

Harris Creek Baptist Church

Jonathan Pokluda

Series: Fool Proof

January 15, 2023

Fool Proof Your Heart

My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or to the left; keep your foot from evil. Provers 4:20-27

Church, good morning! It was slow for the lights to come on there, I thought we were at a Baylor game for a minute... Hey, it is good to be with you. Listen, when we were born we were all given different gifts. So everybody has different gifts, you're good and bad at different things. So when the Lord was giving gifts to me, one that he withheld was a good sense of direction. Okay? I am directionally challenged. I'm an early adopter of the GPS navigation system if you will. I rely heavily on that. I can get lost in my neighborhood. Anybody else directionally challenged? Anybody? Yeah, I'm a believer who struggles with direction. You're welcome here, this is a safe place for you.

Not true of my wife. My wife, she's amazing. You could take her on the side of the road, blind fold her, spin her around, tell her how to get home, and she will tell you. I mean, this is a game

we play on Saturday nights sometimes. She's super gifted at directions. So I rely heavily on the GPS. And recently I got a new car, or a used car that was new to me. And I was coming home from the airport DFW, and this car has this feature where you can just hit "home." So when I get it, I'm learning all these things, and trying to figure out how it works, and I'm putting in my address and whatnot. So when I'm leaving the airport—and DFW has always been a particular mystery to me—anyways. So I just hit "home," right? And this is a trip that I've made dozens, hundreds maybe? I don't know, lots of times. So I hit "home," and I'm driving home here to Woodway from DFW, and it sends me to Dallas, which I thought was weird. But I'm like, "Okay, no problem. It must sense there's traffic, it's smart like that." And so I drive over to Dallas from DFW, and then it sends me through Dallas. So I'm like, "That's odd." And now I'm East of Dallas, I'm like, "That's interesting, but okay, it's smarter than me." Listen I've challenged the GPS many times, I've lost every time. So I'm just going to do what you say. And then it has me turn North, and I'm like, "That's odd." Because I'm pretty sure I live South. I know I'm not the best at this, I'm having this conversation in my head by myself in the car. And then I realized that somehow it had reverted to the previous owner's home. I don't know how that happened, but it was taking me to his house, way up North.

And I tell you that, because before I should follow its instruction, I have to input the right destination. And your heart works the same way. Before you listen to it, before you follow it, you have to inform it. You have to set it on the right destination. And so we're moving through this series we're calling "Fool Proof." How to fool proof your life from the book of Proverbs. The book of wisdom. We're in the book of Proverbs in the Bible reading plan, if you're not reading with us you can join along, biblereadingplan.org. And as we move through that in the

Bible reading plan, we're going to finish up in January, but we're taking six weeks—so we'll go a little slower here on Sundays. Today I'm going to be in Proverbs chapter 4, and we're talking about the heart.

Now when I say, "The heart," there's some confusion around this. Because I'm not talking about the organ. Scripturally speaking, Biblically speaking, your heart is like your emotional quotient. It's where your emotions are stored. It's how you feel, it's that sense of what you should do. And we're asking the question, should I follow it? You don't have to look very far to be given the instruction to follow your heart. It is in countless—I was going to list them, I honestly was going to start this message by listing all the songs that give you the instruction to follow your heart, it was too many. All of the movies like Sandlot, and Meet Joe Black, Lord of the Rings, all of these movies that say, "Hey, follow your heart. What is it telling you to do?" Is this good advice? Some of us parents have given this advice to our kids, "What is your heart telling you to do?" Which asks the question, is your heart trustworthy? Even the Bible has some confusing advice on this. I'll say this, advice that could be confusing. **Jeremiah 17:9** says, a verse some of you have probably thought of, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** So our heart lies to us, it says. But that's half the story. Because then if we turn to the New Testament, **Romans 6** says, **"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance."**

