

## KEY ATTITUDES OF A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Christianity is a way of the heart. It is something that is meant to operate within our deepest inner feelings and thoughts, not just our actions but the very motives and attitudes that drive our actions. If we read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation - we can see that God has always been primarily interested in the heart. All the things that came along later whether it be sacrifices, rituals, punishments - all revolved around the matter of a man's heart.

The Bible identifies one man as personifying what it means to have a good heart. We know him as King David – the man after God's own heart. The Bible makes no effort to hide David's failures yet he is remembered and respected for his heart for God.

If we want to learn more about what God's own heart is like then we would do well to study the man that God Himself described as a man after His own heart – King David.

The title that I have given for my sermon today is Key Attitudes of a Man After God's Own Heart. Today I would like to explore five of those as exemplified in the life of King David.

To begin with, let's, first of all, look at the context of where God calls David a man after His own heart in **1 Samuel 13**. Earlier in the chapter we read that Saul had failed to obey God's full instructions in the war against the Amalekites. The war was a great military success and, according to the best research I have read, liberated Egypt from 400 years of Amalekite/Hyksos domination, yet God did not view Saul as a military hero because He knew Saul's heart wasn't right. In **verse 13** we read:

And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

God rejected King Saul, David's predecessor, for disobedience. Like many today, Saul preferred to do things his own way. He relied too much on his own human reasoning - apparently not realizing that the way that seems right to man often leads to death (**Proverbs 16:25**). He desired, pursued and trusted in physical things - the trappings of power and the desires of the flesh. David, on the other hand, looked to the Creator God and trusted in Him with his whole heart.

We need to remember that this famous description of David was said about him when he was still a teenage boy tending his father's sheep. He must have had a fair degree of maturity as a teenager when God called him a man and not a boy after His own heart. God made this famous pronouncement about David at the beginning of his rise to fame before some of the great mistakes that he made in his life but God never retracted it later. This pronouncement about David is repeated over in **Acts 13:22** where Paul at Corinth quotes what God said about him where He said:

I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all my will.

Let's now look at the first attitude of a godly man that King David exemplified.

**1] Passion:** Perhaps the attitude that David is best known for is his passion. One example of his great passion was his wholehearted commitment and adoration of his Creator.

He was a man who lived with great zest and devotion to God as one can see from reading the many Psalms which he composed. We can learn much from the passion that He had for God as we read them.

As a young shepherd he discerned that the earth and the heavens were concrete evidence of a great Creator God. He was amazed when looked at the life, beauty and design he saw in the heavens and the world around him and was filled with great awe and respect for the God who created it all. He felt so humbled in comparison and gave his life over to doing God's will completely and trusted in the God who could do anything. This is reflected in **Psalm 8** where we read:

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent *is* Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength because of Your enemies that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him?

Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all of your heart, all of your mind and all of your soul (**Matthew 22:37-38**). All of one's heart means with great depth of feeling rather than just a half-hearted interest.

David did everything with all of his heart. Whatever he did he did with all his heart. When he fought, he fought to the bitter end, completely vanquishing the enemy. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary makes these comments about David:

His influence for good in the life of his nation was great, since every king of Judah after David was compared to the standard he established. A capable musician, David unquestionably gave great encouragement to this fine art in the life of his people. As a warrior and military man, he was resourceful and courageous. As a king, he was without equal in the life of his nation. As a religious leader, he was exceptional. Many of his writings will continue to be the favorite devotional literature for honest souls who seek a closer walk with God.

David deeply cared what God cared about. He cared about God's honour when it was blasphemed by Goliath. He cared about bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem. He cared about defeating the enemies of God's people who had been pressing Israel on all sides. He cared about expanding the power and influence of God's people to be a model nation to those around them and he cared for God's honour to want to build the Temple of God.

This is reminiscent of how Mr Armstrong in times past used to constantly encourage us to have our hearts in the Work of God. We should be passionate and care for God's Work in the same way that King David was.

Having said all that about his passion we are all well familiar with one occasion where his passion got pushed to the wrong extreme with his polygamy and adultery. The right kind of passion is a wonderful thing but we must not let our passion go to the wrong extreme.

This point is highlighted by Gary Smalley and John Trent in "The Two Sides of Love". They write:

Almost without exception, our weaknesses are simply a reflection of our strengths being pushed to an extreme. For example, a softside bent often includes the ability to listen closely and carefully to others. But pushed to an extreme, this positive trait can become a weakness...Another person may possess the natural hardside bent of being a critical thinker. Held in balance, that talent can make him great at dissecting things or projects. But push that strength out of balance and the ability to take issues apart can be used to take people apart as well (p.30).

