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The Lord knows very well
that you cannot change your own heart
and cannot cleanse your nature but
He also knows that He can do both.



INTRODUCTION

This Guidebook 2 on the study of the Book of Proverbs focuses mainly on the state and condition of our hearts and God’s loving request, “My son, give me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26). For what has God to gain? He is too great for us to make Him greater, too good for us to make Him better, too glorious for us to make Him more illustrious. When He says, “Give me thine heart,” it must be for our benefit, and not for His own. Surely it is more blessed for us to give than for Him to receive. He can gain nothing: we gain everything by the gift of our heart to Him.

The 8 lessons are intended to make us examine our hearts deeply and honestly as we have never done before. Mysteries exist within our own bosoms and abysses which we have never yet explored. And we ask ourselves often - why are our hearts prone to wander from our God?

At the end of this Guidebook study, the diligent student of God’s inspired word in Proverbs will hopefully have learned:

1. The infinite love of God for us
2. The wonders God can do for our hearts when we give it to Him
3. To be slow to judge anyone for we know not the hearts of our fellowmen
4. To guard our eyes carefully for they are the windows to our hearts
5. That our heart’s true rest is at the Cross

The lessons and questions to be discussed are structured to encourage one another to open up and frankly discuss the conditions of our hearts that affect our walk with the Lord.

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A Wandering Bird

*"As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
so is a man that wandereth from his place."
– Proverbs 27:8*

Solomon spoke from observation and wisdom gained by long experience and the testimony of divine wisdom. The bird away from her nest has no comfort; the instincts of nature make her feel during her incubation that the nest is her proper place. And when the Christian gets away from the cross, the newborn instincts within him make him feel that he is out of his proper position. The cross is the true rest of a Christian.

There is no living comfortably, there is no living with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit in the heart, if we at once wander from the simplicity of our confidence in Christ. Now some of us have had times in which we did come very near to the Lord Jesus Christ. So delightful were prayer-meetings and similar gatherings because you saw Jesus there and talked with him! But what about your present state? Perhaps my dear friend you have wandered from your place; you are not living near to Christ as you used to do. Hence ordinances have but very little comfort in them; they are dull and tedious; and services which were once as marrow and fatness to you have now become as dry bones. You have lost your first love, and I appeal to you, have you not also lost your first comfort? Are you not like a bird that has wandered from her nest?

A real Christian who has backslidden and gone into the world, will never be happy in his sin. As a bird could not be happy down in the depths of the sea, it must drown unless it soon be delivered; so the

saint of God is wretched in the depths of iniquity unless he is brought out. If he falls into sin through weakness, or be dragged into it through the force of sudden temptation, he yearns to be delivered and groans and cries unto God till once more the bones that were broken are made to rejoice. If you wander from holiness you wander from your place.

Oh! how blessed it will be if you and I shall be kept by mighty grace simply relying upon Christ, constantly communing with his person, watchful against the inroads of temptation and persevering in holiness even to the end! Think again of the sorrow we have felt whenever we have wandered. You and I have had backsliding times; let us confess it mournfully. But what wretched times they have always been! What have we ever gained by going away from our Lord but sorrow of heart?

Do you know what sometimes happens to the bird if it leaves its nest? Why, while the bird is away the cuckoo comes and drops its egg in, and so the poor bird when it comes back has to hatch its enemy. And oftentimes when we are not watchful and permit the enemy to take an advantage over us, Satan comes in and drops some foul temptation into our nest, which our hearts help to hatch, and which will give us trouble all our lives. As sure as ever we wander in the matter of watchfulness, it will be for our hurt. We may sleep, but Satan does not. Never was he detected napping yet. There is slothfulness among believers but there is no slothfulness on the part of their adversary. He ever watcheth, going "about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Though you should leave off watchfulness he never will. Oh Christian, do not leave your nest, for you do not know what may come of it; what good things may be destroyed or what bad things may be deposited while your heart is away.

Think – what reason has Jesus given to us to be discontented and go away? Has He been unfaithful to us? In what respect has He aggrieved us? Has He ever treated us harshly for our follies? Never has a friend behaved better to his friend than Christ has behaved to us; and as we can never find a better Savior, let us cling to him all our days. From this nest let us never wander, because of the "rest" which "remaineth for the people of God."

Questions

1. What is the present state of your Christian life?
2. Can you recall a time when you backslided? What triggered it?
3. Do you remember what or who it was that led you return to Him?

