



Men and Matters of the Heart Series – Part II

(www.mensgroup.org - "Original Study")

PRAY: Opening and Closing prayers are suggested for small group members or individuals to invite God into the study to seek Him in His Word. Feel free to add your own words in prayer.

Dear Lord, help us to identify the difference between a heart dedicated to God and one dedicated to self. Help us change our hearts for the better by understanding and accepting the seriousness of our sins and accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

INTRODUCTION:

We studied the makeup of the heart in Part I and were challenged to live out what it means to seek a peaceful, joyful, wise, steadfast, and upright heart - characteristic of a growing and committed believer.

Now we expand our view of the heart by studying five more characteristics of the believer's heart and widen our view of commitment to God. Our helper is the Holy Spirit, as He was in Part I, who gives us the ability to experience these good responses in our new heart given to us by God.

Our heart can only rest in God. Every intent or action of the heart focused on self, or the world, makes it unsuitable for following the Lord. Use these lessons to deepen your understanding of the great blessings of a heart dedicated to God that grows in abundant, positive, and God-pleasing ways.

PURPOSE:

Our purpose in this study is to clarify the difference between a heart dedicated to God and one dedicated to self so that we can learn more about how to grow our own godly heart.

Note: All verses used are from the 2011 New International Version (NIV) of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Men and Matters of the Heart Series:

Part I

- Lesson 1 - The Heart – The Inner Self
- Lesson 2 – The Peaceful Heart – A Healthy Body, Soul, and Spirit
- Lesson 3 – The Joyful Heart – Expressed in your face and outlook
- Lesson 4 – The Wise Heart – The result of humility and the desire to mature
- Lesson 5 – The Steadfast Heart – Courageous, Resolute, Confident, Persistent, Fearless
- Lesson 6 – The Upright Heart – Recognizes Sin, the Savior, and Salvation

Part II

- Lesson 7 – The Delighted Heart – Freedom within Proper Boundaries
- Lesson 8 – The Undivided Heart – Aiming for Wholeheartedness
- Lesson 9 - The Purposeful Heart – Confident in Living Daily
- Lesson 10 - The Trusting Heart – Recognizes its Insufficiency and God's all Sufficiency
- Lesson 11 – Meditative Heart - Stilled to hear God and know self
- Lesson 12 – The Challenge of the Heart – The daily heart workout

Lesson 7 – The Delighted Heart – Resting within the Proper Boundaries

Lesson Focus: Through this lesson we will discover how reading God’s Word can bring eternal delight to our soul and spirit.

“Blessing on every man that wants to delight in God and in His word. It will not go unnoticed and will have eternal benefit for you.” – C. Marsh Bull.

Starting Prayer: *Father God, we want to have a delighted heart that soars above the circumstances that surround us. We want to study your word regularly and ask that your Holy Spirit give us delight and sustain us from your Word.*

Opening Questions:

1. What is one delight you have experienced in your life?

2. What did you do when you were delighted?

Scripture Passage:

Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. (Psalm 119:111)

Phrase Explanation:

When we say we are delighted, it means that we are experiencing great pleasure in someone or something. Parents are delighted when their son finally finds a spouse. Diners are delighted with an excellent meal, and sports fans are delighted by watching their team win the Super Bowl. However, these could be identified as circumstantial happiness on steroids and most of their delight will fade and lose its impact soon.

In a deeper sense, to have a delighted heart indicates that the soul and spirit are unified in their mutual acceptance of the truth driving a true and faithful heart. The psalmist said above that he was delighted with God’s law even though it might not always be in his favor.

Delight is present in the psalmist heart - that immaterial part of his being - because he can see what God has done through His word. We all have experienced a time in life when it was dark and no solution presented itself. For that reason, the psalmist declares that all statutes, laws,

decrees, and commandments of God are delightful. They provided light to his path in both good and bad times.

