

GUARD YOUR HEART BY PUTTING AWAY A FROWARD MOUTH

INTRODUCTION:

Does the name Morgan Spurlock ring a bell to any of you? Probably not, but you might remember something about his story. Back in 2003, he decided to produce a documentary about himself and a special diet he was about to embark on. It was a not-so-healthy diet he called “Super-Size Me” whereby he ate three meals a day at the “Golden Arches” (aka McDonalds) for 30 days straight! The result? He gained 24 pounds in one month—which took 14 months to lose—and experienced depression, loss of energy, and mood swings. Not exactly healthy for **any part** of his body, but most certainly not for his literal, physical heart! In fact, at day 21 he began to experience heart palpitations and one of his doctors suggested he quit the experiment so as not to do any permanent damage!

Maybe you already know this, but heart disease is the leading cause of death for most racial and ethnic groups in the United States. One person dies every 37 seconds in the United States from cardiovascular disease. About 647,000 Americans die from heart disease each year—1 in every 4 deaths.

Is it important to guard the health of our heart? It certainly is! But even more important than our *physical* heart is the command from God to “keep” (guard) our “spiritual” heart. Why? Because our heart is like a reservoir from which our lives flow as we noted last week in Proverbs 4:23.

Let’s turn again to Proverbs 4; please follow along as I read verse 23-27. How is our heart like a reservoir? I suggested three ways last week.

1. First, just as a reservoir “issues” out—releases—what is already in it, the heart does the same thing. Notice **Matthew 15:19-20:**

¹⁹For **out of the heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” Jesus made it quite plain, didn’t He? What is in your heart comes out in what you do, say, and think!

2. Second, we noted last week that what gets **added into** the reservoir also comes out—not just what was there in the first place. That is also true of our heart, isn’t it? What is there comes out—but what we add into our lives also comes out. Just as chemicals...or garbage... or other impurities can be added to a reservoir and affect the quality of the water that comes out, we can add impurities into our heart which will also affect what comes out of it.

3. Third, we noted that our heart is like a reservoir because just as it is **foolish** to try to “clean up” what comes out of the reservoir without cleaning the source, the same holds true for our heart. Jesus said as much to the Pharisees in

Matthew 23:25-26 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye **make clean the outside of the cup** and of the platter, **but within** they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶Thou blind Pharisee, **cleanse first that which is within** the cup and platter, that the **outside of them may be clean also.**”

What Jesus is saying is that you can be clean on the **outside**—but still have an unclean heart! If you cleanse first that which is **within**—the heart—then the outside will be clean also.

We know from verse 23 that God commands us to keep—to guard—our heart, but **how** do we do that? Although I mentioned in passing last week some ways to guard our heart, this morning I want to give you what I believe will be practical methods or steps to do that.

look again at Proverbs 4. In verse 23, God tells us to guard our heart and then tells us why—because from it comes the issues—the outflowings—of our life. I also believe we see in verses 24-27 that there is a two-way street—or stream—between what comes **out** of our heart and what we allow **into** our heart.

- Our heart affects what we say, but what we say also affects our heart
- Our heart affects our eyes & what we choose to look at, but what we choose to look at also affects our heart
- Our heart affects where we decide to go—but where we allow ourselves to go also affects our heart

Part of guarding our heart, then, according to verse 24, is to “put away from thee a froward [crooked; deceitful] mouth” and “perverse lips.” *Perverse* means to speak in a way that is unreasonable or unacceptable. In other words, stop saying things that are deceitful and unacceptable. So how do we do that?

1. Prerequisites of proper speech—a new heart

You may get tired of me repeating this, but it is an absolute must that you remember this—you can’t really have proper speech until you have a **new heart**. Since what we say comes from our heart—and we are born with a deceitful and desperately wicked heart (Jer 17:19)—our heart needs to be changed—we need to have a new heart—if our speech is going to change. The last thing I want to do is help you become Pharisees who focus on keeping the outside clean, but within are full of extortion and excess and hypocrisy and iniquity and uncleanness that Jesus warns us about in Matthew 23.

Notice Jesus’ words from **Luke 6:45** “A **good** man out of the **good** treasure of **his heart** bringeth forth that which is **good**; and an **evil** man out of the **evil** treasure of **his heart** bringeth forth that which is **evil**: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

- A good man brings forth good things because he has a good heart
- An evil man brings forth evil—bad—things because he has an evil heart
- Both men demonstrate what kind of heart they have by what comes out of their mouth!

How do we get a good heart—a new heart? We can’t *create* a good heart within us; only God can do that! And He does that when we are born again and become His child. Notice again some verses from last week: **Ezekiel 36:26** “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

II Cor 5:17 “Therefore if any man be **in Christ, he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Are you a new creature? Has God given you a new heart? If not, the steps or process that I am about to give will not work. And even if they did, having proper speech in **this life** will not save you from hell in the **next life**. I shudder to think of the blasphemy and cursing that will come out of the mouth of those who are suffering in hell....

Step 1 for having proper speech? You need a new heart. Step two? We need to....

2. Purpose (decide) to have proper speech

Having a new heart doesn’t automatically change our speech. There is the part that God does: He gives us a new heart—a new “want-to;” but we need to “act” on that “want-to.” In other words, we need to **desire** to change and **decide** to change. I don’t want to belabor this point too much because it has come up throughout this series, but I don’t want to skip it either.

A. God desires we have proper speech

Does God want us to have proper speech? He certainly does! Here’s just a small sampling of verses:

Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and **the froward mouth, do I hate.**”

Colossians 3:8 “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, **blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.**”

James 1:26 “If any man among you seem to be religious, and **bridleth not his tongue**, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” You have a vain—empty, futile religion—if it does not affect your tongue!