Prayer

Father, why is my heart prone to wander from my God? Why do I not spend more time with you to talk about my hopes and dreams, my problems and things that distress me? Why do I let my heart grow heavy and toss and turn in my bed when you are waiting for me to call upon you? Why do I try to sort out things when I am quite overwhelmed with all that is happening in my life? Father, I really need you right now. Please let the Holy Spirit stir my heart to respond to my God. I can't do it on my own. Let me hear the Lord Jesus say to my heart as He said to the sea, "Be still." Let me experience the peace of Jesus which the world cannot give. Refresh my soul and grant me rest dear God. I desire to be at home once again like the bird that returns to its nest. Thank you that you are always waiting for me like the father that waits for the prodigal son to come home.

Thank you for always loving me, always being faithful to me even when I am not. Hold me in your arms dear God and bid me stay.

I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen



The Great Reservoir - the Heart

*Keep thy heart with all diligence,
for out of it are the issues of life.
- Proverbs 4:23*

You have seen the great reservoirs in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, that life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye etc. Hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, otherwise that which flows through the pipes would be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the stream of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

First, keep the heart full. If that reservoir be dry it will most assuredly beget empty pipes. Now, you know many people whose lives are just dry and empty. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. O for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the

living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams. Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question—"But how can I keep my heart full? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If you have all your springs in God, your heart will be full enough. If you go with your Master to the hill of Olivet, and look down with Him upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will your heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If you live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer—he who lives with little prayer—he who seldom reads the Word—he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high—he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God—who spends much time in holy retirement—who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High—whose soul is given up to Christ—who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent—such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life. Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial.

Secondly, it would be of little use to keep the reservoir full, if one does not also keep the waters pure. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean for if the heart be not pure, then life cannot be pure. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. From where comes our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. You say "How can I do this?" Well, there was a stream of Marah, to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink. Yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they

became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree on which the Saviour hung, the cross. Take that tree, put it into your heart. The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind and makes it pure.

Questions

1. **Is your heart feeling somewhat dry and empty today? Do you long for the refreshing springs that David talks about?**
(Psalm 87:7)
2. **Read Exodus 15:23-25. The people were thirsty and the water was bitter. They grumbled. Are we any different when we face with such circumstances?**
3. **Is there any bitter water in the reservoir of your heart that needs the Lord to turn it sweet?**

Prayer

Father in Heaven, Lord God Almighty, fill my heart with streams of living water that will refresh my soul and my spirit. I can't imagine anything more wonderful in this life on earth than to have the reservoir of my heart continually be filled with the springs of Heaven. There are so many people O Lord whose lives are barren and dry like the desert. They long for rain on the thirsty land. There have been desert times in my life O Lord but I have not forgotten how you have kept me going by the underground streams and sometimes, gushing water from the rock. Thank you for your loving kindness and faithfulness to me O Lord. Keep my heart pure and focused on you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Each Heart Knows its own Bitterness

*Each heart knows its own bitterness,
and no one else can share its joy.
– Proverbs 14:10*

You cannot completely know your fellowman. All that you know concerning your fellows, and there is much which we can know, yet leaves a great deal as unknown to us. It is not surprising that we must be, in a measure, unknown to others, as we do not even fully know ourselves. Mysteries exist within our own bosoms, and abysses which we have never yet explored. If none know themselves so fully as they think, how shall we then truly know our fellows?

Humans in their highest and deepest conditions are remarkably secretive. The extreme heights and depths lie in darkness. A man may openly show himself in his ordinary life, and “wear his heart upon his sleeve” but when he reaches a special grief, the deep waters are still. There is a bitterness that each man feels alone.

What is the practical use of these facts? We learn, first, that we may not judge our brethren as though we understood them and were competent to give a verdict upon them. Do not sit down, like Job’s friends, and condemn the innocent. Be sure that you cannot accurately judge any of your fellowman’s actions. Seen upon its surface, and by itself, his act may appear blameworthy; but the motive behind, if known to you, would soften your censure, or even win your praise. Before the great Searcher of all hearts, things are not what they seem.

As our law condemns no man before it hears him, so let us not hasten to give sentence, since we have not yet heard, and in all probability never shall hear, all the ins and outs of his behaviour. Well said our Lord, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Allow no ungenerous suspicions of the afflicted, the poor, and the despondent. Do not hastily say they ought to be braver and exhibit a greater faith. Ask not—why are they so nervous, and so absurdly fearful? Remember that you do not really understand your fellowman. If we desire to show sympathy to our brethren, let us not dream that this is an easy task. It is not a simple matter to square two unknown quantities — yourself and your friend. It is not easy to lay your soul side by side with another man’s soul.