**2] Faith:** The second godly trait that David exemplified in his life was his great faith in God. As a young boy he faithfully tended his father's sheep putting his life on the line at times to do so fighting off a lion and a bear. From such circumstances he developed a courageous faith in God who he knew was the one delivered him, not his own skills.

This courageous faith was exemplified when he willingly took on the giant Goliath as a teenager. In **1 Samuel 17:36-37** we read the following:

Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.' Moreover David said, 'The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.

Goliath was an enormous man. He quite literally was 10 feet tall. His chain mail armour alone weighed close to a couple of hundred pounds. For 40 days, over a whole month, he taunted and challenged the Israelites. No one had the courage to challenge Goliath, not even Saul. Remember Saul stood head and shoulders above the rest of them and he should have taken the lead. He lacked the faith and courage that David had in spades even as a teenager. Continuing on from **verse 45** we read:

And David said to the Philistine, You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of Lord God of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. The Lord God will deliver you into my hand today, and I will strike you and take your head from you and give the bodies of the army of the Philistines to the birds of the air today, and to the wild beasts of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this multitude shall know that the Lord God does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands...

[Dropping down a verse] And David put his hand into his bag and took a stone from there, and slung *it* and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead. And he fell on his face to the earth.

We may not face lions or bears or giants but we too can develop this kind of faith to handle big problems that come in our life from time to time if we regularly exercise trust in God. If we keep practicing over and over again with the many little trials of life we'll be ready for the big ones when they come along. We read further down in **verse 54:**

And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem. But he put his weapons in his tent.

I wonder if David had a trophy case with Goliath's weapons, the lion's skull and the bear's paw as memories of God's past victories in his life. Charles Swindoll in his book "David: A Man of Passion and Destiny" writes:

So often when facing our own giants we forget what we ought to remember and we remember what we ought to forget. We remember our defeats and forget the victories. Most of us can recite the failures of our lives in vivid detail but we're hard-pressed to name the specific, remarkable victories God has pulled off in our past. Not so with David! He says, "You know why I can fight Goliath, Saul? Because the same God who gave me power over a lion and a bear will give me power over Goliath. It is God who will empower me...so just let me at him."

We see David's courageous faith in many of the other military battles he would be involved in such as the time that he fought the Philistines and brought back 200 Philistine foreskins as a dowry.

Just as we have our ups and downs with the level of faith we display in our lives so too did David. The same David, who displayed such remarkable faith and courage against Goliath, showed a great lack of faith during the 16 month period when he fled and lived amongst the Philistines.

Just prior to it on two occasions when David spared Saul God's intervention to protect him was clearly evident. He had already been anointed to be the next king and Abigail encouraged him by acknowledging him as the one who would be the next king. With that in mind, let's look at what he then says over in **1 Samuel 27:1**.

And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. Nothing *is* better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines. And Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any border of Israel, and so I shall escape out of his hand (**verse 1**).

This is what he is thinking now and in the next verses we read how he acts on it:

And David arose and passed over, he and the six hundred men with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. And David lived with Achish of Gath, he and his men, (**verses 2-4**).

He focused on what he should have forgot and forgot what he should have remembered. David sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind when they are run out of town because the Philistines didn't trust them and then the city of Ziklag where they were residing was burned to the ground and their wives and children were taken captive by the Amalekites. Faithfully trusting God is much better than not trusting God and compromising.

**3] Service:** The third godly quality that David exemplified was his outgoing concern for others. Christ told us in the Sermon on the Mount to love our enemies. King David showed the same concern for both his friends and those who opposed him. After ascending the throne, he actively sought to help the family of Saul. Although this former king had tried to kill him many times, David did not blame his family. And he showed great kindness to Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth which we read of in **2 Samuel 9**.

Another example of this outgoing concern is recorded in **1 Samuel 30**. While David and his small army of 600 men were absent, the Amalekites overran his camp. All his men's worldly goods and possessions, along with their wives and children, were taken. David and his men pursued the Amalekites, but about a third of them became so fatigued they couldn't go on. David's decision was to leave them behind to guard the baggage. God then gave the victory to David and the 400 fighting men who still accompanied him and all was recovered.

However, many of the victors resented the 200 who stayed behind, and determined to return to them only their wives and children keeping their physical possessions for themselves. But David would have none of this. In **1 Samuel 30:24-25** he declared:

As his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.' And so it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel.

