

7

PRACTICAL STEPS EACH ONE MUST TAKE IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY GUARD HIS HEART

“Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of
your life” – PROVERBS 4:23.



Introduction

1. Solomon instructs us to, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life” (Proverbs 4:23 NLT).
 - a. All our **thoughts, words, and actions** are determined by what is in the heart. Jesus says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth *good things*, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth *evil things*” (Matthew 12:35).
 - 1) Jesus gives some examples of the evil things that proceed from an evil heart: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19).
 - 2) In general, only good things can proceed from a good heart: pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8), pure words (Ephesians 4:29-31; Colossians 4:6), and pure conduct (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:11-12; 2 Peter 3:11).
 - b. Why is it that some have good hearts and some have evil hearts? The former guard their hearts and the latter do not guard their hearts. It is essential, then, to learn *how* we may guard the heart. If we do not know *how* to guard the heart, then it is highly likely that we are not adequately guarding it.
2. John says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the **sway** of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). This means that all those that are outside of Christ “are under his influence, and led according to his will, and they are governed by him, and are at his beck and command” (Gill). Yet Satan also seeks to control the minds of Christians (2 Corinthians 11:3).
 - a. If we are to effectively guard the heart, then it is vitally important to understand *how* the wicked one continues to hold his sway over people of the world, and even Christians. To be ignorant of his *devices* and *wiles* puts us in great danger (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11). To learn *how* the wicked one holds his sway over people is to place ourselves in an advantageous position, because with such an understanding we can break free of his influence.
 - b. Satan’s devices are far too numerous to list here, but each one is aware of at least some of those devices: deceit, lies, lust, pride, etc¹. In order to keep his sway or control over the masses, and even many Christians, Satan makes use of several *avenues* to promote his lies and exert his influence. A sincere Christian will discover these avenues and break free of them².
3. Whatever we allow into our hearts will influence our attitudes, thoughts, speech, and conduct. If we allow evil into our hearts, then evil will come out. If we allow good into our hearts, then good will come out. To deny this is to deny a basic scriptural truth. In this lesson we shall consider seven practical steps we can take to guard the heart.

“I asked, ‘How does one guard his heart?’ One raised his hand, saying, ‘I know, I know’, but was unable to give a coherent answer. Many will reply to a question because they think they ought to know the answer. To claim to know what one does not know is certainly the height of folly, and such deprive themselves of knowledge. The proud man claims to know all things, but the humble man says, ‘I do not know. Please teach me.’” (David Collins).

“One cannot adequately guard the heart unless he is aware of the avenues through which Satan continues to hold sway over the world. A wise man labors to understand these things and fortifies his house, but a fool does not consider it and remains under his sway; yet he does not know it!” (David Collins)

¹ Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) wrote a book titled “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices”. It is available for free at this address: www.preachtheword.com/bookstore/remedies.pdf. I have not read it through thoroughly, but it looks like it may be edifying.

² It is not within the scope of this lesson to discuss and expound on these avenues at this time. However, I may do so in a future lesson.

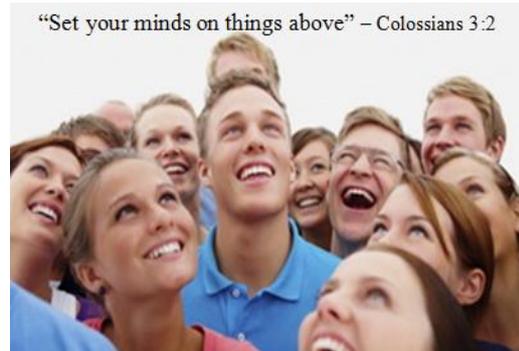
7 PRACTICAL STEPS EACH ONE MUST TAKE IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY GUARD HIS HEART

1. Set your affections on things above (**Colossians 3:2**).
2. Be filled with the Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**).
3. Choose your friends carefully (**Proverbs 12:26**).
4. Avoid the haunts of the wicked (**Proverbs 4:15 TLB**).
5. Set no wicked thing before your eyes (**Psalms 101:3**).
6. Test the spirits (**1 John 4:1**).
7. Control your thoughts and emotions (**2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Proverbs 16:32; 25:28**).

A. SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE

1. Paul says, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (**Colossians 3:1-2**).

a. We have indeed been raised with Christ and, therefore, we seek those things which are above (cp. **2 Corinthians 4:18**), i.e., to strive for heaven (**Luke 13:24**) and eternal bliss as our goal (**Romans 2:7**), and to pursue holiness as the means to attain it (**Hebrews 12:14; 1 Timothy 6:12; Jude 1:21**).



b. The word “mind” is from the Greek word *phroneo* and it has to do with the mind. It is a word that “often means to ‘be minded’ in a certain way (**Romans 12:3; Philippians 2:5**) and includes values and loves” (Walton Weaver). A Christian sets his mind on the things that pertain to Christ and His sovereign rule; which things determine our values because they are the object of his delight. If one sets his mind or affections on the things of this world, then he will quickly be drawn away from his new position in Christ. “Attachment to things on the earth is unworthy of one who has risen with Christ, for they are beneath him, and the love of them is not at all in harmony with his position and prospects. What can wealth achieve for him who has treasure laid up in heaven? Or honor for him who is already enthroned in the heavenly places? Or pleasure for him who revels in ‘newness of life’? Or power for him who is endowed with a moral omnipotence? Or fame for him who enjoys the approval of God? Nay, too often when the ‘things of the earth,’ are possessed, they concentrate the heart upon them, and the ‘look and thoughts are downward bent’” (John Eadie).

2. If we sincerely *seek* those things which are above and *set* our minds on things above, then we will be effectively guarding our hearts against the love of the world.

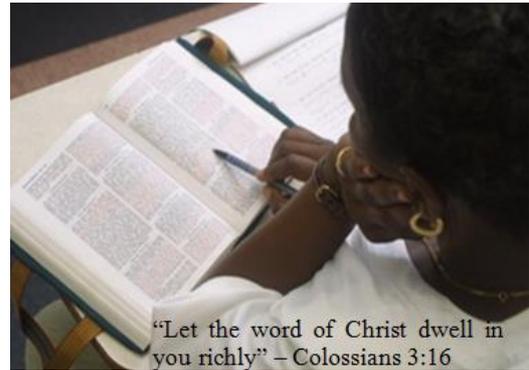
a. (i) John admonishes, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (**1 John 2:15**). (ii) James warns, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (**James 4:4**). Such warnings are necessary “For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (**1 John 2:16-17**).

b. If we have a sincere desire to seek and set our minds on things above, then this ought to create a desire within us to study God’s word in order to discover all we can about these things (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:1-2**).

Q1. Through what avenues does Satan seek to draw our affections away from things above?

B. BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

1. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (**Ephesians 5:18-19**). This is not saying that the Spirit personally indwells in a person and supernaturally takes over his being. The parallel passage in Colossians says, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (**Colossians 3:16**).



- a. To be “filled with the Spirit” is to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. It means to be supplied fully with the Spirit’s guidance and direction through the word of God that He has revealed.
 - b. All of our thoughts, words, and deeds must be governed by the Spirit or the word of God. To the degree that we read and study and fill our minds with the knowledge of His word and apply it, is the degree to which we allow Him to govern our lives.
2. It must be made clear, though, that filling one’s head with knowledge *alone* will not be of any use; one must *apply* that knowledge. Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (**Matthew 7:21**), and, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (**Luke 6:46**). Those whom the Lord blesses are those that hear the word of God and keep it (**Luke 11:28**). In alignment with Jesus’ teaching, James says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (**James 1:22**).
 3. Keeping the word of God will guard our hearts:
 - a. David says, “I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word” (**Psalms 119:101**). The idea is that he had restrained himself from walking in sin because of his respect for the word of God.
 - b. David wrote, “As for the works of men, by the words of thy lips I have guarded myself from hard ways” (**Psalms 17:4 LXX**). In respect to the sinful course of life of wicked men, David says that he had kept himself from such evil conduct because he follows all the commandments of God and walks uprightly. By allowing the word of God to govern his life or direct his steps, sin could not have dominion over him (**Psalms 119:133**).
 - c. David says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (**Psalms 119:11; cp. 37:31**). David read, studied, meditated (**Psalms 119:148**), and stored or memorized the word of God in his heart, and it was by His word that his whole life was governed. You will remember the time when Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil (**Matthew 4:1-11**). (i) After fasting for forty days, Jesus was hungry, and so the Devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread”. Jesus had stored the word of God in His heart, and He quoted an appropriate scripture to combat the temptation: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. (ii) Then the Devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give his angels charge over you [Psalms 91:11],’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone [Psalms 91:12].’ But Jesus quoted another scripture He had memorized to combat that temptation: “You shall not tempt the Lord your God [Deuteronomy 6:16]”. (iii) Again, the Devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me”. But again, Jesus quoted another scripture to combat that temptation: “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve [Deuteronomy 6:13]’”.

