

# OpenTheo

## Proverbs: Matters of Heart (Part 1)



### Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of living a God-conscious life and having a pure heart. He suggests that the heart is at the center of everything, and that even seemingly generous actions may be insincere if there is negativity in the heart. Gregg notes that one's heart must be kept pure and that choosing to be humble allows God to give grace. He also cautions against relying solely on one's own heart, as sin and death can result from following it blindly.

### Transcript

The last few sessions in Proverbs, we've looked at those Proverbs that have a general application to the broad subject of a God-conscious life, which, as I was saying, is not the same thing as simply believing there's a God, but living in the awareness of God, living conscious of God, of his eye, of his sovereignty, of his judgments, of his sympathies, living with the consciousness of those things, transforms a life from what it would otherwise be to something entirely different. Now, having covered those proverbs on those topics, we come to a different focus. And I want to talk about the proverbs that have to do with the inner life, the management of one's attitudes and moods.

And when we come to this, of course, we're not looking so much at those things that have to do with the God out there looking down upon us, but us inside looking out. The matter of the heart, the inward life, which obviously is something easily neglected in religion, but often emphasized in Scripture, in many parts of Scripture. And anyone who's been a Christian for very long is very much aware that this is the whole focus, that man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

And that Jesus said it's possible for people to be like Pharisees who are outwardly like whitewashed sepulchers, outwardly clean and white and good, but inwardly very different, full of defilement, full of dead men's bones, as Jesus put it. And that defilement then ruins everything because the proverbs actually say that even the sacrifice of a wicked man is an abomination of the Lord. A sacrifice is an act of worship, but an act of worship coming from somebody who is intrinsically wicked in their motivations and in their heart is offensive to God.

So, the heart is pretty much everything. It's not entirely everything because out of the abundance of the heart flow things. Words, for example, Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Or Proverbs tells us, and we saw this earlier in chapter four, in verse 23, keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life. So, it's like a spring that sends water out from the ground into rivulets or streams springing from a source under the ground. He says that the heart is the source from which the streams of life spring out and flow out so that whatever you want your life to be should determine the way you heart.

Because if your heart is good, good things will come out. If your heart is bad, bad things will come out. Now, if your heart is bad, you can sometimes, if you're a person of great self-control and perhaps great hypocrisy, do good things from an evil heart, but not consistently.

The things that your heart does naturally, the things that you do naturally, are the things that really will reflect what's in your heart. And that's what Solomon tells us, that the heart is really who you really are, not necessarily who you are when you're pretending, but who you are when you're being yourself. And that's why the heart matters to God, because anyone can pretend to be something different, but what they are in their heart is who they really are.

And that's what God is looking at. In the 23rd chapter of Proverbs, in verse 7, actually, picking up the context, I think we better actually read the opening verses. Well, verse 6 will probably be fine.

It says, Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies. For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up and waste your pleasant words. Now, this is figurative. It says you'll vomit up the morsel.

But the point is that if a man is a miser, that's how this instruction begins. If a miser invites you over for a feast. Now, a feast, inviting you to a feast is an act of generosity, but the man's a miser.

The man is known to be a miser, apparently, because it says don't eat the bread of a miser. There are people who have reputations, their whole conduct, their whole life is that of miserliness, not generosity. And so, if a miser, who is known not to be generous, suddenly has an uncharacteristic act of generosity and invites you to come over to eat, don't trust it.

Don't take it at face value. He says eat and drink. He says help yourself to anything at the table, but his heart is not with you.

What he's thinking in his heart is who he really is, not what he's doing at that moment. Not this uncharacteristic act of generosity to you. That's not who he is.

Who he is is what's going on in his heart, and you don't see what's in there. Obviously, he's got some motive that he's not revealing. And his outward act of generosity is no doubt intended to, in some way, take advantage of you.

And the point here is that you need to pay attention not to just the isolated acts of individuals, which they might be faking, which they might be putting on a false face so that they can get some kind of advantage from you, but look at the person's whole trend of life. A man who is a miser has a miserly way of life. It is not normal for him to be generous.

And so, when you find him being generous, realize that there's something going on inside him that is not immediately meeting near eye. And don't trust the outward act, but be aware that he's really whoever he is inside. As he thinks in his heart, that's who he really is.

That's what he's really up to, whatever's going on in there. In chapter 24, in verse 12, it says, if you say, and this was back when it says you need to deliver from death those who are drawn to death unjustly. It says, if you say, surely we did not know this, that is, we weren't aware this injustice was going on, so we didn't speak up and didn't do anything about it.

It says, if you claim that, does not he who weighs the heart consider it? He who keeps your soul, does he not know it? Will he not render to each man according to his deeds? Now, God knows if you say, I was ignorant of this. I didn't know these things were going on. That's why I didn't speak up.

Well, God knows your heart. God weighs your heart. God is assessing your value, not by the weight of your words, but the weight of your heart.

He's weighing your heart. He's assessing it like you'd weigh a product in the marketplace to see how much it is. He's assessing your heart to see how much it is.

