This powerful message invites us to examine the most fundamental aspect of our spiritual lives: the condition of our hearts. Drawing from Proverbs 4:23, we're reminded that above all else, we must guard our hearts because everything in our lives flows from them. The sermon uses a relatable metaphor of the junk drawer we all have in our homes—that place where random items accumulate without us even noticing. Our hearts can become like that drawer, collecting disappointments, fears, and worldly influences until they overflow unexpectedly. The teaching walks us through five essential practices for heart stewardship: guarding our hearts carefully, keeping them fully devoted to God, cultivating purity through God's transforming work, trusting God completely rather than leaning on our own understanding, and filling our hearts with Scripture. What makes this message particularly compelling is its honest acknowledgment that God isn't looking for perfect hearts—He's looking for willing hearts. Before we can faithfully steward our time, talents, or treasures, we must first surrender our hearts to God. This foundational truth challenges us to ask ourselves what truly occupies the throne of our hearts and whether we're allowing God's Word to dwell richly within us, shaping our thoughts and guiding our decisions.

Title: Guarding Your Heart: The Foundation of Faithful Stewardship

Sermon Summary: This sermon launches a new series on stewardship by emphasizing that all faithful stewardship begins with the heart. Pastor Bo connects the recently completed Nehemiah series about rebuilding walls to the concept that once God rebuilds something, He calls us to steward it. Before we can faithfully steward our time, talents, and treasures, we must first examine and guard the condition of our hearts. The sermon emphasizes that our hearts belong to God and everything in our lives—our words, actions, attitudes, and decisions—flows from what's happening inside our hearts. God is not looking for perfect hearts but willing hearts that are guarded, devoted, pure, trusting, and filled with His Word.

Key Points:
- Guard your heart carefully—above all else, protect your heart because everything you do flows from it
- Keep your heart fully devoted to God—love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength, not just a portion
- Cultivate a pure heart—allow God to continually transform what's inside through His cleansing work
- Trust God with your whole heart—surrender control and lean not on your own understanding
- Fill your hearts with God's Word—hide Scripture in your heart so it dwells richly within you and shapes your thoughts and decisions
- The way we steward our hearts will determine the direction of our lives
- God wants our hearts before He asks for our time, talents, or treasures
- A heart that isn't cared for doesn't stay empty—it gets filled with something

Stories:
- The Junk Drawer Analogy: Pastor Bo uses the illustration of the common household junk drawer that accumulates random items over time without intentional organization. He compares

this to how our hearts can collect disappointments, frustrations, fears, and hurtful words without us realizing it until something triggers an emotional response
- The Lost Luggage Story: Pastor Bo shares a personal experience of traveling alone for the first time when the airline failed to put his suitcase on a direct flight from Milwaukee to Denver despite a one-hour delay. His reaction to this situation revealed what had been stored in his heart
- The Contaminated Reservoir Illustration: The sermon uses the image of a reservoir or well that supplies clean water to a community. If the source becomes contaminated, everything flowing from it will be affected, just as a heart filled with bitterness, pride, and worldly influences will eventually show up in our relationships and decisions

Scripture References from the Sermon

1. **Proverbs 4:23** - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."
2. **Matthew 15:18-19** - "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."
3. **Deuteronomy 6:5** - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength."
4. **Matthew 22:37** - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your mind."
5. **Psalm 51:10** - "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
6. **Matthew 5:8** - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."
7. **Proverbs 3:5-6** - "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways, submit to Him, and He will make your path straight."
8. **Jeremiah 17:9** - "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"
9. **Psalm 119:11** - "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
10. **Colossians 3:16** - "Let the message of Christ dwell richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."

Book/Context Referenced:
11. **Book of Nehemiah** - Referenced as the previous sermon series about rebuilding walls and restoration
12. **Matthew 4:1-11** (alluded to) - Jesus being tempted in the wilderness and responding with God's Word

Suggested Relevant Verses for Main Themes:
- **1 Chronicles 28:9** - For the theme of God searching hearts
- **Ezekiel 36:26** - For the theme of God giving a new heart
- **Luke 6:45** - For the theme of what's in the heart coming out
- **Hebrews 4:12** - For the theme of God's Word and the heart
- **James 4:8** - For the theme of drawing near to God

How does the analogy of the junk drawer relate to the condition of your own heart, and what might you need to intentionally remove or address?

In what ways do you find yourself giving God only a portion of your heart rather than the complete devotion He desires, and what holds you back from full surrender?

Pastor Bo mentioned that everything we do flows from our hearts according to Proverbs 4:23. What specific attitudes or actions in your life reveal what is truly filling your heart right now?

David prayed for God to create in him a pure heart in Psalm 51:10. Why is it significant that he asked God to create this rather than attempting to purify his own heart through willpower?

