

## **1/12/20 Self-Stewardship 2 – Heart Health**

Self-care, a phrase in popular use right now, is a key component to self-stewardship. As the renowned Parker Palmer writes, ““Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to our true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.” While a good many professions can give us counsel on self-care (like about diet, exercise, mental health, etc.), what distinct wisdom does the Bible itself offer?

One such area is discovered in this well-known passage: “Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life” (Proverbs 4.23). In the scriptures, our “heart” is, as one interpreter puts it, “the ruling inner center of the whole person, the source of all action, the seat of the will, intellect and feelings.” And so it must be protected and watched over, as you would something extremely valuable. For if the heart goes awry, so does everything else (Matthew 15.18). So to be a good self-steward means to keep watch over and tend your heart, and the rest of Proverbs gives us some insightful guidance on how to do that:

1. Guard Your Heart By Letting God Mess with It (Prov. 17.3, 21.2): Biblically, human beings are paradoxical – on the one hand, we don’t really understand much about our own interior lives (Jeremiah 17.9), but on the other hand, we are supremely willing to be overconfident about it (Prov. 21.2). Thus, in order to care for our hearts well, we have to let God “test” and “weigh” them, those are the verbs in Prov. 17.3 and 21.2; this occurs when we pause, open ourselves to Him, reflect, don’t shrink back from what He might have to say, and perhaps even confess our waywardness. As a result, it should be our regular practice to have our mind changed and heart redirected.

2. Guard Your Heart By Letting Others Help With It (Prov. 12.25, 27.19): Our heart often ravages us, with its anxieties, sadness, and bitterness (Prov. 12.25, 14.10, 14.13). Often, we cannot escape it on our own; it takes the good, encouraging words of someone else to lift us out of its vortex (12.15). At a more basic level, we really only understand our own hearts when we see them in someone else’s, or hear their aches and joys expressed as someone else’s (27.19). Thus, self-care for the heart requires vulnerability and interconnectedness; the solitary heart is always the unhealthy heart.

3. Guard Your Heart By Not Waiting Till Tomorrow (Prov. 13.12, 27.9): For all the wisdom of delayed gratification and planning ahead, your heart needs to be fed with more immediate fulfillments. Don’t be so focused on the future that you miss out on the small pleasures of today; take care to map out and celebrate short-term victories (daily or weekly ones), not just long-range ones.