

## **Regulating responses when not in the “Middle Chair.”**

### **(July 31, 2025)**

Many of us are familiar with the proverb, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) In that verse, the word “keep” means “to watch, to preserve, or to guard from dangers” and it pictures an armed officer standing on guard at the door of our heart watching for any harmful thing to come its way.

When you picture this vigilant officer standing on guard at your heart, which way is he facing? Certainly, God encourages us to watch out for those things that come into our hearts from the outside in order to corrupt our source of life. However, it may also be important to consider this officer diligently observing the heart to see what may come out of it that would harm those outside of us. It may be just as important to “keep” the world from us (especially when we are in the flesh), as it is to “keep” the world from coming into our hearts (especially when the world is sinful).

But we have all done it...we have reacted in the flesh, only to regret the words we cannot take back. We have been too hurt, upset, and emotional to hear the still, small voice of God while assuming that we are right and justified in our self-defensive and attacking posture. And we have all been under pressure or time-constraints that have required us to react before we are ready to respond. What do we do when we know our hearts are not safe for others? How do we guard them from us?

One helpful way is to simply say it. If you know that you are not in the “Middle Chair,” it can be very helpful for others to know that you are feeling a bit insecure, confused, arrogant, frustrated, or whatever feeling that is indicating that you are not presently clear and objective. And then in that interaction, give the other person the freedom to point it out in you as that discussion progresses so your insecurity or arrogance doesn’t negatively influence the decision.

In this way, you are allowing the other person to help regulate you when you cannot do it yourself. Though not ideal, this will reduce the risk of making an unwanted decision or hurting the other person.