

GARDENING YOUR HEART STUDY GUIDE

Your words determine your future, not anyone else's. This is a truth that is found throughout the Word of God. You have what you say, not what I or anyone else says. One of the main reasons this is so is found in James 1.26.

James 1.26 in the KJV says "If you seem to be religious, but you bridle not your own tongue, but deceive your heart, your religion is in vain"

You need to see this process. People seem religious – they go to church, they look holy, they listen to the sermons, they read their Bible, they pray. But if their tongue is unbridled and out of control and they say whatever they feel, then they deceive their heart. Remember your tongue is a pen that writes on your heart, so if your tongue is out of control the images and pictures in your heart will be wrong. And this makes your religion vain – vain here means empty, it just won't change your life.

You can go to church every week, read your Bible every day, go to all the conferences that ever happen, go to Bible College, but if you do not start speaking correctly and speaking in faith, and saying the Word and stop saying negative, small-minded things then none of the other things will benefit us.

All of us would benefit from bridling our tongues more, and so I want to show you something powerful today. The basic principle is this – as a preacher, I can sow seed into your heart, but only you can garden your heart. I am assuming you all know the parable of the sower in Mark 4, but I want to look at it through this lens: the preacher's words sow seed, but your words determine the heart, the soil, that receives that seed.

If you have a heart of weeds and all the sermons you hear are choked by worry and fear – then that is because you spoke that into your heart over your life. You put the thorns there. If your heart is hard and rocky, you made it that way by refusing to bridle your tongue.

Read Mark 4.14. The sower sows the word! And we know that, every sermon we hear from a good preacher is sowing the Word into us. And we know the Word is a perfect seed. It cannot be corrupted, cannot be dormant, cannot be destroyed.

But whether that seed grows depends on your heart, not the seed! Everyone gets the same seed, but some people got up and said:

"oh man, church, better get logged on, hope I can manage it all today, I just think I can get through, I bet it's on money again, he is always talking about money, it never happens for me", you just put a bunch of thorns in your heart before you even got the sermon.

Others got up and said "I am going to church this morning. I know it's not ideal online, but let's do this thing – I am going to hear from God today, I am going to be blessed today, whatever the preacher says today it's for me and I am going to have a harvest today". That person will get the harvest because their words prepared their heart.

Remember James 1.26 if you speak wrong you deceive your own heart and all your religious activity will not benefit you. You must garden your heart.

Read Mark 4.26-28. The kingdom is a seed, and so the kingdom is inside you (Luke 17.21) because you listened to the seed, it was planted in you. If your heart is good you can rest, and the seed will produce life, healing, blessings and prosperity in your life.

The quality of your heart determines how the seed works. Last January I was in Texas and Jerry Savelle had a prophetic word about an open door that will be bigger than any door you have ever had before. I accepted that prophetic word, and God told me it was about our TV ministry, within a week, our potential audience went from 46 million to 1.4 billion. I know there are other people in that meeting who got the same seed but the thorns and weeds and rocks in their heart meant they did not advance.

Read Matt 12.35. When you garden your heart, good things come to you – actually they come out of you. That seed inside you starts producing. But here is the truth – you have to talk to your heart, only you can do the weeding and the rock removal that needs to take place. A preacher like me can only sow seed. Remember – your words are more powerful than mine, so I can keep sowing seeds but until you weed with your words, your weeds will choke my seeds!

Read 2 Cor 4.13. We have the same spirit of faith you and me, not one of us is better or has more faith. The difference is are you speaking?

When I preach a sermon:

25% of the people don't get it at all because of the paving stones in their heart, they get nothing from the sermon at all.

25% of the people get it, but there is so many other voices inside your heart, that you choke the word with the weeds – worries, cares, fears. While you are listening you go, yes, I can change the world, yes my Father loves me but then you go "yeah but these bills are so big, and this and that is so much, and I can't make it, and I am stuck here on lockdown and the economy is so bad I can't get a job, if I give to God today, I won't be able to make my car payment" – you have sown seeds of weeds, and those weeds choke the Word!

25% of the people get it and they get joy. They rejoice that God meets their needs, they say "praise God, I got it". Then the next day something tough happens – you wake up to a new bill, something vital in your house breaks, and you get annoyed – that preacher said, I wish I hadn't given, I wish I hadn't got so excited, I wish this or that. Then you get offended at me, offended at God, and so on.

Why do some people get offended so easily – because they painted that image of your heart, your out of control mouth stopped you getting blessed by my in control mouth!

25% of people good ground – they get a harvest, healing, prosperity, abundance, the seed goes in. Why – are you the favoured, are you the special ones, is it in your birth right, is it unconditional love? No it is because you did not deceive your heart,

and you painted a good image in your heart, you gardened your heart – and out of the good soil of your heart – you brought forth good things!