Now, it may be, of course, that many injustices are done without us knowing it. And we can legitimately say, I didn't know that was going on. But you don't say you didn't know and hope that that'll work as an excuse before God if, in fact, you did know, because God knows really in your heart what you knew and what you did not know.

And that's what he's saying. You can make any kind of excuse you want, but God's not going to be fooled by an excuse if he knows he'll check out what's really going on inside of you, in your heart, whether you honestly knew or not, your responsibility. Chapter 26, beginning at verse 23, Solomon says, Servant lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver draw.

So a cheap pot that's silver plated, a cheap pot made of earth that has silver coating on it looks like a silver pot, looks like a thing of value, but it's really quite a cheap item. It's not what it appears to be. Likewise, a person who has a wicked heart, but their lips are fervent, that is, they fervently profess loyalty or love or piety or whatever it is, they fervently, they enthusiastically profess something about their feelings.

But if their heart is wicked, again, you may be getting a silver coated, a silver plated clay pot instead of what you think you're looking at. You don't trust people's words just because they're fervent, even though out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. That's not always the case.

That's only true of the unguarded speech. Guarded speech can very much hide what's in the heart. And so it goes on in verse 24, he who hates disguises it with his lips and lays of deceit within himself.

So the person is fervently professing their fervent love and loyalty to you. But if they if they really hate you, they'll disguise that, they'll hide that. They're not going to tell you that.

I mean, sometimes they will. But in many cases, people will wish for you to think them to be your friend. They'll be seeking to curry trust from you.

So that they can take advantage. And so they'll speak very much about their loyalty. A king certainly would know that Solomon probably has seen it many times.

Everybody entreats the favor of a king. Everybody talks about how loyal they are to the king. But if their heart's wicked and if they hate the king, they're not going to let him know that they're going to tell him that they're going to disguise it with their speech.

And verse 25 says, when he speaks kindly, do not believe him. There are seven abominations in his heart. Once again, like the miser who's professing generosity.

So also the psychopathic follower of the king or somebody who's just really trying to butter you up and give you the impression that they're all with you. There are times that you know them better than that. And you know that their words are not trustworthy.

They, in their heart, have something entirely else going on. And that's the whole point of these proverbs that we're looking at right here. They show that what's in the heart is really what matters.

And many times people live their entire life on the surface level and just believe everything they hear and do not check deeper to see whether there's motives that they need to be beware of in other people's professions of friendship. In chapter 27 and verse 19 says, as in water, face reveals face. So a man's heart reveals the man.

Now, you don't know what your face looks like until you look into a mirror. Or in this case, water. They didn't have really mirrors back then.

Not such as we have. They didn't have glass. I mean, they had polished brass, which they used as their best substitute for a mirror.

It didn't really give a very clear image. So looking in a pool of water is the best way for someone to see if they had egg on their face. To see if they were looking good that day.

If someone wanted to know how they looked, they could look in a pool of water and the face in the water answers to or corresponds to the face that's looking in. So in the same way, what's a man's heart corresponds to who he is. It reveals who he is.

You don't know what you look like until you look in a mirror. And that reveals your looks to you. You don't know what kind of a person you are until you examine your heart.

And that reveals kind of a man or woman you are. To know yourself and others don't look at the mirror. Look within.

Look at your heart and see what's motivating you. See what your values are. It's an important thing to examine yourself.

Paul said that in 2 Corinthians chapter 13. He said, examine your own selves and see if you're in the faith. There's times when you have to do an assessment within.

Now to be turned inward as a primary focus all the time is obviously not what is being recommended. I think once in a while we just have to be reflective. Often perhaps at the end of the day when things are quiet and you're in bed and just before you go to sleep unless you're one of those people that falls right off immediately.

You know, to reflect back on the day, to reflect back on what you've said, what you've done, what's coming out of your heart, where you're at, whether you still love God or you're just pretending now, just kind of keeping the show going. Pay attention to what's in your heart. That'll reflect who you are, just like looking in the mirror will reflect what you look like.

That's what Solomon's saying. Keep an inventory of your own heart and your own spiritual progress and condition and purity. Now in chapter 14 and verse 14, Solomon said, the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

Now he talks about a backslider in heart. The word backsliding is not found in the New Testament, though it's often used by Christians to speak of a phenomenon that we see, and that is a person who was once following God, regular in fellowship and in Christian activity and in avoiding sin, but who now is doing something else. They're slipping away

from Christian activity, Christian fellowship, they're slipping away from Christian behavior, maybe compromising in sin and so much so that they don't really resemble Christian anymore at all.

We call that person backslidden. The New Testament doesn't use that word, although it certainly speaks of the phenomenon of people departing from the faith. But the word backslider is found in the Old Testament only a few times, and it's in context usually of the whole nation.

For example, in the Prophets, Jeremiah, I believe, and Hosea, if I'm not mistaken, they speak of Israel being like a backslidden heifer. The imagery is of apparently a cow being driven up a muddy slope, and it's too slippery, and the cow slides backward. Watching a cow trying to climb a muddy slope and slide backward, that's what the image is that Jeremiah uses when he says that Israel's like a backslidden heifer.