In a season of my life I really sought to wrestle this down. And I was asking the question, "Can you trust a regenerate heart?" Regenerate just means new—a heart that has the Holy Spirit, can it

be trusted? And this is the best answer in a pithy way, which always falls short to some degree, that I can give you, is a regenerate or new heart can be trusted but the degenerate heart or untrustworthy heart or old heart is always there as long as we're here on the earth. So for the non-believer, all they have to follow and trust is their "sense," their pragmatism, their "Hey what is the best outcome and what should I do and how do I get there?" But for the believer, sometimes God calls us to do things that don't make sense. The outcomes going to be different than what we might suspect or expect. And there in the battle of the flesh and the spirit, our flesh is still there but the spirit is telling us the way to go, and sometimes it's different than what our flesh wants us to do.

And so I'm going to be in Proverbs 4, this is the verse that says, you know, above all else, guard your heart. Now, for most of your lives if you've been in Church, this verse has been reserved for the 15 year old girl at church camp. And she leaves just as confused as all of you are, because someone like me is up there saying, "you need to guard your heart." She's like, "Okay, what does that mean?" And I want you to know that this verse is just as relevant for the 70 year old as the 17 year old. It's just as relevant for the man and the women, the husband and the wife, the father and the mother, the single person in the community building the kingdom, the young adult and the high school student. In fact, when Solomon scribed this, he's not thinking about the fifteen year old girl at church camp. That's not who he's talking to. It can be relevant there, like, "What do we mean when we say that?" Well, "Be careful what you do with your emotions, don't be emotionally promiscuous and hand your heart over to some young man you met at the dance."

But that's not who he had in mind. And I think you're going to see that this verse is just as relevant for you as it is for her. And so I'll read the whole thing to you. Verses 20-27, but I'll just say this: the first nine chapters of Proverbs really consist of ten lectures. Like, a father speaking to his son, giving him wisdom. And so here in Proverbs chapter four, we're actually in lecture seven, they go faster in the early section. And he's just telling him how to do well at life. Speaking to him about where to get wisdom, and this is what the Holy Spirit has to say to us. It's written by King Solomon, remembered as the wisest man to live rather than Jesus, the wealthiest person who has ever lived. Is says this, **"My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words."** This is the equivalent of, (clap, clap, clap) "Kids! Listen up! All eyes on me, let me have your attention!" He says, **"Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;"** He's going to tell us we need to guard our heart, careful to what we let in, but before he does that he says, "you definitely want to let this in. What I'm about to give you, the instruction I'm about to give you—this is something you want to absorb and marinate on. Keep it with you at all times, it's important." **"For they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body."** The stakes are high, life and death. Health and sickness. And then he says this, **"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."** Your version might say, "Keep your heart with all vigilance." That word "keep" is like how we would describe the milk, don't let it go bad. Don't let it turn sour. Keep it. Preserve it. Keep it safe. **"Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or to the left; keep your foot from evil."** Proverbs 4:20-27.

I'm going to expound upon this text, and to do so I'm going to break it down into one key observation up front, "What does it mean to guard your heart?" And then I'm going to break it down into five questions. This is a note taker sermon, any time you come into this room, I hope that you would bring a Bible, a pen, and something to write on. I can tell you that none of us on this stage are good enough to say something that's going to stay with you forever and ever and ever, without repetitious study, returning to looking at it again. If you're like, "Oh no! I don't have my Bible, or my journal or my pen," and you do have your phone, you're not going to offend me if you throw it on airplane mode and you take notes in your phone. You're always welcome to do that.

Two key observations from this text. Your heart stores information. Your heart stores information. What you put in it determines what comes out of your life. It says that plainly. Guard your heart. For everything you do flows from it. And then observation two; it says you're to guard it more than anything. And so my first idea that I want to put before you today is what does it mean to guard your heart?