4. In order to allow the Spirit of God to fill us, it is necessary to devote ourselves to reading, studying, and meditating, and while we are letting the word fill our hearts, we are not allowing in the evil influences of the world. If we are allowing our lives to be governed by the Spirit, then we are not allowing ourselves to be conformed to the principles of the world (**Romans 12:2; Ephesians 2:1-2**).

Q2. Through what avenues does Satan seek to influence and govern our lives?

C. CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS CAREFULLY

1. Solomon says, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (**Proverbs 12:26**). In general, the wicked will lead one of good character astray. The wicked include...
 - a. Paul says, “Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits” (**1 Corinthians 15:33; cp. Proverbs 1:10-15**). The context reveals that the “evil company” refers to the false teachers that were saying there is no resurrection.
 - b. To the brethren at Corinth, Paul instructs, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (**1 Corinthians 5:5-6**). This is said in reference to a brother that had committed fornication. Sin tolerated among members threatens to contaminate the whole church³.
 - c. We ought to avoid liars (**Psalms 101:7**), fools (**Proverbs 13:20; 14:7**), and those that cause divisions (**Romans 16:17**).
2. As you can see, we can certainly have friends, but we must be discriminating. The kind of friends we don’t need are those that would corrupt our character and hinder our spiritual growth – whether unbelievers or believers. In choosing our friends from among unbelievers we must be sure we do not become “unequally yoked” with them⁴ (**2 Corinthians 6:14**).
3. If we desire to guard our hearts, then we must be careful about choosing friends that may influence us for the worst. But we must also be sure to surround ourselves with good brethren that will influence us for good; brethren that will help us get to heaven.
 - a. David wrote, “I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts” (**Psalms 119:63**). Luke says of the first converts, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common” (**Acts 2:44**), and, “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (**Acts 4:32**).
 - b. We can guard our hearts by ensuring that we spend as much time as possible in the company of brethren that will influence us for good – our thoughts, speech, and deeds. In fact, we are commanded to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (**Hebrews 10:24**).

Q3. Through what avenues does Satan seek to corrupt our good character?

D. AVOID THE HAUNTS OF THE WICKED

1. Solomon advises, “Don’t do as the wicked do. **Avoid their haunts** - turn away, go somewhere else, for evil men can’t sleep until they’ve done their evil deed for the day. They can’t rest unless they cause someone to stumble and fall” (**Proverbs 4:15 TLB; cp. Psalms 26:5**). This doesn’t mean a Christian cannot go to the park, a restaurant, a concert, etc. (**cp. 1 Corinthians 10:27**).
 - a. Rather, it refers to any place where the wicked exhibit unrestrained sinful behavior: immodest dress, immorality, foul language, dirty jokes, drunkenness, etc. For example, proms, pubs, clubs, certain types of restaurants, certain types of concerts, etc. A wise person is able to discern the difference between a place that is decent and a place that is a haunt of the wicked.

³ An English saying that conveys the same message is “One bad apple can spoil the whole barrel”.

⁴ “A Christian that becomes unequally yoked together with an unbeliever has no respect for the word of God and has little concern for their spiritual welfare. Such a one reveals that they have more in common with unbelievers than believers. It has been my experience that such a brother or sister has very few or no Christian friends with whom they socialize” (David Collins).

- b. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21). There were many pagan temples in Corinth⁵ and they were places of socializing as well as places of worship. Everyone went to one temple or another to worship and socialize; it was just a normal part of life. In fact, if you didn't go to one of the temples, then you would be considered an atheist and your social life would cease; you wouldn't have any friends. Nevertheless, Paul spends some time in chapter eight and ten commanding them to abstain from idol worship. In other words, he forbade them to go to those temples. One might naively say, “But we're not worshipping their gods, we're just socializing with our friends.” Paul's clear answer is that “one is not merely eating with friends at the pagan temple; one is engaged in idolatry that involves the worship of demons” (Dunagan).

A righteous person does not keep evil company or frequent the places where wickedness is committed. A righteous person does not take part in evil and neither does he desire to witness the ungodly reveling in wickedness. A person that frequents the haunts of the wicked is usually one that has a fondness for witnessing such ungodly behavior, and we may even expect them to join together in their wickedness. A righteous man cannot bear to be in the company of the wicked and his soul is vexed day after day by their wicked deeds.

2. As well as choosing our friends carefully (Proverbs 12:26), we must carefully consider the places to which they may invite us because evil company in a haunt of the wicked will also corrupt good habits. If we continue to frequent the haunts of the wicked, then the heart gradually becomes desensitized to such wicked behavior, and then, before we realize it, we will find our own thinking, speech, and behavior being influenced by such. To effectively guard the heart, we must completely avoid the haunts of the wicked.