Brethren, do not intrude into the hidden sorrows of any: it is enough for one heart to know its bitterness. Maybe, you will increase misery if you meddle with it. Leave that alone which you cannot relieve. If you can help, lend an attentive ear. But if you cannot help, keep your finger from the wound. Yet in your very quietness, feel inwardly a sense of brotherhood for since this man’s heart has its own bitterness and you have yours, it proves he and you are from the same fallen family, both citizens of the world which brings forth thorns and thistles to all the fallen race.

You may cheer the heart of the burden-bearer, but his trouble is still the same—there is no dividing his grief. We cannot diminish the pain of another’s wound. Rest you certain that everywhere throughout this world every foot has its blister, every shoulder has its sore, every lot has its crook, every rose has its thorn.

We all need sympathy. It is impossible that we should ever perfectly obtain it from our fellow-men but there remains but One who can give it to us. There is One who can enter the deepest recesses of our heart and be in touch with our unmentionable grief. He weighs and measures that which is too heavy for us to bear. That blessed One! Oh, that we may each one have Him for our friend! Without him we shall lack the great necessity of a happy life! A personal Saviour is absolutely

needful to each of us to meet our individual personality. Jesus alone can make our lives more gladsome and remove its wormwood. We must each one have Christ for himself. What is another man's Christ to me? What is the Christ who dies for all the world to anyone in that world until he takes a personal hold on him? "He loved me, and gave himself for me": that is the point of rest. What joy to touch the nail-print with your finger, and to cry, "My Lord, and my God"! This is the heart of the matter. We must personally open the door to our Lord, and He must enter into us, and fill our entire nature with His divine indwelling. Each man must come into an individual relation with the living God in Christ Jesus.

The cure for bitterness of heart is to take it to your Lord at once. All the thorns that pierce thy feet once pierced his head. Go thou to him with the full vessel of thy woe. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." Then shall you sing for joy of heart.

Questions

1. **Has there been a time in your life where you suffered a pain that no one truly understood? Is the grief still there?**
2. **Today's lesson reminds us not to be quick to censure or judge others or to give advice when we do not fully understand what the person is going through. Have you been at the receiving end of such a situation?**
3. **Do you think you really know yourself well?**

Prayer

Father in Heaven, for so long I have carried this bitter pain in my heart, the source of which you alone know. I've tried to forget the wrong done to me. I have tried to bury the matter in the deepest recesses of my mind and my heart. Yet time and again O Lord, the raw wounds appear as fresh as when I was pierced. I need you to heal me and bind up my wounds dear Lord. I can't heal on my own. Father, why is it so hard to forget the hurts people inflict on us? Why is it so easy for them to walk away? If not for Jesus holding me up all this time, I would have fallen over the edge of the cliff. But Lord, I don't want to hurt anymore. I know Jesus said, "I have come to heal the broken hearted, to bind up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). Heal me now my Lord, bind up my wounds. This I ask in Jesus' name, Amen.





Let Your Eyes Look Straight

*Let thine eyes look right on,
and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
– Proverbs 4:25*

It is clear that every part of our nature needs to be carefully watched, lest in any way it should become the cause of sin. Any one member or faculty is readily able to defile all the rest, and therefore every part must be guarded with care. We have selected for our meditation the verse which deals with the eye. These windows of light need to be watched in their incomings, lest that which we take into our soul should be darkness rather than light; and they need to be watched in their outgoing, lest the glances of the eye should be full of iniquity, or should suggest foolish thoughts. Hence the wise man advises, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Have eyes and use them. Using them, take care to use them honestly.

Some persons are always as if they were asleep. The shadows of this transient life impress them, and that is all. They have never awakened yet to the true life and its joys. They have never seen anything in very truth; for it is faith that sees, and of faith they have none. That which is apart from faith is not visible to the soul, however clear it may be to the eye. We have thousands around us who need to be startled out of that slumber in which they see the unsubstantial fancies of the hour. They say, “We see,” but scales are on their eyes. I fear we have such in all our congregations, lulled to sleep even by the preacher’s tones, to whom

the fact of coming to their accustomed seat, and listening to the usual hymns, tends rather to confirm them in a sluggard’s slumber than to stir their souls to action. O may God awaken you by His grace!

