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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | By **Martha Rodman** on December 12, 2024 |   *Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love. I Corinthians 16:13. NLT.*  Oak Harbor is the home of Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. The station itself has two different locations with at least four manned gates. The men and women who guard these gates must stay vigilant. They must check every car and their occupants for the proper clearance documents. I am sure there are times they don't "feel" like being so vigilant, but their training keeps us safe.  Scripture also gives us a responsibility to be a "guard". Every believer must accept this duty call, or deal with the circumstances. What are we called to guard? Our hearts! Proverbs 4:23 tells us not only what we need to guard, but why. *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.* We must guard our hearts above everything else in our lives; our marriage, our children our jobs. Why? Because out of it flows the issues of life. Everything we do, think or dream comes from our hearts; which is why they must be guarded, and guarded well.  You don't need a guard, unless there is an enemy. The Bible clarifies that we have one. He uses various tactics in his warfare against us, one of which is appealing to our pride. He wants to make us feel we are somehow the exception to the need to avoid temptations. He lures us into feeling it's ok to watch media that portrays adultery, pornography, cursing, and hatred. We don't think it will affect us. But sadly, it is not true. We must protect our hearts from fantasies. We must also avoid comparisons. Avoiding things that erode our love for our spouse and our children is essential. This is one area our hearts must be guarded.  Another tactic is fear. If allowed, he floods our hearts and minds with the "what ifs of life". Unless we guard our hearts well, insecurity and fear will overwhelm us. Our life will grow smaller and smaller as we attempt to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. God's goal for us is to enlarge our lives, not shrink them!  One of my fears, during the early years of our marriage, was that something would happen to my husband. Praying one day, the Holy Spirit showed me, that although this fear was "normal", it wasn't trusting Him. As I continued to pray about the situation, He led me to Hebrews 13:5-6. As I read and meditated on these scriptures, peace and trust descended. *Don't love money, be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, I will never fail you. I will never abandon you. So we can say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me? NLT.*This scripture became a guard over my heart whenever those fears would try to rise again. When it happened, I went back to this scripture and reminded God of this promise.  There is more good news. We have a helper to help guard our hearts and that is the peace of God. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7.*If we pay attention, the peace of God functions almost like a guard dog. When a guard dog sense danger, he begins with a low growl and his hackles rise. Pay attention to the peace of God abiding in your hearts. If/when you find that peace disturbed, pay attention. Something is up. Take the time to pray or think through the situation. Your guard dog is warning.  God has given us the breastplate of righteousness to protect our hearts. If you have ignored it and walked in unrighteousness, your heart is unprotected. This can lead to heartbreak. If you find yourself in this situation, repent and go back to your first love. Put on the whole armor of God, not just part. Then you will walk in peace.  Satan loves to attack our hearts because from them comes our dreams, our passions and our future. If he can use discouragement, disappointment or even disillusionment, he will have won. His desire is to get us to lose heart and quit walking in God's ways. If he wins with these tactics, not only will we suffer but also those around us, including the next generation.  Friends, if you recognize your heart is damaged, please remind yourself of Psalm 147:3. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Go to Him. Acknowledge your broken heart and your need for His care. Take the time to sit in His Presence and allow His healing to flow in you and through you. It will be worth it. Allow His Spirit to wash away any bitter infection, unforgiveness, disappointment, or anger. These things will sabotage your future relationship with God and with others. God has planned a much better future for you than that! |