

WEEKLY LEADERSHIP DEVOTIONAL

June 14, 2026 - June 20, 2026

Guarding Your Heart, Guiding Your Team

How the Health of a Leader's Heart Determines the Health of Their Team

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

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

A leader cannot give their team what their own heart does not possess. Guard your heart with the same intensity you give to guarding your vision, because your team will always go where your heart leads them, whether you intend it or not.

Inspiring Biblical Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Every leader eventually discovers a sobering and unavoidable truth: the culture of a team is the culture of the leader's heart, made visible. What a leader carries internally, including their anxieties, their unresolved wounds, their joy, their faith, their bitterness, their peace, does not remain contained within the boundaries of their own soul. It seeps into every meeting they run, every decision they make, every relationship they cultivate, and every standard they set. Teams do not merely follow their leader's strategies. They absorb their leader's spirit.

This is one of the most sobering and simultaneously one of the most empowering truths in all of biblical leadership. Sobering, because it means that no leader can afford to be careless with their own inner life if they genuinely care about the wellbeing of those they lead. Empowering, because it means that the single greatest investment a leader can make in their team is the daily, faithful investment in the health of their own heart before God.

At Inspiring Biblical Leadership, we teach that the leader's heart is not simply a personal matter; it is an organizational matter. A leader who is spiritually dry leads a spiritually dry team. A leader consumed by anxiety produces an anxious culture. A leader walking in genuine faith, peace, and joy creates an environment where those same qualities become contagious and accessible to everyone they serve. This week, we explore the profound connection between guarding your heart

and guiding your team well, and why the most important leadership meeting you will ever have happens on your knees, alone with God.

SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

Scripture consistently affirms that the heart of the leader is the headwaters of the team's culture. These passages establish the biblical foundation for this week's devotional:

“Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, drink the milk and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost.”

Ezekiel 34:2–4 (NIV)

God's rebuke of Israel's shepherds in Ezekiel 34 is one of Scripture's most direct and searching indictments of self-centered leadership. The shepherds had prioritized their own comfort, consumption, and security over the welfare of those in their care. The sheep were scattered, injured, and lost, not because the flock was difficult, but because the shepherds had allowed their own hearts to drift from their God-given calling to serve. A leader whose heart is oriented primarily toward self-preservation and self-promotion will inevitably leave their team scattered, depleted, and directionless. The health of the flock always begins with the condition of the shepherd.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”

John 10:11, 14 (NIV)

Jesus' description of Himself as the Good Shepherd is the ultimate model for every leader who carries responsibility for the wellbeing of others. The Good Shepherd is defined by two inseparable qualities: sacrificial love and intimate knowledge. He lays down his life; he leads from self-giving rather than self-serving. And he knows his sheep; he leads from genuine relationship rather than from transactional management. These two qualities flow from a heart that is fully aligned with the Father's heart. A leader who guards their own heart through consistent communion with God will find that the Good Shepherd's qualities increasingly become the natural expression of their leadership.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV)

Paul’s instruction to the Philippians is simultaneously a prescription for the leader’s heart and a promise for the leader’s team. When a leader brings every anxiety, uncertainty, and challenge to God in prayer rather than carrying it silently or displacing it onto their team, the peace of God becomes a guard over their heart. And a leader whose heart is at peace creates a team culture where people feel secure, stable, and free to do their best work. Anxiety is one of the most contagious conditions in any organization. So is peace. Both are set in motion by the condition of the leader’s heart.

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

1 Peter 5:2–4 (NIV)

Peter’s instruction to leaders captures the posture that flows from a heart that is truly guarded and surrendered to God: willingness over obligation, eagerness to serve over personal gain, and example over authority. These are not behaviors that can be manufactured through discipline alone; they are the natural outflow of a heart that has been transformed by grace and kept tender through ongoing communion with God. A leader who guards their heart will lead their team not from the pressure of position but from the overflow of genuine care, producing a culture that reflects the Good Shepherd’s own heart for the flock.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Consider the profound ripple effect of a leader's heart on those they lead. When Moses grew weary in the wilderness and struck the rock in anger rather than speaking to it as God commanded (Numbers 20:11), the consequences extended far beyond Moses himself. His moment of heart-failure, born from accumulated weariness, frustration, and unguarded emotion, cost him the privilege of entering the Promised Land. What we carry in our hearts as leaders always has consequences that extend far beyond ourselves. The unguarded heart of a leader is never simply a personal problem.

Yet Scripture also shows us the extraordinary fruit that flows from a leader whose heart is faithfully guarded. Nehemiah is a masterclass in this. Faced with opposition, discouragement, conspiracy, and the relentless pressure of an enormous rebuilding project, Nehemiah consistently returned to prayer before he returned to the problem (Nehemiah 4:9, 6:9). He processed his burdens before God before he brought direction to his people. The result was a team that “worked with all their heart” (Nehemiah 4:6), because their leader's heart was the model and the source. Nehemiah's guarded heart produced a guided and motivated team.

The Apostle Paul offers perhaps the most instructive example of how the health of a leader's heart directly shapes the spiritual atmosphere of those they lead. Writing from a prison cell, Paul's letter to the Philippians overflows with joy, peace, and confidence in God, not because his circumstances warranted those responses, but because his heart was guarded by prayer, gratitude, and an unwavering focus on the things of God (Philippians 4:8). The peace that Paul possessed was so tangible and so contagious that it became one of the defining characteristics of the Philippian church. Paul led his team from whatever condition his heart was in, and he was relentless about keeping it healthy.