An arrow will never strike the mark if it travels in a zigzag direction; and the man whose life has no aim whatever, who pursues this, and then that, and then the other, what will he achieve? They have never yet discovered that this life is a preface to a life of diviner mould. They have not thought that time is but the doorstep of eternity.

To beings who lead such purposeless lives we would address the words of the wise man, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Have something to live for, and live for it. Get to know the right way, and, knowing the right way, keep to it with full purpose of heart and concentration of faculty. Remember, you cannot see to the end of a crooked way. You can only see a small part of a way that twists and winds. Choose, then, a straight and direct path which has a clear end. “To Christ!” “To Christ!” “To Christ!” That is the sole inscription upon every finger-post of the road to Heaven. Keep you to the King’s highway. Be not like Lot’s wife, who longed, and looked, and lingered, and was lost. Away, away, from Sodom, altogether away: let no eye steal in that direction.

Every wise man will conclude that the best way for a man is the way which God has made for him. He that made us knows what He made us for, and He alone knows by what means we may best arrive at that end. Christ Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

“Let thine eyes look right on.” “I understand that,” says one, “But you cannot look with your eyelids.” “Let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” What can that mean? Well, you can shut your eyes with your eyelids to a great many things, and so cease to see them. In the matter of faith-sight a great many things are best not seen. So, when you would otherwise see the danger, and all the difficulties and the doubts, do not look with your eyes, but look with your eyelids. Not to look at the difficulties at all is all the look they deserve. Let your eyelids shut out the view which would create distrust. Do not see, do not feel, “only

believe.” Believe Christ, and believe nothing else. “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” If all the devils in hell should come riding on the crests of those waves, howling as they come, take no notice of them. Draw down the blinds, and see nothing, know nothing, believe nothing but the Living Word, our Saviour. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” When thou closest thine eyes to consider, thou canst see a good deal with closed eyes, but still look thou right on, and to the One and Only, trust.

You must also let your eyes look right on, dear friends; for if you begin to look two ways at a time, you will miss the Lord Jesus, who is your way. Let your eyes look right on and you shall see the Lord of grace appearing to you through the mist and through the cloud, that self-same Saviour who stands in the midst of us even now, and cries, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

Remember Elisha’s petition for his servant was, “O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!” The young man was at that time seeing, and yet not seeing. He saw the enemy but not the Lord’s angels who protected the man of God. He could see the danger, but he could not see the deliverance. And so we are like Elisha’s servant often. Our constant prayer must be, “Lord open our eyes that we might see.”

Questions
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1. **Read 2 Kings 6:8-17. Do you long to have the eyes of faith of Elisha?**
2. **What distractions do you struggle with most with as a Christian?**
3. **Do you see Jesus at the Finishing Line waiting for you and the saints that has gone before you cheering you on dear Christian?**

Prayer
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Father, remove the scales from my eyes that I might see Jesus waiting for me at the end of the Finishing Line. Let my heart long to hear His voice telling me “Well done, good and faithful servant” at the end of my race. Yet Lord, I confess that while my heart longs for this, my eyes continue to glance at vanities. Like David I pray dear God, please “turn my eyes from beholding vanities.” I am weak and struggle with my flesh. I need your strong and gentle hands to hold my head and turn it to the side so that my eyes are also turned away from the things of the world and instead be fixed on you, my Lord and my God. This I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.





The Broken Stone Wall

*"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken."
– Proverbs 24: 30-32*

This slothful man did no hurt to his fellowmen. He was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else's business. He did not trouble himself about other men's concerns for he did not even attend to his own – it required too much exertion. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well alone and for the matter of that, he let ill alone too as the nettles and thistles in his garden plainly proved. One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest and make up for lost time. The time never actually came for him to begin but it was always coming. He always meant to repent but he went on in his sin.

This picture of the slothful man and his field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a Christian but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has withered in him. He has backslidden. He has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into one of listlessness and indifference to the things of God and while things have gone wrong within his heart and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character has broken down.

Let us stand with Solomon and consider and learn while we look at this broken-down wall. When we have examined it let us consider the consequences of broken-down walls. Let us rouse up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God's infinite mercy rouse us up before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices.

You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence for it was a stone wall. It was a substantial protection to begin with. The man had a field for agricultural purposes and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance. The idler took no care of his property but allowed the wall to get into bad repair and in many places to be quite broken down.

Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide. In many cases sound principles were instilled in youth, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! The Word of God taught us the ways of right toward God and toward men. We prayed till the things of God were placed round about us and shut us in as with a stone wall. We were checked when we would have done evil. We were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. Protection to character is also found in the fact that solid doctrines have been learned. This is a fine stone wall.

It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall. It is a great calamity when professedly converted men become unfixed, unstable and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Christians sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained.

Broad-churchism today is slowly breaking down the stone walls of our churches. The cry is "Be liberal and shake off all narrowness. Take the Broad way instead." I am obliged to cry "Be steadfast in the truth" for if we are not careful it will let the devil and all his crew in and do infinite harm to the church of God. Many have been taught the gospel of the grace of God, and they have learned it well, so that they are able to

contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal verities.

Another stone wall which is too often neglected is that of godly habits which had been formed: the slothful Christian allows this wall to be broken down. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous: to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants. At night, again, to go to your rest without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful. It may be said, "We can pray at all times." I know we can: but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all. Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer.

I believe that there is a great guardian power about family prayer, and I (Spurgeon) feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Household devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of our religion, and my prayer is that these may not be broken down.

Take care, also, of the stone wall of Bible reading, and of speaking often one to another concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly, and commune with God, and you will thus, by the blessing of God's Spirit, keep up a good strong fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into your soul.

Questions

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1. **Which Sunday school or youth bible story do you treasure most over the years? Or if you have more than one, share.**
2. **How is your bible study life now?**
3. **Have you neglected some part of the stone wall that surrounds your Christian life?**

Prayer

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Abba Father, restore to me the full joy of my salvation. Forgive me Lord for allowing the stone wall that surrounds my heart to be broken down in some areas. Help me to rebuild and strengthen the stone wall of my faith again. I once lived a simple peaceful life walking in the sunshine of your love. Then when you blessed and prospered all I do, I began to slide away. I was tempted by the honor, applause and pleasures of the world. I look at my life now and realise how foolish I have been to forsake the eternal treasures for the transient and fake values of this world and all its accompanying vanities. I still struggle Lord but I miss the warm communion with my God that gives me much peace in a troubled world. Quicken me my Lord and draw me near to you again. I ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.





The Vineyard of Your Heart

*Then I saw, and considered it well:
I looked upon it, and received instruction.
A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest –
and poverty will come on you
like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.”
– Proverbs 24: 32-34*

We may find instruction everywhere. To a spiritual mind nettles have their use, and weeds have their doctrine. Are they not brought forth of the earth on purpose that they may show us what sin has done? Whatever you see, take care to consider it well, and you will not see it in vain. Wisdom has a way of gathering grapes of thorns and figs of nettles. Like Solomon, see and consider them well — look upon them, and receive instruction. Many are stung by nettles, but few are taught by them.

This man had a vineyard, but he did not cultivate it; he had a field, but he did not till it. I know we each one have some power to serve God; do we use it? If we are his children he has not put one of us where we are of necessity useless. Somewhere we may shine by the light which he has given us, though that light be only a small candle. Are we thus shining? Having opportunities he did not use them, and being bound to the performance of certain duties he did not fulfil them. When God appointed that every Israelite should have a piece of land, He meant that each man should possess his plot, not to let it lie waste, but to cultivate it.

You are not asked to do in the service of God that which is utterly beyond you, for it is expected of us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. The man of two talents is not required to bring in the interest of five, but he is expected to bring in the interest of two. Solomon's slothful man was too idle to attempt tasks which were quite within his power. Dear friends, if God has given us any power to do good, pray let us do it, for this is a wicked, weary world. We should not even cover a glow-worm's light in such a darkness as this. Do not let us be void of understanding, because we have opportunities that we do not use, obligations that we do not fulfil, and capacities which we do not exercise.

The Christian who is slothful in his Master's service has no idea what he is losing. Some people have just enough religion to make it questionable whether they have any or not. When we see a lot of lazy servants, we are apt to think that their master must be a very idle person himself, or he would never put up with them. Oh, let not the world think that of our dear Saviour!

Note, first, that land will produce something. Soil which is good enough to be made into a field and a vineyard must and will yield some fruit or other; and so you and I, in our hearts, and in the sphere God gives us to occupy, will be sure to produce something. We cannot live in this world as entire blanks; we shall either do good or do evil, as sure as we are alive. The sluggard by sleeping was doing more for the cultivation of thorns and nettles than he could have done by any other means.