1. *What does it mean to guard your heart?*

And the answer to what it means to guard your heart, is to be very careful what you allow in. That's kind of the first point if you will, before we get to the five questions. What does it mean to guard your heart? Be very careful what you allow in. Do we think about this enough? Do we think about this enough? The term here is military term. It's the way that a guard would protect a castle. With violence, hostility, vigilance, alertness, awareness, strategy. No one is going to come into this castle. I must protect it, and he says above all else guard your heart that way. Think

about that. Above all else. More than you protect your children, more than you protect your home with a security system. More than you protect your money with FDIC insurance. More than you protect anything, he says above all those things, guard your heart.

We all understand that we guard what is valuable. But I don't think enough, I don't think we think enough about guarding our heart. Why do we need to guard our heart? Because your heart is going to seek what you feed it. It's a very simple idea that you could spend hours and hours and hours meditating and journaling on. Your heart is going to seek more of what you feed it. This is the reality that we sit in right here. I'm going to slow down right here and try to teach this for a second.

You experience things through your five senses. Those five senses feed your mind, that's your thoughts. And your mind feeds your heart, and then the Scripture says everything we do flows from that. So what's the difference between the mind and the heart? We're speaking in metaphors here, because we're not talking about the organ, we're not talking about our brain. So we're talking about something else. Your mind is your thoughts, your heart is your feelings, simply put. Your mind is your thoughts, your heart is your feelings, your emotions, your sense of what to do. What makes you you.

So let me show you this graph. (JP shows visual on screen) Here you have your five senses. We all understand what those five senses are from health class. This is how you experience life. You feed your brain through your five senses. You experience things, you make memories. You make memories, "Oh I remember that tasted good! That smell takes me back! That song—I danced to

that in the eighth grade...I saw the sign!" I remember these things, I'm taking these in, I'm feeding my mind. So my five senses feed my mind. These are my thoughts, right? There's my brain, I'm creating memories and then my brain feeds my heart. My emotional quotient, so here's the heart, right? This is what we're talking about today. And the heart, what goes into your heart determines what comes out of your life. There it is. Brilliant. Your senses feed your mind, your mind feeds your heart, your heart determines where you go. Let me give it to you this way, you go through a really bad breakup. You get home, by yourself—you're sad. You don't enjoy your life right now. You just want to die. I can't believe it—it's the lowest I feel. I feel all these things. What do we say about that person? "Oh, they just have a broken heart." Certainly you can experience that through divorce as an adult. But if we were talking about someone younger. But the same thing as an older person, with grief. You experience grief. "I miss them so much! I'm just sad!" "Hey, let's go out, let's go get some ice cream!" "I don't really want to." A broken heart. Your experiences fed your thoughts, your thoughts have fed your heart. Your heart has fed your position, condition, outlook, existence, everything you do flows from it. Okay?

Now, that's kind—everybody can relate to that. Now, we can feed our mind evil things that feed our heart. Evil things that feed our heart, and then our outlook is more inclined to do evil, think evil, speak evil, be evil. To do bad things. This is what this verse is speaking to. That when our emotions get lost, life just kind of feels lost. And for a lot of us, if we look back in 2020, some of our emotions got lost in that. So we're sitting in this place more than we even realize, and our outlook has turned downtrodden, and we don't know what to do about it. I have spent, since 2018—I've been fascinated with psychology. Really before that, but really deep diving into people like Caroline Lee, studying Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, seeking to better understand

how our mind works and how it drives ultimately our behavior. And I have found the Bible to be a fantastic book on psychology, the Human psyche, understanding right our outlook. Everything you do flows from it.

Here's a parable that if you're more inclined artistically, this may help more than that. A wise man walked up on a shepherd tending his sheep. The shepherd was standing beside a stream that came down from the mountain. He's standing there and his sheep would not drink from the stream because it was so filthy and muddy and dirty. So he would have to scoop up the water in a large jar, and let everything settle to the bottom. He'd pour it out slowly through a filter to pour it into a trough so that his sheep would drink it. And the wise man walked up to him and said, "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm trying to filter the water so that my livestock will drink it." He goes, "You know there's an easier way." He says, "Well what is that, I'm intrigued if there's a better way—show me." He says, "Follow me!" And he takes him up into the mountain to the source of the stream, a spring. Up in the mountain. And there at the spring there's a trough, a natural tank if you will. And all of the livestock have stepped in that and muddied the water and relieved themselves in that pool. And that's what's running down. It's all churned up and turned up, and he says, "If we can just build a fence around this, if we can protect this, then what flows from this will be clean." And that's a picture of what this proverb is saying about your heart. Everything you do flows from it.

