

4 TACTICS TO GUARD YOUR HEART

“...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” (Proverbs 4:23–26).

As leaders, you need to know that there is a battle going on for your credibility and character. In today’s volatile social media environment, every word, action or random musing is being scrutinized and judged, even those made years ago.

Whether you think it is fair or not doesn’t really matter. While we are blessed with God’s forgiveness, the world isn’t as forgiving, and even though we may receive forgiveness from God, consequences often remain for misspoken words or improper actions.

In **Proverbs 4, Solomon** is talking about the core of a person: the thoughts, feelings, desires, will and choices that make a person who he or she is. This is what we must guard.

Howard Hendricks, former **Pastor** and **Professor** at **Dallas Theological Seminary**, accomplished a longitudinal study of **250** new pastors. At the end of the first year, **84** of these pastors had lost their ministries due to adulterous relationships. What did these 84 pastors have in common?

- All had ceased to have a time of private devotion.
- All had let their guard down in their dealings with the opposite sex.
- All reported they had pride in the fact that **“this would never happen to me.”**

We are involved in a spiritual battle. The more committed you are to Christ, submit your life to His authority and the authority of the scripture, typically, the spiritual battle increases in intensity. You must remain constantly vigilant and keep your guard. Look at **King David** for an example of what happens when leaders drop their guard for even a moment.

What are tactics we can use to guard our hearts?

1. STAND FIRM

Ephesians 6 commands us to put on the whole armor of God and to **“stand firm.”** I often equate this to the command on the battlefield to hold until the last. This is not the command you want to receive, but certainly, one that is easily understood. Retreat is not part of the equation. Put on the full armor of God, and stand. Stand firm.

2. RENEW YOUR MIND

Our mind is not renewed or transformed by reading books about scripture or the myriad self-help leadership books that exist on the shelves today. Our mind is renewed and transformed by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.

You can be refreshed, encouraged, and excited by those other books, but the Word of God is the only source of transformation of our hearts and minds. Pastors who experienced moral failure had stepped away from the transforming Word of God and had conformed to the way of thinking of the world... something we are all susceptible to!

3. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

In a world where we are bombarded by thoughts and images that are in direct opposition to God's way of thinking, we must pray without ceasing.

I have a good friend who is the CEO of a Christian non-profit, and every time we talk, when we are done, he asks if he can pray for me. I find myself now trying to beat his offer to pray for me with my offer to pray for him. Sounds silly, but I have embraced the attitude of constant prayer, and my mindset is completely changed.

Each challenge is met, first, with a whispered prayer for guidance and patience and wisdom. This helps me see God's world God's way and not the fallen world through fallen eyes.

4. LIVE IN COMMUNITY, NOT ALONE

If you know me, you'd know that I am an extroverted introvert. I can operate in crowds when I have to, but left to myself, I would much rather be alone.

As Christians, we were created to operate in a community, the spiritual gifts were given to the church so the church could operate in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and God covenants with us as a body. Don't get me wrong; I believe there must be a personal recognition of our "lostness" outside of Christ, but we are designed by our Creator to operate as the body of Christ, the church. Apart from that, we will stumble and fail.

Find yourself a community of believers that will challenge you, hold you accountable and love you. One thing I can guarantee, if you struggle with a besetting sin, you will never succeed in breaking that pattern of sin alone.

A few last words for leaders about guarding their hearts, from **1 Peter 5:6-11**, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen" (NIV).

SOURCE — Bob Russell