Q4. How will frequenting the haunts of the wicked affect the heart and conscience?

E. SET NO WICKED THING BEFORE YOUR EYES

1. How did Satan tempt Eve? “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, **that it was pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6). Eve was now gazing upon the fruit of this tree in a new way, and as she stared intensely, so covetousness grew stronger. This is why Satan tempts us when we look at things. John says, “For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, **the lust of the eyes**, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).
2. Our eyes are bombarded with a whole host of things everyday – some things we can't help seeing, but of these there are some things from which we can turn away (Isaiah 33:15), and then there are those that we set before our eyes by choice. David said, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...” (Psalms 101:3) and “Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things” (Psalms 119:37). I suspect there are many more things available to set before our eyes today than there were in David's day.
- a. Here's the problem, during our lifetime we have been bombarded with so much visual wickedness that we have become desensitized to it. So when we see something wicked, we are not alarmed and our conscience does not bother us as we keep looking. For example, there are several adverts running on television at the moment (December, 2015) featuring young ladies in their underwear and completely naked people. How many of us simply watch them without blushing and turning away? We need to learn to blush all over again. Various media rely on visual stimuli to entice us unto all kinds of wickedness but most of the time we choose what to set before our eyes. David had a zero tolerance attitude: “I will set **nothing** wicked before my eyes...” (Psalms 101:3).
- b. But it is not just the obvious things we must refuse – sex, nudity, violence, bad language, etc. – it is godless behavior, bad attitudes, and false teaching we must refuse to set before our eyes. Where we have the choice, we must not allow anything into our hearts that is going to adversely influence our thinking, speech, and behavior.

⁵ “In Corinth you could find the cults of the gods of Egypt, Rome and Greece. The temple of **Aphrodite**, the goddess of love, stood atop the Acrocorinth” (David Padfield. See www.padfield.com/2005/corinth.html).

3. All the doorways into the heart must be guarded, and that includes the eyes. David sought to guard his heart against evil influences by making a choice where he could make a choice, which is why he determined to set nothing wicked before his eyes and to turn his eyes away from worthless things. A failure to do so is to leave the heart unguarded, which will result in the hardening of the heart and an increase in sin. The Hebrew writer instructs us to “exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (**Hebrews 3:13**).

Q5. What are the various media through which the heart may be influenced?

F. TEST THE SPIRITS

1. When Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel to the entire world, He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (**Matthew 28:19-20**). Following the conversion of 3000 believers, the apostles began teaching them immediately (**Acts 2:42**). Indeed, the Lord Himself “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is **to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church**, the body of Christ”⁶ (**Ephesians 4:11-12**).
2. However, we see Satan lurking in the background, planning, scheming, and devising ways to destroy the church.
 - a. The first major threat to the church was persecution (**Acts 8:1**). But rather than destroying the church, it became the means by which the gospel began to be spread throughout the world (**Acts 8:4**).
 - b. However, when we come to acts 15, we see another threat to the church – division! There were those Jewish converts that were insisting that Gentile converts must be circumcised to be saved (**Acts 15:1**) and keep the Law of Moses (**Acts 15:5**). While the apostles and elders agreed that circumcision and the keeping of the Law were not necessary (**Acts 15:6-29**), the number of false teachers continued to grow and abound (**2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1**).
3. You may have heard some people say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe in Jesus”. Well that’s a contradictory statement, isn’t it!
 - a. Does it matter whether Jesus is the “I am” or not? Jesus says, “Therefore I said to you that you shall die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins” (**John 8:28 MKJV**).
 - b. The purpose of teachers is to edify the saints to the point that they know the truth and are not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (**Ephesians 4:11-14**). What would be the point if doctrine doesn’t matter?!
 - c. John says, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (**2 John 1:9**). It is essential to believe the right doctrine and remain in it to remain in fellowship with the Father and the Son.
4. Thus, it is essential to guard our hearts against false doctrine because it will cut off our fellowship with God and bring condemnation (**Revelation 20:10**). Protecting ourselves against false doctrine is actually quite simple:
 - a. Get to know the truth. God’s desire is that we be filled with a knowledge of His will (**Colossians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:4**), which can only come through reading and studying (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:1-2**). The Lord has provided teachers to aid us in our growth (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).
 - b. Test the spirits. John says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (**1 John 4:1**). We can test the spirits by comparing their teaching against the scripture: if their teaching aligns with the scripture, it is true, and if it doesn’t align with the scriptures, their teaching is false (**cp. Acts 17:10-11**).

Q6. Through what avenues does Satan seek to corrupt our minds with false teaching, and why?