I'll just go one more to hit this home. Ten to twenty years ago, you go to a therapist and say, "Hey I'm struggling with depression or anxiety." And you are going to leave with what's known as an SSRI, or a Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitor. You're going to leave with a

prescription. And this is not a statement about medication, I have no issue with that whatsoever, it can be very helpful. But today, what's interesting is today you walk into a therapist and you say, "Hey I'm struggling with anxiety or depression." And you're going to leave with a prescription or something to do that looks a lot like prayer. It's crazy. They're going to tell you things—secular scientist is going to say, "Hey, here's what I want you to do. I want you to start every day by sitting still, and thinking about all of the blessings or good things in your life. And fixate on one of them. And learn to take thoughts captive. And to give careful consideration what you allow in your brain." You don't need to be hostile with it. Just go slow, and think. These are the kinds of things today that they are prescribing. Which is like, really going back thousands and thousands of years into this book, David says, "I meditate on your law day and night." It's like, woah there's something to this. It says, "Fill your heart with hope, with optimism. And it will heal the way you feel.

Okay, how do we do that. I'm going to give you five questions. Five questions from the text that will help you guard your heart. This is the who, what, where, when, and why of guarding your heart. It's going to be a who, a what, a where, a when, and a why from the text in how to guard your heart. Again, these slides are going to change quickly, so grab what is most helpful to you as we move through here. He says, "My son, pay attention." This is my first question, who are you listening to?

Who are you listening to?

Who gets to inform what your heart holds on to? Everybody—a challenge in life is you have to choose who you listen to. He says this, "**My son pay attention to what I say; try your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight. Keep them within your heart.**" The way that

this plays out practically is that we all have feedback bias. Meaning, when we feel a particular way, we look for people who feel that way. The way that it's been said throughout time is that misery loves company. But company doesn't have to be an actual person. It's like if I feel this way, then I want to read someone that feels that way, I want to listen to someone that feels that way, I'm looking for somebody to agree with me, which feeds my emotions, which grows my emotions. This is kind of just the way that this works.

To go back to the classic “above all else guard your heart,” I've had this conversation many times at the front of this stage. Young lady comes up, single, “Man I don't know what's wrong with me, I only date losers. It's like I like guys that aren't good for me, I'm attracted to them. What should I do?” To which I say, “What's on your playlist?” “What do you mean?” “Well who are you listening to?” “Oh, ya know, I love the Taylor Swift album, it's so good, angsty, man anti-hero wow!” “Does Taylor have a marriage like you want? Is that what you're after? What are you watching? What are you watching on TV?” “No, you don't understand, I'm talking about my relationships.” “I know. You're systematically going to a university that teaches you to only date losers. That's what's going on. That's what's going on.” And parents certainty application for us there. It doesn't have to be that though. I had a conversation recently with somebody—they're radios always on sports radio. And they just said, “You know I realized how well my day was going is how good sports radio was that day, and my heart began to care too much about these men in their ball and what the scoreboard said. And I got really invested in it, and there was just a big chunk of my brain that was going to that. And so it wasn't really thinking about eternal things, it was thinking about this earthly game.” What are you listening to? Gossip can impact the way you feel towards someone. Somebody comes up one day, you

really like somebody, then somebody walks up and says, “Hey did you hear what they did?” You’re like “Oh gosh that’s weird.” Then it spins up in your head. We don’t see how damaging it is. It’s like, “What are you saying?” I heard a kid the other day say, “Man I hate TCU.” And some of us are like “GOOD!” I’m like, man that’s a really violent statement. You’re talking about a group of people created in the image of God. Wow. Where’d you learn that? I mean, I know where they learned it from, it’s not a mystery where they got that from. But in saying those words, they heard something that turned their heart dark towards someone. That’s what’s happening there.

