5. Guard your heart by guarding where you go.

“Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” (v.26-27)

Discuss: Ephesians 5:15 says, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.” What do you think it means to walk in wisdom?

Discuss: Which of the five steps above do you find easiest to do? Why?

Discuss: Which of the five steps above do you find most difficult to do? Why?

For Further Study:

“Proverbs 4:23” at www.biblestudytools.com

“The Full Armor of God: Guard Your Heart” article at www.thecove.org

“What Does Guarding Your Heart Mean?” article at www.crosswalk.com