



Guard Your Heart

Intentional inputs in a world filled with a chorus of streams

Leadership Behavior: Leaders Lead Themselves First

Researchers estimate that we humans created on average 2.5 quintillion (that's eighteen zeros) data bytes of information on a daily basis in 2020. That number is also increasing at an exponential rate. (<https://techjury.net/blog/how-much-data-is-created-every-day/#gref>). Research has also shown that the human mind is only capable of absorbing 34 gigabytes of information on a daily basis. That comes out to about 6,000 thoughts on a daily basis.

Here's the deal...The daily library of content available to be consumed far exceeds your ability to consume. Therefore you must be extremely selective about what you choose to consume.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Proverbs 4:23, NIV).

Your mind was designed by God to be a container. It holds whatever you put in it. It holds it indiscriminately. You can fill it with dark, frightening, depressing thoughts, or you can fill it with uplifting, encouraging and bright thoughts. Your mind doesn't filter the content, it consumes whatever you feed it.

Minding our information intake is a difficult discipline to master in a world that is ever increasing in the information it sends in our direction.

Consider a few sources that potentially poison the well of your life:

The "Face To Face" Friendships

We are social beings created for connection with one another. The people we invite into our lives are also given the greatest access to our minds and hearts. Be careful about who you open yourself to.

- The Offended Friend...spreads their root of bitterness in every conversation
- The Apathetic Friend...drains passion from those they touch
- The Idle Friend...wastes your time

The "In Front Of Your Face" Media

We are consuming more media on a daily basis than ever before. Most of that content is the equivalent of a sugary snack to the mind. A quick spike of energy with no lasting reward.

- 24/7 News Media... leading with fear or anger in order to keep your attention
- Social Media... an addictive algorithm that keeps your mind on a sugar drip
- Entertainment... 7.5 hours per day

The “In Your Face” Internal Critic

This is my greatest foe in guarding my own heart and mind. It is the internal voice I live with on a daily basis that reminds me of things I haven't accomplished, places I've failed, or plays conversations over and over again. When this guy is left unchecked he poisons the well.

How do we guard our hearts?

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:4-9.)

Paul tells us the following:

- 1) It is the peace of God that guards our hearts and minds
- 2) The peace of God is **with** those who choose to dwell upon
 - What is True
 - What is Honorable
 - What is Just
 - What is Pure
 - What is Lovely
 - What is Commendable
 - What is Excellent
 - What is Praiseworthy

What a filter for life!

- 3) Praise is the outflow of a life filled with God's peace

What flows from our lips is the consequence of what we've allowed to flow into our hearts.

Where Do We Begin?

1. Stay In the Secret Place

“No man is greater than his own prayer life!” - Leonard Ravenhill

Start your day in a place of prayer and devotion. Let the first thoughts that fill your mind be spiritual thoughts.

2. Secure Your Systems

“We don’t rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems” - James Clear

Think of your habits and routines as an automatic filtering system. Where you consistently see the wrong inputs in your life, chances are high you have an unintentional but consistent system in place producing that result.

Remember you ultimately become what you repeatedly do.

3. Saturate Your Spirit

Find the negative voices in your life and delete or diminish them and then surround yourself with those voices and streams that meet the Philippians 4 filter.

Questions:

- 1) What are some of the negative streams you have allowed into your life? What is the effect of those streams on your own thoughts and conversations?
- 2) Where do you find your positive inflows?
- 3) What systems do you have or need in your life to better secure the wellspring of your mind and heart?