

note: all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted

Key Scripture Proverbs 4:23 - 27

- ▶(23) **Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.**
- (24)**Turn away from you the crooked mouth, and put perverse lips far from you.**
- (25) **Let your eyes look straight ahead, and let your eyelids look straight before you.**
- (26) **Study the track of your feet, then all your ways will be established.**
- (27) **Do not turn to the right hand or to the left; turn your foot aside from evil.**

Heart disease is rampant in America and is the leading cause of death for one in every four people. Hardening of the arteries, congestive heart failure, heart murmurs and other diseases effect millions of people on an ongoing bases. What is more difficult than all of these disorders of the body are the spiritual disorders of what the Bible calls the heart. It declares that our hearts are diseased spiritually without reservation:

- ▶Jer 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

There are many theories in psychology about mental, emotional and behavioral problems with people, however the answer to this diagnosis of the spiritual heart is actually in the next verse.

- ▶Jer 17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. "

Our heart is directly connected to our actions and when our Creator searches the hearts He looks at it through what we do. To begin, when we speak of the heart of mankind, we are talking about the very core of our being:

- ▶Pro 27:19 "As face reflects face in the water, so the heart of man reflects a man."

It is just as critical for our physical well-being that we have our physical heart checked out and we know and are aware of physical problems we may have as it is critical, and perhaps even more so, that we are aware of the spiritual condition of our heart. And, just as the American Heart Association can tell us what to eat and not to eat to care for our physical hearts, so the Scriptures present us with a healthy diet for our spiritual hearts. One example of a Scriptural heart healthy diet includes what we should stay away from:

- ▶Eph 4:31 "Let all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and tumult, and evil speaking be put away from you, along with all evil things."

WE ARE BEGINNING OUR STUDY OF THE HUMAN HEART, AND IN THIS STUDY WE WILL LEARN WHAT THAT MEANS - TO GUARD OUR HEARTS. IN THE SAME WAY WE PAY ATTENTION TO LOW-

FAT DIETS AND EXERCISE AND DO THE THINGS WE SHOULD TO TAKE CARE OF OUR PHYSICAL HEARTS, WE WILL LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE A LOW-SIN LEADING TO A NO-SIN DIET IN ORDER TO TAKE CARE OF OUR SPIRITUAL HEART IN A WAY THAT LEADS TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH. YOU MAY WANT TO DRAW LITTLE RED HEARTS WITH A CHECK MARK IN THEM IN YOUR BIBLE NEXT TO VERSES LIKE THIS TO MARK A SPIRITUALLY HEART HEALTHY DIET MUCH LIKE A RESTAURANT MENU MARKS A PHYSICALLY HEART HEALTHY DIET.

In our study we will explore in depth what the Bible means when it says “heart.” We will explore what heart is in a Hebrew language context, and how this differs from contemporary definitions.

This understanding will allow us to learn to approach God on His terms, and from that, how to live pleasing to Him. We will learn how to bring biblical healing to our lives where needed and begin to learn how to help others who are having heart problems.

This way of life noted here in Proverbs - keeping our hearts - is central to loving God and loving others and the Bible speaks to this issue from cover to cover.

WHAT IS OUR “HEART”?

When we think of heart we tend to think of emotion, as in “They gave it their whole heart.” We usually mean they put all the emotional energy they had into whatever it is they were giving themselves to. And often, we are told to “follow your heart” speaking to some kind of intuitive process that will lead us where we would like to go. In the same way, we would tell someone to whom we are very close that we “love them with our whole heart.”

What is your current understanding of “heart”? Briefly describe heart on the following lines.

God asks the same thing of our heart towards Him as we give to those very close to us.

▶"And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. . ." (Deuteronomy 6:5-6 NASB 1977)

Does this then mean I am to get all emotionally worked up about my relationship with God? Not necessarily. Proverbs 4, our first chapter key text is not telling you or I to let it all go emotionally. Rather we are to do something watchful with our hearts.

✚ **PROV 4:23** **Keep** your heart with all diligence.

THE WORD FOR “KEEP” IS A WORD THAT IS USED FREQUENTLY IN SCRIPTURE, IT IS STRONGS #5341 נָצַר נָצַר NÂTSAR NAW-TSAR’ A PRIMITIVE ROOT; TO GUARD, IN A GOOD SENSE (TO PROTECT, MAINTAIN, OBEY, ETC.) OR A BAD ONE (TO CONCEAL, ETC.): TO WATCH OVER, KEEP, PRESERVE.

This word is used in Psa 34:13 *Keep* your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile; It is used again in Psalm 78:7 regarding those who “*keep* His commandments,” in Ps 119:2 of “those who *observe* His testimonies” and in Ps 119:34 where the Psalmist asks for understanding “that I may *observe* Your torah.”

