

DATE: MAY 15, 2011

TEXT: Proverbs 4:20 - 27

TITLE: "IT IS THE MATTER OF THE HEART"

SERIES: "GET SMART" – Wisdom for living from the book of Proverbs #3

INTRODUCTION: As we continue our study of the book of Proverbs, I am reminded of a first grade teacher who collected old, well-known proverbs. She gave each kid in her class the first half of a proverb and had them come up with the rest. Here are a few of them.

(**PICTURES WITH SOME OF THESE and perhaps John draw a cartoon with words)

- **As You Shall Make Your Bed So Shall You... Mess It Up.**
- **Better Be Safe Than... Punch A 5th Grader.**
- **Strike While The... Bug Is Close.**
- **It's Always Darkest Before... Daylight Savings Time.**
- **Don't Bite The Hand That... Looks Dirty.**
- **If You Lie Down With The Dogs, You'll... Stink In The Morning.**
- **Where There's Smoke, There's... Pollution.**
- **A Penny Saved Is... Not Much.**
- **Children Should Be Seen And Not... Spanked Or Grounded.**

Today, we will look at a proverb with a priority. It is a proverb that focuses upon the heart. *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."* (Proverbs 4:23) The life we live is a matter of the heart. *

***PROP: A BIG HEART with words on one side: "IT IS THE MATTER OF THE HEART."

I (v.20 – 21) KEEP THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD WITHIN YOUR HEART

1. The lifelong journey that each one of us has embarked upon is filled with choices.
2. A major part of living wisely lies in giving attention to familiar truths by expressing them in our daily choices.
3. Again and again in the book of Proverbs, the father calls for his son to pay attention and listen carefully.

"My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;" (Proverbs 4:20-21)

4. It is a sobering fact that true values and morality are always only one generation removed from possible extinction.
5. Parents and children, I want to repeat that; it is a sobering fact that true values and morality are always only one generation removed from possible extinction.
6. For one generation to allow the light of God's truth to go out would mean the succeeding generations must be doomed to stumble in darkness.

7. The words of truth must be kept alive in our hearts by living them out in our daily choices.

“When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, ‘Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.’” (Proverbs 4:3-4)

8. The truths of God’s word must be passed on from generation to generation in our home and in our daily lives, as well as in the church.

9. This third section of advice in Proverbs 4 we are studying today has a striking feature of the mention of body parts, though occasionally this may be lost in the English translations.

10. The phrase translated ‘listen closely’ in verse 20 is really ‘incline your ear,’ and the phrase translated ‘your sight’ is literally your eyes.

11. By using ears, eyes, and heart, the teacher is exhorting the whole person to receive the truths of wisdom.

12. In today’s terms, we might understand his advice as “use all that we have” or “put your body into the pursuit of true godly wisdom from above.”

13. We need wisdom greater than our own.

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:7-8)

14. A body so engaged will be a body blessed with life and health.

“...for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body.” (Proverbs 4:22)

15. The pursuit of wisdom will impact the whole of our lives.

16. This promise is made possible because of God’s words that bring deliverance from the evils that harm and hinder life.

17. Young people, what you pursue will determine the life you live, the person you become and the legacy you leave and pass on to others.

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” (I Timothy 6:11)

18. The Father’s instruction is to keep these important truths of wisdom within the heart.

19. The word ‘heart’ is found 963 times in the Bible. Of these usages, the heart can mean ‘the mind, the emotions, the will, or the inner man.’ It can even refer to the person as a whole.

20. The biblical word “heart” comes close to our idea of mind. It can be paraphrased as conscious and rational intention. This intention or attitude contains the springs of life which determine all our words and deeds. A man is what he intends.

ILLUSTRATION: Joe Stowell, in *Fan The Flame*, says that “The Heart is used in Scripture as the most comprehensive term for the authentic person. It is the part of our being where we desire, deliberate, and decide. It has been described as “the place of conscious and decisive spiritual activity,” “the comprehensive term for a person as a whole; his feelings, desires, passions, thought, understanding and will,” and “the center of a

person. The place to which God turns." (J. Stowell, FanThe Flame, Moody, 1986, p. 13.)

