




- 1 **Think over the last 24 hours as a careful observer of your part of the world.** How many times did something in the media try to influence your opinion, change your values, or affect your behavior.

 *Use your imagination and describe the effect on your life if you heeded just 10 percent of these messages.*

 In the early days of computer programming, engineers lived by the motto "Garbage in, garbage out - GIGO." They recognized that the quality of a computer's output depends upon good data. What kind of input does your brain receive throughout a typical week? What are the sources of these influences?

 *What adjustments has God been working in you about making? What are some practices you can apply this week that would reflect Solomon's call to guard your heart with all vigilance-above all else, guard your heart?*

- 2 **According to Dane Ortlund, Christians often reduce their view of the Christian life to one of the following: outward improvement, intellectual addition or felt experience.** Solomon says that without an emphasis on the heart, you've missed the most important thing. Which of the three reductionistic tendencies do you most struggle focusing on?

 *How is Solomon's call to focus on the whole person better?*

- 3 **Proverbs has a great deal to say about the heart.** Choose a few of the following passages and discover what it means and why it is so important: Pr 2:10, 8:5, Pr 6:14, Pr 15:30, Pr 14:14, Pr 3:5, Pr 19:3, Pr 28:14, Pr 17:3, Pr 24:12, 20:9.

 Proverbs 4:23 says that we need to guard our hearts. Look up the following verses and see what you can learn about the dangers that can threaten our hearts.

a double heart (Ps. 12:2)


a hard heart (Prov. 28:14)

a proud heart (Prov. 21:4)


an unbelieving heart (Heb. 3:12)


a cold heart (Matt. 24:12)


an unclean heart (Ps. 51:10)

 Which of these do you find your heart most vulnerable to right now? Why? How can we pray for you that you would guard your heart in that area?


4 When Solomon mentions a path and a way in Prov 4:26, he is drawing from the picture he had already explained in Proverbs 4:10-19. Everyone must make a choice between the way of wisdom and the way of folly.

 Trace the course of each path in (v. 10-19) to its inevitable conclusion. Contrast the images used to describe each path.

 What terms appear more than once and what does this repetition emphasize?

 What connection do you see with the heart in those who choose the path of evil?

5 In light of what Proverbs 4:23-27 says about the heart, read Matthew 5:8, and 5:27-30 together. What images or metaphors does Jesus use? What do they indicate about God or people in the text? What might they indicate about people today? Why do you think Jesus is being so extreme in the way he talks not just about our actions, but even our desires? How does this passage call on you to change the way you live?

 Read Mark 7:21-23 and Luke 6:45. How do these two Gospel texts connect to Proverbs 4:23?

6 Jesus tells us that only the pure in heart will see God (Matt 5:8). But Solomon says that our hearts are not pure (Prov 20:9). What is the solution to this big problem? See Deuteronomy 30:6, Ezekiel 36:26, and Jeremiah 31:33. What does that mean for how you relate to God?

PRAYER REQUESTS