So, I am the sower sowing seed, but your voice determines the harvest you get by cleaning your heart and gardening your heart.

Now everything in our heart speaks to us.

The pavement says “I don’t get it, I don’t get, I just don’t understand the BIBLE” – everytime you say that you are laying big slabs of pavement in your heart. It sounds like “I don’t get it, I don’t understand”, it’s always a whiny voice a paving slab in your heart. “I can’t do it, I can’t believe what I can’t see, I’ll believe Jesus is alive when I see him and I touch him, I will believe I am healed when I feel better and 8 doctors say so, I will believe I am prosperous when the money is in the bank”. So, whenever you hear that whine inside you:

1. Don’t Let the Whine out of your mouth. Do not say it!
2. Counter the pavement with the word from your mouth. You say outloud “I have the same spirit of faith as that preacher”. We need to realize we are as righteous as anyone in the body of Christ. We have to stop idolizing charismatic superstars. We have to stop running to other people – only we can clear our own heart.

These two things get the paving stones out – you start moving at a new level and the next sermon you hear will make so much more sense. Why? You started heart gardening.

The stony ground speaks too, according to Jesus, it is offense. Those rocks in your heart sound like bitterness and anger and frustration. Most Christians are too smart to get offended at the seed and the Bible, so they get offended at the preacher, they walk away from church “well that pastor’s not perfect you know”, “he really let me down, he should have replied to my email, he should have answered my question better, he prayed for me and nothing happened – I blame him” .

Now God has designed the ministry in a particular way – the seed is always perfect but the sower is always imperfect. That does two things – firstly, it means you have more practice to walk in grace. Secondly, it should encourage you that if I can receive my harvest as an imperfect man, so you can receive yours. Every pastor should be an encouragement to you – man alive, if they can do it, we can do it. If they can move mountains, we can!

But satan gets in, takes your eyes off the grace and focuses on the imperfections – you start thinking of the pastors mistakes and failures, your disagreements, how Essex they are, how they dress, and preach, and your heart is now not on the Word but on the sower – and that puts rocks in your heart and makes you fickle.

The most fickle people in the world are the offended. they are there on Sunday praising god and shouting amen. then Monday they are phoning people up in the church telling them how evil the pastor is. That does not affect the minister, but it will affect you. And then because the pastor can see how fickle you are, and not let a fickle person run a small group, usher, help out in this or that, now the person gets offended we are holding them back from their ministry and dreams.

No, that's not what is holding you back – your rocky heart is what holds you back. Stop getting upset at pastors, and get the rocks out of your heart. Your words put those rocks in your heart, so only your words are powerful enough to get them out.

What do you do if your heart is rocky?

1. Thank God for the WORD. Get your eyes on the WORD OF GOD and start being grateful. Gratitude is the antidote to the poison of bitterness.
2. Thank God you have a sower. Thank God you have a church that gives out good teaching.
3. Thank God your pastor is imperfect. Firstly, it gives you a chance to show grace and sow grace. Secondly, you all need to realize if I can walk in victory, anyone can. I mean it, this is not just rhetoric, I am truly everyman, and if I can walk in faith, you really can!

Your heart speaks to you and if it starts speaking offended words – if it starts being negative to those who are sowing the seed into your life, then you need recognize that is the rocks in your heart speaking, and my words cannot get them out. The more I speak the more I am throwing seed on rocks. You need to move the rocks with YOUR WORDS – thank you, I am sweet in spirit, thank you I focus on the Word, thank you Lord, I love my pastor.

What about the weedy heart? According to Jesus the weeds are the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust for other things. Those weeds are only in your heart if your words put them there, and only your words can get them out.

We have to stop being worldly and judging on the outside. Stop trying to be another minister, stop trying to make me another minister. One thing I have learned from the Champions of the Faith series is that the earthen vessels that contain the treasure of the Lord come in many different shapes and sizes!

People are concerned that if they do not lie, they will never get on in business. That is a worldly care, a weed, you say that and your mouth is sowing weeds in your heart. You are messing up your own heart. You are then speaking to a mountain in your life – and your heart is full of weeds, and starts to ask: are you telling the truth, is this one of those lies you have to tell to win? You just confused your own heart and stop yourself moving mountains. No truth brings freedom, truth brings prosperity. It's that simple.

Deceitfulness of riches money lies. That's fine that money lies – it lies all the time, it says "all you need is me, I will look after you, if you get enough of me you will be happy, don't put me in the offering!"