Here at Harris Creek we practice the 24-hour principle, which is if you say something to me which is about someone else, then I’m going to give you 24 hours to say it to them, because you told it to me about them, and I want to make sure—that’s not helpful to them, they need to hear you say that. And so I’m just going to ask them in 24 hours, “Have you said that to them?” Which makes this place really not a safe space for gossip. And it’s not. If you’re a guest with us today, it’s not a safe space for gossip. Gossips not safe here, because it messes with our hearts. And so the pure heart listens to things that bring glory to God.

Next question, what are you saying?

What are you saying?

What is coming out of your mouth? What are you saying? These are great questions to discuss in your lifegroup, with your kids. I mean, you can keep this list directly from this proverb. This is what he says in verse 24, “**Keep your mouth free of perversity; Keep corrupt talk far from your lips.**” And you might say, “Well, does what I say really impact my heart?” It absolutely

does. Maybe more than just about anything else. And it certainly displays what's in your heart. And so here is Jesus our Lord and savior, when he was on the earth and he gave sermons and taught people, this is his commentary on this passage. **Matthew 15:18-20, "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person;"** So speaking of gossip, do you gossip? Do you speak about anyone that's not present for entertainment value just to have something to say? You know, this is relevant to us in the area of sports. Our kids hear what we say about the other team, they hear what we say about the coach, they hear what we say about the other players. "I think they just get playing time because..." They hear that and it messes with their heart. It changes who they are and it affects their outlook of the world. What comes out of your mouth is coming from your heart.

I'll say this, how do you speak about your spouse? Is there ever a scenario in all of creation that you should ever say something negative about your spouse? And here's what I will tell you, it will not under any circumstance ever, not one single time, ever grow your heart for them. And if you guys are in a covenant relationship, like, you're in it, and you say something poorly about them, it's not going to grow your heart for them, which means your marriage just got more difficult, because you're stuck. The pure in heart only speak what builds others up. That's **Ephesians 4:29, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up so that it may benefit those who listen."**

The next question, third question, is where are you looking?

Where are you looking?

Where do your eyes go? Where are you looking? He says this in verse 25, **“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.”** I think far too often we are entertained by the things that Christ died for. What you watch, it feeds your preferences and grows your preferences. Our son, coming out of Christmas, I just saw the spirit of materialism, and I’m trying to parent it was always like, “Hey what can we get? Can we get that? Can we get that?” Just scrolling through looking for new things. I’m like, “You just got toys for Christmas.” But he was more fixated on the gift cards, ya know what can I buy next. And we’re very vigilant on what he watches on YouTube or on TV. So he’s watching these YouTubers that they just seem harmless, they just build things and do experiments and stuff. But then I realized what they’re doing is they—through their adds they raise money, and they just do these crazy things, “Hey I’m going to buy all my friends cars! And we’re going to build a rocket in the backyard and it’s going to be amazing—send it to space!” And there’s always something big and crazy and expensive. And it’s feeding something in his heart that’s growing. I would have thought, well that’s innocent, it’s not pornography, it’s not explicit. It doesn’t have to be. But when it is explicit, I don’t think we fully understand how damaging to our heart it is. It takes you somewhere that you don’t want to go.

For some of us, this can be like crime shows which are just kind of on the rise. We love a good whodunit, and what did they do and where and why? And so Forensic Files, Dateline NBC, Snapped, Serial Podcast, True Crime, all of these things are on the rise. In fact, I heard recently that they went from—the guy was just talking about this particular murder—and they were

talking about how they were obsessed with crime shows. And he made this statement that they went from watching them to doing them. And this is something, this is a pattern, that happens. They've observed this in the FBI in people who solve these kinds of problems, often they feed something, it grows, and they want to act out on it. In fact, some of us got really obsessed with the Idaho murder. Idaho murders, right? And we look in that, and as they get a suspect we say, "Oh that's the case!" He was obsessed with criminology, he was obsessed with understanding how people did this, what they did. And then he went, presumably, and acted out on it.

