

Guard Your Heart

*“Above all else, **guard your heart**, for it is the wellspring of life.”
(Proverbs 4:23, NIV84)*

1. *Make it your number one priority to care for your heart. (able all else)*

A person can be brain dead and technically alive. You don't have to think about breathing. My lungs take in air. As a matter of fact, I have to think, to hold my breath but my lungs overrule my brain at some point.

But if my heart is dead, it is all over. My brain cannot function without my heart but my heart can beat without my brain.

I told a story a couple weeks ago about the sock hop in the Alzheimer's wing of York Manor. What I forgot to say is that **sometimes we have to lose our mind to find our heart.**

- *The most significant decisions of our lives are those we make with our hearts.*

When I found Jesus my heart made the decision. It was not a rational decision but it was the most significant of all.

*“But what does it say? “The word is near you; **it is in your mouth and in your heart,**” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For **it is with your heart that you believe and are justified**, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.””
(Romans 10:8–11, NIV84)*

When I fell in love with my wife, it was mindless ... I was mindless. I lost my mind to find my heart and the love of my life.

*“While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “**Why this waste of perfume?** It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly. “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? **She has done a beautiful thing to me.** The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”” (Mark 14:3–9, NIV84)*

When we choose to live with heart we lay it all on the line, we hold nothing in reserve. Consequently, living nay the heart is painfully wonderful. You can't eliminate hurt and preserve happiness. They are two sides of the same coin.

In The Four Loves, C.S. Lewis penned a lesson on the danger of holding one's heart too tightly. He writes:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.

2. What are the major threats to my heart?

- *Compassion fatigue.*

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:9–10, NIV84)

- *Contrarian Syndrome. The need to be against something.*

THANKFULNESS AS A MORAL THERAPEUTIC

By A. W. Tozer

In this world of corruption there is real danger that the earnest Christian may overreact in his resistance to evil and become a victim of the religious occupational disease -- **cynicism**. The constant need to go counter to popular trends may easily develop in him a sour habit of fault finding and turn him into a sulky critic of other men's matters, without charity and without love.

What makes this cynical spirit particularly dangerous is that the cynic is usually right. His analyses are accurate, his judgment sound. He can prove he is right in his moral views; yet for all that he is wrong, frightfully, pathetically wrong. But because he is right, he never suspects how tragically wrong he is. He slides imperceptibly into a condition of chronic bitterness and comes at last to accept it as normal.

Now, as a cure for the sour, faultfinding attitude -- I recommend the cultivation of the habit of thankfulness. Thanksgiving has great curative power. The heart that is constantly overflowing with gratitude will be safe from those attacks of resentment and gloom that bother so

many religious persons. A thankful heart cannot be cynical.

- *A cooling heart*

*“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, **the love of most will grow cold**, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:10–14, NIV84)*

*“Never be lacking in zeal, but **keep your spiritual fervor**, serving the Lord.” (Romans 12:11, NIV84)*

3. Living from the Inside Out

The world within and the world within

Most of us live from the outside in. God challenges us to live from the inside out.

*“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. **Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him.** Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ 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 7:14–23, NIV84)*

Self-care

The heart as an emotional centre is meant to love and to be loved. The scripture calls it the wellspring of life.

It is not meant to lust.

It is not meant to drive greed.

It protects but does not control

*“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,” (Isaiah 61:1, NIV84)*