

Guard Your Heart Discussion Notes - June 27, 2026

1. What is one thing you are pretty careful about protecting or locking up? What does that reveal about what you value?

The heart is not the seat of feelings. It is the command center of the human person; the place where you think, decide, and choose. The sermon opened by correcting a common misread: guarding your heart is not about protecting your emotions or being careful in dating. It is about watching over the source that governs everything else. Proverbs 4:23 frames it this way: you do not guard the river, you guard the headwater. The problem is that the source itself is compromised. The sermon offered three diagnostic questions to assess the condition of the heart: Does what people see match what God knows? Do I change to align with God, or do I rename sin to excuse it? And am I closer to God this year than I was last year? The call was not to perform better external behavior, but to guard the spring because a guarded heart, surrendered to Christ, is the one from which rivers of living water eventually flow.

Read Proverbs 4:23

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

Proverbs 4:23 sits at the center of a larger passage (vv. 20-27) that moves through the body-ears, eyes, heart, mouth, feet; placing the heart at the hub that governs all the rest. The instruction comes from a father to his son, drawing on Solomon's God-given wisdom. The phrase "springs of life" pictures the heart as a headwater source: a small, hidden, quiet place that determines the quality of everything that flows downstream from it. The stakes of this verse are not primarily emotional, they are directional. What you allow to form at the source will eventually show up in every part of your life.

2. The sermon described the heart as a command center - not the seat of feelings, but the place where you think, decide, and choose. How does that definition change the way you understand what it actually means to guard it?

Read Psalm 139:23-24

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalm 139 is David's extended meditation on the fact that God knows him completely. He knows his sitting and rising, his words before he speaks them, every moment of his life. After 22 verses describing that total knowledge, David does not shrink from it. He leans into it. What makes this prayer striking is its posture: David is not performing a self-audit. He is inviting God to do the searching. That is a different kind of heart-guarding than white-knuckled self-discipline. It is an open-handed surrender to the one who actually knows what is there.

3. David does not try to search his own heart, rather he asks God to search it for him. What does that kind of open-handed, God-invited examination actually look like in your day-to-day life? What is one practice or habit that helps you stay in that posture?

Read Luke 6:45

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

Just before this verse Jesus uses the image of a tree and its fruit: you do not get figs from thornbushes. The word "abundance" is defined as surplus or overflow. Meaning, what spills out when the container is full. Jesus ties the condition of the heart directly to speech, which means words function as a kind of diagnostic. This teaching cuts against the common instinct to manage behavior through effort and willpower. Jesus is saying the real work happens deeper at the level of what the heart is full of. Behavior management that skips the heart is just pruning dead branches.

4. Jesus says what overflows from our mouths reveals what is in our hearts. Do you think people are generally honest with themselves about what their words and habits actually say about their inner life? What makes that kind of self-honesty so difficult and what makes it easier?

Read John 7:38

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

Jesus spoke these words on the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles which was a festival where priests poured water before the altar each day, recalling God's provision in the wilderness. Against that backdrop, Jesus invites anyone who thirsts to come to him. The imagery shifts from the small, hidden spring of Proverbs 4:23 to rivers - plural, vast, public, life-giving to others. John 7:39 clarifies that this refers to the Spirit given to those who believe. The inward discipline of guarding the heart does not stay private. Over time, the faithfulness poured into the source becomes overflow that reaches and sustains the people around you.

5. The sermon closed with this idea: you guard the spring in private, and God turns it into rivers that flow to others. Who in your life is downstream from your heart and what is one specific thing you can do this week to be more intentional about what flows toward them?

Prayer Points

- For honest hearts - that what we show others would match what God already sees.
- For continued transformation - that God would complete the work of replacing hearts of stone with hearts of flesh.
- For diligence at the source - courage to guard the headwater, not just manage what comes downstream.

DEEPER DIVE: Solomon - A Life of Guarded and Unguarded Hearts

Solomon is the man behind Proverbs 4:23. He wrote it as a father passing hard-won wisdom to a son, drawing on the extraordinary gift of understanding God gave him early in his reign. That

makes his life one of the most instructive and sobering in all of Scripture: the man who wrote the command to guard the heart did not ultimately guard his own. His story is not a sudden collapse but a long, gradual drift; a slow drift from a surrendered, listening heart toward accumulation, accommodation, and eventually idolatry. Studying Solomon is not an exercise in judging a flawed and ancient king. It is a mirror held up to anyone who knows the truth well enough to teach it.

Read 1 Kings 3:5-9

"At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, 'Ask what I shall give you.' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding heart to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?'"

This is Solomon at his best. God offers him anything, and Solomon asks not for wealth, long life, or military victory but for a "hearing heart". The Hebrew "lev shomea" literally means a heart that listens. He is oriented outward toward his people and upward, toward God. His request delights the Lord, who grants both the wisdom he asked for and the things he did not. This moment captures what an unguarded, surrendered heart looks like in its early beauty: humble about its own limitations, focused on serving others, and genuinely dependent on God. It is also the high-water mark of Solomon's spiritual life which makes what follows all the more striking.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-4

"Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father."

The word "heart" appears five times in four verses. This seems like a deliberate echo of the language Solomon himself used in Proverbs. The narrator is drawing a line between the teaching and the man's life. Solomon wasn't undone by one dramatic rebellion. He was undone by repeated, willful compromises; each one dressed up as wisdom or political necessity. God had warned Israel plainly not to intermarry with foreign nations, and the reason was explicit: "they will turn away your heart after their gods" (1 Kings 11:2). Solomon heard that warning and chose otherwise, again and again. The danger wasn't that he stumbled into sin, it's that he walked into it gradually enough that it never felt like a fall. But compromise has a way of accumulating, and what starts as a small bend in the source eventually changes the direction of the whole stream. By the time the text says "when Solomon was old," the drift was already complete. It was the slow calcification the sermon described: a heart of flesh quietly hardening back toward stone.

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-14; 2:10-11

"I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind... And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."

Ecclesiastes is traditionally understood as Solomon's own retrospective; the Preacher looking back from the far end of a life lived at scale. He tried wisdom, pleasure, projects, wealth, and achievement. He "kept his heart from no pleasure" - which is the opposite of the instruction in Proverbs 4:23. The result was not satisfaction but emptiness: vanity, a striving after wind. What makes Ecclesiastes so valuable is that Solomon does not soften the conclusion. He lets the failure speak plainly. The book functions as both confession and warning: when the heart is unguarded, it will reach for more and more in an attempt to fill what only God can fill, and the reaching itself becomes the cage.

Deeper Dive Discussion Questions

1. Solomon knew the truth about guarding the heart well enough to write it down as instruction for others, yet he did not live it. What does his life suggest about the gap between knowing a truth and actually living it? Where do you see that gap in your own life?
2. Solomon's drift happened through repeated disobedience that he likely justified as strategic or necessary in the moment. What are some ways believers today rationalize stepping over clear biblical boundaries and why is that kind of slow drift often harder to recognize than an outright rebellion?
3. Ecclesiastes reads like a man who tried everything and arrived at emptiness. What does Solomon's late-life reflection suggest about the warning signs we should take seriously much earlier in a season- before we reach the end of it and look back?