

MEN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Young Men's Retreat Study Material



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WHY WAS DAVID REFERRED TO AS A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART?

Introduction

The phrase, “A man after God’s own heart,” is first found when God rejected **Saul** as he was serving as the first king of Israel. He described through Samuel the kind of man He was looking for to sit next on the throne of Israel.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.” **1 Samuel 13:13-14**

When **Paul** preached a sermon in a synagogue in the city of Antioch of Pisidia on the subject of Israel’s history, he made reference to David, God’s choice for the next king of Israel.

²¹ And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the *son* of Jesse, **a man after My own heart**, who will do all My will.’ ²³ From this man’s seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus. **Acts 13:21-23**

David was not a perfect man:

Yet, we understand that **David** did not turn out to be a perfect man but was instead **a terrible sinner**, having broken most of the ten commandments, including adultery and murder, in a very short time. The question therefore arises, “**How could David be considered a man after God's own heart?**” We first need to see what characteristics he had to qualify him for such an exalted description. Much has been written regarding the meaning of these verses and its applicable value today. Much has also been written about David, especially in the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings. However, we also find much of **his character** in the book of Psalms as he opened up his life for all to examine. It is in **Psalms** that we see David’s deep longing to seek and do God’s will and his deep consternation and willingness to repent when he didn’t.

David’s life was a portrait of **success and failure**, and it highlights the fact that he was far from perfect. Even so, what made David a cut above the rest? When we see the big picture of David’s life we see that **his heart was pointed toward God**. When he sinned, he hurt deeply, knowing that he had disobeyed

God's will and disappointed Him immensely. When he was confronted with the facts about his weaknesses and sins, he was **willing to confess** his wrong, **repent**, and do better. So what does it take to be a man after God's own heart? Let's look at some **key characteristics** of David's life to find out.

There Were Key Characteristics of David's Life That Made Him a Man After God's Own Heart:

First, David had absolute faith in God. Nowhere in Scripture is this point better illustrated than in 1 Samuel 17 where David as a **young shepherd boy** fearlessly slew the Philistine, **Goliath**. Shortly before the duel, we see direct evidence of David's faith.

³² Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. ³⁶ 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." ³⁷ 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." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"
1 Samuel 17:32-37.

David was fully aware that **God was in control** of his life, and he had faith that God would deliver him from impending danger. How else would one venture into a potentially fatal situation with such calm and confidence? David knew early on in life that **God was to be trusted and obeyed**. As we see in Scripture, David's faith pleased God, and he is **rewarded** for it by the Lord. His faith put to death the giant in his life.

Second, David absolutely loved God's law. Of the 150 psalms in the Bible, David is credited for writing over half of them. Writing at various and often troubling times in his life, he repeatedly mentioned how much **he loved God's perfect word**. We find a beautiful example of this in **Psalms 119**;

⁴⁷ And I will delight myself in Your commandments,
Which I love.

⁴⁸ My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments,
Which I love,
And I will meditate on Your statutes.

The fact is all of Psalm 119 is devoted to David's **joy and desire** in keeping the word of God. Each verse says the same thing but uses different words for love, joy, commandments and statutes. By the way, it is the longest chapter in the Bible with 176 verses, and each verse begins with a letter in the Hebrew alphabet, beginning with Aleph. It is not hard to see his complete **adoration for God's Word**. But also notice how he mentions that he "meditates" on God's statutes. God granted David understanding and wisdom through daily **meditation**. We would do well to not only read God's Word but also think about it throughout the day for God loves when we think about Him. "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways" (**Psalm 119:2-3**). In order to love God's law, we must begin with the supreme love of God. If we love Him with all of our heart, souls, and mind, then surely we will love His will.

Third, David was truly thankful. His attitude of thanksgiving is expressed over and over again in the Psalms; ⁶I will wash my hands in innocence; So I will go about Your altar, O LORD, ⁷That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, And tell of all Your wondrous works.: **Psalm 26:6-7**. David's life was marked by seasons of great **peace and prosperity** as well as times of **fear and despair**. However, through all of the seasons in his life, he **never forgot** to thank the Lord for everything that he had. It is truly one of his finest characteristics. Look at just these few words; "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name." **Psalm 100:4**. As followers of Jesus Christ, we would do well to follow David's lead of offering thanksgiving to our Lord on a daily basis.

Fourth, David constantly gave praise to God above all. This point emphasizes the fact that David's heart was always pointed toward God in spite of his weaknesses and sins. Psalm after Psalm contain words of praise. Here is a brief example from Psalm 100:1-3

"Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!
² Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before His presence with singing.
³ Know that the LORD, He *is* God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Each of David's Psalms are packed full of words that direct the reader to a **loving and merciful** God, but also a just and righteous God. Look at the first five verses of **Psalm 103**:

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
² Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
³ Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,

⁵ Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

This Psalm doesn't end there. David goes to point out God's righteousness, justice, acts of mercy, graciousness, power and control, commandments, blessings, dominion, and works. Do any of these words tell us something about the heart of David?

