

PROTECT YOUR HEART IN A SAFE, SECURE PLACE

By: Robert J. Tamasy

Most of us in the business and professional world pride ourselves in being rational and pragmatic, able to act in a straight-forward, reasonable manner. "There is no room for sentiment!" seems to be the mantra of some top business leaders as they make decisions that affect the bottom line of their companies.

In reality, however, we all are influenced to some degree by our emotions – what some might term "matters of the heart." We can present an image of being practical and fact-centered in our actions, but inevitably our innermost desires have significant influence on everyday thoughts and conduct.

This can be manifested in how we respond to our superiors, interact with certain coworkers employees, or react to suppliers and customers. Our personal affections and interests are involved in decisions about how we use our time and spend our money. They have a role in determining where we travel on a holiday, and even where we go for lunch or dinner.

Matters of the heart have perhaps the greatest impact on how well we safeguard those things we say that are most important to us – such as our spouses, children, reputation and moral values. For example, a business woman who loves her husband would be wise not to spend much time in private with a male coworker she finds particularly attractive and who makes her feel "special." A professional man who says his children are a top priority should consider what the impact of constant travel and long hours at work, to earn a long-sought promotion, eventually will have on his relationship with them. We need to consider whether closing a major business deal is worth it if ethical compromises are necessary to achieve it.

This is why, in the Bible's book of Proverbs, it says, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*" (Proverbs 4:23). A common contemporary saying advises, "If it feels good, do it." A similar view states it this way: "How can it be wrong when it feels so right?" These may sound correct. But consider this: An unreasonable customer might make you so angry that you would want to punch him in the jaw. It might even feel good. But would that be the right thing to do?

The heart – also described as the "seat of our emotions" – can easily deceive us, especially when an appealing goal or objective is involved. So we must "guard our hearts" – establish unwavering guidelines that govern our thoughts and behavior when we encounter enticing opportunities to compromise. Look at some other observations about the heart from Proverbs:

The heart influences what we do – and why. It is often easy to rationalize questionable actions, but even good things can be wrong if done with improper motives. "*All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord*" (Proverbs 16:2).

Our actions reflect the purity of our hearts. We all can appear to have pure hearts in the absence of moral or ethical challenges. The test comes when questionable situations arise and we must decide how to respond. "*The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts*" (Proverbs 17:3).

When our hearts are right, people notice. Compromise can have short-term rewards. But the long-term rewards of becoming known as a person of integrity, dependability and sincerity are far greater. "*He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend*" (Proverbs 22:11).

Robert J. Tamasy is vice president of communications for Leaders Legacy, Inc., based in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. He is the author of Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace (River City Press) and has coauthored with David A. Stoddard, The Heart of Mentoring: 10 Proven Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential (NavPress).

CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Robert Milligan, President
1065 N. 115th Street, Suite 210 • Omaha, Nebraska 68154 • U.S.A.
TEL.: (402) 431-0002 • FAX: (402) 431-1749 • E-MAIL: info@cbmcint.org
Please direct any requests or change of address to: www.cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Do you consider yourself to be a person that is very rational and pragmatic, whose actions and decisions are not greatly influenced by emotion? Explain your answer.
2. Think of a recent situation when you – or someone you know – exhibited behavior or made a decision that clearly was influenced from the heart, rather than from the head? What was the result?
3. Practically speaking, how would you go about “guarding your heart” to protect those parts of your life that you regard as most important?
4. It is sometimes said that one way to ensure that our hearts and motives are right is to enter into an accountability relationship with another person, giving that individual permission to ask questions of us, even difficult ones. Do you have such a relationship right now, or do you think it might be helpful to you? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to consider some other passages that concern this topic, turn to the following:

Proverbs 14:10, 16:7, 20:9, 20:27, 21:2, 26:24-26, Jeremiah 17:9