

SCANNING YOUR DASHBOARD

WARNING LIGHTS
& HOLY HABITS

=====*for*=====

A LEADER'S SOUL

ROWLAND FORMAN

Dashboard Indicator #5

Am I Slipping Morally, or Guarding my Heart?

Caring for Your Own Soul

Effective leaders care deeply for the souls of others. Yet this often comes at the expense of their own soul's well-being—and sometimes that of their family as well.

Scanning Your Dashboard invites you to regularly attend to your inner life. Just as a driver watches the dashboard for warning lights and fuel levels, wise leaders learn to notice what is happening beneath the surface of their lives.

Each **Dashboard Indicator** in this mentoring resource pairs a Warning Light with a Holy Habit—helping you not only to recognize areas of vulnerability, but also to respond with practices that cultivate a healthy, Christ-dependent life.

A dashboard doesn't only warn you when something is wrong—it also reassures you when things are functioning as they should.

Begin by processing Warning Light #5 and Holy Habit #5 on your own. Then, if possible, meet with a mentor-friend or small group, to share what the Holy Spirit is bringing to your attention. **Working with Warning Lights and then Holy Habits, helps you not only to see what you need to work on, but to step into a grace-filled response.**

WARNING LIGHT #5:

IMPURITY: *Am I Spying on Greener Grass?*

My first working title for this warning light was *immorality*. I've chosen instead the word *impurity*, because impurity describes the root, while immorality describes the fruit. Long before outward failure, there is often an initial glance—a quiet looking over the fence—that if left unchecked, can lead to tragic consequences.

Impurity is a heart issue.

Proverbs 4:23 is an essential starting point as we grapple with questions like, “Why has this sinful behavior just happened?”

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Above all else ... This is the top priority. Nothing else comes close. Moral vigilance isn't paranoia; it is the way of wisdom.

... guard your heart ... Watch out! Pay attention to warning signals. Be alert to any moral slippage and take preventive action.

... for everything you do flows from it. You are the keeper of the stream. Left unattended, it can pollute everything downstream. Carefully guarded, it becomes a source of life in every relationship—as pure a stream, as a ransomed sinner can be.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus may have had Proverbs 4:23 in mind:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).

The Pharisees, whom Jesus refers to as hypocrites, put all the emphasis on external behavior. To them adultery meant the physical act of having sex with anyone who is not your spouse. Jesus upheld the Seventh Commandment—***You shall not commit adultery***—but raised the bar. Desire, he said, or a sideways glance that may become a repeated stare, precedes the physical act.

... in his heart. Jesus taught that lusting after or coveting what doesn't belong to us (the Tenth Commandment) is a heart issue. It includes adultery but it is deeper than that.

What is your “greener grass”? If you initially looked over the fence casually, what did you spy that doesn't belong to you? Has that casual glance become something with a vice-like grip on your heart? Are you desiring what God has not entrusted to you?

Nowhere in Scripture is this sad progression—from a glance to a tragic fall—more vividly portrayed than in 2 Samuel 11. In the preceding chapters, David is enjoying extraordinary success. God has given him victory, rest from his enemies, and a covenant that will last forever.

Then comes the tipping point: 2 Samuel 11:1-5. At the time when kings went off to war, David stayed in Jerusalem. From his balcony he saw Bathsheba

bathing. One glance became desire; desire turned into an adulterous act, adultery cascaded into deceit, abuse of power, and even the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.

Why did this happen? Not because David was ignorant of God's law, but because he failed to guard his heart. Later, in deep repentance, he would cry out, *Create in me a clean heart, O God* (Psalm 51:10). David knew where the real problem lay.

David's story is included to alert us and invite us to examine our own hearts before a glance becomes a fall.

There is hope. But before exploring solutions, please take this heart-check. Let the Holy Spirit do the work of conviction that leads to repentance and restoration.