They do not weigh down, discourage, or beat him up. They are seen as his constant guide that “makes me wiser than my enemies,” gives me “more understanding than all my teachers,” allows me “understanding more than the aged,” are “sweeter than honey to my mouth,” gain understanding “through your precepts,” and allow me to hold back my feet from “every evil path” (Psalm 119:98-104). He was delighted with the by-products of his study of God’s word.

This perpetual delight is not the result of good circumstances but of principles and values revealed by God that direct his heart, and the heart of every person who would do the same thing, creating a life well lived. This delight produced a strong determination by the psalmist in several different ways: “I will follow your righteous laws,” “I will not forget your law,” “I have not strayed from your precepts,” and “my heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end” (Psalm 119:106-112). He was adamant and determined to keep his focus on God.

The eyes of his heart were opened by God’s commandments to the difference between temporal and eternal life, and to the inner workings of his own heart, as well as the hearts of others. So, how did he obtain that delight? A rhetorical question. He made time each day for God’s Word. He did as David said,

Trust in the Lord...take delight in the Lord...commit your way to the Lord...and be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. (Psalm 37:3-7a)

A delighted heart finds rest in the boundaries given by the commandments of God. So, delight comes as each of us commit’s to reading and meditating on the Word of God, every day.

When time with God is calendared, your delighted heart will be one that finds rest within His boundaries.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is delight different than experiential or practical joy?

2. How do you think delight comes to one who studies the Bible?

3. What kind of boundaries for delight are set in the Bible?

Application:

1. Tell us about a time you were delighted by something you found in the Word of God?

2. How has the reading of God's Word changed the way you face serious situations?

3. What would help you to have a delighted heart?

Closing Prayer: *Father God, increase our desire to study your word. Help us to understand it and do what it encourages us to do. We want to have a delighted heart.*

Additional Resources:

Similar verses: 1 Samuel 2:1; Nehemiah 1:11; Psalm 1:2; 35:9; 37:4; 111:2; 112:1; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174; Jeremiah 15:16; 2 Corinthians 7:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

Lesson 8 – The Undivided Heart – Aim for Wholeheartedness

Lesson Focus: In this lesson we will discover that an undivided heart is a focused heart. The words wholehearted and undivided identify a heart fully committed to God.

“Blessing on you for considering where your heart is and desiring it to be undivided. Your commitment to wholeness will bring clarity, freedom, and peace to your heart.” -- C. Marsh Bull.

Starting Prayer: *Dear God, I am your child and I have times when I recognize I have a divided heart. Help me to manage the struggle to have undivided loyalty to you and build up my strength to push away anything that does not align with your desires for me.*

Opening Questions:

1. Give an instance when you sensed your heart was being torn in two different directions?

2. What was the result of this divisiveness in your heart?

Scriptural Passages:

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind...Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. (James 1:6, 8)

Phrase Explanation:

James encouraged his readers to ask for wisdom when it was lacking. He declared that when your loyalty is divided between God and the world it is harder to obtain unity because of your doubt and disbelief.

The picture of a wave being blown and tossed by the wind illustrates the life of a person who is unsettled, unstable, and unable to make decisions that continually lead in the same direction; therefore, they have tension in their heart. This mind and emotional struggle cause him or her to waver in their loyalty; one moment they live enmeshed in the world and in another moment respond as God would want. Confusion and instability are the consequence.

The psalmist proclaimed his love for the law because it kept him from being double-minded. He said:

"I hate double-minded people, but I love your law." (Psalm 119:113)

Jesus said to the Pharisees,

"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand." (Matthew 12:25)

To be wholehearted is to be completely given over to one direction. There is no wavering, no grumbling, no fear, no doubt, but complete faith and belief. This is a word of total commitment that starts in the heart and flows out to actions and words expressing the pureness of a dedicated heart.

Caleb, one of the twelve who spied out the promise land, silenced the people upon the spies return and said,

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." (Numbers 13:30)

However, the people decided to follow the advice of the ten spies who discouraged advancing. Later, when God decreed that none of the rebellious would live through the wilderness experience, He also said,

"But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it" (Numbers 14:24).