They keep trying to climb one direction, but they keep losing ground. If we would ask, what do we mean by backsliding? There isn't a specific definition, but clearly it means losing ground. It means you're facing one way, but sliding the other direction, backward, so that instead of making progress, you're making regress, you're slipping.

You may even be trying to go forward, but instead you find yourself further back than when you started. So, applied to Israel as a nation, it speaks of a person losing spiritual ground, and no doubt that is the correct use of the term. A lot of people think, you know, if you're backslidden, will you still go to heaven? That depends.

Backsliding is kind of a vague term. If you lose some spiritual ground, will you still go to heaven? Almost certainly. I mean, you're not always at the same level of spirituality.

You might have very high points, and the next day you wake up and you're just feeling in a funk, and you're not really caring about God. Your heart's colder, and so forth. But that doesn't mean you've permanently lost ground.

It doesn't mean you've made decisions to depart from God. It just means that you're not where you were yesterday at the moment. But if you look at the overall trend of your life over a period of weeks or months or whatever, and you see that today you're further behind than you were six months ago, or a year ago, or ten years ago.

If you look at the big picture, and you're further from God than you used to be at some time early in your life, that would be a specie of backsliding. I mean, it's not backsliding in the sense that you've departed from faith, necessarily. But it means you've lost ground.

You have been further ahead in the past than you are now. Now, here Solomon talks about an individual backslider, but he describes it as a backslider in heart. That's where backsliding begins.

Because the heart is so important, we need to manage the heart and monitor it and see if it's losing ground. We should be with all our hearts pursuing God. The Bible says you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength.

That's the first and great commandment found in Deuteronomy chapter six. And if we have loved God more in our hearts at any time previously than we do now, then we are a backslider in heart. Maybe not to the point of defection.

Certainly a person can lose so much ground that they're not a Christian anymore at all. They don't love God anymore. They don't trust God anymore.

They don't want God anymore. If a person gets to that point, I would dare say they can't really be considered to be a Christian anymore and are not saved. They've departed from the living God with an evil heart of unbelief, it says in Hebrews.

And so that's actually a very good cross reference to this one, it seems to me, Hebrews chapter three, because it also speaks of the heart and backsliding. It doesn't use the word backsliding because the New Testament doesn't use that word. But it certainly speaks of the phenomenon in Hebrews chapter three, verse 12.

The writer says, Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Notice the person in question has been with the living God. And their heart has obviously been that of a believer.

But now they're having a heart of unbelief and departing in their heart from God. That certainly is losing ground. And that this is talking to true Christians can hardly be doubted since he addresses the same readers in verse one this way.

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. So he's writing to people that he calls holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling. These are true Christian people he has in mind.

He says you need to beware that your heart doesn't backslide, that there is not in any of you an evil heart of unbelief which departs from God. And so that's what Solomon is saying in Proverbs 14, 14 too, that the backslider in heart is the man who eventually suffers in the manner that the Proverbs says. He'll be filled with his own ways, which just means he'll suffer for his own deeds.

But the point here is, of course, that the heart can backslide. And sometimes it backslides without showing up on the outside because we do develop religious habits and we do maintain relationships with people long after we have lost interest in the core matters that brought us together to do these things in the first place. If you are drawn into fellowship because you love God, you're drawn to worship because you love God, you become regular in religious activity and worship services and your friends are now

Christian people.

And so your social life is surrounded by Christians. You speak the Christian language. You know what kinds of things not to talk about because they would be unacceptable in the group and so forth.

And all those things, you got those structures in your life because you were fervent for God. But you see, the heart can become unfervent again. It can become cool.

It can become cold. It can become, as Jesus said, lukewarm so that it's disgusting to God. But it won't always show because the habits and structure in your life are religious ones.

You're now all your associates are Christians. You still talk in a way that, you know, that Christians approve of. And if you don't behave properly, it's not you don't make that public because your religious society you're with would not be approving of that.

And so things can be beginning to diminish in your heart before it shows on the outside. And eventually, if you don't catch that and turn your heart back the right way, your behavior will start to slip off too. Backsliding begins in the heart.

It eventually ends up showing in behavior, but it starts in the heart. And when you hear about people who end up divorcing their spouses or having affairs or doing things that, you know, who were Christians, and you're shocked. You think, how could that have happened to them? Well, you know that they weren't just fervent for God consistently all along time.

And then one day they woke up and went out and had an affair. Or one day they woke up and divorced their spouse. What's been going on in their heart has been compromise and corruption and backsliding in the heart for some period of time where it doesn't show.

And then suddenly it manifests in a behavior that nobody knew was brewing in there. I think of one person I know, a lady who who served God for many years. Outwardly, I assume with the heart as well.

I don't know. I don't know a person's heart, but certainly it was consistent enough for enough decades that it seemed to me very sincere. And yet at one point, she just walked away from God.

