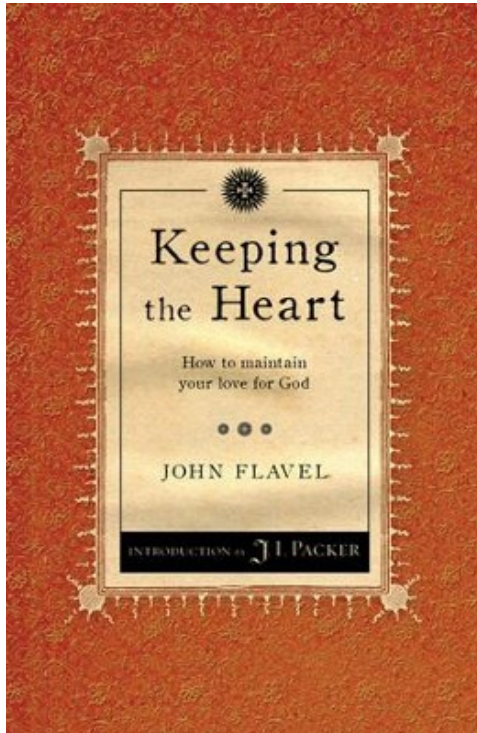


John Flavel (1627-1691) was an English Puritan pastor. He wrote *Keeping the Heart*, which was originally titled, *A Saint Indeed, or The Great Work of a Christian Explained and Applied*. The original title gives us insight into the way that Flavel thought about the injunction of Proverbs 4:23 — "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." This is indeed "the great work of a Christian."



Flavel wrote this work at a time when he was unsure if he would ever see his flock again. In it, Flavel's patience, tenderness, certainty, and firmness shine, which are unmistakable marks of a seasoned and wise shepherd. There is perhaps no better book to learn the art of what we commonly call "heart shepherding" than this one. (It includes the best ten I know of on sinful fear.) The usefulness of this book can be found in Flavel mode of instruction. He teaches the reader to guard his heart less by precept and more by example. By reading this book, you will learn how to shepherd your heart because Flavel guides us, one truth at a time into care for our own souls. It serves as a phenomenal example of how to counsel oneself. — Omri Miles, *Pastor/Elder*

Quotes

"Heart work is hard work."

"Affliction is a pill, which being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill and so embitters the soul; God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to fright you from sin: and you will thrust it onward to the piercing of your very hearts by despondency and discontent."

"Nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs do; would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician when he hath studied the case of his patient, prepared the most excellent receipts to save his life, to hear him cry out, O he hath undone me! he hath poisoned me; because it gripes and pains him in the operation?"

"It is none of our work to rule the world, but to submit to him that doth."

Suggested One-Month Reading Plan

(4 pages per day)

Week 1: Monday July 3rd - Sunday July 9th

Introduction by J.I. Packer

Flavel's Introduction, 4 pages

What the Keeping of the Heart Supposes and Imports
2. Assign Some Reasons Why Christians Must Make This the Great Business of Their Lives

Week 2: Monday July 10th - Sunday July 16th

3. Special Seasons in the Life of a Christian Which Require Our Utmost Diligence in Keeping the Heart

1. The time of prosperity
2. The time of adversity
3. The time of Zion's trouble
4. The time of danger and public distraction

Week 3: Monday July 17th - Sunday July 23rd

3. Special Seasons in the Life of a Christian Which Require Our Utmost Diligence in Keeping the Heart

5. The time of outward wants
6. The season of duty
7. When receiving injuries and abuses from men
8. When we meet with great trials
9. The hour of temptation #1

Week 4: Monday July 24th - Sunday July 30th

3. Special Seasons in the Life of a Christian Which Require Our Utmost Diligence in Keeping the Heart

9. The hour of temptation, #2
10. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness
11. When sufferings for religion are upon us
12. When we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand

4. Improving and Applying the Subject