Fifth, David was truly repentant. Who can forget the sins of David regarding Bathsheba and her husband? Our hearts are wrenched with surprise and sorrow that God's selected king could commit such sins. As king he was to be an example to its citizens as well as his own family. His horrible decisions regarding this matter eventually threw Israel into turmoil and created disrespect among his own family members. Yet, when his sins are pointed out to him, he didn't hesitate to **confess his sins** and offer restitution of some kind. In addition, when the consequences of his sins began to mount, he **didn't blame** someone else. He knew that his sins were 'finding him out.' Through all of his struggles, he continued to point men to God. The following are just a few verses that describe the circumstances:

² Then it happened one evening that 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 behold. ³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And *someone* said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴ Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. ⁵ And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I *am* with child." **2 Samuel 11:2-5**

David's Cover Up Worsened the Matter:

The **cover up** became worse than the deed. When Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, came on leave from battles, David tried to get him to go home to be with his wife, hoping he would later believe that it was his baby instead of David's. Uriah refused, saying that he couldn't enjoy the benefits of home while his fellow soldiers dwelt in tents in open fields for battle. David even got him drunk, hoping he would lose his sense of moral courage and go home to be with his wife. It didn't work. David eventually **arranged for the death of Uriah** during an upcoming battle. Coveting a neighbor's wife, adultery, lying, murder; how the mighty has fallen! But the mighty fall hard; for, he had sinned against God, his neighbor, and the nation of Israel. Another side of David is seen when God has **Nathan the prophet** to approach him and point out his sins. Nathan tells the tender story of how a rich man took the only lamb of a poor man to use it for his feast. But that lamb was treated by the poor man as if it were his own daughter. When David heard this, he became angry and demanded that the rich man would surely "die!" Nathan said to David, "**You are the man.**" David didn't make any excuses. He didn't blame Bathsheba for bathing on the roof of her house. He should have been with his army, leading them into battle; not standing on his balcony admiring the view. He knew what Nathan said was true.

¹³So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

¹⁴However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” ¹⁵Then Nathan departed to his house. **2 Samuel 12:13-15**

David Expressed His Deep Sorrow and Repentance:

However, admitting our sin and asking for forgiveness is only half of the equation. The other half is **repentance**, and David did what we should all do: repent of our sins. David wrote several Psalms expressing his grief and sorrow over the sins he had committed. **Psalm 51** is David’s prayer of repentance to God. The following are a few verses from that Psalm, but it would do well for a person to read the whole Psalm:

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

³For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

⁴Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge. (vs. 1-4)

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.

⁹Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You. (vs. 7-13)

Conclusion:

David demonstrated his faith seemingly on a daily basis which pleased the Lord. Throughout his life his faith would be tested on a grand scale and in the final analysis he passed most of

the tests. **David also loved God's law** and he sought to follow it as best he could. He spent many days **meditating** on it and trying to apply it to his own life. He knew that God's law had the power to change lives if it were followed to the letter. Another important character trait that David exhibited was that he had the **attitude of gratitude** and was very **thankful** for his life. During his life he had all sorts of trouble, but David thanked God every day no matter the circumstances. And, finally, David was truly **repentant**. Let us not forget that he was a man just like we who have also sinned. But, despite his sin, he always loved God and sought to repent of those sins. He is a role model for all of us who need to repent earnestly. David was indeed a man after God's own heart.



WHAT A PERSON NEEDS FOR A MESSED UP LIFE

TEXTS: 2 Samuel 11 & 12; Psalm 51

Introduction:

1. You have heard of A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) and G.A. (Gamblers Anonymous), but you have ever heard of M.A.?
2. It was begun in 1982 by Sondra Felton, a Florida high school teacher, who understood the pain of people who just couldn't get organized and as a result left cluttered messes in their homes, offices and cars. There are now 18 Messes Anonymous groups around the country with more than 7,000 members: sin messes up lives.
NOTE: Today, there are many profit making and professional organizations that help people who hoard and who need help organizing their messed up offices and homes.
3. But what does a person need when he has messed up his life? He probably needs the same thing David needed when he messed up his life. He was a man of many triumphs but there was also tragedy as sin piled upon sin: 2 Samuel 11

1) **Triumphs:**

- a. Example of courage and faith for all of Israel—Goliath
- b. Faithful even when hunted like an animal---Saul
- c. Brought the nation closer to God.

2) **Tragedy:** *ROOFGATE* Nixon: Watergate; Others: Dishonest Gate, Impatience Gate, Lazy Gate, Unfaithful Gate, etc.