And Joshua, the other spy who agree with Caleb, blessed Caleb forty-five years later by giving him Hebron

"because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly." (Joshua 14:13-14)

Wholeheartedness or an undivided heart toward God requires cleaving to God in faith and trust. It advocates a unitedness of heart regarding mind, emotion and will, all aligned with God's direction.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does a leader desire that followers align with his direction?

2. In the passages referring to Caleb, he is called wholehearted, what gives him that reputation?

Application:

1. What do you lack to be identified as wholehearted, having an undivided heart?

2. Why is it important to have an undivided heart?

3. What do you feel would be necessary to gain a reputation like Caleb?

Closing Prayer: *Dear God, I see the reputation of Caleb before You and the people of Israel. I know he maintained it for forty-five years. I ask you to drill down in my heart and show me where I have a divided heart. Show me how I can make it undivided, and give me the guts and the willpower to keep it that way.*

Suggested Additional Resources:

Similar verses of undivided and wholehearted: 1 Chronicles 12:33; 2 Chronicles 31:21; Psalm 86:11; Ezekiel 11:18-21; Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 7:35; Ephesians 6:7.

Lesson 9 – The Purposeful Heart – Creates Confidence in Daily Living

Lesson Focus: We will show that purpose is essential to a full and vibrant life, for without it we are just swimming in the sea, susceptible to tides, creatures, and currents.

“Blessing on each man that understands and lives out God’s purpose for his life. Make it your aim to find your purpose.” -- C. Marsh Bull.

Starting Prayer: *Lord, you have made us with purpose in mind. Help us to accept and understand the talents and gifts you have given to us so that we might be helpful in spreading your Word to the world.*

Opening Questions:

1. What do you think about when you hear the word, “purpose”?

2. Where do you hear people talking about needing purpose in their life?

Scriptural Passage: *The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever—do not abandon the works of your hands, (Psalm 138:8). For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; (Acts 13:36).*

Phrase Explanation:

Who wants to live a life without purpose? Most people start with some purpose in mind but in time discouragement, distraction, and loss of the dream cause their purpose to die. Sadly, many live today as the proverbial frog in the pot of water. As the water is slowly heated, the frog adjusts to the new temperature; not sensing any danger. He remains in the pot, until he is boiled alive. This can happen to people and gradually cause them to lose their way and thus their purpose.

Living without purpose is wasting your life a second at a time. Losing a moment seems negligible and insignificant, but each moment is unrecoverable. God doesn’t want us living that way. We are to be purpose driven. From the beginning, God had a plan. He created an environment in which humans could live and furnished everything they needed to thrive. When they decided to act independent of God (sin), He already had fashioned a plan for them to return to Him.

Further, as we were uniquely created in our mother's womb by God, He gave a specific purpose to each one of us. He placed talents within us that could be helpful and supportive to mankind, so we all have a contribution we can make.

Noah was purposed to save his family and the animal kingdom while all other families died in the flood. (Genesis 9:9, 22)

Joseph's purpose was to save Jacob's family by bringing them to Egypt. Egypt would become the womb that would protect them until time for them to be birthed as a nation by walking through the Red Sea (birthing canal).

Moses too had a purpose given to him by God. He said to him,

“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh. To bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:10)

This brought purpose to Moses' life. Being hidden in the reeds of the Nile River, adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, trained as a warrior, educated as an elite in Egypt, and made aware of his significance by his parents, but not yet humbled by it, caused him to try to bring his purpose to fruition by his own hand by killing an Egyptian. He thought the Israelites would rally to him, but instead told their oppressors what happened, so Moses fled into the wilderness. That led to an even more purposeful forty years in the wilderness; and substantial benefits when he led the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Samuel, by his mother's oath to God, was purposed to be the first in a long line of prophets. (1 Samuel 1:11, 22, 28; 3:1-14)

David said,

“The Lord will work out His plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.” (Psalm 138:8 NLT)

Paul agreed with David's life when he spoke in Antioch of Pisidia,

“Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep;” (Acts 13:36)

Mary's purpose was to be the instrument of God to bring Jesus into the world. Gabriel said to her,

“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.” (Luke 1:31)

Saul had a purposeful life dedicated to the purification of Jewish tradition. However, that purpose was changed on the road to Damascus, and he recognized that,

“I have been chosen as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles.” (1 Timothy 2:7)

These are just a few examples of how God purposes the hearts of people - all of us.