Your heart is like an iPhone. Okay? It's like an iPhone. It hears what you're interested in, and it begins to just put it in front of you. "Oh you like that?" My iPhones like, "Hey I think we need a new rug..." And all of a sudden anywhere I look there's rug ads. "Oh look! A 12x15, is that too big? Okay a 10x...wow they're rugs everywhere! Wayfair, Rooms to Go, Overstock, Amazon even! Babe, Amazon even has rugs! Prime, two day delivery, we can have one!" It just knows I'm looking for rugs and it's just feeding me rugs. That's how your heart works! It sees what you take an interest in, and it begins to place it in front of you, "Look here, look over here, I saw you looked at that last night, checked that out. Look over here! Hey, you're driving down the road take interest in this. Keep your thoughts right here, this is fun to think about, isn't it? You told me it was fun so let me feed you more. Okay, you like fixer upper, let's get a new house!" "I just got a new house," "Yeah not a new house, an old house! Let's get an old house and fix it up—I saw you watch Shark Tank! That was cool, you know, you could be an inventor—come up with somethings great, solve a problem. Why didn't you think of that? Oh you did think of that, you just didn't tell anybody. Come up with some laundry detergent or something—you've got the new creation, the new potion, it's going to be amazing." Right? We feed something.

Social media? Here's what social media taught me recently. All of your Christmases were so much better than mine. I mean, you guys were going places and doing stuff, and I was writing a sermon that no one was going to listen to because there were lots of kids in the room. I mean, I am the only man in Waco Texas who didn't go on an amazing hunt this Christmas. All of you, you guys were shooting big things and it was amazing. The rest of you were on a ski vacation, right? What am I doing? I'm feeling discontentment. It's self-harm. I hate mom guilt, but let me just go and remind myself what a terrible mom I am, comparatively. I don't like envy, but let me go back to that influencer one more time, just to remind myself just how beautiful she is, how amazing her marriage is, how well behaved her kids are, how she can buy anything at anytime she wants, how great her house is. Tell me we don't do this? The pure in heart will set no evil thing before their eyes. Fourth question, when do you plan your path?

When do you plan your path?

When do you plan your path? When, how often, at what time, do you plan your path? It says this in verse 26, **“Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.”** You can't be steadfast without being thoughtful, this is what this Proverb is saying. To be thoughtful requires time set aside to think about it. By planning your path, I mean how do you ensure you're steadily going the right direction. And so how do we spend daily time with Jesus, and not just call ourselves a Christian, but actually prioritize consuming God's word; and not rolling our eyes at that anymore and saying, “Well that doesn't work for me,” but actually saying, “No. For me to go through life as a follower of Jesus, I'm going to actually have to actually follow Jesus. I'm going to have to learn what he says and fill my heart with those

truths.” And so I was talking with a guy recently who lost his way. He left the path. He strayed from the path and he was just overtaken by insecurity, depression, harmful thoughts. And he said—you know he said something I had said, so I was kind of leaned in and was like, “Wow I’ve never heard anybody else say that but I love it.” He said, “You know, prayer healed me.” And he goes, “But not that the prayer was answered. But the activity of sitting alone with God every morning and just fixating on the things above, reflecting, thinking about the cross, the empty tomb, heaven forever and ever and ever, just filling my heart with hope actually moved me to a better place.” And I’ve seen it over and over and over and over again. And if that’s what you need to hear, your heart is going to be most reluctant to it... give it a shot. Give it a try.

I’ve been giving the same advice for a long time, if you’re on the wrong path, change your playmates and your playground. Change who you hang out with and where you go for fun. And hang out with people on the right path that are going the right direction. The pure in heart spend time daily to stay steadfast on the path. Number five, why do you stray?

Why do you stray?

