

Maintaining a Pure Spring
From *Captivating* - John and Stasi Eldredge

Peter Marshall, the former chaplain of the United States Senate, loved to tell the following story called 'The Keeper of the Spring.' This simple tale beautifully illustrates the importance of constantly caring for ourselves.

An elderly, quiet forest dweller once lived high above an Austrian village along the eastern slopes of the Alps. Many years ago, the town council had hired this old gentleman as Keeper of the Spring to maintain the purity of the pools of water in the mountain crevices. The overflow from these pools ran down the mountainside and fed the lovely spring which flowed through the town. With faithful, silent regularity, the Keeper of the Spring patrolled the hills, removed the leaves and branches from the pools, and wiped away the silt that would otherwise choke and contaminate the fresh flow of water. By and by, the village became a popular attraction for vacationers. Graceful swans floated along the crystal-clear spring, the mill wheels of various businesses located near the water turned day and night, farmlands were naturally irrigated, and the view from restaurants sparkled.

Years passed. One evening the town council met for its semiannual meeting. As the council members reviewed the budget, one man's eye caught the salary paid the obscure Keeper of the Spring. "Who is this old man?" he asked indignantly. "Why do we keep paying him year after year? No one ever sees him. For all we know, this man does us no good. He isn't necessary any longer!" By a unanimous vote, the council dispensed with the old man's services.

For several weeks nothing changed. But by early autumn the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the rush flow of sparkling water. One afternoon, someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint in the spring. A few days later, the water had darkened even more. Within a week, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks, and a foul odor emanated from the spring. The mill wheels moved slowly; some finally ground to a halt. Businesses located near the water closed. The swans migrated to fresher waters far away, and tourists no longer visited the town. Eventually, the clammy fingers of disease and sickness reached deeply into the village.

The shortsighted town council enjoyed the beauty of the spring but underestimated the importance of guarding its source. We can make the same mistake in our lives. Like the Keeper of the Spring who maintained the purity of the water, you and I are the Keeper of Our Hearts..of our Beings. We need to consistently do what it takes to take care of ourselves.

In what ways are you a Keeper of the Spring for your own life? For those around you?

What are the simply daily, weekly, monthly practices you can employ to the flowing water of your life?

What are the obstacles to you employing these simple practices in your life?

What will it take to remove these barriers so that you become the best Keeper of the Spring in your own life?