**4] Humility:** The next godly quality that David exemplified was his humility. We have seen David's humility in the way that he spoke during his confrontation with Goliath. He focused on God and said it was God who empowered him rather than boasting in his own skills.

Another example of David's humility is found in **1 Samuel 24**. It's the story of David's kindness and mercy to his father-in-law Saul who was trying to kill David out of jealousy. Starting in verse 9 we read:

And David said to Saul: 'Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my* eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he *is* the Lord's anointed.' Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.

Notice the humility of David here. He didn't seek the praise of men but was willing to lower himself, even calling himself a dead dog and a flea, because being reconciled to Saul meant so very much more to him than his pride and avenging himself. Just as pride comes before a fall, so too, does humility need to come before a restoration of any relationship.

Another example of humility is in **2 Samuel 16** when Shimei kept cursing David. One of David's men asked David if he could kill him but David said let him curse and was prepared to accept whatever legitimate criticism Shimei had despite his rather disrespectful attitude.

**5] Sense of Responsibility:** The final godly quality of King David we'll look at today is arguably the most important and that was David's willingness to confess his faults and change when made clear to him, his repentant attitude. He was sensitive to God's correction and had a sense of responsibility in dealing with his faults. In **Psalms 19:12** he wrote:

Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

I mentioned earlier that an example of David's passion going to a wrong extreme was his adultery with Bathsheba. His problem with sexual lust wasn't just a one-off occasion. In **Deuteronomy 17:16-17** God said when Israel chose a king he was not to multiply three things to himself – horses, silver and gold to himself and wives. In the next verse God said that he was to write a book of the law and read it all the days of his life. Given how much he meditated on the law of God as we see in **Psalms 119** no doubt David was familiar with the law on those things that he wasn't to multiply. Unfortunately he only scored two of out three in obeying them and very neglectfully broke the law about multiplying wives to himself.

In the seven years he reigned in Hebron up till age 37 he had 7 wives. Bathsheba was the eighth mentioned by name and he had number of other unnamed wives and concubines. At least 21 sons and daughters are named plus others which are unnamed. Carnal men in this world who don't control their sex drive collect pornography. Without the media and the internet the temptation for rulers in ancient times was to collect a harem which David ended up doing.

David had already developed a pattern in his life that was leading to the greatest mistake that he is known for. We'll pick up the story in **2 Samuel 11:2**:

And it happened one evening, David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof *he saw* a woman bathing. And the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon. [I have to admit to a bit of male curiosity here as to what she actually looked like and what David had to contend with]. And David sent and asked about the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? [This servant was probably familiar with David's problem with women and reminds him she is the wife of another but David's hormones have already got the better of him]

And David sent messengers and took her. And she came in to him, and he lay with her. And she had purified herself from her uncleanness. And she returned to her house. [One wonders how willing or unwilling Bathsheba was to go along with David's advances. Nothing in the story indicates she put up any resistance] And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I *am* with child.

Most of us are familiar with the rest of the story of how he tried to get Uriah to come back and sleep with his wife to cover his tracks and when that failed he stooped to murder by arranging for Uriah to be killed in the front line of a battle.

David could have easily went the same way as Saul and lost the Holy Spirit and his sanity if he had not responded in humility and repented when Nathan eventually confronted him about his adultery and murder. God allowed time for the guilt to haunt him and the stress to eat him up as is evidenced in **Psalms 32**.

Everything was on the line at that moment when Nathan confronted David. For close to a year David had turned his back on God. Had he not responded to the prophet when his sins were so craftily pointed out to him he probably would have lost the Holy Spirit and gone down the same path as Saul becoming a bitter, self-willed old man. When confronted with his horrible sins of adultery and murder he made no excuses. Faced with the reality of transgressing God's law David said:

I have sinned against the LORD (**2 Samuel 12:13**).

In his famous prayer of repentance in **Psalms 51** he begins by saying,

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me...(and down in verse 10 he says) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

This willingness to accept responsibility for his actions and confess his sins was a trait that he shared with his ancestor Judah. The Life Application Bible commentary says this about Judah.

Judah was a natural leader. The events of his life provided many opportunities to exercise those skills. Unfortunately Judah's decisions were often shaped more by the pressures of the moment than by a conscious desire to cooperate with God's plan. But when he did recognize his mistakes, he was willing to admit them. His experience with Tamar and the final confrontation with Joseph are both examples of Judah's willingness to bear the blame when confronted...Judah's offer to substitute his life for Benjamin's is a picture of what his descendant Jesus would do for all people.