At Inspiring Biblical Leadership, we teach that the most strategic leadership investment any person can make is the daily, faithful cultivation of their own soul. You cannot pour from an empty vessel. You cannot lead people into a spiritual and emotional health that you yourself are not pursuing. You cannot create a culture of faith, peace, and purpose while your own heart is running on empty, driven by anxiety, or hardened by unresolved wounds. Guarding your heart is not self-indulgence; it is the most team-centered, other-focused investment in your leadership toolkit.

You can't lead people to places in God you haven't been yourself. The depth of your team's spiritual culture will rarely exceed the depth of your own walk with God.

Inspiring Biblical Leadership

The speed of the leader is the speed of the gang. But it is the soul of the leader that determines the direction.

John C. Maxwell

A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit, and a great leader takes full responsibility for the condition of the hearts he carries.

Arnold H. Glasow

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you trace the connection between the current condition of your heart and the current condition of your team. Bring each one before God honestly and prayerfully.

1 If the current emotional and spiritual climate of your team were a direct reflection of the current condition of your heart, which in many ways it is, what would that climate reveal about what you have been carrying internally? What do you see in your team that may actually be a mirror of your own unaddressed heart conditions?

2 Philippians 4:6–7 promises that bringing anxiety to God in prayer results in a peace that guards both heart and mind. What specific anxieties, fears, or pressures are you currently carrying about your team or organization that you have been managing through strategy and effort rather than surrendering through prayer?

3 Nehemiah consistently returned to God in prayer before bringing direction to his people. What is your current practice for processing the burdens of leadership before God before you bring them to your team? Is that practice sufficient for the weight you are currently carrying?

4 God rebuked the shepherds of Israel for feeding themselves while neglecting the flock. In your leadership right now, are there members of your team who are weak, injured, straying, or lost, and you have been too preoccupied with your own agenda to notice or respond? What does faithfulness to the flock require of you this week?

5 Jesus described the Good Shepherd as one who both lays down his life and genuinely knows his sheep. How well do you truly know the people you lead, not just their roles and responsibilities, but their struggles, their dreams, their fears, and their God-given potential? What would deeper knowledge of your team require of you?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The health of your team begins with the health of your heart. Here are five concrete steps to begin guarding your heart and guiding your team more faithfully this week:

1 **Begin Each Leadership Day With a Heart-to-God Prayer**

Before you engage your team, your inbox, or your to-do list each morning this week, spend ten intentional minutes bringing the burdens of your leadership to God in prayer. Name every anxiety, every uncertainty, every relational tension, and every fear specifically. Do not move into your leadership day until you have experienced at least a measure of the peace that Philippians 4:7 promises. A leader who begins the day with a guarded heart leads from a fundamentally different place than one who begins with unprocessed anxiety. This single practice, sustained consistently, will transform the atmosphere of your entire team over time.

2 **Identify and Address One Unguarded Area of Your Heart**

This week, honestly identify one area of your heart that is currently unguarded and potentially leaking into your leadership, including unresolved anger, lingering disappointment, creeping pride, growing cynicism, or simmering fear. Name it specifically before God. Bring it to a trusted mentor, pastor, or accountability partner. Take one practical step to address it, whether through prayer, counseling, a difficult conversation, or a deliberate act of forgiveness. The unguarded areas of a leader's heart do not stay hidden; they find expression in the team culture whether the leader is aware of it or not.

3 **Conduct a Flock Check on Your Team**

Set aside 30 minutes this week to prayerfully think through each person on your team individually. Using Ezekiel 34 as your framework, ask: Who on my team is weak and needs strengthening? Who is sick and needs healing? Who is injured and needs binding up? Who is straying and needs to be brought back? Who is lost and needs to be searched for? After this prayerful assessment, take one specific, intentional action toward the most vulnerable person on your team this week. Shepherding your flock begins with knowing the condition of each sheep.

4 **Schedule Individual Connection Conversations**

This week, schedule a brief, informal one-on-one conversation with at least two members of your team, not to discuss tasks, projects, or performance, but simply to ask how they are doing, what they are finding difficult, and what they need from you as their leader. Let the conversation be unhurried and genuinely curious. John 10:14 tells us the Good Shepherd knows his sheep. The depth of your care for your team is inseparable from the depth of your knowledge of them as individual people, not merely as role-holders.

5 **Create a Weekly Heart-and-Team Reflection Ritual**

At the end of each week, build a 15-minute reflection practice into your schedule that asks two connected questions: How is my heart? and How is my team? Journal your honest answers. Over time, you will begin to see with clarity the direct connection between the seasons when your heart is healthy and guarded and the seasons when your team is most fruitful and cohesive, and vice versa. Visit InspiringBiblicalLeadership.org for additional devotionals and resources on shepherding your team, emotional health in leadership, and leading from the overflow of a life rooted in God.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I confess that I have not always led my team from a heart that was healthy, guarded, and surrendered to You. There have been seasons when I brought my weariness, my anxiety, my unresolved wounds, and my unprocessed fears into my leadership, and my team bore the weight of what I had not yet brought to You. Forgive me, Lord, and help me to lead differently.

Guard my heart above all else, for I know that everything I do flows from it. Let the peace that surpasses all understanding stand watch over both my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus. Make me a shepherd who truly knows my flock, who sees the weak, the wandering, and the wounded, and who leads not from obligation but from the overflow of a heart genuinely filled with Your love for the people You have placed in my care.

May my team experience not just my leadership strategy, but the genuine warmth, faith, and peace of a leader whose heart is kept by You. For the glory of the Chief Shepherd, in Jesus' name, Amen.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”
Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

