

## **The Heart of the Matter (Proverbs 27:19)**

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A few months ago I discussed Proverbs 4:23: “Guard your heart more than anything else,” and I mentioned the importance of taking care of or tending our hearts, focusing especially on the choices we make and the company we keep. The verse for today also mentions the heart, but it does so from a different angle. In a word, it stresses that the heart is the connecting tissue, the essential link, between people.

Proverbs 27:19 says, in two translations: “As water reflects the face, so the heart of man reflects man” or “Just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another.” When we think of our hearts, we think of the core or essence of ourselves, our true commitments, our loves, our passions, our fears, our most basic identity. Yet, as Proverbs teaches us, the heart is more than simply our own inner compass. It reflects, like water reflects our image, the common “face” of humans. Our heart “reflects” another’s.

The point is that if we seek to understand another person – in family, in business, in domestic or international affairs – we really are seeking a heart that is not very different from our own. It would be too much to claim that everyone is driven by the same motivations or lured by the same rewards, but we are on good ground for believing that there is something so important in the hearts of humans that is shared with each other that it is worth our effort to discover that “something.”

The heart of the matter then, is not only that the heart matters, and that it matters a lot, but that it allows us to form an understanding of another, and it is in fact “reflected” in them. Thus, Proverbs teaches that we see ourselves in the world of faces and hearts—even as we sometimes think that others’ hearts are quite different from ours.