To admit wrong or guilt is one of the hardest things we humans do. I vividly remember a comment in a sermon given by Bill Winner many years ago that stuck out in my mind. He said, "If someone is 99% wrong and you are 1% wrong you still have to repent of that 1%".

I am also reminded of a funny Chevy Chase quote from the movie "Fletch Lives". Fletch was in disguise trying to obtain some information about a toxic waste dump when the person he was trying to get the information from pulled him up on a rather obvious mistake. Fletch then says to him, "It takes a big man to admit he is wrong and I am not a big man!"

Some people have a pride where they can't be seen to be wrong. They have to "save face" and not look bad or wrong in front of others. This is why some people aren't prepared to confess and admit they've caused offence sometimes. They have a faulty and irrational perception. They don't want to look bad by admitting they are wrong but they really do look bad in front of others the more they dig in and refuse to admit they've done any wrong.

Politicians are especially guilty of this irrational logic. If they actually admit they've made a mistake and genuinely go over and above in trying to fix the problem the other person or persons will think much better of them. This paradox is touched upon in **Matthew 23:12**. Here Jesus says:

"Whoever exalts himself [insists he's right when he's not] will be humbled [others will still think less of him], and he who humbles himself [is prepared to confess his mistake] will be exalted [others will think better of him, not less of him].

The way that we respond when people bring things to our attention that need correction and improvement are a reflection of our character. Do we defend ourselves and minimize our problems when we shouldn't? Do we ignore someone who wants to bring something to our attention and sweep issues under the carpet? Do we really try to change and apply any legitimate criticism, regardless of the attitude of the person who brings it to our attention?

Our ability to handle correction when it comes to us in all shapes and forms, both harsh and gentle, is a reflection of our character and maturity. The more we respond to correction the more we'll grow in character because we are prepared to accept the need to change. If we ignore the need to change then how can we grow in character?

David may have been forgiven but confession and forgiveness is no way stops the harvest when you sow to the flesh. As the old saying goes – you can't sow wild oats and pray for a crop failure. The guilt he felt over the depths of his own sins probably played a part in his weakness to firmly punish his son, Absalom, who rose up in rebellion against him. His polygamy and his lack of parental direction led to a whole host of problems within his family that included rape and murder.

Late in his life he would send away his wives and concubines except for Bathsheba who was with David as he fled from Jerusalem when the others were violated by his son Absalom during his rebellion.

In **1 Kings 15:5** we read this summary of David's life – “David did *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”

The leader of another church organization that I used to attend made a comment on a few occasions, based on this verse, that David's only major sin was the murder of Uriah the Hittite. I personally don't think that is quite what is meant by this verse when one takes into account the major sin he committed near the end of his life when he numbered Israel. Matthew Henry in his commentary feels that it was the only major sin in that it had lingering consequences for the nation given how it later affected his judgment with his children.

My personal view of what I feel is meant by the exception of the matter of Uriah the Hittite is that it was the only time in his life when he turned his back on his relationship with God for a long period of time. It was only after the child was born from the adultery that he confessed and repented of his sins which meant that he had turned his back on God for close to a full year.

The fact that the Bible calls David a man after his own heart despite his major sins says a lot about God's character. In a documentary that I saw on Lord Nelson, who defeated the French at Trafalgar, one of the commentators made a comment that great men make great mistakes. I found that comment encouraging from the point of view that even if you make great mistakes, of which I know I've made many, you can still go on to do great things for God which David certainly did.

A good example of this is in the faith chapter, **Hebrews 11**. It's encouraging that when God chose to remember them in this chapter He chose to remember them by their great deeds and not by their faults. Regardless of how spectacularly you may have failed today you always have a fresh start from tomorrow on to become a great success if you learn from your mistakes. In fact, those mistakes may help you to become an even better success.

In **Jeremiah 30:9** we read the following about what will happen after Israel is brought back from captivity after the Great Tribulation:

But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

In **Ezekiel 37:24-25** we read the following about that same time:

And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your



fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children forever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince forever.

David will be the ruler over Israel forever under Jesus Christ in the coming Kingdom of God teaching them the laws and statutes of God which he ruled by when he was king over Israel.

What about us? Will we strive to have a heart like David's? Do we have passion for our calling and obeying our Creator God? Do we live by faith? Do we love others with the same kind of genuine concern that David had for his people? Are we humble and do we accept responsibility deeply for our mistakes and repent when we break God's law? If so, like with David, Christ will give us a part in His Government as a king and a priest in the World Tomorrow. If we can develop these qualities we can truly be a man or woman after God's own heart!