Note again that, if it be not farmed for God, the soul will yield its natural produce; and what is the natural produce of land if left to itself? What but thorns and nettles, or some other useless weeds? What is the natural produce of your heart and mine? What but sin and misery? What is the natural produce of your children if you leave them untrained for God?

Nobody can sleep on thorns, or make a pillow of nettles. No rest can come out of an idleness which lets ill alone. While you are sleeping, Satan will be sowing. If you withhold the seed of good, Satan will be

lavish with the seed of evil, and from that evil will come anguish and regret for time. Neglect is all that is needed to produce evil.

When a man lives by faith in Christ Jesus, and his faith exercises itself actively in the service of his Lord, it takes root, grows upward, and becomes strong, till it chokes his doubts. If your heart does not yield fruit to God it will certainly bring forth that which is mischievous in itself, painful to you, and injurious to your fellow-men. Often the thorns choke the good seed; but it a very blessed thing when the good seed comes up so thick and fast that it chokes the thorns. God enables certain Christians to become so fruitful in Christ that their graces and works stand thick together, and when Satan throws in the tares they cannot grow because there is no room for them. The Holy Spirit by his power makes evil to become weak in the heart, so that it no longer keeps the upper hand. If you are slothful, friend, look over the field of your heart, and weep at the sight.

Look at the great field of the world. Do you see how it is overgrown with thorns and nettles? If an angel could take a survey of the whole race, what tears he would shed, if angels could weep! What a tangled mass of weeds the whole earth is! The world is full of cruelty, oppression, drunkenness, rebellion, uncleanness, misery. What has the church been doing all these years? She ceased after a few centuries to be a missionary church, and from that hour she almost ceased to be a living church. However, instead of asking what the church has been doing for these nineteen hundred years, let us ask ourselves: What are we going to do now?

Will the Lord say, "I went by the field of the sluggish church, and it was all grown over with thorns and nettles, and the stone wall was broken down, so that one could scarcely tell which was the church and which was the world."

Questions

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1. **Do you feel God calling you to a particular ministry in this church because He has given you the talents for the job?**
2. **What is your greatest inertia (a tendency to do nothing) that prevents you from attempting great things for God?**
3. **Are there nettles and thorns in your heart that you want the Lord to remove?**

Prayer

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Abba Father, forgive me for the sin of slothfulness. I don't know why I always neglect to do the things that you want me to do which are chiefly for my good. I know you want to bless me and make me a better person. I confess before you Lord that I have an ungodly habit of putting off to tomorrow what I should be doing today. I know it is wrong and yet I find little strength in me to make the effort to do it. Lord shake me and rouse me from my slumber so that I may jump up from my sleep, put on the armour of God and report for duty in the service of the King. The stone wall of this church O Lord has some parts where repair is needed. Open my eyes to make me see and lead me to where you want me to serve. I desire to honour you with my life again dear Saviour. Give me the Grace to do it. I ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.



The Heart – a Gift for God

*My son, give me thine heart.”
– Proverbs 23:26*

It is God, in the person of his dear Son, who says to each one of us, “My son, give me thine heart.” Can we answer, “Lord, I have given thee my heart”?

Only love seeks after love. If I desire the love of another, it can surely only be because I myself have love toward him. We care not to be loved by those -whom we do not love. It were an embarrassment rather than an advantage to receive love from those to whom we would not return it. When God asks human love, it is because God is love.

Again, it can only be supreme love which leads wisdom to seek after the heart of such poor things as we are. The best saints are poor things; and as for some of us who are not the best, what poor, poor things we are! Yet, God says to each one of us, “My son, give me thine heart.” Only infinite love would come a-wooing to such wretched hearts as ours.

For what has God to gain? Brothers and sisters, if we did all give our hearts to Him, in what respect would He be the greater? If we gave Him all we have, would He be the richer? “The silver and the gold are mine,” says He, “and the cattle on a thousand hills.” He is too great for us to make Him greater, too good for us to make Him better, too glorious for us to make Him more illustrious. When He comes a-wooing, and cries,

“Give me thine heart,” it must be for our benefit, and not for His own. Surely it is more blessed for us to give than for Him to receive. He can gain nothing: we gain everything by the gift.

Wisdom prompts us to do it; for many others crave our hearts, and our hearts will surely go one way or other. Let us see to it that they do not go where they will be ruined. Everybody will try to steal thy heart, therefore leave it with Him. Give your heart to Jesus; for nothing short of true godliness will preserve you from sin.

