

“Battle For Your Heart” - Colossians 3:1-17
Pastor Burt Garwood - January 14, 2018

Your Father-God knows this about you: You can give him good behavior...but so can a prisoner or a slave. You can pay him compliments...but everyone knows how to sweet-talk someone to get what they want.

- Your Father-God knows the true litmus test of your love and belief in him is to look at your heart. READ: Isaiah 29:13 & Mark 7:6. Imagine the pain this brings God.
- You know the truth about you, and who or what your heart most desires. You know who sits on the throne of your heart. God does too. (1 Samuel 16:7)
- That’s why God talks to us so much in the Bible about our hearts. READ: Deuteronomy 5:29, Mark 12:30, Colossians 3:1 & 15, Matthew 23:37.
- God is fighting for you heart because he created you. He loves you so much that he sent his Son to save you from your sins and woo your heart into a love relationship with him.
- The question is: Are you willing? Do you really know the depths and magnitude of what is at stake?

There was a couple who hired a painter to come to their house, patch the cracks, and paint the walls. But less than a month later the cracks started to reappear.

- They hired a new painter. He explained, “Your real problem isn’t a crack in the wall. Your real problem is the foundation, and until you address the foundation the cracks will keep showing up.”
- That’s often our approach to addressing the cracks in our lives. Just patch them up and paint over them. But the cracks really haven’t gone away. Our Father-God teaches us that the foundation which really needs attention is your heart.

Proverbs 4:23 “*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*”

- Your heart defines and determines who you are, how you think, and what you do.
- Because everything flows from it, your heart is the battleground where the gods go to war.

Proverbs 4:23 “Above all else...”

- God is saying, make this your greatest priority. Treat your heart like it’s your most valuable asset.
- When my grandpa Blaine had a heart attack, he started following a strict diet natural diet. He read the labels on the food and cut out all foods that in his words, “had chemicals with words I can’t pronounce. If I can’t pronounce it, then it isn’t going into my body.” He was a rancher. His strict diet allowed him to ranch until he was 89 years old. Grandpa Blaine was committed to doing everything he could to protect his heart.

Our tendency is to give attention to what people see. As long as things look good on the outside then we tend to not give much concern to what’s on the inside.

- Spiritually speaking—instead of focusing on our hearts, we often make our focus “behavior modification.” If I can just perform better. So we work on our game face for public accolades. But all the time inside, our heart is in critical condition.

Proverbs 4:23 “...guard Your heart...”

- This word, "guard" means to *diligently protect against the enemy.*

- When we are commanded to guard, an enemy is assumed. When your guard is up, you aren’t passive. You are pro-active. You have set up a defense.

Proverbs 4:23 “...for everything you do flows from it.”

- Your heart beats 100,000 times and pumps 2,000 gallons of blood every day. Everything flows through the heart, so it must be guarded.
- What’s true physically is true spiritually. In ancient Jewish culture, the heart was a metaphor for the core of a personality. It was the spiritual hub, and your life flowed from its orientation. God himself used the heart as a metaphor of a person’s core being.
- Your heart is the truth of your identity, that’s why the gods fight so fiercely for every inch of it. What god wins the war for your heart has a lot to do with how you guard it.

1. Accountability

- Sometimes accountability is almost exclusively behavior focused. Deeper accountability happens when we allow someone to see our hearts. READ: James 5:16
- Find one or two trusted friends who will help you guard your heart. Be honest with them about your struggles so that you can hold each other up in prayer.

2. Prayer

- Have you ever noticed how hard it is to pray when you are not guarding your heart?
- Prayer becomes selfish. You find yourself being distracted. You mindlessly say the words to God, a routine prayer that you’ve said many times over the years...but your heart really isn’t in it. Or you are engaged in a sin that you don’t want to give up or you find yourself angry and upset at God. Or your heart is wounded or dry and it hurts to pray at all.
- READ: Philippians 4:7. No matter what is going on, take a moment each day to focus your heart in prayer, asking your Father-God for his peace to guard your heart.

3. Scripture Meditation

- READ: Psalm 119:11. Our heart so values God’s Word that we hide it in the fortress of our heart like a treasure. We spend time soaking up his Word, thinking about it and letting it sink in so that it flows from our heart through our veins and influences everything we think and do. Our heart beats to God’s rhythm of life spelled out for us in his Word.

4. Practice Holy Thinking

- READ: Philippians 4:8. We are constantly surfing the net or watching 24-hour news and flipping through hundreds of other channels...and almost none of it is noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. Taking time every day to think about things that are pure, lovely, excellent and praiseworthy will guard your heart.

The gods are at war and they are battling for you heart. Guard it by the power of God with everything you’ve got. Because your heart is your foundation.

- We tend to put the emphasis on behavior medication because the results are immediate and obvious. That approach is like filling in cracks and painting over them.
- Instead, turn your focus to the foundation – your heart.

[Borrowed heavily from Kyle Idleman’s sermon series “Gods At War”, thanks for blessing us Kyle with this.]