B. We must desire to have proper speech

Psalm 39:1 “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”

Notice the decisiveness of David in this verse; what he purposed to do.

--He was going to take heed that he didn't sin with his tongue

--He was going to keep—control—his mouth like a bridle would

Step 1? We need a new heart. Step 2? We need to decide—purpose—to have proper speech.

Step 3? We need to...

3. Pray for God's help to have proper speech

Have you ever noticed that God does not **command** us to do things we naturally do? God commands us to do what we *don't* do naturally—and what we can't do on our own. Why? He wants us to find our help in Him—not in our own strength.

Is it God's desire that we have proper speech? Yes—we just looked at some verses confirming that. The question is: is it **our** desire? If it is, we will set out to do it—but we will also seek God's help by praying about it. Notice again on your sheet:

Psalm 19:14 “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Psalm 141:3 “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

Our prayer should not be just to **avoid** using language that displeases God, we should also want to use language that **edifies**—that builds up—others.

Ephesians 4:29 “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is **good to the use of edifying**, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Step 1—is the prerequisite of a new heart. Step 2—purpose/decide to have proper speech. Step 3—pray for God's help. Step 4? **4. Protect your ears!**

Isn't it true that what we **hear** often affects what we **say**? Just the other day Graham and I and Louise were playing a game at our house and he said.... “Oh my word!” Why did he say that? Because he hears his Mommy say it! Our children or grandchildren pick up on things, don't they, and often times repeat what they hear—even if we wish they wouldn't!

Children aren't the only ones affected by what they hear, though. I was in the military for almost 30 years and observed the strangest thing happen to people when they put the uniform on. Out of uniform they seemed to talk “normal,” but when they “put the uniform on” they seemed to adopt a whole new vocabulary. And the more I heard the wrong kind of language, the more I discovered that that kind of language was now in my head and was much more likely to come out of my mouth.

Step 1 is the prerequisite of a new heart. Step 2—purpose to have proper speech. Step 3—pray for God's help. Step 4—protect our ears. Step 5? We need to...

5. Ponder examples from God's Word

I am so thankful that God wrote the Bible and not men. How do I know God wrote it? Because men would not voluntarily share the “bad and the ugly” like God does. My guess is that if it were up to David, he would not have chosen to have his sin with Bathsheba published in a book to be read by millions of people over the course of hundreds of years. Solomon, I'm sure, would feel the same way about his turning from God to idols. There are a number of examples we could look at in God's Word regarding both good and bad speech, but I'm going to limit it to one of each.

A. The bad example of Jacob

Please turn to Genesis 27. We are going to have to hurry through this, but I do want you to see the backdrop of Jacob's deceitfulness before we get to his actual lies.

i. Isaac's request (27:1-4)

Recap: Esau was the firstborn—and a hunter. Isaac wanted a dinner of fresh venison—then would bless Esau.

ii. Rebekah's plan (27:5-10)

Recap: Jacob was to go kill two young goats and bring them to his mother, who in turn would cook them up. Jacob would then pretend to be Esau and bring the dinner to his father and “steal” the blessing that was to be for Esau.

iii. Jacob's protest (27:11-12)

Recap: Didn't seem concerned about the deceitfulness—he just didn't want to get caught!

iv. Jacob's deceitful talk with his father (27:18-24)

--End of v 18 “who art thou, my son?”

--v 19; Lie 1: “I am Esau thy firstborn” (*No; it was Jacob*)

Lie 2: “I have done according as thou badest me” (*No; he didn't shoot a deer—he killed 2 goats*)

Lie 3: “Eat of my venison” (*No; it was goat, not venison*)

--v 20; Lie 4: How did it happen so quick? “Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.” (*No; he went out back*)

--v 24; Lie 5: “Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.” (*No, it was really Jacob*)

Would love to spend more time on this, but we can't today. I do want to say, this, though—Jacob is an example of not only being deceitful in speech—he is also proof that we **reap what we sow**. Some of you are familiar with Jacob's life and the fact that soon after this he goes to his uncle Laban and is deceived by him a number of times. We also know that Jacob was lied to by his own sons when they sold their brother Joseph, killed a goat and poured its blood on Joseph's coat, then brought it to their father and said, “This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no” (Gen 37:32).

B. The good example of Joseph

Now turn to Genesis 50. Again, we don't have a lot of time to get into the details and background, but many of you are familiar with this account so it shouldn't be brand new to you. Look at verse 15...

--v 15; Joseph's brothers are worried he is going to pay them back for selling him

--v 16-17; through a messenger, they said their father wanted Joseph to forgive his brothers and that they themselves wanted to be forgiven.

--end of 17 “And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.”

Notice Joseph's words:

--v 19 “Fear not: for am I in the place of God?”

--v 20 “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...”

--End of v 21 “And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”

Joseph wasn't Jesus—he was a man just like us. He was wronged terribly in his life just like some of you.

--He was wronged by his brothers when they sold him...

--and when he was wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife when he refused her advances

--and when he was forgotten in prison by the chief butler

In spite of all the wrong that happened to him, Joseph trusted that God had everything under control. He also trusted in God's knowledge of the truth and God's ability to bring good out of bad. He protected his heart—and it obviously affected his speech—because he “comforted” and “spoke kindly” to the ones who had wronged him.

What a wonderful example to us—and an encouragement that the same God who helped Joseph is able and willing to help us, too!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS/QUESTIONS:

1. I've asked this a couple of times already, but I'm going to ask again: do you have a new heart? Controlling what comes out of your mouth does not get you into heaven—only a new heart—which is a gift from God—does.
2. Child of God, does your language please God? Don't just think about what you should avoid saying—think about what God would have you to say to be an encouragement to others. God is able and willing to help you with that. Are you asking and seeking His help?