

- > **Great Day**.... You know, every day can be a Great Day, when we will just: slow down, study God's Word, and learn from it. His Word really does teach us so much about: how we can live a Great life on earth, while we are here!
- **Today**, We are so glad that you have joined us, to hear another message segment – brought to you by "**Discovery Crossroads Ministries**".... Our ministry is all about the reality that: "**with God, Dead ends, become alive again!**"
We Fully know that: "**God can do the miraculous, in & thru us, when we will just let Him!**"
- > The message title today is: "**Shields Up!**". This is a message that speaks to: How we all should be on the "**Defensive**", when it comes to "**what all we ALLOW**" to get into our hearts, which then "Influences" our behavior!
- **OK**, so growing up, I was a "**Star-trek**" fan.... But, the "Star-trek" series, can teach us some things – for instance: the "**Starship Enterprise, had shields that it could raise**", to **Defend** the ship, when an enemy came along. If you ever watched any of the series, you might notice that: "the Enterprise" did NOT always run around with their "**shields up**", all the time.... they only "**raised the shields**", **when**

a threat was detected..... And that's the point: we should only raise our "**heart-shields**", when a threat to our heart "IS DETECTED". **See, we are NOT** to seclude ourselves away from life, in fear of everything being bad for us. We are only to "**safeguard**" our heart, from things that: **1)** have the ability to **hurt or destroy** our heart – and **2)** things that have the ability to **influence** our heart away from God, and away from His Good Word, that teaches us how we can live an abundant life on earth!

> **So**, Let's dive into Proverbs 4:23.... "**Above all else, guard your heart - for everything you do flows from it.**" NIV

-- **3 Big things here:**

1) Above all else.... We are talking about: of all the things in our lives, that need to be "**highly-guarded**"... our most valuable assets, that should be given: "**the highest priority**" for us to safeguard. **Think on it:** what are the most valuable assets of "YOUR" life.... **How greatly do you "Safeguard" them - "Vigorously" or "Half-heartedly"?** **Understand:** "Half-heartedly" means: "**Acting with little enthusiasm, little effort, or little interest**". (If you answered "Half-heartedly", I pray that you will consider: **increasing the priority** that you give, to "Guarding your heart" – especially in this chaotic, mis-guided, world that we live in!)

...**For example**: If you are out on the open ocean (*sharks swimming all around your boat*), and a big leak develops in your boat; Do you: **a)** keep on fishing, **b)** reach for another beer, **c)** hope the leak will go away on its own, or **d)** start to bail water out of the boat? / Which answer should be "YOUR" **highest priority**, in this scenario?(**Now**, *if you chose option "B"* ("reach for another beer"), *we really need to talk!*)

I mean: In this scenario, "**above all else**", should see you: opting to follow "**choice D**" ("*start bailing water out of the boat – so that you can stay afloat, as long as you can!*").

* This is the truest understanding of what it is to: make certain aspects of our lives "**vitaly more important**", than others aspects! There are areas of our lives, that MUST BE given "**greater importance**", than other less important areas – *and specifically*, our "**spiritual-self**", should be one of them!

....That brings us to the **second part** of our passage today:

2) **Guard your heart**.... Don't we "**lock**" our valuable things up, like our: houses, cars, jewelry, money, personal info, etc.?

- **Guard your heart** is 2 things: "**to Guard**", and "**the Heart**".

- When I think about "**Guarding something**", I think about: **posting a sentry outside of a door**....(*kind of like they do at Buckingham Palace, in England. Seriously, you do not go messing with "the sentries" there.... NOT GOOD!*).

...I know people who Guard the doors of their house, with some serious “**gun-power**” behind them! An intruder would do well, to think twice about breaking into some people’s homes!

-- **So**, speaking of: “**posting a sentry, outside the doors of the Palace, or your home**”. What I’ve been alluding to is: **spiritually** posting a guard, outside the door of our heart.