The sermon states that our hearts are always devoted to something. What competes most strongly with God for the devotion of your heart, and how can you recognize when something has taken His place?

How does trusting God with all your heart, as described in Proverbs 3:5-6, challenge your natural tendency to rely on your own understanding and control?

What does it practically look like in your daily life to hide God's Word in your heart as described in Psalm 119:11, and how might this help you resist temptation?

The pastor emphasized that God is not looking for perfect hearts but willing hearts. How does this truth change your approach to spiritual growth and your relationship with God?

Before we can faithfully steward our time, talents, and treasures, we must first surrender our hearts to God. Why is the heart the starting point for all other areas of stewardship?

Reflecting on the question in the bulletin, in what specific area is the Holy Spirit inviting you to guard, surrender, or fill your heart more intentionally this week?

Small Group Guide: Stewarding Your Heart
Series: Stewardship

Sermon Title: Stewarding Your Heart
Key Scripture: Proverbs 4:23 - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and transformation.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

The Junk Drawer Question:
Share about your actual junk drawer at home. What's the strangest or most random thing you've found in it? How does this relate to how we sometimes treat our hearts?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon
Guard Your Heart Carefully - Our hearts are the source of everything in our lives
Keep Your Heart Fully Devoted to God - God desires complete devotion, not partial commitment
Cultivate a Pure Heart - Transformation comes through surrender, not self-effort
Trust God with Your Whole Heart - Surrender control and lean on His wisdom
Fill Your Heart with God's Word - What we put into our hearts shapes who we become
Discussion Questions
Section 1: Understanding Heart Stewardship (15 minutes)

Pastor Bo said, "The way that we steward our hearts will determine the direction of our lives." What does this statement mean to you personally?

Read Proverbs 4:23 together. Why do you think Solomon says "above all else" when talking about guarding our hearts?

What are some things that have "collected" in your heart over time without you realizing it? (disappointments, fears, words spoken to you, etc.)

Section 2: Devotion and Purity (15 minutes)

Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37. What does it look like practically to love God with "ALL" your heart? What competes for that devotion in your life?

David prayed in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God." Why can't we create a pure heart on our own? What's the difference between trying harder and surrendering to God?

Are there areas of unforgiveness, bitterness, or pride that you've allowed to take root in your heart? (Allow time for silent reflection - don't pressure sharing)

Section 3: Trust and Truth (15 minutes)

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. The sermon mentioned that we can't win a debate with God. Share a time when you argued with God's direction but eventually had to surrender. What did you learn?

Jeremiah 17:9 says our hearts are "deceitful above all things." How does this truth keep us humble and dependent on God's wisdom rather than our own feelings?

Read Psalm 119:11 and Colossians 3:16. What's the difference between hearing God's Word occasionally versus letting it "dwell richly" in your heart? What practical steps can help God's Word take root deeper in your life?

Practical Application (15 minutes)
Personal Reflection Question from the Sermon:

"Am I guarding, surrendering, and filling my heart the way that God desires?"

Take 3-5 minutes of silent reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal:

An area that needs to be guarded more carefully
Something that needs to be surrendered to Him
How you can spend more time filling your heart with God's Word
This Week's Challenge (Choose one or more):

Daily Heart Check:

Each morning this week, pray Psalm 51:10 and Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to search your heart
Journal what He reveals to you

Scripture Memory:

Memorize Proverbs 4:23 or Proverbs 3:5-6
Write it on a card and place it where you'll see it daily

The Inventory:

List what currently has your affection and occupies your thoughts
Honestly assess: What sits on the throne of your heart?
Surrender those things to God in prayer

Word Dwelling:

Commit to reading Scripture for 15 minutes daily this week
Choose one passage to meditate on deeply rather than rushing through multiple chapters
Accountability Partners (5 minutes)

Pair up with someone in the group and share:

One specific area where you need to guard your heart better
One thing you're surrendering to God this week

Exchange contact information and commit to checking in with each other mid-week.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Have each person share one sentence about what God spoke to their heart today, then close in prayer together. Pray specifically for:

Hearts that are willing and surrendered
Protection from what shouldn't enter our hearts
Hunger for God's Word
Complete devotion to Christ
Looking Ahead

Next week we'll discuss stewarding our time. Before the next meeting, notice how you spend your time throughout the week. Where does your time actually go versus where you think it goes?

Additional Resources
Recommended Reading: Psalm 51, Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 15:18-19
Worship Songs: "Create in Me a Clean Heart," "Trust in You" by Lauren Daigle, "Oceans" by Hillsong United
Memory Verse for the Series: Proverbs 4:23

Remember: God isn't looking for perfect hearts. He's looking for willing hearts.