That's fine, money lies, so just ignore it. But if you start speaking what money says you are putting weeds in your heart. We will never have enough, oh we can't tithe, not in London, not in this economy, not right now. Maybe when the children are older. All of that is the deceitfulness of riches! the lies of money! Don't say that or you are putting weeds in your heart, that when I preach the WORD, it chokes what I say right out of your life.

Finally, the last weed is lust for other things. We live in a strange society, we invented fomo in around 2014, the fear of missing out. People think – and say: if I don't sow my wild oats, I miss out. if I am not at that party, well my life is over, I might as well be dead. no – you never miss out by doing what God wants.

I want you all to have JOMO – the joy of missing out. Stop lusting for other things – just decide that God's stuff for you is the best stuff. Stop looking at your neighbour's wife, and oxen – car. Those thoughts will choke out the word.

So, if that's you I want you to do some weeding. I can't do it for you, I can sow more seed, but your words put the weeds in and your words can take them out.

Weeds speak. Some sound like WORRY – oh if you go for God nothing will work out, that's foolish to give that big, tithing is just useless, God can't help you, you need to go to the doctors, you need to listen to everything they say, you need to live a little, stop being a prude, stop being a Pharisee

Some sound like MONEY – you need money, you need to save, you are losing your job, stop going to church until you have made some money, give up the mid-week service to get some more money, money will solve every problem

Some sound like LUST – “well, I just wanted to be married, so I married them, I wanted sex so I just moved in with them, I wanted to do it, so I did, I didn't want to miss out on life, I didn't want people to think I am weird, I have to miss church today pastor, I am working on my house”

YOU have to challenge them with WORDS – you have to put the word in your mouth, you have to SPEAK YOURSELF – we have the same faith – you have to speak – you have to garden your heart with your WORDS – you need a healthy heart to move mountains, so you need to START SPEAKING.

You need to have a word with yourself.

1. YOU NEED TO SPEAK AGAINST WORRY. I refuse to worry in JESUS name, God is with me, I have faith in GOD, I will walk through the valley of the shadow of God
2. You NEED TO SPEAK AGAINST THE LIES OF MONEY. If Joseph can prosper as a slave, then as a prisoner, then as a demoted prisoner, then I CAN PROSPER AS A TITHER. I can give and I will receive. You need to SPEAK AGAINST THAT LUST FOR THE OTHER, for things that not on your path. I am not scared of missing out, I am glad I am here. Someone said to me once “I am so glad there is a church that believes what you believe in my town, I am just sad it is you pastoring it” – well, you won't receive from this seed will you? I am not saying this for my benefit, I am doing fine, I am saying it for yours.

So today, have a word with yourself, because I cannot do it for you. All I can do is throw more seed on your heart, which might be more seed on the rocks or more seed to be choked by weeds, you have to use your mouth to change your heart.

But I can give you a Scripture – there are others, but this is a good start.

If you are a pavement person, you can read Luke 24.45. It says that Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. You need to declare that “Jesus Himself is opening my mind to understand the Scriptures”. Every time that whiny paving stone speaks to you – make that your declaration.

If you are rocky and easily offended, I give you Proverbs 19.11 which says “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” Say this: it is my glory to receive seed from an earthen vessel, it is my glory to overlook the vessel and enjoy the seed. I will give thanks at all times! I went to a meeting once where my son had to use the ladies’ toilet because the mighty man of God was in the men’s. His bodyguards were rude and dismissive to my entire family. But I sat down, listened to this earthly vessel, and got so blessed by the seed he shared. It is my glory to receive from imperfect preachers!

If you are thorny, full of worries and cares, start with Matthew 6.31, and declare “My Father will clothe me and my Father will feed me”

Listen, if your life does not look like harvest time right now, it’s not the fault of lockdown, it’s not the fault of the virus, it is either:

1. You are not getting enough seed. If so, that is your fault, we are putting out so much good seed right now, it is unreal.
2. Your heart needs gardening. If that is the case only you can do that, you write in your heart with your tongue, so get writing with your tongue right now!

GARDENING YOUR HEART QUESTIONS

1. Whose words determine your future?
2. What does James 1.26 teach us will happen if we do not bridle our tongue?
3. What is the only thing a preachers words can do for your heart (see Mark 4.14)?
4. Have you ever heard a sermon and known you did not benefit fully from it, and now you see it was your heart gardening that was the problem?
5. Ben says "The quality of your heart determines how the seed works", and shares the example of the prophetic word he got in January. Do you have examples of this in your life – the quality of your heart determining how the seed works?
6. Why don't the pavement people receive from God and what is the solution for them?
7. Why don't the rocky people receive from God and what is the solution for them?
8. Why don't the weedy people receive from God and what is the solution for them?
9. When is the next sermon you are going to hear and what can you declare today to help garden your heart in preparation for that?
10. What about this message inspired, encouraged and challenged you the most?