

D1: The Spiritual Discipline of Shepherding My Heart

Key Ingredients:

Some focal points in the spiritual discipline of shepherding your heart:

I. The motivations for coming before God with my Bible open.

Ask yourself for good answers to this important question: "Why am I coming before You in prayer with my Bible open?"

Theme verses? Phil 3:7-11; Ps 27:8-9

Other Scriptural encouragement to pursue God (look for this theme in your daily reading):

1 Chron 16:27; 17:20

2 Chron 20:6

Psalm 5:4-7; 16:8-9; 25:15; 27:8-9; 31:19; 36:5-10; 40:16; 42:1; 57:1; 63:1; 73:25-26; 86:5-10; 89:11-18; 91:14-16; 105:3-4; 113:4-9; 116:5-7

Proverbs 30:5-6

Isaiah 30:18

II. The centrality of the gospel as I shepherd my heart.

Meditate on, preach to yourself the gospel in the presence of God in prayer. Use "II. The Gospel of Jesus" from our first lesson (9/8), along with other passages like these:

Romans 6

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Galatians 1:6-10

Galatians 3:1-9

Galatians 6:14-15

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 4:17-24

Philippians 1:6 and 2:12-13

Philippians 2:5-11

Philippians 3:1-14

Colossians 2:8-15

Colossians 3:1-11

2 Timothy 1:8-12

Titus 2:11-14

Titus 3:3-8

Hebrews 9:11-14

Hebrews 10:11-18

1 Peter 1:2-5

Etc.

Why am I doing this? It is Your power in the gospel of Jesus that has made me what I am in Your sight. Rehearsing this again today allows me to prayerfully communicate to You that I love Your work in my life through Jesus - that I am interested in learning more of Your work through Christ in me. There are treasures in the gospel of Jesus that I have yet to discover in my own life and I crave to find them. This is also an opportunity for me to boast in Christ in before You because of what the gospel has achieved in my life. And if I stagger today under the weight of my sin, the gospel will buoy me and provide me the gospel rest I need. And if I'm in a moment of gospel growth and successes, rehearsing the gospel will lead me to humbly acknowledge that all the credit goes to You. . . .

III. The truth about sin as I shepherd my heart.

“Light thoughts of sin breed light thoughts of the Savior.” C. H. Spurgeon

1. My sin is offensive to God.

Psalm 69:5; 90:8; Proverbs 5:21; 15:11; 16:2; 17:3; 21:2; Jeremiah 23:23-24
Proverbs 6:16-19; 8:13; 11:20; Mark 7:20-23
Psalm 7:11; 9:7-10; 11:4-7; 25:8-11; 31:9-10; 32:1-5; 38:1-5; 51:1-13; 78:36-39; 79:8-9; 103:8-14; 118:18;
130:1-4;
Isaiah 6:3-7; 59:1-2
Jeremiah 2:22
Mark 3:4-5a

2. My sin is powerful to entangle me.

Psalm 19:13; 40:11-12
Hebrews 12:1-2

3. My sin is dangerous to me.

Proverbs 9:13-18; 14:16; 21:16; 27:12;
Matthew 5:29-30
Psalm 40:11-12; 139:23-24
Isaiah 6:3-7

4. My sin is deceptive to me (concerning 1-3 and more).

Psalm 19:12; 78:36-39
Matthew 7:3-5

Other passages about sin in general:

Proverbs 3:11-12; 10:17; 13:1, 18; 15:5, 10, 12; 19:27; 29:1; 20:9, 30; 28:13; Psalm 141:5
Psalm 119:9-11;

Why must I rehearse this about my sin? If I do not fight to have Scripture's view of my sin, I will easily be duped by sin's deception today and become unaware of sin's nearness to me. I then will be vulnerable to sin's entanglements. Sin at that point can become familiar to me - even tolerable to me. Then sin can become a delight to me. Before I know it I am in a position of weakness with sin where I will be in the fight of my life to be free from its entanglements, or I will be defensive of my sin. If I do nothing about my view of sin, my view of sin only grows cloudy.