Wisdom urges to immediate decision because it is well to have a heart at once occupied and taken up by Christ. It is an empty heart that the devil enters. So when you are tempted you can say to the devil, “You are too late; I have given my heart to Christ, I cannot listen to your overtures.”

Do you want to give God something that is sure to please Him? You need not build a church of matchless architecture — I do not know that God cares much about stones and wood. What would God my Father like me to give? He answers, “My son, give me thine heart.” He will be pleased with that, for He himself seeks the gift. You must give Him your heart, or you give Him nothing. And does He not deserve it? I am not going to use that argument, because, somehow, if you press a man to give a thing, at last it comes not to be a gift, but a tax. Our consecration to God must be unquestionable in its freeness. Religion is voluntary or else false.

I will put it thus; surely it were well to give a heart for a heart. There was One who came and took human nature on him, and wore a human heart within his bosom, and that human heart was pressed full sore with sorrow till, it is written, that he wept. It was pressed still more with anguish till, it is written, “He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground.” He was still further overwhelmed with grief, till at last he said, “I am full of heaviness and then it is written, “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” A heart was given for you, will you not give your heart? I say no more.

You cannot give God a piece of heart. A heart that has even a little bit taken off is a dead heart. The devil does not mind having half your heart. He is quite satisfied with that because he is like the woman to whom the child did not belong: he does not mind if it be cut in halves. The true mother of the child said, "Oh, spare the child! Do not divide it;" and so Christ, who is the true Lover of hearts, will not have the heart divided.

Where is your heart? Did I hear somebody say, "I am willing to give God my heart?" Very well, then, let us look at it practically. Where is it now? You cannot give your heart up till you find out where it is. If you have locked up your heart in an iron safe, get it out. It is a horrible thing to pack up a heart in five-pound notes, or bury it under heaps of silver and gold. Hearts are never healthy when covered up with hard metal. Men's hearts begin to smell of the places wherein they keep them. But wherever your heart is, it is in the wrong place if it is not with Christ. Go, fetch it, sir. Bring it here, and give it into the hand of Him that bought it.

But in what state is it? "Oh," say you, "I never could make out what to do with my hard heart." Yet, still give it to Him, for I will tell you what He will do. He will work wonders for your heart. Give it now to Christ, and He will change it. Yield it up to the sweet power of His infinite grace, and He will renew a right spirit within you. God help you to give Jesus your heart now!

Questions

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1. Which part of Spurgeon's writing above affected you most?
2. What is the state of your heart?
3. Are you ready tonite to give your heart to God?

Prayer

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Father in Heaven, You alone know the condition of my heart today. I will gladly exchange it for yours anytime. I want to give my heart to you. I just don't know how. I desire to be like David, a man after God's heart for I know you loved David much. Help me to understand how much you love me. Make my heart respond to your love. Set it on fire for you because I don't want to live a half-hearted Christian life anymore. I want to be walking and leaping and praising God everyday of my life from here on. Lift my spirit on eagle's wings that I may live above the rain clouds and be near you always. Make your Word alive to me that I may hear you speak to my heart every time I open the pages of the Bible. I long to hear your voice speaking to me, telling me what to do next, giving me wisdom to act wisely, and assuring me at all times that you will be there for me in every situation. Hear me O Lord. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen





The Talking Book

*When you awake, they will speak to you.
– Proverbs 6:22*

The word of God is an infallible director for human life. It will lead us in the highway of safety, it will be the guardian of our days and it will talk with us. Left to our own way, we soon excel in folly.

THE WORD IS LIVING. Its voice, like the voice of God, is powerful and full of majesty. How else could it be said: “It shall talk with thee”? A dead book cannot talk, nor can a dumb book speak.

The Word lives because it enshrines the living heart of Christ. It was once pierced with a spear, but it lives on, and yearns towards sinners, and is as tender and compassionate as in the days of the Redeemer’s flesh. Christ is in the garden of the Scriptures, for there He delights to walk. Hear the promises, listen to their gracious words; they are the footsteps of the Saviour; and, as you hear them, may you be led to cry, “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!” You can behold His face almost in every page. The God who said, “Let there be light,” gives forth from its pages the same divine fiat. (royal authority)

Remember it is God’s word, not man’s comment on it, which saves souls. God does not save souls by our comment. It is the word of God that is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. There must be life in it, for by it men are born again.