It is used of guarding a vineyard in Isa 27:3, or of guarding a fortification in Nahum 2:1. We are told to *natsar* or watch our mouth (Prov 13:3) our tongues (Ps 34:13) and our lips (Ps 141:3).

In Psalm 141:3 the writer asks God to “set a guard. . .over my mouth, *keep watch* (*natsar*) over the door of my lips.

THIS WORD FOR “GUARD” IS STRONGS #8104 שָׁמַר שָׁמַר SHÂMAR SHAW-MAR’ A PRIMITIVE ROOT; PROPERLY TO HEDGE ABOUT (AS WITH THORNS), THAT IS, GUARD; GENERALLY TO PROTECT, ATTEND TO, ETC.: - BEWARE, BE CIRCUMSPECT, TAKE HEED (TO SELF), KEEP (-ER, SELF), MARK, LOOK NARROWLY, OBSERVE, PRESERVE, REGARD, RESERVE, SAVE (SELF), SURE, (THAT LAY) WAIT (FOR), WATCH (-MAN).

Though close in meaning, *shamar* carries the idea of watching over in the sense of tending to something as Adam was placed in the garden to tend it (Gen 2:15); also the man Harhas as the one who tended to the priest’s garments (2 Kings 22:14) and Satan who was ordered to tend the life of Job although given the power to harm other aspects (Job 2: 6)



SO WE ARE NOT TO TEND OUR HEARTS, WHICH WOULD CARRY THE IDEA OF GIVING OUR HEART WHAT IT DESIRES, BUT TO GUARD IT SO THAT IT DOES NOT GO AFTER WRONG DESIRES.

Reflecting on your life, have there been times when you tended your heart and should have guarded it? What was the result and what could you have done differently?

PROV 4:23 Keep your **heart** with all diligence.

Heart in the Hebrew Bible is a translation of the word *leb* pronounced “lev”, a word that means so much more than merely our emotions.

STRONGS # 3820 לֵב LĒB (PRONOUNCED LEV) IS A FORM OF H3824; THE HEART; ALSO USED (FIGURATIVELY) VERY WIDELY FOR THE FEELINGS, THE WILL AND EVEN THE INTELLECT; LIKEWISE FOR THE CENTRE OF ANYTHING.

Key to understanding our heart is its relationship to what we think (our intellect), how you feel (our emotions) and what we do (our will).

The word itself is based upon two Hebrew letters. A *lamed* ל and a *beth* ב. The *lamed* is picture of a staff, such as the staff in the hand of a ruler or shepherd and means authority. The *beth* is in the shape of a nomadic tent and carries the idea of being inside as a family resides within the tent. Together they mean the authority within.

One example of this use of heart as the authority within is when Nehemiah had returned to Jerusalem.

Neh 5:7 I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, “You are exacting interest, each from his brother.” And I held a great assembly against them (ESV)

“Counsel with myself” in Hebrew is actually וימלך לבי עלי *vay’yim’malek libi alay* which includes *malak* - to become king or queen, to rule; *leb* heart and *al* upon, with. A literal translation of “counsel within myself” is “and he ruled heart of me within me” and directly carries the core meaning of heart. The LITV translates as:

Neh 5:7 Then my heart ruled within myself, and I contended with the nobles and the magistrates. And I said to them, You are each man lending at interest, from his brother. And I held a great assembly against them.

The word heart carries with it this idea of within and it is used in the Scriptures to refer to the most inner part of things including a tree (2 Sam 18:14), the heart of the sea (Ex 15:8; Jonah 2:3); the inner most part of both the heavens (Deut 4:11); and the earth (Matt 12:40), a text referring to Yeshua’s burial.



HEART IS THE TOTALITY OF OUR INNER LIFE AND IS THE STOREHOUSE OF WHO WE ARE!

What have you learned up to this point about your own heart that is new to your understanding. What insights have you gained?

Our heart operates as a treasury of wisdom as in Prov 2:10a: “when wisdom enters into your heart;” a storehouse of emotion as in Ps 13:2 “having sorrow in my heart every day” and as the mediator of our will as in 1 Chron 29:18 “O Yehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever for the intent of the thoughts of the heart of your people, and prepare their heart toward You;.” Because it is so central to what we do, Scripture notes that to know someone’s heart is to know the actual person and to pursue someone’s heart is to pursue who they are.