So, what should be your response to this? Confidence in your daily activities, for God has purposed you. Finding out what that means for you, and seeing it set in motion, will give you a purposeful heart; one where your mind, emotion and will are aligned to His purpose so that God can bless the world through you.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. What do the quotes above mean about what God has done for each person on the earth?

- 2. What did Moses do that wasn't in line with God's purpose?

- 3. How many opportunities to make a difference do you think you have lost by not knowing your purpose?

Application:

- 1. What do you know about your purpose in life?

- 2. What would be a way to find out more?

3. What is keeping you from fulfilling your purpose?

Closing Prayer: *Lord, I want to know more about my purpose. Help me understand it better and help me to work it out into action for the world.*

Suggested Additional Resources:

Similar verses: Psalm 57:2; Isaiah 46:11; 48:14; Acts 5:38-39; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 3:10.

Lesson 10 – The Trusting Heart – Recognizes Our Own Insufficiency and God’s All Sufficiency

Lesson Focus: We will affirm that having a trusting heart in God always results in a life well lived according to His purpose than living independent of Him, which produces fear and falsehood.

“Blessing for trusting in God for your salvation and trusting Him with your daily life. Trust is a valuable commodity, and we know that God never squanders it.” – C. Marsh Bull

Starting Prayer: *Father, we accept the fact that you are always in control, and we want to place our trust in you every day. We know that you desire good things for our life when we trust and obey you. Help us to trust you more and more each day.*

Opening Questions:

1. When in your life have you trusted someone, and they let you down?

2. How valuable is trust in God to you?

Scriptural Passage: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

Phrase Explanation:

“In God we Trust” was the motto adopted for our money by a joint resolution of the 84th Congress and approved by President Dwight Eisenhower on July 30, 1956. It became the replacement for the unofficial motto of “E pluribus unum,” which means “one out of many” that had been on our paper currency since 1782.

From that day until now there have been those wanting its removal based on separation of church and state, but it has survived this groundless pressure. This is a declaration of trust in someone greater than the government and it points peacefully to what the Scripture passage above urges us.

The vital first mistake we make is that we trust only in ourselves and this independence, denies God His rightful place in His creation’s life. Isaiah challenged his writers to,

Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem. (Isaiah 2:22)

And the psalmist echoed that by declaring,

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans. (Psalm 118:8)

The second mistake is to trust in government, which we have seen to be riddled with bureaucracy, greed, and unworthy of our complete trust.

King David declared,

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him. (Psalm 28:7)

We have spoken of wholeheartedness as another desire for our heart as we live before God, trusting Him and aligning our mind, emotion, and will—all our heart. Declaring that we can't fully depend on ourselves, any others, idols, or the government to direct our life leads us to trust God only.

A trusting heart is a heart freed from beliefs that would deceive and disappoint. It is a leap of faith that moves our soul and spirit to a new level of spirituality. No matter what comes, what circumstance crosses our path, who remains faithful or unfaithful to us, or any other temporal thing, wholehearted trust in God is totally sufficient for us. It is a deep dependence on the God who is our creator, sustainer, savior, guide, and Lord. Trusting God is recognizing our insufficiency and His all sufficiency.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the mistakes people make in the trusting area?

2. How does trusting in God make your heart “leap for joy?”

3. Where does your trust in God breakdown: circumstances, relationships, or _____ ?

Application:

- 1. What things presently do your trust more than your trust in God?

- 2. How would trusting God with all your heart change the way you live?

- 3. What is the most important part of trusting God to you?