From the text we learn that Holy Scripture is very familiar. It does not so much preach to us as talk to us. It is not, “When thou awakest, it shall lecture thee,” or, “it shall scold thee;” no, no, “it shall talk with thee.” We sit at its feet, or rather at the feet of Jesus, in the Word, and it comes down to us; it is familiar with us, as a man talketh to his friend. Many of us have felt the presence of God in the pages of Scripture as ever Elijah did when he heard the Lord speaking in a still small voice.

The main teachings of Holy Scripture are about men, about the Paradise of unfallen manhood, the fall, the degeneracy of the race, and the means of its redemption. The book speaks of victims and sacrifices, priests and washings, and so points us to the divine plan by which man can be elevated from the fall and be reconciled to God. It deals with things not in the moon, nor in the planet Jupiter, nor in the distant ages long gone by, nor does it say much of the periods yet to come. But it deals with us, with the business of to-day; how sin may be to-day forgiven, and our souls brought at once into union with Christ. It speaks to men in all states and conditions before God. And, certainly, when we become the children of God the book talks with us wondrously. In the family of Heaven it is the child’s own book. We no sooner know our Father than this dear book comes at once as a love letter from the far-off country, signed with our own Father’s hand, and perfumed with our Father’s love. If we grow in grace, or if we backslide, in either case Scripture still talks with us. Whatever our position before the eternal God, the book seems to be written on purpose to meet that position. It talks to you as you are, not only as you should be, or as others have been, but with you personally, about your present condition. It tells us all that is in our heart, and talks to us as a living thing that has been in the deeps, and has been on the heights, that has known the overwhelms of affliction, and has rejoiced in the triumphs of delight.

How very faithful it always is. You never find the word of God keeping back that which is profitable to you. Like Nathan it cries to David, “Thou art the man.” It never allows our sins to go unrebuked, nor our backslidings to escape notice till they grow into overt sin. It gives us timely notice; it cries to us as soon as we begin to go aside, “Watch

and pray," "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and a thousand other words of warning does it address personally to each one of us.

THE WORD IS RESPONSIVE. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Now, talk with a man is not all on one side. To talk with a man needs answering talk from him. You have both of you something to say when you talk together. It is a conversation to which each one contributes his part. Now, Scripture is a marvellously conversational book; it talks, and makes men talk. It is ever ready to respond to us. There is one thing about God's word which shows its responsiveness to us, and that is when you reveal your heart to it, it reveals its heart to you.

Questions
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- 1. What is your favorite book or books in the Bible and why?**
- 2. Have you had an experience of the Word of God rebuking you for something you have said or done wrong?**
- 3. Share what is the most difficult thing you face in the study of God's Word.**

Prayer
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Father in Heaven, forgive me for not studying your Word diligently. I am always busy with my work and many things and they steal away all my time. When it is late I am too tired to open the Bible to read and meditate on your Word. I miss out all the comfort due to me. Lord, help me to memorise your Promises in the Bible and write them upon my heart so that I might not sin against Thee. But more than that, that I may call them up when I need them in the face of discouragement or troubles. I need your Word to strengthen me and to assure me that all things will work out well at the end of the day. Teach me to pray short prayers like Nehemiah when I am at work in the office or at home. Help me carry with me short verses from the Bible in my purse that I may reflect on them as I am driving or waiting for someone or something to be done. Help me to depend on you in all circumstances.

Lord I want to commit to meditating on your Word diligently and to take delight in it. Help me. I ask this in the Lord's most precious Name, Amen.



References for Proverbs Guidebook 2

1. Sermon no. 2027 titled *"The Sluggard's Farm"* (Proverbs 24:30-32) by Charles H. Spurgeon.
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5. Sermon no. 3453 titled *"A Wandering Bird"* (Proverbs 27:8) by Charles H. Spurgeon
6. Sermon titled *"Man Unknown to man"* (Proverbs 14:10) by Charles H. Spurgeon
7. Sermon titled *"The Talking Book"* (Proverbs 6:22) by Charles H. Spurgeon
8. Sermon no. 1995 titled *"The heart: a gift for God"* (Proverbs 23:26) by Charles H. Spurgeon

Acknowledgement

Thanks be to the Almighty God for The Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching at Midwestern Seminary and The Charles Spurgeon Library, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for making available online all of the sermons from the 63 Volume "Works of Charles Spurgeon" (out of print now) for FREE at www.spurgeon.org.

References also from www.archive.spurgeon.org, www.blueletterbible.org, www.biblebb.com, www.biblegateway.com.

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