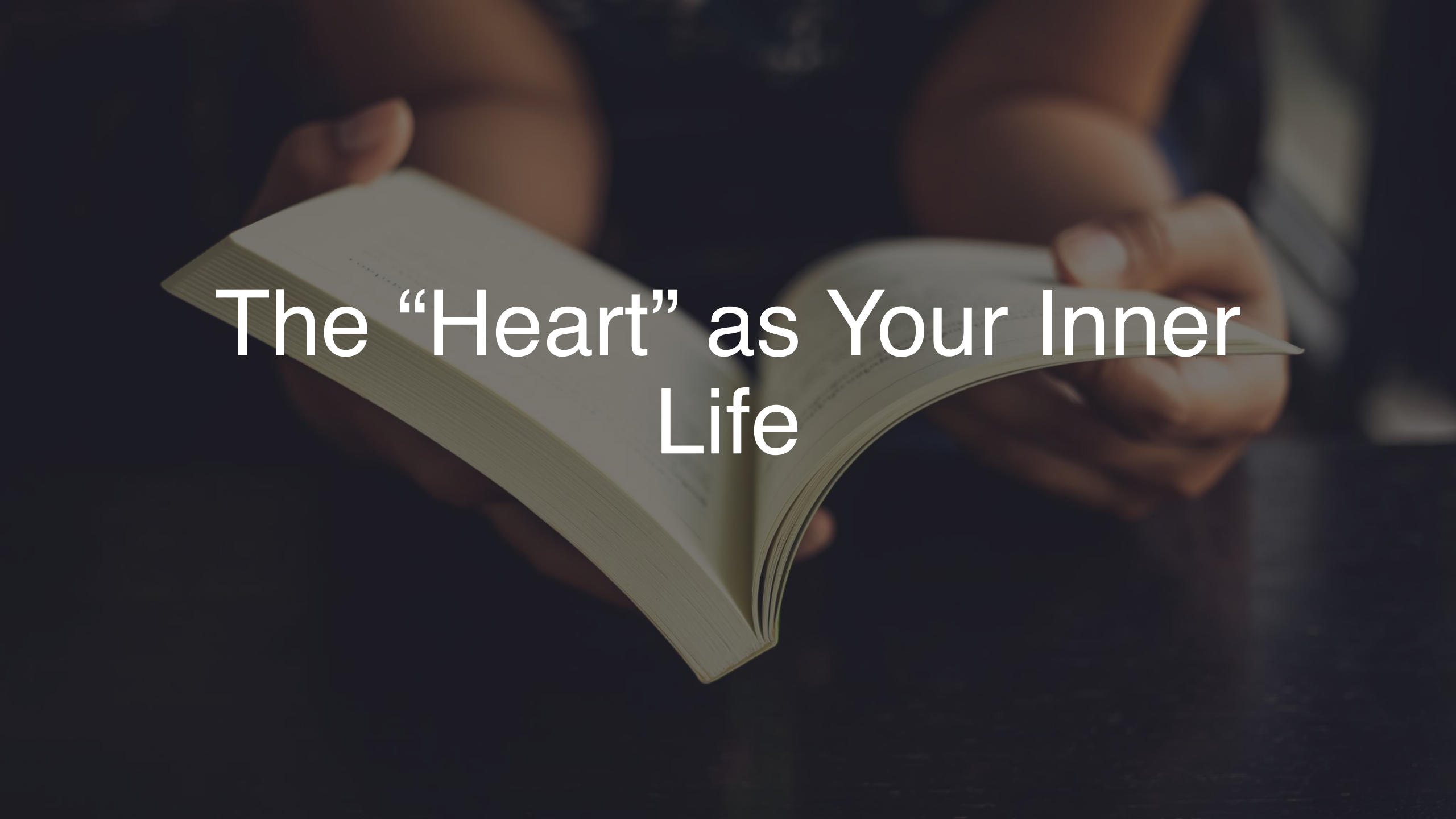


Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean
not on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5

¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, ² for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 3:1–8

A person is holding an open book, with their hands visible on the left and right sides. The book is open to two pages, and the text on the pages is partially visible. The background is dark and out of focus. The text "The 'Heart' as Your Inner Life" is overlaid in white, centered on the book.