Why do you stray? Which is kind of like asking how would the enemy take you out? What are the tendencies for you to turn towards, why do you stray? What are your temptations. Verse 27, **“Do not turn to the right or to the left; keep your foot from evil.”** And so if something is evil stay far from it. Don’t poke it, don’t sniff it, don’t taste it, run from it, stay from away from it. Young people, I’m blown away by the obsession with crystals, and manifestations, and horoscopes, and things that are evil. You don’t want to come close to those things, you don’t want to end up where they will carry you. And so, people can blow off the church because they

say crazy things and you're like, "Well is Harry Potter bad because it's witchcraft?" And here's the truth, "I don't know. But if you're interested in it, you better know." And you might be like, "Well everybody's watching it!" We don't like when our kids tell us that. And so why are we going to tell God that? "Well, God, everyone was watching it. Everyone was doing it. Everyone was going there." That's not going to work. That's not going to keep you from ending up some place that you don't want to be.

I love soldier movies. I love movies where there's someone there, like a hero that is able to overcome evil because they've got all the tools they need. They can think clearly, and fight well, and shoot straight. Kind of the Bourne Identity, Supremacy, whatever it is I'm coming in to save the day. I love that stuff. Somebody was like, "Hey, you should watch Terminal List." I'm like, "Man, this is exactly what I'm looking for. Reacher, Jack Ryan, great! Love this stuff." I get a couple episodes in, there's a strip club scene. Snap, shows up out of nowhere, just like that. "ooooo..." That's all it took. Here's what it would look like, so pornography was a struggle for a long long time, still a struggle in a sense that I have to fight it all the time. And resist temptation daily and confess and ask for prayer. And so if this is the door and Satan's on the other side, the one who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour—seeking to destroy, then I'm locking the door, I've got padlocks—back against the door, I'm not going to let him in. But when that shows up on the TV and it's like, "Woah, wow oh gosh." It's just like unlock. Turn the knob. Open the door. Leave it open. And then everywhere I look it's just like a sense of heightened awareness, double looks, just kind of walking fractured. Broken hearted in a way. It's like, "Oh man, I've never noticed that before."

And this—what is that? You’ve given the devil a foothold. You can do it materialistically, you can do it with lust, you can do it with pride. Choose your sin. You’ve given the devil a foothold. You’ve invited him in. And he will devour you. And sometimes we’re like, “Man, it’s awesome though.” But there’s a strip club scene. And I don’t think that’s guarding your heart above all else. If you were ever going to be “legalistic” in a sense...*above all else* protect your heart! If you’re a parent, *above all else* protect their heart! More than you protect anything in all the world! Protect their, your heart! The pure in heart eliminate evil from their lives at all cost.

In summary be very careful what you let in your heart by asking questions like who are you listening to, what are you saying, where are you looking, when do you plan your path, why do you stray? Here’s a great example of why this is so important. Is the man who gave us this advice, inspired by the Holy Spirit, did not take his own instruction, and it cost him dearly. Solomon. Solomon strayed, he didn’t guard his heart and this is what 1 Kings 11 says, **“As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.” 1 Kings 11:4** And we know in Ecclesiastes Solomon, the man who had everything you could ever want—died in deep depression. Lonely and bitter. But Jesus, Jesus is such a better example than Solomon. Because Jesus, he was tempted in every way Hebrews tells us, but he did not sin. He resisted. And then for the joy set before him he endured the cross scorning the shame, calling us to fix our eyes on Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. Throwing off everything that so easily entangles us and running the race marked out for us. And you can’t do that too much. You can’t do that too extremely if you will. Above all else guard your heart.

Let me pray that you would. Father help us do that. Help us protect our hearts, guard our hearts, be careful what we let in. Show us the path, straighten the path. Help us to trust in you with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding, but in every way we have acknowledge you. And God I pray that you would keep us on the path, that you would straighten it. Help us to raise up disciples of Jesus in this place. People that know you and follow you and walk with you. Help us to reflect on these questions and answer them honestly and to change what we need to. By the power of your Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name.