Closing Prayer: *Father, it seems easy to let you take control, but we know that our flesh wants to be in charge, so it is more difficult than it seems. Help us to build our trust in you by reviewing our past, where you were faithful, and stepping out in faith in the present by trusting you with our future.*

Suggested Additional Resources:

Similar verses: Psalm 20:7; 32:10; 37:5-6; 56:3-4; 62:8; 112:6-7; Isaiah 26:3-4; Jeremiah 17:7-8

Lesson 11 – The Meditative Heart – Stilled to Hear God and Know Self

Lesson Focus: We will illustrate the importance of meditation, how to focus on it, and how it is emphasized in the Scriptures.

“Blessing on each man who learns the usefulness of meditation as a believer and decides to regularly implement this spiritual discipline into their life.” - C. Marsh Bull

Starting Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, I want to participate in spiritual disciplines like meditation and further its connection to prayer. Help me to understand it better and carve out time each week to make it happen.*

Opening Questions:

1. When have you taken time to mediate?

2. What happened in that time?

Scriptural Passage: *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.* (Psalm 19:14)

Phrase Explanation:

Our senses are bombarded daily and we are challenged to see, taste, touch, hear, and smell the world around us. But when we travel home, we become calm, supported by familiar thoughts and senses. The tall trees lining the avenue, the bustle of cars with different destinations, our music on the local radio station, favorite places to dine, a welcome home hug, and smells that waft along the sidewalks. We feel comfortable and at home.

However, this rush to enjoy all around us in the world can lead to a dead-end. The reason for this is the difficulty handling all the input -- as our mind and senses are assaulted with an overabundance of stimuli. Meditation is one of the best solutions to these pressures on our heart and mind. Meditation is not an eastern mysticism, but the immersing of our mind in God’s Word and learning ways to quiet our heart, so we can hear His still voice.

In J.I. Packer’s book, *Knowing God*, he describes meditation as “an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a

means of communication with God [prayer]. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God and to let His truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart."

To hear God regularly means shutting out the noisy world around us and putting our heart at rest in the Lord through meditation and sincere prayer. We rest in Him because we trust and depend upon Him. If not God, who else can we fully rely on with our heart and soul? God gave His Son to die for us and be raised again to instill in us the hope of heaven.

In Jesus' day, activity could fill the days, so he got away to be quiet (meditation) and speak (pray) with his Father. After his baptism by John the baptizer, he

"left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness...[and] returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit," (Luke 4:1, 14)

After the feeding of the five-thousand and being with them all afternoon, he

"made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd, [and] went up on a mountainside to pray." (Mark 6:45-46)

Paul, in his letter to the Philippian church, suggested topics and matters that are primary to be in the believer's mind during a time of meditation:

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

And to the Colossian church he said,

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Colossians 3:2)

The meditative heart is an act of devotion which allows us to step away from life by the senses and prioritize life by the spirit. It includes meditative study of bible passages, personal application of what they say, and prayer back to God in worship and thanksgiving. Meditation provides time for us to realign with God and helps us maintain our full focus on Him. It is in this quietness and silence that God authenticates His plans for us, as suggested by the psalmist, "The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me..." (Psalm 138:8).

Meditation helps us lead others wisely with words and actions; to have a stilled heart that produces righteousness and perspective on who we are, who we serve, and who we want to help.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some important elements of meditation?

2. How have you been challenged to practice meditation and resultant prayer?

3. What are some benefits and blessings of meditation?

Application:

1. If 1 is the least and 5 is the best, on a scale of 1-5, how close are you to having a meditative heart?

2. In your typical day, what needs to be adjusted to prioritize time for meditation?

3. What would a meditation time look like for you?

Closing Prayer: *Holy Spirit, I am convinced that meditating on the Word and having it illumined to my mind by you will change my life. I confess my lack of love for your Word and want to make it a priority in my life. Guide me in this action.*

Suggested Additional Resources:

Similar verses: Genesis 24:63; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 48:9; 77:12;
104:33-34; 119:15, 23, 27, 97, 148, 143:5.

Knowing God, J.I. Packer, Intersity Press, 1973, pg. 19.