The “Heart” as Your Inner Life

Defining the “Heart” as Internal Feature

Heart (internal feature) n. – the locus of a person’s thoughts (mind), volition, emotions, and knowledge of the right from wrong (conscience), understood as the heart.

Genesis 6:5 (Hebrew) *The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.*

1 Peter 3:15 (Greek) *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord...*

Modern proverb (English) *It's not the size of the person in the fight; it's the size of the heart in the person.*

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Proverbs 3:1–8

A person is holding an open book, with their hands visible on the left and right sides. The book is open, showing two pages. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on the book is the text "Everything You Do Flows from Your 'Heart'" in a white, sans-serif font.

Everything You Do Flows
from Your "Heart"

Above all else, guard your heart, for
everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23

1. “Guard your heart” does not mean “never allow yourself to get hurt.”

Prov. 4:23 isn't about protecting your ego, your dating life, or your self-esteem tied to grades, sports, or achievements. It's a call to guard your *inner life* – the core of who you are – from becoming polluted by pride, arrogance, self-reliance, or ungodliness.

1. “Guard your heart” does not mean “never allow yourself to get hurt.”

The heart in this verse isn't about feelings alone; it's the wellspring of your values, desires, and decisions. When your heart is shaped by God's wisdom, everything else flows from that center in a healthy direction.

2. “Guard your heart” does not mean “block your emotions.”



r/exchristian • 7 yr. ago
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Did anyone else just shut down emotionally when told to "guard your heart? "

Growing up with Christian parents, I was always told to "guard my heart" and that it was "desperately wicked." I was always told that "heart" referred to emotions. As a result, I would swallow my feelings down, literally. I would feel the need to cry or get angry, and instead I would hold my breath and just shake until the feeling passed. I had a game I'd play with myself during my teenage years, called the Psychopath game. I would watch disturbing and gruesome media and see how little emotion I would feel watching it. I was so proud of how good I was at guarding my heart, and I thought God would be pleased at me for how little emotion I felt. Now that I'm an adult and starting to lose my faith, I'm waking up to my emotional side again. It's such slow going though. I need a good cry, but I've built up such a mental block to deep emotion like that. I don't know if my practice of shutting down emotion was a response to my parents' brand of teaching (neither of them are emotional people), or if it's somehow inherent in Christian teachings. Did anyone else shut down their emotional side as a result of being told that your feelings are deceptive and wicked?

NIV The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

KJV The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

NASB95 The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:9



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2. “Guard your heart” does not mean “block your emotions.”

“Guard your heart” doesn’t mean shutting down your emotions or avoiding vulnerability. Emotions are part of how God made you — they reflect His image and help you experience love, compassion, grief, joy, and even righteous anger.

2. “Guard your heart” does not mean “block your emotions.”

Guarding your heart means *guiding your emotions*, not *suppressing* them. It's choosing not to let feelings rule your life or lead you into sin, while still staying emotionally open to God and others. A guarded heart is not a hardened heart — it's a *wisely directed* one.

A person is holding an open book, with their hands visible on the left and right sides. The book is open, showing two pages. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on the book is the text "Discipleship for Your 'Heart'" in a white, sans-serif font. The text is centered horizontally and vertically over the book's pages.

Discipleship for Your “Heart”

Matthew 12:34 ...the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Matthew 15:18–19 ...the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Jesus in Matthew's Gospel

John 7:38–39 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Jesus in John’s Gospel

Philippians 4:8–9 ...whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable —if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Colossians 3:1–2 ...set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Ephesians 3:16–17 May [God] strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Paul's Letters