21. The heart is of importance because the Lord considers the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' (1 Samuel 16:7)

22. God is concerned about the condition of our heart.

ILLUSTRATION: (* Picture) William Harvey has been listed as one of the top 100 heroes in western culture. William Harvey (1578-1657) was an English physician who first explained how blood is pumped from the heart throughout the body, then returns to the heart and is recirculated. Harvey's findings are the foundation for all modern research on the heart and blood vessels. Without his contributions, the development of medical science and its life-saving ability would have been severely impeded.

23. I read a statistic that said, "Every 20 seconds, a heart attack strikes someone in America."

24. The reality of heart-health medically cannot be denied.

25. If you're over 40 years old, your heart has already beat more than 1.5 billion times. When it stops, it will be too late to change ways that impact its health.

26. Here in Proverbs, which was written about 2700 years earlier, there is recognition of the importance of the heart for the maintenance of life.

27. Our spiritual heart has throbbed millions of times with thoughts, affections, and choices.

28. In the heart, we determine how we will speak, behave, and respond to life's circumstances.

29. Today's Scripture reading emphasizes the importance of caring for our heart spiritually.

30. Devotional writer, Mart De Haan, observed, "To keep the heart spiritually fit we must consult the great Physician." He suggests we ask these questions about our spiritual health.

- **Do we need to lose the weight of unnecessary burdens and cares?**
- **Are we maintaining a steady rhythm and pulse of gratitude and praise?**
- **Is our trust greater than our anxiety?**
- **Are we enjoying the life-giving nutrients of the Word of God?**

31. We are admonished to not lose sight of God's words of truth and wisdom, but to keep them within our heart.

32. These truths of godly wisdom must become residents in the heart and not just hotel guests that come and go.

33. They must become life principles we live by.

34. What do we do with the truths revealed in God's Word?

35. Listen to what we are instructed to do with the truth of God's Word.

"Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart." (Proverbs 7:2-3)

36. The point is that the teaching of these truths of wisdom is so precious it must be guarded closely.

37. Make room in the heart for the truths and things that really matter.

ILLUSTRATION: ** Pastor and author A.W. Tozer wrote, “One of the world’s greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves.”

38. The heart impacts what we do and what we do impacts the heart.

ILLUSTRATION: “Life does not cause the condition of the heart; life reveals the condition of the heart.” (Authors Blackaby and Brandt)

39. What we keep or store in our hearts matters.

40. The food you keep in your cupboards or refrigerator will determine what you can cook and eat.

41. What we keep in our hearts determine the outcome of our lives.

Proverbs 23:7 “For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.”

42. Keep your heart full of the Word of God.

43. Keep your heart pure.

44. What are you keeping in your heart?

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

(Psalm 119:11)

ILLUSTRATION: “However strong a castle may be, if a treacherous party resides inside (ready to betray at the first opportunity possible), the castle cannot be kept safe from the enemy. Traitors occupy our own hearts, ready to side with every temptation and to surrender to them all.” —Theologian John Owen (1616–1683)

45. What you keep in your heart will determine how you live.

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)

46. Solomon expressed a similar thought in Ecclesiastes.

“The heart of the wise man inclines him to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.” (Ecclesiastes 10:2)

ILLUSTRATION: John Flavel lived from 1630-1691. He was a prolific and popular author. Among his many books was one titled, *Keeping the Heart*. It was a book on Proverbs 4:23 and is a Christian classic that has been called "one of the greatest Christian books of all time" He said, “By keeping the heart, we mean the diligent and constant use of all holy means to preserve the soul from sin, and maintaining its sweet and free communion with God.” (PROPOSITION of the book “Keeping the heart”—***“The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition, is one great business of a Christian’s life.” (John Flavel)** Among the many chapters are chapters on keeping the heart in times of adversity, trouble, danger, distraction, in the time of outward wants, times of great trials, temptation, doubts, suffering, and sickness**

47. We must keep the heart regardless of what is going on around us.

48. We do that by keeping the truths of God’s word in the heart.

49. The main business must be to be keepers of the heart.

ILLUSTRATION: **“He who will keep his heart must take heed of plunging himself into such a multiplicity of earthly business that he cannot manage it without neglecting his main business.” John Flavel.

