Watch Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, ________ your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Since your heart is the wellspring of life, guard it ______________. The Scriptures ________ us about the heart of God and how He’s dealt with individuals and with humanity through the ________. They reveal His ________ and His warnings. They reveal His ________ and His wrath. The Scriptures also teach us about our own ________, what God desires and what God condemns. In all of this is the nature of the heart, it’s what ______________ our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, and our destiny. That’s why knowing what God says about the heart is so vital.

As the wellspring of life, the heart is where so many things in our lives __________. We’re loved by others, and it ________ us to love them back. We’re ________ by others, and it may cause us to strike back. The heart is ________ with thoughts and emotions. Some are ________ emotions like love, joy, compassion, and hope. Other emotions ________ to sin and heartache. The Lord Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks out of that which _______ the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out his evil treasure what is evil” (Matthew 12:34-35). We have to ask, what’s coming out of your heart?

The things coming from your heart are the very things that you’re _________ into your heart. If you feed on the selfish, the fleshly, the worldly, you’ll ________ things that are selfish, fleshly, and worldly. Romans 12:2 urges us, “And do not be conformed to this ________, but be transformed by the renewing of your ________, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Our reading is from The Gospel According to Matthew 26:36-41, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The battle between good and evil, the battle for your soul and eternal destiny, ________ within the heart. God Himself says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can __________ it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the ________ of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Because this battle between our willingness to serve God and the weakness of our flesh is ________, we must watch our hearts and pray that we do not enter into temptation to sin.

Temptations can hit us suddenly without ________ or they can lie dormant in our hearts and arise when we’re ________. Luke 4:13 says, “When the devil had finished every temptation (that is, on Jesus), he left Him until an opportune time.” The devil knows when to _________ to our flesh, our eyes, or our pride. If we’re not alert and ready, we can easily ________ into the devil’s schemes. He’s looking for an opportune time! First Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be of sober spirit, be on the ________. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring ________, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your ________, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

Let’s talk about some of those schemes as they relate to our hearts. First, the devil loves to make our hearts ________. The Lord Jesus said, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who

Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.
is ________ with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell” (Matthew 5:21-22).

James 1:19-20 reminds us, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to ________, slow to ________, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” What do we do when we get angry? Ephesians 4:26-27 explains, “Be angry and do not ________; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give ________ opportunity to the devil.” We must ________ our emotions and learn to be patient and to bear with one another.

Second, when anger continually burns in the heart, it ________ to hatred, bitterness, and revenge. Bitterness describes the twisted way individuals ________ to painful events. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be ________ from you, along with all malice. Be ________ to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” The Lord Jesus faced all kinds of horrible injustices, insults, and cruelty. While suffering, He didn’t “threaten, but He continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus left us this ________, so that we might follow in His steps.

Revenge is ________ back evil for evil. The Lord Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:38-39). Christians depend on God to ________ with evildoers. Romans 12:17-21 says, “Repay no one evil for evil, but give ________ to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on ________, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but ________ it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with ________.” A heart that must take revenge only leads to more anger, hatred, and violence. We don’t overcome with vengeful violence; we overcome by showing the love of Christ.

Third, Christians are to love and treat everyone with ________. God doesn’t show favoritism; He is no respecter of persons. The Jewish apostle Peter went to the Gentile home of Cornelius at God’s ________. He told the people, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to ________ partiality, but in every nation the man who ________ Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:34-35). It doesn’t matter to God who you are or where you came from, God will ________ you when you fear Him and do what is right.

God doesn’t see us like ________ sees us. He ________ what’s in our hearts. He doesn’t look at ________ appearance; He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He knows our hearts determine what we say and how we ________. God is fair and He treats everyone alike. He will “render to each person according to his ________” (Romans 2:6). Why? Because his deeds reflect his heart.

When Jesus died upon the cross, He died for every person in every nation for ________ time. Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for ________ (Hebrews 2:9). He himself is the propitiation (that is, the atoning sacrifice) for our ________; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The Father wants everyone to be ________ and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). It’s clear from Scripture that God treats every person fairly and wants what is ________ for all of us.