Lesson 12 – Challenge of the Heart – The Daily Heart Workout

Lesson Focus: We will conclude our series with a challenge for you related to your heart.

“Blessing for continuing through each of these lessons. There are important steps you can take now, so don’t hesitate – move forward to make each of these lessons a part of your life.” – C. Marsh Bull

Starting Prayer: *Father God, we are in the final lesson on Men and Matters of the Heart. Help me to review my life and initiate a process to put the life lessons I’ve learned from this series into action. Make me a better man, father, husband, employer/employee, and neighbor because of my heart.*

Preparation Question(s) for Discussion:

1. When was the last time someone encouraged you to do something good for yourself?

2. When have you encouraged a friend or brother related to their life? Remind yourself or tell the group about it (no names are necessary).

Scriptural Passage: *My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:20-23)*

Phrase Explanation:

Solomon gave a compassionate challenge by repeated commands in Proverbs 4. Earlier in that chapter he spoke about,

“Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.” (Proverbs 4:13)

For a moment think about the physical heart and the soul (often called the heart), which is the unified mind, emotion, and will. If we don’t take care of our beating heart, we endanger our lives, for without blood pumping through our body we will die. This is also true of the soul

heart, for it determines the course of our life. Out of the soul heart comes purpose and God’s intention for our life, or the way we live.

You must know your heart, its weaknesses, and tendencies, and you must guard your heart from attack. This means to keep watch at every entry point to the heart: the ear, eye, mouth, nose, and touch. Place guards on the senses, those channels into the mind, emotion, and our memories and imaginations. Why? We do this because they pressure the will to act on their desires and deepen the corruption of the heart. Eve, Cain, Lot, Achan, Judas Iscariot, Simon the sorcerer, Demetrius, and Herod are examples of fallen hearts.

The statement, “guard your heart” is echoed in Malachi 2:15 in relationship to your wife, Jesus used it over ten times in the gospels, Paul challenged the elders of Ephesus with it (Acts 20:18-31) and wrote to the Corinthian church about this action (1 Corinthian 16:13), and even Peter as he closed his second book to those living as foreigners in today’s Turkey, warned readers to be on their guard (2 Peter 3:17). It is of most importance.

All these Scriptures say is to keep a vigilant sentinel that is always awake at the doors of your heart. You cannot survive if your physical heart is compromised and neither can your mind, emotion and will survive if they are penetrated by the ways of this world. You must link hands with the Holy Spirit to resist the attempts of your own flesh, the suggestions of the world, and the evil one to draw you away from godliness (1 John 2:15-17). James makes sure we know that we are in danger when temptation is acted upon by leading us to death.

“each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15)

Charles Bridges in his discussion of the Proverbs 4 passage said, “If the citadel [the fortress for the defense of the city] be taken, the whole town must surrender. If the heart be seized, the whole man—the affections, desires, motives, pursuits—all will be yielded, guard the fountain, lest the waters be poisoned.”

Our hearts must be guarded constantly for the world is vigilant and diligent in its assault against us. Asking for wisdom from God, praying for spiritual understanding, and obedience to the Holy Spirit are the “only” effectual guards to the heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to guard your heart?

2. How do we keep from being pulled away from our desire and intent to live a life worthy of God's sacrifice for us?

3. Describe in your own words the illustration Charles Bridges used about a citadel?

Application:

1. What sentries do you have at the doors of your heart now and why?

2. What other sentries do you need to place at the unguarded doors of your heart?

3. What is the first sentry you would place on an unguarded door?

Closing Prayer: *Father God, I know it's up to me to set up the sentries and to feed and encourage them so that they stay strong. Help me to guard the center of my soul with as much vigilance as I do the outward part of my body. Thank you for this study. Help me to do the work that will show that my heart is strong for God.*

Suggested Additional Resources:

Guard verses: Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 16:11; Luke 12:15;
Acts 20:31; Philippians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:14.

An Exposition of Proverbs, by Charles Bridges, pg. 53-54, Proverbs 4:23