...**One of the best examples**, of how “God Guards” (*posts Guards*) to Protect His Most Important things, we just need to look at **Genesis 3:24**, which says, “*After sending them out (speaking of Adam & Eve), the Lord God **stationed (posted) mighty cherubim (guards) to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he **placed a flaming sword** that flashed back and forth to **guard the way** to the tree of life.***” NLT

...**So here** the Bible says that: God put cherubim & a flaming, swinging, sword, across the entrance to the garden of Eden, and the Tree of Life – **Why did He do that?... to Guard it** from thieves & cheaters, so that they could NOT eat of its fruit and have eternal life in heaven. God is the Only One who **ALLOWS** His chosen ones, to eat of the Tree’s Fruit, and live forever in His Kingdom! **Revelation 2:7**, “*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, **I will give the right to eat from the tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.*” NIV

- **Point:** Only God will Allow all those who have **received** Jesus Christ, as Savior & Lord, to get into the Garden, to eat of the fruit of Eternal Life.... while all those who **reject** Jesus Christ, as Savior & Lord, will be Denied access to the garden Paradise of God! **Are you hearing me?....** *From this example, we should all learn the importance of: Guarding our hearts!*
If God took **that kind of care** in keeping the Tree of Life free from vile, corrupt, people – *Surely,* we should do the same with our heart, to keep the corruption & vileness of this world, from getting into our heart and polluting it!
- **Look,** Computers & hearts have something in common, they both NEED an “**anti-virus**”. **Who goes WITHOUT an “Anti-virus” on their computer?...** It’s just “**foolishness**” to do that, with all the attacks on computers today! **Come on**....
Going WITHOUT an “Anti-virus” on your computer, is like: **ALLOWING** someone to drop “**piranhas**” in your tropical fish tank! **Seriously,** if you had an aquarium filled with beautiful, peaceful, little fish - **WHY would YOU ALLOW “piranhas”, to be put in the same aquarium with them? I mean: goodbye beautiful, peaceful, fish!....(Hopefully you picked up on me saying “YOU Allowed”.... because that is what “You did”, when “YOU Allowed” the corruption to get into “YOUR” fish tank... (“YOU” did not GUARD your fish tank, from being invaded & corrupted).**

....**Hopefully**, you really wouldn't ALLOW that to happen to your fish.... **But truthfully**, I'm NOT talking about "fish", but your "heart" - it needs a Good anti-virus too!... So I'm saying that: "**WE Allow**" corruption, to get into "**OUR**" heart - (We Allow detrimental things to get into our hearts, instead of **protecting** them from corruption!). **Please understand** that: "your heart" **NEEDS** "Mega-protection", from all the "piranhas & viruses", that are trying to make "your heart, their home"! *Not everything, that we take in, is beneficial for us!... **Evil is a corruption to our good-heart***, and that is why we need a "good **antivirus**" to keep it out!

* God's Word **IS** "**The Anti-virus**" for your heart - *it protects the heart, by identifying threats for you!*

....**Hear me**, "**The human heart, is always being trained**" - and whatever it gets trained to love, it WILL crave (*go after*)! Feed it "**corruption**", and it will seek after more! Feed it "**goodness**", and it will go after more! **Need proof?....**

Romans 8:5, "*Those who live according to the flesh, have their **minds set on** what the flesh desires - but those who live in accordance with the Spirit, have their **minds set on** what the Spirit desires.*" NIV **Twice** here we see, "**set on**"... (**like**: **setting** a radio station on the radio in your car, and being inundated by what all comes thru that station).

- As for the heart: **YOU** set its channel, daily.... and YOU either **set it on** things that are of the **flesh** (*world*), or on the things of the **spiritual** (*heaven*)?

* **Two big ways to Guard your heart....** **1) Closely examine** everything that is trying to break into your mind & heart!
2) Get wisdom & understanding from God's Word – **read** it, **absorb** it, and **learn** from it! By doing this, false, worldly, wisdom, will have a hard time, getting in & taking root in your heart! This is the truest understanding of what it is to: **"Guard your heart"**, from the false-narratives of this world.

3) Everything you do, flows from it....

Matthew 15:18-20a, "18 The things that come out of a person's mouth **come from the heart**, and these defile them. 19 For **out of the heart come** evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what defile a person." NIV

- Each of our hearts started life "**extremely pure**". As brand new babies - we knew nothing, nor do we adopt anything (*ie: beliefs, philosophies, doctrines, personal options, etc.*).

-- **However**, as we grow & learn, we **Adopt** many things **into** our heart, changing the purity of it...(*just like passing a drink across your lips, and it ending up in your stomach!*)....