- a. He allowed his lust for a woman to grow.
- b. He committed adultery with Bathsheba.
- c. He tried to cover up his sin with a lie.
- d. He tried to cover up his sin with murder.
- e. He broke 40% of 10 commandments: "not covet," "not commit adultery," "not bear false witness," "not murder."
- f. God's verdict: "But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord," 11:27

- g. It was tearing him apart inside: “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night **THY HAND WAS HEAVY UPON ME: MY VITALITY WAS DRAINED AWAY** as with the fever-heat of summer,” **Psalm 32:3-4**
- 4. You and I can fall into the same trap in other ways, but **WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET OUT OF THE MESSES WE GET INTO?**

Discussion:

I. We Need Someone Who Will Be Totally Honest With Us”

Acts 2:36---Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

- A. David was blessed with a friend who leveled with him.
 - 1. Nathan told the story about the poor man and his lamb.
 - 2. David was outraged—“the man deserves to die”---12:5-6
- B. Although it isn't fashionable, we need people who are opposed to sin and are willing to help others who are caught in its trap.
- C. Sin is our enemy, and a friend helps us to defeat it.

II. We Need A Heart That Will Respond:

Arts 2:37---Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”

- A. There are many ways in which David could have responded:
 - 1. Anger with the preacher, excuses, blame someone else.
 - 2. None of these would have improved his situation.
- B. He had a heart that could be touched:

III. We Need The Assurance Of Forgiveness:

Acts 2:38---Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A. David thought of what happened to Saul in his rebellion.

Psalm 51:11---Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

B. He rejoiced at the prospect of being forgiven:

Psalm 32:1-2---Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *Whose sin is* covered.
² Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit *there is* no deceit. v. 5---I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

US DAY: Paul quotes this in Romans 4:7-8---Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; ⁸ Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”

C. Because he confessed his sin and repented; he received mercy:

1. This was the main difference between David and Saul:

- a. SAUL: Concerned about politics, expedience, glory and his dynasty;
- b. DAVID: Concerned about relationship with God.

2. This comes from a contrite heart.

D. We need the blood of the Lamb—"repent and be baptized..."

IV. We Need **Strength To Carry On:**

Acts 2:38-37---READ

A. Forgiveness is not necessarily the end of our troubles.

1. You can be forgiven in a moment, but it can take years to untangle the mess.
2. In David's life the sword did not depart, the innocent in his family suffered, his child died, his children rebelled, the cause of God was hurt.

B. Sin is terrible and David needed strength to carry on.

C. His faith, trust, and knowledge of forgiveness carried him on.

D. **TODAY:** Jesus is referred to as the "Son of David."

Acts 2: Peter's Sermon: He quotes from David

Book of Revelation 22: States that He "sits on the throne of David" and is
"the root of David."

Acts 13:22: "a man after God's own heart"

CONCLUSION: ALL OF US NEED WHAT DAVID NEEDED.

1. Someone who will be totally honest with us
2. A heart that will respond
3. The Assurance of forgiveness
4. The strength to carry on

We Must Guard Our Hearts in Order to be Men After God's Own Heart

Proverbs 4:23-26

²³ Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it *spring* the issues of life.
²⁴ Put away from you a deceitful mouth,
And put perverse lips far from you.
²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead,
And your eyelids look right before you.
²⁶ Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.

When Solomon refers to guarding the heart, he really means the **inner core** of a person; the thoughts, feelings, desires, will, and choices that make that person who he is. The Bible tells us that our thoughts often dictate who we become:

Proverbs 23:7

For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.

The mind of a man reflects who he really is, not simply his actions or words.

Proverbs 27:19

As in water face *reflects* face,
So a man's heart *reveals* the man.

That is why God examines the heart of a man, not simply his outward appearance and what he appears to be.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

There Are Diseases of the Heart:

Just as there are many **diseases and disorders** that can affect the **physical** heart, there are many ailments of the **spiritual** heart that can impair growth and development as a believer. Atherosclerosis is a hardening of the arteries due to accumulated cholesterol plaques and scarring in the artery walls. **Hardening** of the spiritual heart can also occur. Hardening of the heart occurs when we are presented with God's truth, and we refuse to acknowledge or accept it.

Although Egypt was stricken with one calamity after another when the **Pharaoh** refused to release the Israelites from their bondage, he **hardened his heart** against the truth

that God Almighty intended to deliver His people from Egypt (Exodus 7:22; 8:32; 9:34). In Psalm 95:7-8, King David pleaded with his people not to harden their hearts in rebellion against God as they did in the wilderness. Because they did harden their hearts, they had to wonder in the wilderness for 40 years. These same words are quoted and applied to Christians in **Hebrews 4:7-11**:

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:
“Today, if you will hear His voice,
⁸ **Do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
⁹ Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
¹⁰ Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, ‘They always go astray in *their* heart,
And they have not known My ways.’
¹¹ So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’
¹² Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief** in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we **hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast** to the end,

There are many things that can harden the heart and lead a person to deny God, and just like **cholesterol blocks** blood flow, they keep a believer from having a **free flow of God’s peace and blessings** derived from obedience. Guarding against a rebellious spirit and cultivating a spirit of submissive obedience to God’s Word, therefore, is the first step in guarding the heart.