IV. The truth about the blessings of obedience as I shepherd my heart.

Proverbs 13:13; 14:14, 26-27; 15:3, 9, 29, 31-33; 16:3, 6, 7, 17, 20; 19:8, 16, 20, 23, 25; 20:7; 22:5, 17-21

Why must I rehearse this about obedience/righteousness/holiness? In the new man You have created a desire for obedience (Romans 6:17; Ephesians 4:24). I need to consistently feed that new, God-given desire in my new condition so that it grows. If I do not rehearse to myself what the blessings of obedience are, I should not expect my desire for obedience to grow. Indwelling sin will do everything possible to quench that desire, so I must fight to overcome that.

V. A strategy to fight against specific sin as I shepherd my heart.

1. How would I initially describe the “issue” or sin I am facing?

As you understand the “issue” or sin right now, call it what you believe it to be (your understanding of it will grow and become more accurate as you examine Scripture and pray). This is just a place to begin - you have to call it what you currently understand it to be.

2. What does God think about this sin (what does Scripture say this “issue” or sin is)? How does God portray Himself in contrast to the sin?

You are trying to see this sin as God does (through Scripture!). It is more important to see it as He does than remain in your current, limited understanding of it. You especially want to see it in the light of His nature and being. You want to see how divergent your sin is in comparison to God Himself. This preps you for confession of sin - even begin to start confessing your sin as you discover the hideousness of your sin in contrast to God. Remember to confess sin means to agree with God about your sin. Call this sin what it is. Use biblical language. Meditate on Scriptures that call this sin what it is, or that put God in stark contrast to this sin (remember - you love Him more than your sin!).

3. What has God done for me in the gospel concerning this sin (positional gospel realities and/or conversion realities)? Preach to yourself these gospel realities. See this sin and yourself rightly in light of the finished work of Jesus at the cross.

Refer back to “II. The gospel of Jesus” from our first lesson (9/8). Allow confession of sin to continue here in light of what God has done for you in the gospel of Jesus. You are righteous in God’s sight only on the basis of faith in Jesus! Expressions of gratefulness and worship and humility and joy are appropriate here as well - express them!

4. What has God done for me in the gospel so I can fight against this sin and fight for holiness (practical gospel benefits)? Use “III. Who you are in Jesus” from our first lesson (9/8).

Refer back to “III. Who you are in Jesus” from our first lesson (9/8). As a result of union with Christ (crucified, raised, ascended), my relationship with both sin and Jesus has been fundamentally altered (Romans 6). I am no longer a slave to the sin I am fighting, rather I have become a slave of God, righteousness and obedience (Romans 6). This new condition I am in is radically different

from the old condition in which I was a slave to sin only. This “new man” or “new creation” comes equipped by God to be able to “lay aside” the sin I am fighting against and to “put on” righteous behavior from Christ’s law. Rehearsing these gospel benefits is called “renewing your mind” or “setting your mind on the things above where Christ is,” etc. Confession of sin must run into the rehearsal of these gospel benefits which are the foundation for repentance.

5. What are the gospel-empowered commands for me as I fight for obedience?

NOW I am ready to set before me commands from Christ to obey. Watch for both commands to “put off” sin and for commands to “put on” righteous behavior. Both are necessary. The new condition we are in by God’s grace in the gospel is equipped with power and desire to do just this. Trust God by obeying these commands from Christ. Meditate on these commands. Trust God’s promises in the gospel (that you are a new creation capable of obeying Jesus and saying “no” to sin) more than you trust how you currently feel.

6. What other sins have surfaced in my fight against this sin? What other sins have been smuggled into my life under the cover of the current sin getting my attention? (Start over at #1 with this new sin.)

VI. The requests I must bring to God as I shepherd my heart.

My household (D2) - roommates, family, the challenges/trials/gospel goals you face there. . .

The lost. . .

Work/school - the people and relationships/challenges/trials/gospel goals you face there. . .

Grace Bible Church

Elders

Deacons and other ministry leaders

Smallgroup members

Ministries like BUILD, H3, Wellspring, NGM, Sunday’s worship service, Discovery Dinner, Smallgroup ministry, etc.

Missionaries and those in training

Etc.

Leaders of Government - 1 Tm 2:1-4; 1 Pt 2:13-17; etc.

Other specific needs

Etc.