🔑 1Sa 13:14 “But now, your reign is not going to stand. יהוה (the Hebrew consonants in English as YHVH is the name of God) shall seek for Himself a man after His own heart, and יהוה shall command him to be leader over His people, because you have not guarded what יהוה commanded you.” TS 2009



THIS MAN AFTER YHVH’S OWN HEART WOULD BE ONE WHO WOULD CARRY OUT WHAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY GOD TO CARRY OUT. THIS RULER WOULD KNOW GOD AND GOD WOULD KNOW THIS RULER.

🔑 1Sa 16:7 And Yehovah said to Samuel, do not look on his appearance, nor to the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. For man does not see what He sees. For man looks for the eyes, but Yehovah looks for the heart. (LITV)

For the person pursuing God, while others may take pride in appearance and focus on how they look, this is only the wrapper of the contents. God knows what constitutes a person's essential self, and He looks not on the wrappings but upon the heart.

HE CALLS US TO DO THE SAME!

This is summarized by Yeshua when he says in John 7:24 "Do not judge according to sight, but judge with righteous judgment."

Also with Paul who wrote

✚ "Then, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, and we have been known to God; and I also hope to have been known in your consciences. For we do not again commend ourselves to you, but are giving you occasion of glorying on our behalf, that you may have it toward those boasting in appearance and not in heart." (2Co 5:11-12)

Outside boasting in appearance versus the inner heart. This heart is built on living with good according to what God declares good and rejecting evil according to what God declares evil. Yeshua taught on this repeatedly and uses trees and treasure to illustrate that the heart is that part of you and I that orders our lives and acts as our inner treasury.

✚43 For there is not a good tree that produces bad fruit, nor a bad tree that produces good fruit. 44 For each tree is known from its own fruit. For they do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 The good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart. And the evil man brings forth evil out of the evil treasure of his heart, for his mouth speaks out of the abundance of his heart. (Luke 6:43-45)

Our hearts are our personal treasuries, and the abundance of what is in the treasury produces the fruit that shows up in words and actions. The foundation of who you or I are as a person is how our heart is constructed and to what degree it treasures that which is evil or treasures that which is good.



SO RIGHT NOW, AT THIS VERY MOMENT IT IS YOUR HEART THAT IS WEIGHING EVERYTHING THAT YOU ARE READING. IT IS YOUR HEART THAT IS ACCEPTING OR REJECTING, QUESTIONING OR SETTING ASIDE. IT IS YOUR HEART THAT IS THE GLASSES THROUGH WHICH YOU SEE THE WORLD. IT IS YOUR HEART THAT CREATES YOUR VIEW OF THE WORLD, THAT WEIGHS AND JUDGES AND CONSIDERS AND FEELS AND ACTS ACCORDING TO WHAT IS CONTAINED WITHIN IT.

WHEN WE SPEAK OF STUDYING OUR HEARTS WE ARE REALLY SPEAKING OF STUDYING OUR WORLDVIEWS. HOW YOU OR I VIEW REALITY CAN ONLY BE COMPREHENDED THROUGH TERMS OF HOW THE BIBLE DESCRIBES THE HEART. IN OTHER WORDS, TO GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER, WE HAVE TO STUDY THE MATTERS OF THE HEART. TO SEE A WORLDVIEW WE MUST

UNDERSTAND THE HEART THAT CONSTRUCTED IT AND TO KNOW WHO YOU AND I ARE WE MUST ATTEND TO AND GUARD OUR HEARTS.

DILLIGENCE

Pro 4:23 Keep your heart with all **diligence**, for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Diligence is a fascinating word which appears to not mean that at all.

It is the Hebrew word *mishmar* which as noted earlier, is the noun form of *shamar* and means a place of confinement like a jail or prison, a place of guarding and observing someone who is in custody. A *mishmar* was the place where Joseph was confined, and it is used of the guard set up by Nehemiah to watch over the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in much the same way as the *mishmar hagvul*, or guard of the border exists in Israel today. Their job is to keep Israel secure within its borders and includes another organization they work with called *Mishmeret Yesha*, which trains settlers in how to secure their borders. *Mishmeret Yesha* has five principles, the first of which should define how we guard our hearts.

“The Torah of Israel and the words of the prophets are the ideological basis for the Nation of Israel. Any and all national decisions will be based on this and only this ideology.”



FOR OUR PURPOSE, “THE TORAH OF ISRAEL’S GOD AND THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS ARE THE IDEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR HOW I GUARD MY HEART. ANY AND ALL PERSONAL DECISIONS WILL BE BASED ON THIS AND ONLY THIS IDEOLOGY.”

“But wait,” you may be thinking. “Doesn’t torah mean law?”