Walked away from everything she held dear. Just turned away and it shocked everybody. And I have to think, well, she must have been drifting for some time, maybe years in her heart, away from her convictions.

But she was in a religious community. She was in a religious marriage. She was, you know, never around unbelievers.



And so the entire structure, outward structures of her life were Christian and put pressure upon her to continue to look Christian. And after many years, she just kind of turned and gave it up. And I've actually known more people than one like that.

But that was striking because there was such a consistency in the Christian part of the behavior right up until the time that she turned it was over. And you just know that that didn't happen overnight. The heart was backsliding.

And that's why Solomon says, to keep your heart. The word keep means to guard your heart with all diligence because the springs of life are going to come from it. Because a person may become a backslider in heart before they're a backslider in their ways.

And so management of the heart is something that is a priority and monitoring what's in the heart. In chapter 22 of Proverbs and verse 15, it says, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him. Now, this suggests that the heart of a child from an early stage is foolish.

This, I guess, would be as close as we might come to finding a scripture saying that children are born sinful because in Proverbs foolishness is evil. Foolishness is not just being kind of stupid compared to other people. Foolishness is moral stupidity.

The inability to know how to conduct oneself morally and righteously. That's what foolishness is in Proverbs. And this unrighteous behavior is in the heart of a child from the earliest ages.

Some would say born there, some would say picked up after birth in the environment or whatever. It does seem like Solomon considers it to be a universal phenomenon in children. And yet he sees there being the ability to manage that heart or to shape that heart.

In the case of the child, the child's not likely to shape it himself because the child doesn't know any better. So, the parent then has the duty to manage and to correct and to shape the child's heart in the early days, at least in the foolishness that manifests in foolish behavior. One thing good about children in a way is that if they have foolishness in their heart, usually they're not real artful about pretending to be different than they are.

They're kind of naive, they're kind of transparent. If they're thinking something foolish, they do it or they say it. And when parents see the manifestation of foolishness in a child's heart, they should discipline it, train it.

The heart needs to be trained. Some of you know I live in an apartment complex and there are a couple of, there's more than one young family. I don't know if there's two or more, but there's two I'm aware of because everyone in the apartment is aware of them.

Their children are toddlers and monsters. One of these families, the husband's a pastor, a young pastor and his wife. They have two little girls and there's another family, a Hispanic family who have two little boys.

Cute as can be, these little children. You see them and you feel warm toward them until they behave in front of you and they behave like monsters. This is not just a problem with these two families.

This seems to be a problem of this generation of young parents because I've hardly been on an airplane in the past two or three or four years that didn't have some screaming child, not an infant, a screaming young child who the parents just kind of embarrassingly sat there and tolerated. And apparently no one is teaching young parents that the foolishness that's in their child needs to be disciplined out of them. The parent is responsible for that.

We find in the book of Samuel that Eli was held responsible for the evil that his sons were doing, although they were adult children, but they had not been trained and he had not restrained them. That's the specific complaint God made that his sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them. And they know likely they made themselves vile before they were adults when they were easier to restrain.

And he had been an indulgent father, it would appear. And when people don't realize that their children are born foolish and foolish is unacceptable. If Proverbs teaches us anything, it teaches that foolishness is unacceptable behavior and that a parent is the one responsible to discipline that out of a child.

You can't guarantee that your children will love God or that they will pick up your faith. It'd be wonderful if we could guarantee that our children will believe as we do and love God as we do. We can't force that upon anyone, but we can teach them that they are not going to be able to disrupt everybody else's life with their, you know, their childish tantrums or whatever.

My children, when they were little, toddlers and babies, traveled on airplanes for hours. We took them to Australia, to Japan, to Korea. I mean, our kids were on airplanes for 14 hours with us.

We wouldn't let them disturb the people around us. Now, of course, you have to learn ways in a public place. But the main thing is you teach the children before you get on the airplane.

You teach them what they will and will not get away with. You teach them habits. You shape their heart.

We wanted our children to sit still in church with us from an early age. Well, kids don't actually do that. So we actually taught them how to sit still at home.

They'd sit on the couch and say, okay, sit still for two minutes, you know, and we'd praise them from the time they're little. And they learned that there's times they have to sit still. They have to be quiet.

You have to train a child. And there's many things in Proverbs about that. We'll get to that as a separate topic eventually here.

Right now we're talking about the heart and it simply overlaps with the subject of a child. In this Proverbs, foolishness wound up in the heart of a child. And the idea is that foolishness can be driven from them by judicious parenting.

It talks about the rod, which sounds rather severe to our modern sensitivities because we now live in a society that even thinks that spanking is child abuse. It's amazing how out of touch with history one generation can become and how quickly. I mean, it should be obvious that almost every citizen who ever made a good contribution and turned out to be a well-behaved, you know, well-adjusted human being was probably spanked as a child.

There might be a few cases that weren't, but I mean, through most generations, parents had the good sense to spank their children and train their children. And a lot of mature and well-balanced people came out of that. Maybe some people abused their children.