Reflect and Discuss:

1. What do you understand to be the difference between impurity of heart and immorality of behavior?
2. What might "greener grass" represent for you—not just sexually, but in terms of desire or coveting?
3. Where do you see the danger of small, unchecked glances becoming larger compromises?
4. How does David's story both warn you and give you hope?

Prayer

Holy and merciful God, You see not only my actions, but my heart. I confess how easily my desires wander and how casually I sometimes look over fences You never intended me to cross. Search me and know my heart. Show me where impurity has taken root. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Teach me to guard what matters most, and to desire what you desire for me. Lead me in the way of purity, not out of fear, but by love and grace.

Amen.

HOLY HABIT #5:

PURITY: *Guarding Your Heart*

Maintaining purity is challenging, but possible. And it begins with prayer.

Maybe an expansive prayer like, “Lord, make me as holy as a ransomed sinner can be”¹ or a series of smaller expressions of dependence on God throughout the day.

If the goal is to become more like Jesus, it’s comforting to know that Jesus was:

... tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.
(Hebrews 4:15).

After forty days in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the Evil One—to indulge himself by turning stones into bread, to show off by throwing himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and to turn aside from the Cross by bowing down to Satan.
(Matthew 4:1-11).

Each time he repulsed temptation by quoting Scripture.

Jesus is alongside you when impure thoughts assail you, and his Word is still the Spirit’s sword to win the battle of the mind.

To the intensely religious people of his day—those proud that they hadn’t physically broken the seventh commandment, Jesus said

... anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

Jesus taught that the solution to sexual impurity is not external, because the cause is not external.

It is a heart issue.

¹ Robert Murray M’Cheyne

When one of the Early Church Fathers, Anthony, was overwhelmed with lust, he separated himself from society to live as a hermit in Egypt. He later admitted,

“I discovered Satan could easily find me in the desert.”

So how do we deal with this heart issue?

First, we need to pray.

Pray an expansive and expectant prayer such as: *Create in me a clean heart O God!* (Psalm 51:10).

And pray urgent prayers too—Scripture-based prayers that confront sinful thoughts immediately. Because our hearts can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), we also need frequent prayers of confession.

John the Apostle reminds us:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9).

All of us, however saintly we may appear, need tender hearts that keep short accounts with God.

Second, we need safe people with whom we can be vulnerable.

This is like coming out of hiding.

In Eden, our first parents hid from God and from one another. And when we are struggling on the inside but keeping up appearances on the outside, healing begins with honesty:

Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Third we need humility

We need to approach sensitive issues like this with sober, humble hearts.

As the English Reformer, John Bradford, observed criminals being led to execution, he said, “There, but for the grace of God go I.” In other words, ***that could have been me.***

A pure mind develops, not through pride, but through dependence. God’s grace is limitless and always available.

So, guard your heart—not with self-confidence, but with prayer, community, and the gentle strength of Jesus.

This is the holy habit of purity.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. When do you feel most vulnerable when it comes to purity?
2. When temptation comes, what Scripture could you access immediately for your protection?
3. What are some of the challenges you face in your quest to find a safe person with whom you could be more honest?
4. What is one small step you can take this week to guard your heart more intentionally?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that you understand temptation yet were without sin. Create in me a clean heart. Strengthen me when my thoughts drift towards impurity and lead me back to your ways.

Give me humility to confess, courage to seek help, and grace to walk in the light.

Guard my heart today and shape me to become more like You. Amen.

The 7 Dashboard Indicators

- Indicator #1** Am I Drifting, or Abiding in Christ?
- Indicator #2** Am I Praying Less, or Praying More?
- Indicator #3** Am I Proudful, or Humbly Serving Others?
- Indicator #4** Am I Running on Empty, or Learning Unforced Rhythms of Grace?
- Indicator #5** Am I Slipping Morally, or Guarding my Heart?
- Indicator #6** Am I Isolated, or Investing in Others?
- Indicator #7** Am I Pretending, or Leading with Integrity?



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