Not only that, He wants His children to ________ His example. He wants all of His children, every Christian, to want ________ others to be saved and to know the truth. The Lord Jesus said, “You have heard
that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and _______ for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:43-45). If you call yourself a child of God, and then act like a child of the devil, then you’re doing the _______ thing. Why show love to all people? Ephesians 5:1-2 says, “Therefore be _______ of God, as beloved children. And _______ in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” A heart that loves God and loves others is like a fragrant offering; it’s _______ to both God and to man.

Sadly, some fail to love and respect people who _______ from them. They love those who are _______ themselves and dislike everyone else. This failure to love others who are different is not unique to any one group; and it can _______ any individual, any class, or any race. It’s easy to point your finger at others and _______ your own failings. Be careful _______ you judge others; because you yourself may be _______ of doing the same thing (Romans 2:20-23). Prejudice, bias, and hate can _______ anyone. Stereotyping and labeling an entire class—any class—is both unwarranted and unfair and unchristian. No class, no group, and no individual are so _______ that they may show partiality to other human beings.

James 2:8-9 says, "If, however, you are fulfilling the _______ law according to the Scripture, that ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you’re doing well. But if you _______ partiality (that is, respect of persons), you’re committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” So, let’s examine our own hearts, watch our own mouths and behavior towards others that we may not disrespect anyone, anywhere at any time. Each of us can _______ our hearts, and perhaps that will lead others to change.

Prejudice takes place when someone judges another before _______ the evidence. This is not fair or kind, but presumptuous. Since we don’t know the _______ of other people's hearts we’ve got to be careful not to judge ignorantly. The Lord warns us against _______ judging of others, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the _______ you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that’s in your brother’s eye, but do not _______ the log that’s in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).

Some, who ignore the behavior of the judgmental Pharisees, think Jesus is here saying that we should _______ judge anything; but Jesus is here speaking of unfair judging. He’s speaking against how _______ in those days were judging others by human standards and not God’s. The Lord Jesus also said, “Don’t judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). There is a time to judge rightly, but make sure you know all the _______. Some look only at the surface without getting the _______ story. They jump to conclusions quickly and assume the _______. Proverbs 18:17 says, “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.”

The apostle John tells of the man who put himself _______ and thought he was in charge of the church. John said, “I’ve written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, doesn’t acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I’ll bring up what he’s doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to _______ the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church” (3 John 9-10). The authority that we must acknowledge today is not in man but in God and in His inspired _______. Pride led Diotrephes to trust in himself rather
than __________ to God. Please see the difference between man-made laws and God’s laws. God will __________ us according to His inspired teaching found in Scripture, and all the pride and arrogance in the world cannot change what God says.

Fourth, some have __________ hearts. I’ve known some whose heart has hardened against God and against the Word of God. They say, “I don’t care what anyone says, and I don’t care what the Bible says. I’m going to do what I ________.” You can’t reason with such people. People who oppose what the Lord clearly says in Scripture reveal this stubborn heart and place their ________ in jeopardy. Some don’t want to admit sin is sin. Some would rather listen to some human myth rather than hear God’s teaching; they have no desire to obey. They’ve removed God from their hearts.

Matthew 13:14-15 describes the hard-hearted Jewish leaders in the days of Jesus, “Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed ________ but you’ll never understand, you will indeed ________ but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’” Where is your heart? Have you allowed it to be hardened against God, against Christ, against God’s morals, or against God’s church?

Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” Without realizing it, we can let our hearts become hardened against God. When people fall to temptation, they may grow to love sin more than they love God. This love for sin will deceive them about God and about their souls.

I hear people refer to sinful relationships and sinful behaviors and then use the word “______”, and they think that love justifies them, but they’re deceiving themselves. Love doesn’t __________ sin into sinless-ness; it doesn’t turn what is immoral into what is moral. Using the word love doesn’t change God’s Word. Love may explain what one is doing, but it doesn’t __________ sin. When someone points out sin as sin, people who practice that sin may react one of three ways. They may ________ their hearts and give up their sin; they may ________ God and His Word; or they may say God’s Word doesn’t ________ what it says, and they get angry at God and strike out against anything that God teaches. We pray that they’ll humbly their hearts to God and be obedient.

Your heart will determine your choice to obey sin or to obey righteousness. To become a Christian, believe and trust the Lord, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today.