Probably some children grew up to be troubled and so forth because of that. But very few generations have had as many troubled young people as our generation has or our children's generation has. And it might be coincidence merely, but it also corresponds with the fact that people stopped spanking their children.

As soon as Dr. Spock's book became popular and said it was unhealthy to spank a child, a couple of generations have raised children without very much discipline. And so much so that now people who don't have any connection with history or any connection with good sense, they just think, well, to spank a child, well, that's abusive. And in fact, people who are against spanking children say, well, that'll just teach the child to be violent.

You know, you're modeling violence to the child. No, you're teaching the children that violence is not acceptable. To inflict judicious pain doesn't teach violence any more than for a court to send a man to prison teaches him that he can imprison people.

You know, for the policemen to arrest a criminal and put him in jail doesn't teach society, oh, we can kidnap people and hold them against their will and lock them in a basement. That's not the message. The message is you do evil, justice will catch up with you and it will hurt.

That's the lesson. Children don't learn violence by being spanked. They might learn to be violent by watching abuse.

That's an entirely different subject. The point here is that the heart is not static, it is malleable. It can start out foolish in every child and be shaped by judicious parenting into something better.

Foolishness can be driven out of the heart. And a heart, of course, can backslide. I mean, hearts change.

You can't just assume that the personality you're born with, you're just stuck with it. And it's, you know, you're just going to have to be the way you are, just have to be me. Well, what if being you is an ugly and awful thing? Then you shouldn't be you.

You better make you into something else. You can be reshaped. You cannot be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind and of your heart.

So what Solomon is saying is the heart needs to be managed and shaped. It can be corrected. It can improve.

In Proverbs 20, in verse 9, he says, Who can say I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin. Obviously, it's a rhetorical question and by implication, it's a statement saying that no one can say, I've made my heart clean, I'm pure from my sin.

Now, this, you know, provides something of a balance to what we were just saying. The heart can be improved, but it can't be perfected in this world. The person who thinks that he's beyond sin is simply not in touch with his own heart.

The person who decides that he's without sin and that he's made himself completely pure is deceiving himself. He's doing so probably to avoid further hard work that needs to be done in shaping his heart more. The molding of the heart and the keeping of the heart is a lifelong responsibility.

It's easier if a person can convince himself that, OK, I've done all that hard work. Now I'm clean, I'm perfect, I'm good, I don't have to change anymore. And then they just deceive themselves into thinking they've got no sin left in them.

Well, sin is in there. Sin is born in there. Paul said that.

Paul said, My mind, I've come to place my mind. It approves of the law of God, but there's something else governing my members that brings me into bondage to sin and death. I'm a good guy as far as my intentions, but what I actually carry out is often contrary to my intentions.

I don't understand that. It's weird because I know what I want to do and yet I see what I do and it's not the same. So a person's got to be wise enough to know that just because you've come to a place where you've improved, your motivations are good, your values

are good, your morals are good, your beliefs are good.

You shouldn't think that the work is done and let your guard down and say, well, I'm cleansed from all my sin now. Did all that hard work of self-reformation, but there's nothing more to do. You know, there's always going to be more to do because there's always sin in there.

No one can really reasonably say that they've gotten beyond the point and the danger of sin in their heart. In chapter 23 in verse 19, Proverbs 23, 19, Solomon says, hear my son and be wise and guide your heart in the way. Once again, you guide your heart.

It's your responsibility to guide your heart. You don't just follow your heart. You guide your heart.

You just follow your heart. Well, your heart has corruption. It has foolishness.

You can't just trust your heart. The heart is often deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? And so you don't just follow it.

You have to guide it. You have to choose what your heart will be. And that means, of course, that you, again, it's confirming that the heart is malleable.

The heart can be shaped. It's not just what it is and you just have to live with it. It is something that you have to give guidance to.

Now, how do you give guidance to your heart? I mean, in many respects, the heart is in the Bible treated as the deepest core of your motivations. What is there besides that? What's deeper than that to guide it? I think basically the will is treated as something different than the heart. The heart would be your thoughts and your emotions and your motivations and things.

But then there's your will. And you can say, I can see that my thoughts and my emotions and even my motivations are not what they should be. But I choose to direct my inner life a different direction.

I choose to take up arms against the sinfulness and the foolishness that I see my heart choosing. And I choose to change it. I choose to take charge of it.

The other night in our conversation around the table, many of you were there. We were talking about people with certain sinful emotional patterns and habits and thought life and so forth. And talking about the need to simply take charge of it.

And we were talking about refusing to be offended in particular. And how some people get offended at the teaching of refusing to be offended. They think, you can't do that.

You just can't tell yourself to not be offended. And I think, well, who can't? Can't or

won't? If you can't, are you saying you're not in charge of your own mind and your own heart? And if you're not, who is? Somebody else, whoever you let be. If you don't take charge of your own heart and your mind, then somebody else will take charge of it.

You just have to man up and say, it's my responsibility to shape my inner life to please God. Now, it's not all by my own effort. It's God who works in you to will and to do his good pleasure.

God works in your heart, but he works with you. He gives you the stewardship. You choose to trust him or not to trust him.