50. Keeping the heart keeps us on track.

ILLUSTRATION: Peter Marshall, former chaplain of the US Senate, tells the following story, “The Keeper of the Spring”, which illustrates the importance of constantly guarding our heart... “An elderly, quiet forest dweller once lived high above an Austrian village along the eastern slopes of the Alps. Many years ago, the town council had hired this old gentleman as Keeper of the Spring to maintain the purity of the pools of water in the mountain crevices. The overflow from these pools ran down the mountain-side and fed the lovely spring that flowed through the town. With faithful, silent regularity, the Keeper of the Spring patrolled the hills, removed the leaves and branches from the pools, and wiped away the silt that would otherwise choke and contaminate the fresh flow of water.

By and by, the village became a popular attraction for vacationers. Graceful swans floated along the crystal-clear spring, the mill wheels of various businesses located near the water turned day and night, farmlands were naturally irrigated, and the view from restaurants sparkled. Years passed. One evening the town council met for its semiannual meeting. As the council members reviewed the budget, one man’s eye caught the salary paid the obscure Keeper of the Spring. “Who is this old man?” he asked indignantly. “Why do we keep paying him year after year? No one ever sees him. For all we know, this man does us no good. He isn’t necessary any longer!” By a unanimous vote, the council dispensed with the old man’s services.

For several weeks, nothing changed. But, by early autumn, the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the rushing flow of sparkling water. One afternoon, someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint to the water in the spring. A few days later, the water had darkened even more. Within a week, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks, and a foul odor emanated from the spring. The mill wheels moved slowly; some finally ground to a halt. Businesses that were located near the water closed. The swans migrated to fresher waters far away, and tourists no longer visited the town. Eventually, the clammy fingers of disease and sickness reached deeply into the village.

The shortsighted town council had enjoyed the beauty of the spring but underestimated the importance of guarding its source. We can make the same mistake in our lives. Like the Keeper of the Spring who maintained the purity of the water, you and I are the Keepers of Our Hearts. We need to consistently evaluate the purity of our hearts in prayer, asking God to reveal the little things that contaminate us. As God reveals our wrong attitudes, longings, and desires, we must remove them from our hearts.

(from Joshua Harris' book, I Kissed Dating Goodbye. Multnomah Publishers)

51. To be keepers of the heart, we must keep the truths of God's word in our hearts.

52. Let them be the foundation and principles by which you live your life.

*** POINT TO REMEMBER: "KEEP THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD WITHIN YOUR HEART FOR THEY WILL KEEP YOUR HEART SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY."**

II. (v.23.) KEEP THE PRIORITY OF GUARDING YOUR HEART

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

1. The heart is the vital organ of the soul.

2. We must make the safety of the heart a priority.

ILLUSTRATION: (Picture of him) When Amanda was younger, she had a time when she was fascinated by animals. She loved to watch Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter. Steve Irwin was a wildlife expert, conservationist, & television show host. Born on February 22, 1962, in Australia, Irwin became world famous for his television series, *The Crocodile Hunter*, and other nature programs. On September 4, 2006, Irwin was working on a new program, filming at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Snorkeling near a stingray, he was pierced in the chest by its barb, which struck his heart. Irwin died of cardiac arrest shortly after being stung. A wildlife expert and part entertainer, he faced dangers on a daily basis. But, he was killed because he was stabbed in the heart with a barbed spine.**

3. The heart is important physically and spiritually.

4. For that reason, we are to make it a priority to guard our heart.

5. Make the condition and spiritual safety of your heart a priority.

6. If the heart is struggling, it will impact the rest of our lives.

"As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man." (Proverbs 27:19)

ILLUSTRATION: Sekomi, the chief of the Bamangwato, in Africa said to Missionary David Livingstone, "I wish you would change my heart. Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always."

7. He understood the importance of the heart.

ILLUSTRATION: **Bible Commentator, W. Wiersbe said, "What you do with your heart determines what you do with your life."

