

## Teaching for 11-28-07

### Post a Guard

There is a small, powerful, and often overlooked verse in Proverbs that is a good reminder in these challenging days. It is an admonition to be ever diligent and watchful over the issues of the heart: *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life* (Prov. 4:23).

This verse is packed with truth. We need to soak in it and apply it to our lives. Our supreme duty is to guard our hearts, and do so with diligence. The Hebrew words for *guard* and *diligence* both have the connotation of setting a guard. The idea is that we must watch over our hearts by setting a guard with great diligence, meaning with all of our efforts and unrelenting attention. We must “set the borders” or boundaries of our hearts, lest we allow unwanted assassins to have access to the secret places of our lives.

A survey of the Internet should be enough to demonstrate why it is so important to put a continuous guard over our hearts. With every click of the mouse, there are evils and blatant sins that confront unguarded eyes and hearts. We know there are numerous cracks in the borders when we hear so many stories of leaders of large ministries whose lives have been found to be full of immorality and sin. Anger, violence, division, judgment, and deception have infected many of God’s people because they have not taken care to put a guard on their hearts.

Jesus made reference to the importance of the heart in Matthew 15. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were concerned that Jesus’ disciples were not keeping the “tradition of the elders.” They were upset about breaking tradition, while Jesus was concerned about breaking God’s commands for the sake of tradition! Jesus pointed out that it is possible for us to speak all the right words, but have a heart that is far away from God. Jesus goes on to teach that defilement is not about what we touch or eat, but rather, it is a matter of what is in the heart (vs. 10-20).

### How to Set the Guard

How do we put up a guard over our hearts? The Word of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is our sure standard. No matter how logical or sentimental the words of a person may be, the ultimate authority is always the Word of God. The Holy Spirit of God takes that Word and enlivens it and applies it to our hearts for our personal application.

As we study and become familiar with the Word and the ways of God, we will know what to guard our hearts against—such as pride or an over-inflated sense of our own importance. If we know God’s Word, we will be convicted about lack of love for the Lord and others. We will confess resentments and anger—and will refuse to hold on to offenses. We will not be distracted by the desire for power and prestige or the building up of our own ministries and reputations. Nothing will turn our attention away from a pure devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Accountability to other godly friends will also help us to maintain a proper guard over our hearts. We all have those blind areas in our lives that we do not see clearly. We should have people in our lives who have permission to speak the difficult truth to us when they see that we are letting

our guard down. This goes beyond participation in a small group, although that is also very helpful. It means having at least one or two close friends of the same sex who can keep us accountable and speak truth into our lives.

### **Due Diligence**

Have you truly and earnestly been keeping guard over your heart? Are you approaching it with a relentless diligence that shows how important it is to you? When you are home alone, do you compromise in what you read or watch on television? Does your speech always reflect the purity of a true Christ-follower—or do you participate in conversations that reflect an unguarded heart?

As you read this, you have perhaps realized that there are indeed some areas in your life where the guard has been let down. It is possible that already the intruders have slipped into your life. The Word is still true when it says that today, if you hear His voice, you should not harden your hearts (Hebrews 3:7). Allow the Lord to help you reestablish a diligent guard over your heart so that what flows out of it will be godly, pure, and honoring to Jesus Christ.

*Lord, forgive us where we have slacked off in keeping a guard over our hearts. Help us to keep diligent in standing guard so that all that flows from our hearts will truly reflect the purity that comes from Your heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.*