You choose to love or not to love. You choose to be humble or not to be humble. God, when you choose to be humble, God gives grace to the humble.

He resists the problems. He'll give grace to the humble. If you choose to honor him, he'll honor you.

If you choose to trust him, he'll show himself trustworthy and he'll come to your rescue. But you have to make those choices. And if you don't do it, if you don't choose to be loving and patient and humble and trusting and so forth in the ways that you should, well, then someone else is going to come in there and decide whether you're going to be all those things or not.

Your very environment will decide it for you. You see, that's the difference between cold-blooded and warm-blooded animals. I think everything God made in nature, if we think about it, has some kind of a spiritual lesson to be taught.

And it is interesting that God made two kinds of creatures in this particular respect. There are the fish and amphibians and the reptiles. Their body doesn't generate its own temperature.

They conform to the temperature of the environment. That's why that famous illustration of the frog in the kettle is as it is. The frog, its body temperature just adjusts to whatever it's in, including temperatures that'll kill it.

It just feels comfortable. It doesn't have anything inside it determining what temperature it should be. So, whatever the environment makes it is what it is.

And it feels comfortable with that environment. It feels comfortable with that temperature. God didn't make those creatures with an internal control of body temperature.

And then there's the mammals and birds that do have that, ourselves included. And our bodies maintain a certain correct temperature except when we're sick. And we can be out in the freezing cold or we can be out in 115 degrees.

And our body, if we're healthy, will remain 98.6. The environment does not change our body temperature. We self-regulate that. There's internal controls of that.

Therefore, if we are in icy water, we will feel cold because the environment is in contrast to what our inward temperature is that we're regulating. The fish that's in freezing water doesn't even know. Its body temperature is the same as the environment.

And if you go out in extremely hot weather, if you fall into a boiling pot of water, you'll be scalded and you'll be burned and you'll be in pain and you'll hate it. And you'll jump out of there as much as you can. A frog won't do that.

So, there's no difference between hot, cold, anything. Its body doesn't have any frame of reference to assess or judge its environment. But ours does.

98.6 is the norm. That's our frame of reference. If we're in temperatures lower than that, it can be, you know, if it's sufficiently lower, it can make us uncomfortable.

Too much higher makes us uncomfortable, too. And that's because God, I think, designed us biologically to reflect a spiritual truth. And as there are some who do not maintain their own inward temperature, their own spiritual environment, their own spiritual quality, they just go along with whatever the environment is, whatever crowd they're with, whatever the culture approves, whatever society does, they're in.

They don't have any sense that something is right or wrong. All they know is that this is what's being done. This is the way we think in this society.

This is the way we act. And they have nothing internally that sets them at odds with anything, any set of circumstances, because there's no internal maintenance of any norm. There is no norm for them.

Whatever the environment is, this is what they are. And then there's that which God requires people to be, like creatures that are warm-blooded that have internal controls of their temperature, and therefore they sense contrast between what they are and should be on the one hand, and what the environment is on the other. And so there's people like Lot, who was, although in some ways we would say a compromised individual, the Bible calls him righteous Lot, who vexed his righteous soul day by day in seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds done in Sodom around him.

He was in Sodom, and in some measure picking up a little bit of that temperature himself, but he was still not all there. He was not completely corrupted. He still had something inside him saying, this doesn't feel right.

And it says in 2 Peter 2, he vexed his righteous soul day after day in beholding their lawless deeds. And that's how a Christian is. If they are maintaining their heart as it should be, they are determining what they will approve of.

They are choosing that. They will determine whether they're going to be offended, whether they're going to be fearful, whether they're going to be angry, whether they're going to be proud. I mean, the temptations of those things we don't control.

We don't, we live in a world of temptation. When I go out into the environment, no doubt my body temperature is tempted to go cold, but my body temperature resists that. There's a temptation for me to freeze all the way through.

And probably I would if, you know, if the cold overcame. You can freeze all the way through, but you have to die first. As long as you're alive, your body is going to be maintaining a temperature, but you can die and then your body will assume room temperature.

The point being that you choose from among options what your attitudes and your moods will be. You have to manage that. That's your responsibility.

If you neglect that responsibility, it's not going to be good because someone else is going to control it. Your environment is going to control it for you. And your environment might mean whoever is the most influential person in your life or in your home or in your office where you work or, you know, whatever.

And although it's not in the material we were going to cover today, I'll just point out because we're talking about it in Proverbs 25, 28, excuse me. Proverbs 25, 28 says, Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. So you're required to have a rule over your own spirit.

That's your responsibility. Your own spiritual life is your responsibility. You can't really do it well without the grace of God, without the spirit of God.

But as a Christian, you are not without the grace of God and you're not without the spirit of God. So that means you're fully responsible. And therefore to walk in the spirit, to walk in grace, to trust in God, to choose righteous thoughts and attitudes, that's your responsibility.

You need to rule your own spirit. If you don't, then you are in a condition like unto a city whose walls are broken down. And of course, in ancient times, the walls of a city were there to keep invaders out.