*- Whatever you **allow** in your heart (*good, evil or both*), is what **YOU will become** – because your heart **directs** your: thoughts, words & actions! **Yep**, your heart is always being trained, and from that training – YOU immerse! What you let into your heart, affects your “**habits, behaviors & decisions**” (*choices*) - which in turn, determines the course (*direction*) of your life-journey. And all these combined, will “**influences**” others! **What training have YOU allowed into your heart, that affects you & others?**

...**Look**, if you had a **crystal-clear pond**, and every day you pumped raw sewage in it, you would end up with a highly polluted pond! **But**, if you “**highly-valued**” keeping that pond crystal-clear, you would not “**Let it**” be polluted!

- **Guess what?... our heart operates the same way....**

thus, our heart condition is our choice: ***Fight to keep it pure – or, Don't care and LET it get filthy?*** **Know this:** God said, “*Nothing impure will ever enter it (God's Kingdom), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*” NIV Revelation 21:27

...**I keep saying** that “**the heart is constantly being trained**”. **Therefore**, Our hearts are a “**Depository**” (*a warehouse; a bank*), that holds everything that we Allow to get into us...

it's the "**Sponge of our soul**", always getting "**heavier**" with all kinds of: truths, philosophies, principles, opinions, etc.

- Even the ancient Egyptians "**weighted**" a person's heart (*once they died*), to determine the "**heaviness**" of the life that they had lived. If the heart was heavy, they surmised that the person had a hard life. But if it was light, they surmised that the person had a good life. **Matthew 12:35**, "**A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.**" NIV..... That passage said twice, "**stored up**" – meaning: Our heart really is a "**Depository**".

- **So yes**, I have stressed "**the heart as a Depository, bank or warehouse**" **purposely**, because that is the aim of this message - **to get you to realize that**: all kinds of things are fighting to get into you, to mold: your life-course... your life-beliefs... your life-battles... and even your life-burdens.

- The world (*people & systems*) are fighting to get into your heart, to mold your very being - to make you into who "they" want you to be. This old world wants to "**influence**" YOUR heart, to follow their path! **But**, YOU need to be the one who steers the course of your life, and decides what is allowed in your heart - *obviously, this must be done with the Help of God, Himself....* and we have that Help, the moment we ask Jesus to forgive us of our sins, and to come live in our heart!

At that very moment, God "**Deposits**" His Spirit into our heart as our "**Helper**", and as a guarantee of our salvation to come! God intended our heart to be a "**Spiritual, Divine-bank**", depositing, storing & safeguarding God's most important "Truths & Understandings" within us.

Jeremiah 31:33, "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. I will put my law (word) in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." NIV

God's Divine Promises & Mysteries, are securely written in the "Bank-vault" of our hearts – Wow!

> **OK**, here are some "**ways**", that you can Guard your heart:

a) Do not forsake (or, "**walk away from**") God's Word, for it holds all "Truth & Understanding", and it keeps you on the path of God's Righteousness! God writes His Word in us, but it is our job to reflect on it, and not forget it!

Proverbs 3:1-2, "1 My son, **do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments** - 2 for length of days and years of life and peace, they will add to you." ESV

- God certainly writes His Good Word on the walls of our heart, **BUT**, we have a responsibility to "KEEP & FOLLOW" it!

("Don't just be **hearers** of His Word, but **doers** of it!")

("The more you use it, the less you will lose it")

- b)** Watch your mouth – wayward lips spew: gossip, anger, maliciousness & corruption! **Listen**, whatever “**comes out**” of your mouth, shows the “**content**” of your heart... and that “content” will prove to either be: “**Pure or Impure**”!
Proverbs 4:24, “**Keep** your mouth free of perversity.
Keep corrupt talk far from your lips.” NIV
- c)** Keep your eyes straight ahead, fixing your gaze on Jesus - *wandering eyes, create wandering hearts!* **Hebrews 12:2a**, “*Let us keep looking **to Jesus**. Our faith comes from Him, and He is the One Who makes it perfect.*” NLV Keeping our eyes **glued** to Jesus, in this highly attractive (*flashy*) world - is quite the challenge, but it can be done! Intentionally is required!
- d)** Give “serious thought” to the paths that lie ahead of your feet - not all choices are good for your heart! Do not wander to the left or right of God’s Holy Word! **Proverbs 4:26**, “**Give careful thought** to the paths for your feet, and be steadfast in all your ways.” NIV Paul reminds us that: “*Not everything that we see, taste & touch (in this world), is beneficial to us!*”.
- e)** Watch out who you hang around – because the “**negative-influencers**” are all around you! Paul told the church of Corinth, in **1 Cor. 15:33**, “**bad** company, corrupts **good character!**” NLT **Yep**, Just when you thought that you were

doing pretty Good in life, along comes someone who influences you to leave the path of Goodness – and it is never good from there!