8. The heart is the starting point of the activities of life.

"In his heart a man plans his course..." (Proverbs 16:9)

8. The heart must be a priority.

"Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path." (Proverbs 23:19)

9. You must guard what happens to your heart, for it determines the course of life.

“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’” (Mark 7:15-23)

ILLUSTRATION: *The Secret Garden*, a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, tells the story of Mary, a young girl who goes to live with her wealthy uncle Archibald on his estate in England. Mary gets to know Dickon, a working-class boy who loves nature. The two children discover a fenced-in garden that Mary’s uncle has locked up because it reminds him of his deceased wife. The garden looks dead because of neglect, but Dickon assures Mary that, with proper tending, it will recover with new life. With the children’s help, “the secret garden” eventually bursts forth with colorful, fragrant blooms. All of us have a secret garden of the heart. How we tend it will determine what speech and behavior it produces.

10. Guarding what we take into our hearts and monitoring our response will determine what takes root there, as through His power, we remove the thorns of resentment, weeds of lust, and roots of bitterness,

11. Through His cleansing and sanctifying power, we can replace them with the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

12. Scripture gives the reason to guard your heart when it says, **“...for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)**

13. Wellspring is literally, “outgoings,” a term usually used in a geographic context to describe the boundaries of a given territory.

BACKGROUND: (Pictures of Megiddo)The most important piece of real estate in any town in Israel was the spring that provided water to that town. In ninth-century B.C., Megiddo, an elaborate water system was built, including a shaft nearly one hundred feet deep and a tunnel over two hundred feet long, all through solid rock. The purpose for such a costly system was to bring the water from a camouflaged spring safely inside the city walls and secure the city in case of siege.**

14. As the living stream issues from the physical heart in its normal, healthy condition, to vitalize and nourish every part of the body, so from the pure, healthy heart go forth good feelings, purposes, thoughts, words, and actions, all of which as they spring from the inner life of the soul, tend to conserve and increase that life more and more.

15. Be diligent to guard your hearts.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Picture of him or him becoming president) When Harry Truman became president, House Speaker Sam Rayburn took him aside and said, “From here on out, you’re going to have lots of people around you. They’ll try to put a wall around you and cut you off from any ideas but theirs. They’ll tell you what a great man you are, Harry. But, you and I both know you ain’t.” Rayburn wasn’t trying to insult Truman. He was simply warning the new president to be on his guard. The Bible tells us to do the same thing with our heart. We need to guard our hearts because the heart is the seat of our affections, and therefore of our decisions.

16. The term 'guard' is an imperative command that means 'to watch, preserve, guard from dangers; guard with fidelity; keep secret and close, blockade.'
17. This verb is related to a word which describes a prison guard keeping watch over a prisoner in a cell (posting a guard, a guard-house, a guard post).
18. Since God commands it, then we can carry it out, in His power.
19. Guard your heart against pride and pollution of the world.
20. Guard your heart by guarding what you read, for the words of the world could take up residence in your heart.
21. Guard your heart by guarding what you watch, for the pictures of the world can take up residence in your heart.
22. Guard your heart by guarding what you listen to, for what you hear can take up residence in your heart.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Picture of the church) I received a note from a young person who had been part of our first church we pastored in Wilmington, California back in the early 80's. While pastor there, I received a call from one of our precious ladies close to ninety who did not drive. She was concerned about a friend who was all alone about 45 minutes away. Two other elderly ladies brought the lady who called to the church and we all got in my car and went over there. It was a sad and tragic site. The lady was desperately ill. We called and had her taken to the hospital where she was admitted. Her house was putrid by neglect. The ladies cleaned up her refrigerator, which was full of food that was rotten and covered with mold, for she had not been able to care for herself.