That's what the walls are for. If the walls get breached, the walls fall down, then anyone can invade. There's no defenses.

The city will not be able to govern itself anymore. It'll end up being governed by whoever the strongest aggressor is that attacks because there's no walls to prevent that. So the person who won't rule their spirit, their spirit will be ruled by someone else or something else.



And so this is what Proverbs teaches, which is, of course, true, that what you are referring to as your real self is really your heart. Now, one other point before we quit here, and that is that it's popular these days for those who write books on Christian psychology to adopt specular ideas about the nature of man and then to try to find scriptural support for it. And we've been talking about the heart.

And one of the most popular and persistent notions in secular psychology is a notion that Sigmund Freud came up with about the unconscious mind. We almost take it for granted that it exists, although Freud was the one who invented it in the 19th century. And so really it's kind of a new idea that people have an unconscious mind.

And the reason I bring it up is because many Christians would say when they're trying to defend this notion of the unconscious mind that this is really what the Bible's talking about when it talks about the heart. When the Bible says, as he thinks in his heart, so is he, that the word heart there, they say, is the unconscious mind that Freud spoke about. Well, what is the unconscious mind or the subconscious mind? We use these terms actually quite freely in speech as if they are a proven reality that people have an unconscious mind.

A lot of times when I say, I unconsciously did this or I unconsciously did that, what they really mean is I was just kind of thoughtless at the moment. That's not the same thing. The unconscious mind in Freud is a repository of all the experiences that you've ever had since childhood, and especially those in the first seven years of your life, which you've got memories that aren't really memories because you can't remember them.

All the experiences are programmed into this realm in your personality called the unconscious, which is unconscious. You can't be conscious of it. There's no way through natural means for you to remember the things that are in there.

Freud believed that you have to use unusual methods like hypnosis and certain other techniques, maybe free associations, inkblot tests and things like that, things to try to dream analysis. These are the kind of things that would kind of reveal what you wouldn't be able to know about your unconscious mind, sort of the contents of this reservoir of unremembered memories, which according to Freud, dictate your whole personality and your whole behavior. The reason that you are behaving the way you are is because you've got unconscious in the unconscious mind, you've got sexual aggression that you're not aware of.

Even the so-called Oedipus complex that came up, where every child wants to kill their parent of the same sex and sleep. With the parent of their opposite sex. In Freud coming up with that, he told us a lot about himself.

He didn't tell me much about me because I've never had any such interest at all whatsoever and it sounds disgusting to me. I imagine to most normal people, the fact

that Freud thought that every person has that, tells you a great deal about him because obviously he must have felt that, or else he wouldn't think that every person did. I mean that's how psychologists often are.

They look at their own corruption and they assume, well I'm normal, so everyone's this way. Then they start making generalizations and then they find someone else maybe who thinks that way too. That confirms it.

A lot of times, psychology says normal people all have this or this or this thing going. Do you know all normal people? No, well who did you examine? My patients. And your patients are normal people? Why are they patients then? Why are they coming to a psychiatrist if they're normal? Normal people don't go to psychologists.

People with special problems go to psychiatrists. And so they see a caseload of people who have problems and they determine that this is how normal people are. Because it's the only people they've had a chance to examine.

They don't examine people who don't come to them. So, you know, psychology is such a non-science. It's also in many cases nonsense, although there are some sensible things that psychology comes up with and there are some things that are observed that they happen to hit right, even at broken clocks right twice a day.

And, you know, anyone who observes people is going to hit some things right. And I have to admit there are some things psychology says that I can't disagree with and some of them even agree with the Bible. But the basic things that make the different schools of psychology what they are, Freudianism for example, is not scriptural.

But people who are Christian Freudians, they try to find it in scripture. Now the unconscious mind then is supposedly the repository of all these unremembered memories that you can't get at. They dictate your behavior.

The problems you have are the result of what's in there. But you don't know what's in there. You can think and think and think.

You'll never remember it because it's in a separate category from the consciousness. Remember in the movie Awakenings where Robert De Niro played, it was a true story, Robert De Niro and Robin Williams, do you see it? It's a great movie, fantastic movie. Very touching, a true story about a certain kind of strange patient that was helped briefly by a certain doctor who's still living in New York today.

Very moving, one of my favorite movies. But Robert De Niro is playing this patient who's been confined against his wishes in this hospital because he really had a serious problem. But he's now recovered or he thinks he has.

He's having some problems but he's much more normal than he was. He's sitting before

the board of the hospital and saying, I just want to go out like normal people. I just want to go out and walk in the sun.

I want to have relationships. And one of the woman psychologists sitting there, she says, do you realize how much unconscious aggression you're doing right now? And he said, well, if it's unconscious, how can I know it? But how can I be conscious of it? But that's just the point. The very definition of the unconscious mind is you can't be conscious of it.

Only your therapist knows. And he only knows by doing things like analyzing your dreams and hypnotizing you and using cocaine and stuff as Freud did. I mean, using drugs, bringing out what's in the unconscious mind.