STRONGS #H8451 תּוֹרָה תּוֹרָה TÔRĀH TO-RAW’ FROM H3384; A PRECEPT OR STATUTE, ESPECIALLY THE DECALOGUE OR PENTATEUCH: - LAW.

THE WORD *TORAH* IS RELATED TO THE VERB *YARAH*.

STRONGS #H3384 יָרָא יָרָא YĀRĀH YĀRĀ’ YAW-RAW’ A PRIMITIVE ROOT; PROPERLY TO FLOW AS WATER (THAT IS, TO RAIN); TRANSITIVELY TO LAY OR THROW (ESPECIALLY AN ARROW, THAT IS, TO SHOOT); FIGURATIVELY TO POINT OUT (AS IF BY AIMING THE FINGER), TO TEACH: - (+) ARCHER, CAST, DIRECT, INFORM, INSTRUCT, LAY, SHEW, SHOOT, TEACH (-ER, -ING), THROUGH.

Yarah is used of God speaking to Moses and telling him when he goes to Pharaoh he will not be going alone and that what he would say would be taught to him.

Exo 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach (*yarah*) you what you shall speak.”

Most often translated as “law” *torah* is the subject of what is being taught and although it does contain law, *torah* does not equal to law.

“Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching” (*torah*).
Prov. 1:8

“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching (*torah*); incline your ears to the words of my mouth!” Ps.78:1

“My son, do not forget my teaching (*torah*), but let your heart keep my commandments,”
Prov 3:1

“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching (*torah*) a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,” Prov 6:23

“Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching (*torah*) of our God, you people of Gomorrah!” Sarah 1:10

REREAD THE KEY STATEMENT ABOVE. IF YOU THINK OF *TORAH* AS TEACHING AND NOT LAW SPECIFICALLY, DOES IT CHANGE YOUR OPINION OF WHAT WE CALL “LAW” IN THE SCRIPTURES? IF SO HOW, AND IF NOT HOW NOT.

ISSUES

Pro 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *are* the **issues** of life.

When we think of issues we tend to think of problems as in “he or she has issues, stay away from them.” But that is not at all what is meant here. Some translations use the word springs and that is part of the picture. ESV translates “For from it flow the springs of life.” The word for issues or springs is *totsa’ah* which can mean an outgoing, like a spring but also an extremity or border. Keep your heart with all dilligence for out of it are the *totsaah* the flowings or borders of life.

STRONGS #H8444 תוֹצֵאת תוֹצֵאת TÔTSÂ'ÂH TÔTSÂ'ÂH TO-TSAW-AW' FROM H3318; (ONLY IN PLURAL COLLECTIVE) EXIT, THAT IS, (GEOGRAPHICAL) BOUNDARY, OR (FIGURATIVELY) DELIVERANCE, (ACTIVELY) SOURCE: - BORDER (-S), GOING (-S) FORTH (OUT), ISSUES, OUTGOINGS.

If the heart is like a spring, and Yeshua has showed us that, it is a storehouse of good or evil flowing out from our heart and into our lives and the lives of others. What constitutes our life's issues - comes out of - our hearts, and just like a spring, nothing can come out unless it was in there first.

Mar 4:24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.



YOUR STANDARD OF MEASURE IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING ACCORDING TO HOW YOU GUARD YOUR HEART. WHAT YOU ALLOW IN AND GIVE YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION TO IS WHO YOU WILL BECOME, AND OUT OF WHO YOU WILL BECOME, YOUR LIFE WILL BE ORDERED.

✚Prov 2:2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding;

Perhaps CS Lewis sums up this part of our study in *The Magician's Nephew* when Uncle Andrew and the Cabby and the children all witness the founding of Narnia. "It has not made the same impression on him as on the Cabby and the children. For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are."

APPLICATION

1) As a starting point, today and for the coming week, pray and ask God to show you the contents of your heart and spend some time thanking Him that He has given to you such a wonderful and amazing part of who you are as your heart. Record in your journal what you learn for ongoing reference.

✚Psa 139:23 - 24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if any wicked way is in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.

2) As we begin this journey together, in addition to #1, start a journal about your heart and watch how it thinks, feels and acts through the course of this day. At the end of the day, reflect on your experience.

What came out of your heart? A treasure of good things, a treasure of evil things? Complete a short summary regarding your heart and any new awareness or renewed awareness that you have.

Ask God to give you a heart that loves what He loves and hates what He hates lining up with His definitions of good and evil. With this in mind, what would He need to do to lead you in that direction?

Your language can give you insight into the contents of your living treasury. It speaks out of what your heart holds. What would you like to have in abundance in your heart and what needs to happen to help you get there.

Anything else you would like to remember from this Chapter?