23. The junk of the world will cause rot in the heart if you leave it there.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (James 1:27)

24. What are you letting into your heart?

25. We must take guarding our hearts seriously, for it is the wellspring of our lives.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

26. We must guard the heart so it does not stray.

ILLUSTRATION: (*Picture of it or map with location) The Hibernia oil platform in the North Atlantic is 189 miles (315 kilometers) east-southeast of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. The total structure, from the ocean floor to the top of the derrick, is 738 feet high and cost over \$6 billion to build. The production platform *Hibernia* is the world's largest oil platform and consists of a 37,000-tonne integrated topsides facility mounted on a 600,000-tonne gravity base structure. The platform was towed to its final site, and 450,000 tonnes of solid ballast were added to secure it in place. It is stationary because it sits in the middle of "iceberg alley," where icebergs can be as large as ocean liners. Sixteen huge concrete teeth surround the

Hibernia. These teeth were an expensive addition, designed to distribute the force of an iceberg over the entire structure and into the seabed, should one ever get close. Radio operators plot and monitor all icebergs within 27 miles (45 kilometers). Any that come close are "lassoed" and towed away from the platform by powerful supply ships. Smaller ones are simply diverted using the ship's high-pressure water cannons or with propeller wash. As rugged and as strong as this platform is, and as prepared as it is for icebergs to strike it, the owners have no intention of allowing an iceberg to even come close. It is built to withstand a million ton iceberg, with designers claiming it can actually withstand a 6 million ton iceberg with reparable damage. What's amazing is that a million-ton iceberg is expected only once every 500 years. One as large as 6-million-tons comes around once every 10,000 years. Yet, they prepared to guard against an iceberg that might damage it.

27. How committed are you to guarding your heart?

****POINT TO REMEMBER: KEEP THE PRIORITY OF GUARDING YOUR HEART, FOR YOUR HEART WILL DETERMINE YOUR LIFE**

III. (vs.24-27) KEEP A LIFESTYLE THAT MATCHES THE HEART OF GOD

1. Actions flow out of the heart.
2. With his great emphasis on proper conduct and ethics, the wise man also emphasizes the fact that only when one's heart is right will one's actions be truly right.
3. As is the fountain so must be the streams, so we must guard the other areas of our lives.
4. These verses speak about a lifestyle that matches the heart of God.

A. (v.24) WATCH YOUR WORDS

"Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips." (Proverbs 4:24)

1. The mouth can get us into a lot of trouble.

"He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity." (Proverbs 21:23)

Proverbs 13:3, "He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin."

ILLUSTRATION: In one of the Crock Hunter's shows, he was unexpectedly bitten by a small, non-poisonous snake he was holding. He was explaining that the creature would only strike if it perceived movement...and so, he held very still. That is, except for his lips, which moved as he explained himself...and then the little thing quickly bit him right on the mouth!

2. It was his mouth that got him in trouble and caused him pain.
3. Sooner or later, the mouth reveals what is in your heart, for words flow out of the heart.
4. The call is for speech that is wise, straightforward and not deceptive.
5. The twisted mouth and perverse lips do not match a guarded heart.

6. We are to put it away, having nothing to do with it, keeping it far away from our lips.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building other up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29)

7. Be intentional in guarding your speech.

ILLUSTRATION: Dave McLaughlin, in one of his writings, tells, “I was at a bagpipe competition—yes, I’m Scottish—and I expected the judges to be fans of bagpipe music. So why, I wondered, did they have their hands over their ears? Inflated bagpipes naturally make a steady droning noise. The actual music is played over and above that. In covering their ears, the judges shut out some of the low pitched noise while still hearing the higher pitched melody.”

Low level noise surrounds us wherever we go. A lot of it comes out of our mouths. Imagine if every word you spoke in a day were laid out for a judge to examine by the standard of usefulness or kindness. How many of them would be deemed offensive or simply unnecessary noise? If we thought about it, we could put our mouths to a lot better by speaking words that were helpful, kind, encouraging, even inspirational.

8. Dave McLaughlin commented, “One of the downsides of omnipresence for God must surely be that He’s around to hear every trivial, obnoxious, thoughtless word we let spill from our mouths.”

9. Let’s make sure he doesn’t feel like covering his ears when we open our pipes.

B. (v.25) WATCH YOUR FOCUS

“Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.” (Proverbs 4:25)

1. We have a choice as to where we look and what we look at.
2. Your eyes and gaze should be focused on the path ahead.
3. I believe both the admonition to watch where you are going and what you are watching and to show unswerving determination to your task are included in this instruction.