It's amazing how many Christians have just assumed this is true. Do you realize that not even, I mean, there's a great number of modern secular psychiatrists who don't even believe in the unconscious mind anymore. It's a Freudian idea that many people have given up.

And then Freud's younger associate, Carl Jung, he expanded that to the idea of the collective unconscious mind. That the whole human race has a collective unconscious that we're all acting out from things our ancestors, even our evolutionary ancestors who are not even fully human, had. So that the reason that we all have dreams of falling and fear and wake up in fear from the sensation of falling is because our ancestors were ape-like people who lived up in trees and they always were afraid they'd fall in their sleep and be eaten by a saber-toothed tiger.

And so that's in the collective unconscious of the race and it comes out in our dreams and so forth. I mean, Jung went there with it, but he started out working with Freud and then developed this unconscious mind further. The thing is there's nothing in the Bible that suggests there is such an unconscious mind.

If there was, if we're not conscious of it and can't be, how could we be responsible for it? It certainly is not identified with the heart in the Bible. The heart, you know, Christian psychologists are always writing books about this and they assume Freudian unconscious mind and then they use scriptures about the heart of man and say, well, see, this is talking about that and this is talking about that. No, it is not.

There's no place in the Bible that the heart is thinking about something that's an unconscious realm. Even that famous scripture, as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Well, that even talks about it.

He's thinking in his heart. He's not unconscious of it. He knows what he's thinking.

He knows what his motives are. It's just that you don't. That miser invites you.

He knows what he's done it for. He knows what his motives are. He's got something up

his sleeve.

What's being said is you don't know what's up his sleeve. It's not that he's unconscious of it. In Proverbs, chapter 14, this is the last one we'll look at and then we'll have to break.

Proverbs 14 and verse 10, it says, the heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger does not share in its joy. That is to say, there's inward emotions of the heart, bitterness and joy, which are, you know, no one else can participate in. It's just your inward reality.

You're experiencing some inexplicable joy in God or something, even in trials, you can be experiencing joy. And an outsider can't participate in that because it's strictly a matter of what's going on in your heart. Same thing with bitterness.

You can have bitterness of heart. And your heart knows about it, but outsiders don't. The idea is that your emotional state essentially is an inward reality that's going on in your heart.

And you know, your heart knows what's going on in there. It's not unconscious of it. And so, I only say that to say that I have my doubts about the reality of Freud's unconscious mind.

There could be such a thing, but the Bible doesn't confirm it. That's the point I'm saying. I personally have my doubts that it exists, but if it does exist, it cannot be said to be taught in Scripture.

The Bible doesn't use the word heart that way, although some people would like for it to. And I seriously doubt that it really is true, because if it is true, it's one of the most significant spiritual discoveries needed to understand our own spiritual behavior. And that God would know of such a thing and not tell us would be a very strange thing for him to do.

You know, when he spent so much time revealing in his word how we're to manage our spiritual lives and so forth for him to give us not a clue that there's this whole realm that we need to go to a psychiatrist. It would just be a strange omission on the part of God, since that would be sort of that thing that determines everything. And yet it's just totally left out.

You see, if it is unconscious, there's not the same moral responsibility for it. And so, I mean, the Bible everywhere assumes that you do know what's in your heart, or at least you can. You might be so shallow, you're not even thinking about what's going on in your heart.

You're just kind of living thoughtlessly, an unexamined life, which is not worth living. But at least what's in the heart is accessible to you. You can examine your heart and you

should.

And you should manage it and mold it and shape it and direct it and command it and guard it. Those are the things that Solomon says. Now, what we come to the next time, we'll be looking at specific inward realities, depression, envy, jealousy, resentment, anger.

These are issues that actually people go to therapists about. These are the things people go to counselors about. Well, thankfully, the whole counsel of God is given to us about it.

These issues are addressed by God himself. And if you ever go to a counselor about those things, the best he can do is tell you what God already said and agree with God on it. Because God certainly knows the spiritual life better than others.

Remember, the Bible says, blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. And so, a lot of the counsel that comes from therapists is the counsel that was generated by ungodly men. And remember, Paul said that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Neither does he know them because they're foolishness and because they're spiritually discerned. So, it would be a surprising thing if true spiritual facts about Christian spirituality were discovered by people who hated God, like Freud. And Freud did hate God.

He hated God and he hated Christianity. That was very clear. He determined as a child that he would destroy Christianity because two men that he thought were Christians roughed his father up for being Jewish.

And his father didn't defend himself and Freud was resentful toward Christianity and vowed that he would destroy Christianity. He came mighty close. He tried hard and he certainly has changed the way that Western civilization thinks about spiritual things from a Christian perception to a Freudian perception.

Certainly, he was very successful. He and Darwin and a few others have done more than anybody else. Marx have done more than the whole rest of the world to change the perception of the Western civilization from a Christian position to a pagan one.

But fortunately, we have the Word of God and when we want to know about the issues of depression and anxiety and envy and resentment and anger, there is information from God on that. And we don't have to go to the ungodly and walk in their counsel.