> **When you aim to do these 5 things** (to **Safe-guard** your heart), **do them like this:**

- **1) Purposely**....(YOU have to **intentionally** post the guard over your heart)-(It won't happen on its own!).
- **2) Powerfully**....(YOU need to use the strongest guard/lock possible... *and that is to be **active** in this process, daily*).
- **3) Permanently**....(YOU should never go back to Not guarding your heart, or leaving it Unlocked, for the thief to break in and steal from you).

> Let me close with Oswald Chambers, "**You no more need a day off from "spiritual concentration" on matters in your life, than your heart needs a day off from beating. As you cannot take a day off morally and remain moral, neither can you take a day off spiritually and remain spiritual.**"

-- God intended for our hearts to be filled with Love - NOT anger, hatred & violence. **Yet**, it is OUR choice, as to which we will LET into our hearts! **Amen?....**

-- **OK, let us therefore Pray**.....

Discovery questions:

- 1)** Do you believe that "access to your heart", is thru both mediums: the physical world and the spiritual?
- 2)** Read thru the short passage of Proverbs 4:23, and decipher exactly what "you" think it means.
- 3)** Do you believe that there are things in your life, that should be protected more than others? Do you believe that your heart is one of them? If so, do "you" protect it really Vigorously, or just Half-heartedly?
- 4)** Do you believe that your "spiritual" life, should be guarded more than your "physical" life? If so, does that have anything to do with the eternal life of your spirit?
- 5)** What kind of locks do you safeguard your house with: a) none at all, b) a simple hook, c) a single key lock, d) a deadbolt, or e) good locks and an alarm system? So, what about your heart - Does it have the greatest lock possible to secure it, or none at all?
- 6)** Do our "priorities" have anything to do with the strength of the

lock that we use for our heart? Think deeply on this!

- 7)** Have you ever thought that “you” might really need to post a “sentry” (*guard*) around your heart, to protect it from all the hazards that it comes in contact with in this life? What might that “sentry” look like, to spiritually guard your heart?
- 8)** Reread Genesis 3:24. Can you see the lengths (*great detail & intentionality*) that God went through to secure the Tree of Life? So, how much “more” should you secure your heart, from the evil intentions & bad things in this life?
- 9)** *Just asking...* “who” allows things to get into your heart? Is it “you”, or “others”? No blame game allowed on this question... “who” has the sole responsibility of keeping your heart clean?
- 10)** What kinds of things is your heart “set on” today/right now?
- 11)** When you read Mathew 15:18-20, can you see how the words that you speak (*even with the inflection that you use*), proves the “contents” of your heart? As you speak each day, try and see what content is living in your heart, by the words that proceed from your lips.
- 12)** Who foolishly operates a computer these days, without an “antivirus”? By doing that, you are setting your computer (*or heart*) up for a virus and a crash!

- 13)** Matthew 12:35 insists that we all “store up” good or evil in our hearts - but I wonder which is more prominent for you; is there more good, or more evil, stored up in your heart?
- 14)** Is it true that: if you don't use something, you can really lose it? If so, does the same hold true, for knowing & keeping God's Word in our hearts (*see: Proverbs 3:1-2 - ponder greatly the last part of that passage*)?
- 15)** Reread Proverbs 4:26; what is it really implying? Do our thoughts & feet really interrelate - one being able to steer the other?
- 16)** Hebrews 12:2 tells us to “keep looking (*gazing*) to Jesus”, to keep our heart straight & true - But how do you do that in this busy, flashy, world?
- 17)** Remember, Oswald Chambers said that: we really have to “concentrate on the spiritual matters of our lives” daily!
- 18)** Do you realize that: “**YOU**” **have control** on the kinds of truths, philosophies, opinions, etc., that **get into** your heart - stuff that wages war against you, to take your heart captive & lead it away from where & who you want to be?