



St. John's Congregational Church

40 days of Prayer & Fasting

April 7 - May 16

Devotional - Week 4

Guard Our Hearts

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." *Proverbs 4:23*

The word "heart" appears over 900 times in the New King James Version of the Bible! God is obviously concerned about our hearts. One way that we guard our hearts is by guarding what influences us and how we influence others and one important factor in that is refraining from gossiping or listening to gossip. Gossip is talking about someone or something that ultimately has negative consequences. You can be speaking truth and still be gossiping. Paul knew about the destructiveness of gossip and provided some guidance. In Ephesians 4:29, he tells the Ephesians to speak only what is helpful for building others up, that it may be beneficial. That is quite a standard to live by!

It is important that we consider our reasons for speaking what we do. That can be difficult because it is so easy to talk about someone else and to discuss things going on around us. But we need to weigh whether what we say will ultimately be helpful or hurtful. In thinking about what to say it may help to consider the following questions: Is God leading me to say this? Is what I say going to work toward building God's kingdom or toward destroying it? Would I say this if the person about whom I am speaking were standing right here?

In addition to not speaking gossip, we need to refrain from listening to gossip. When I went to the cardiologist recently, he wanted to know if I smoke or use drugs or alcohol. That's because he knows that what I take into my body influences the functioning of my heart. The same is true for our spiritual hearts – what we allow in influences what we think about people and situations. When we listen to talk about someone else we may not know if it is true, but we may be a little more suspicious of that person the next time we see them. To refrain from listening to gossip, don't contribute to the conversation and seek to stop it as soon as it starts. If someone comments to you about a co-workers outfit, challenge them to go to her about it. If someone asks you, "Did you hear...?" tell them you would rather not know.

One of the qualities associated with our hearts is love. If we are to truly be the community God wants us to be, we must speak out of love and that includes refraining from gossip. In Bible Study, the topic has been the power of words. Let us study God's Word together this Tuesday as Min. Harrison teaches about how our words can be life giving according to Jesus' example.

Daily Prayer

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Amen.

(Psalm 19:14)

Daily Scripture Meditations

Monday

Ephesians 4:17-5:2: A New Heart

Tuesday

James 1:19-27 and Chapters 3 and 4: Expressions of the Heart

Wednesday

Psalms 15: A Pleasing Heart

Thursday

Matthew 26:57-67, 27:11-14: Jesus' Heart

Friday

1 Peter 1:13-2:3: Love from the Heart