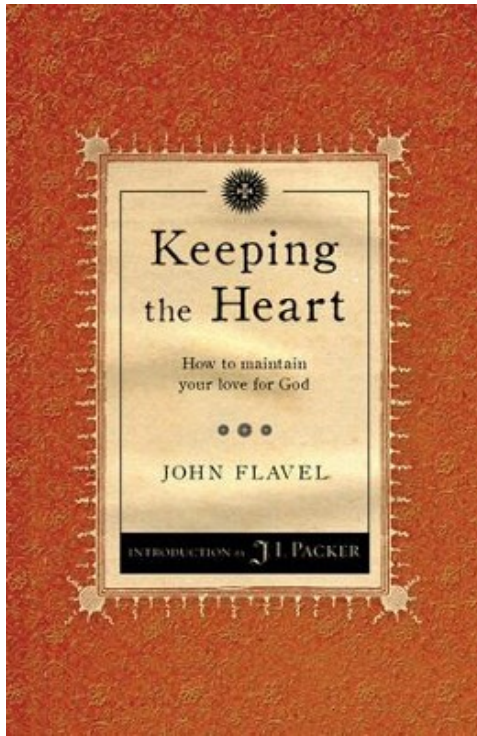


It is rare that we would want to highlight a book twice in one year as the book of the month. But if there is ever a book whose contents I would hope would permeate Grace Bible Church, it's this one. So if you have already read it, please consider reading this short, but immensely practical book again. If you have not read it, I hope that this is the month you do.



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* as a pastoral letter to his church to help them obey the command of Proverbs 4:23: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life."

This is our Discipline 1: Shepherd your heart. Flavel works hard to teach his readers that their primary focus in their religious devotion needs to be the inner man. It is easy and common to focus on outward externals, but without the focus on shepherding their hearts to love and honor the Lord from their heart, these religious efforts can quickly devolve into Pharisaical hypocrisy. Flavel doesn't merely teach. The book is filled with practical examples that came from being personally aware of the difficulty and benefit of doing the heart work of keeping the heart pure unto God.

I teach a lesson on Proverbs 4:23 each year in Build and Wellspring. I am happy to say that very little of the content is my own. Most of it I just stole from John Flavel. If you have found any benefit in those lessons (or even if you haven't) I encourage you to go to the source and read this book. If you aren't used to Puritan writings you may be scared off at first. There is a cadence and vocabulary of writing that is a bit foreign to modern preferences. Some things that I have found helpful are being content to read slower than normal, sometimes reading out loud, and taking notes in the form of creating an outline as you read.

. — Jacob Hantla, **Pastor/Elder**

Suggested One-Month Reading Plan

(4 pages per day)

Week 1: Monday, January 29th - Sunday, February 4th

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, February 5th - Sunday, February 11th

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, February 12th - Sunday, February 18th

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, February 19th - Sunday, February 25th

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