⁶ Verse 11 is from the NKJV and verse 12 is from the NLT.

G. CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

1. What we think and feel is going to be determined by what we allow into our minds. What we think about will determine how we feel, and what we think and feel directly influences our speech and conduct (**Proverbs 23:7; cp. 27:19**). Why is it that some Christians dress immodestly, gamble, drink, take the Lord's name in vain, and attend events and functions they ought not? Why is it that some Christians have little interest in attending services, studying, singing, praying, participating in the work of the church, and sharing the gospel with others? (i) It is because they are feeding on junk food and not the spiritual food that God supplies in His word, and, (ii) it is because they are not disciplining themselves or leading disciplined lives.
2. It is essential for one to have control over his own spirit (**Proverbs 16:32; 25:28**). Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:23**) and the onus is on us to develop it (**2 Peter 1:5-6**). One that has self-control is "one who holds himself in self-government... the ability to control one's own life" (Woods). Barclay comments, "The Christian ethic does not contemplate a situation in which a man is emasculated of all passion, in which he is drained of virility, in which he is de-sexed and emptied of every passion; it envisages a situation in which a man's instincts and passions remain, but remain under perfect control and mastery, and so become his servants and not his tyrants."
3. Whoever has the greatest influence over a person's thoughts controls the person. Satan seeks to control our thoughts and influence our attitudes through false teachers and various other avenues. God seeks to influence our thinking and attitudes through His word. So, to what should we devote our time? As we study, so our thoughts and attitudes are influenced. But we also discover passages that speak about things on which to meditate. To the Philippians, Paul says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is **any virtue** and if there is **anything praiseworthy** - meditate on these things" (**Philippians 4:8**). A deeper study of these words will reveal many things on which to focus our thoughts. Is there anything else about which to think?

"Then those who feared Jehovah spoke to one another, and Jehovah listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Jehovah and who meditate on His name" (Malachi 3:16).

 - a. David meditated on God's glorious majesty (**Psalms 145:5**), works (with a view to discovering His character and attributes) (**Psalms 77:12; 143:5; cp. 119:27**), ways, and commandments (**Psalms 119:15, 48, 78; cp. Joshua 1:8**) during the night (**Psalms 63:6; 119:48**).
 - b. In Ephesians, Paul lists the spiritual blessings in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3-14**). These are things worthy of our meditation.
 - c. Many seek blessedness and Jesus' prescription for such is given in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:1-12**). Think on these things and you will find the blessedness you seek.
 - d. Paul says, "Pray without ceasing" (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). So think on all the things about which we must pray: things pertaining to the advance of the kingdom of God, one's brethren, one's enemies, etc.
 - e. We come together on the first day of the week to break bread (**Acts 20:7**) and our thoughts are focused on Jesus' death (**Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**). The first day of the week may be the only day on which we come together to remember Jesus' death, but that doesn't mean we can't think on these things each day.
4. We can choose to think about what other people say, what we see in the media, or what the lyrics in secular music teach, but such **will** influence our thinking. Or we can let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (**Colossians 3:16**) and focus on all the things we have just been discussing. The thing is, it takes a great deal of **effort, discipline, and self-control**. But in doing this, we will effectively guard our hearts against the negative influences of Satan upon our hearts. We must bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (**2 Corinthians 10:5**). If we fail to control our thoughts, then be sure that Satan will give us plenty to think about – evil things!

Q7. Through what avenues does Satan seek to control our thinking, and to what end?

Conclusion

1. Above all else we must guard the heart because it determines the course of our lives (**Proverbs 4:23**). All our **thoughts, words, and actions** are determined by what is in the heart.
2. If we desire to effectively guard the heart, then it is essential to know of the many devices that Satan employs to hold sway or control over people (**2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11**). In addition, we need to be aware of the avenues of which he makes use to promote his lies and exert his evil influence. Knowledge of these avenues will enable us to break free of them. Answering the questions in the lesson will help us to realize the avenues through which Satan operates.
3. Whoever has the greatest influence over our thoughts has the greatest control over our attitudes, speech and behavior. It will either be God or Satan; the choice is ours. If we desire to guard our hearts, then there are several practical steps we can take: (i) Set our affections on things above, (ii) let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, (iii) choose our friends carefully, (iv) avoid the haunts of the wicked, (v) determine never to set any wicked thing before our eyes, (vi) test what is taught against the scriptures, and, (vii) make the effort to take control of our thoughts.
4. A *sincere* Christian desires to conform to the image of Christ (**Romans 8:29**), but we will only achieve this if we allow our minds to be transformed by the Spirit (**Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:10**).

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