“A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth.” (Proverbs 17:24)

4. Looking in the wrong direction can be costly.
5. Because of their wickedness God chose to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot and His family was warned, **“Flee for your lives! Don’t look back and don’t stop anywhere in the plain!...” (Genesis 19:17)** Many of you know the story how when they were fleeing Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.
6. She did not look straight ahead in obedience to what God had before her.

EXAMPLE: (*Picture of horse and trolley). The main entrance at Disneyland offers vehicles that you can ride up and down Main Street on. Among those vehicles are the horse-drawn trolleys. As of the latest

information I received, they have 28 large “Draft Horses,” or horses adapted to pulling heavy loads, they keep on their Circle D Corral Working Ranch, operated by 48 cast members and located backstage, north of Frontierland. Their horses’ breeds are Percheron, Clydesdale, Belgian and Shire. No Disney horse works more than 4 hours a day, 3 days a week. If you look at them, you will notice that they all wear blinders when out working with the people. Blinders, also known as blinkers or winkers, are a piece of horse tack that restrict the horse's vision, keeping them focused .

7. God wants us to keep our eyes focused.
8. Keep your eyes focused upon the Lord and He will keep your gaze in the right direction.

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

ILLUSTRATION:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace. (Helen H. Lemmel)

C. (vs. 26-27) WATCH YOUR WALK

“Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.” (Proverbs 4:26)

1. Don't take paths that will crumble or give way.
2. Consider carefully the paths you take.
3. The paths we take determine our walk, so we must weigh out our course of action.
4. Ponder the path your feet take and the choices you make.
5. Watch where you put your feet and the ground upon which you standing.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

6. Keep your eyes upon the Lord and He will make your paths straight.
7. Listen to the Lord so you can hear Him say, “This is the way; walk in it.”

“Do not swerve to the right or to the left; keep your foot from evil.”

(Proverbs 4:27)

8. Stay on the straight and narrow, in other words.
9. Avoid evil actions.
10. Take responsibility for the places you go.

“Avoid every kind of evil.” (I Thessalonians 5:22)

11. Don't walk in the areas of evil.
12. Evil lurks around every path.
13. This is a warning that needs to be heeded.

ILLUSTRATION: Benjamin Franklin said, “Watch the little things; a small leak will sink a great ship.”

14. Every step we take matters, so keep your foot from evil.
15. The power to talk straight, look straight, and to walk straight comes only from the heart that is right with God.
16. God cares about the condition of our heart.
17. God wants you to keep a lifestyle that matches His heart.
18. He can do a work in our hearts.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:27)

19. What does God want to do in your heart today?

ILLUSTRATION: On February 24, 1948, one of the most unusual operations in medical history took place in Ohio State University’s department of research surgery. A stony sheath was removed from around the heart of Harry Besharra, a man thirty years of age. When only a boy, he had been shot accidentally by a playmate with a .22-caliber rifle. The bullet had lodged in his heart but had not caused his death. However, a lime deposit had begun to form over the protective covering of the heart and gradually was strangling it. The operation was a delicate one separating the ribs and moving the left lung to one side. Then the stony coating was lifted from the heart as an orange is peeled. Immediately, the pressure of the heart was reduced, and it responded by expanding and pumping normally. “I feel a thousand per cent better already,” said the patient soon after the operation.

You would think that having a hard, stony sheath around your heart would help to protect it, but that was not the case. It had to be removed from this man in order for the heart to function properly.

20. God can work in your heart. What does God want to do in your heart today?

21. God can do a work in your heart.

****POINT TO REMEMBER: KEEP A LIFESTYLE THAT MATCHES THE HEART OF GOD BY LETTING GOD WORK IN YOUR HEART**

CONCLUSION: IT’S A MATTER OF THE HEART

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

- **KEEP THE TRUTHS OF GOD’S WORD WITHIN YOUR HEART FOR THEY WILL KEEP YOUR HEART SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY**
- **KEEP THE PRIORITY OF GUARDING YOUR HEART, FOR YOUR HEART WILL DETERMINE YOUR LIFE**
- **KEEP A LIFESTYLE THAT MATCHES THE HEART OF GOD BY LETTING GOD WORK IN YOUR HEART**

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