Heart murmurs are abnormal flow patterns due to faulty heart valves. Heart valves act as doors to prevent the backward flow of blood into the heart. **Spiritual heart murmurs** occur when believers engage in **complaining**, gossip, disputes, and contention. Believers are instructed many times to avoid grumbling, murmuring, and complaining (Exodus 16:3; John 6:43; Philippians 2:14). By engaging in these activities, believers **shift their focus away** from the plans, purposes, and past blessings of God to the things of the world. God sees this as a lack of faith, and without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Instead, Christians are instructed to **strive for contentment** in all things, trusting in God to provide what is needed in His good time (Hebrews 13:5). Guarding against a complaining spirit and cultivating a spirit of gratitude and trust is the second step toward guarding the heart.

Congestive heart failure is an inability of the heart to successfully pump blood through the body due to weaknesses within its walls. Congestive heart failure can result from **hypertension** (high blood pressure), myocardial infarctions (heart attacks), and abnormal enlargement of the heart. The **spiritual equivalents** are anger, giving in to temptation, and

pride. Anger acts like a poison on the body, both physically and spiritually, and makes a believer more vulnerable to the temptation to hurt others with our actions and words.

Ephesians 4:31-32 instructs,

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Christians Are Engaged in a Battle:

Every Christian is locked in a constant, **intense war** with evil forces. Many of us become so intent on fighting the external spiritual war that we forget that much of our battle is not with external forces, but with **our own mind and thoughts**.

“Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.”

James 1:14-16

WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE LIFE FORCE OF SIN.

THE LIFE FORCE OF SIN (Sin Personified)

James 1: 13-16

YOUR OWN DESIRES

'Called by and drawn away by temptation and enticement to abuse and misuse good desires.'

Food, SEX, Ambition, Survival,
Wanted and Loved,
Pleasure, Self Esteem
(Things good in themselves)

Adultery, lying,
covetousness,
hate, idolatry,
wrath,
witchcraft,
strife, heresies,
envy, murder,
discord,
drunkenness;

TEMPTATION

Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes, The Pride

ENTICEMENT

See James 1:14 and 1 John 2:16

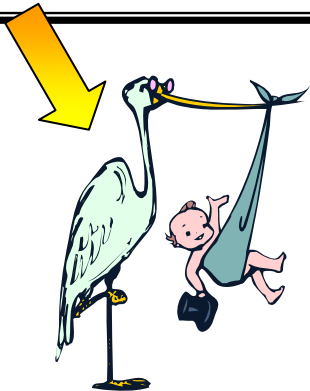


DANGER

THE DESIRE TO SIN CONCEIVES

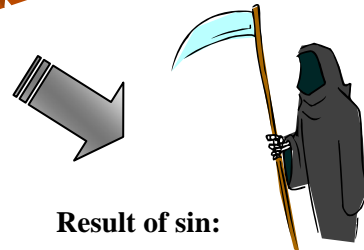
The Seed Thought Is Planted and Nourished in the Fertile Soil of the Mind

James 1:15



Full-Grown

James 1:15



Result of sin:

DEATH

THOUGHT GIVES BIRTH TO SIN

Sin Begins in the Mind:

Sin always begins in the mind. A sinner must first conceive and dwell on the sinful action before he actually carries it out. The first line of defense, therefore, must be to refuse to even contemplate a wrongful action. The apostle Paul tells us to take every thought captive, so that it conforms to the will of God.

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity** to the obedience of Christ. **1 Corinthians 10:3-5**

Proverbs 16:18 tells us that **pride** leads to destruction. **Proverbs 16:5** says, “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” Pride was the first great sin of **Satan**, when he thought that he could be like God and incited one third of the angels to attempt a coup in heaven (Ezekiel 28:17). For this reason, Satan was cast from heaven. Satan also **tempted Eve** in the Garden of Eden by appealing to **her ego**. He said, “For God knows that when you eat from [the forbidden tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Eve desired to be as wise as God, so **she capitulated to Satan’s advice** to eat of the fruit of the tree. Pride was, therefore, the downfall of man, as well. Satan did not want man to obey God but to **become his own god**—determining for himself reality, meaning, and ethics. This satanic philosophy is the foundational philosophy of sorcery, secular humanism, and New Age mysticism.

Avoiding anger, pride, and temptation are also critical elements of guarding the heart. The apostle Paul instructs us,

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” **Philippians 4:8**

Dwelling on these things will help to build a guard fence around our hearts.

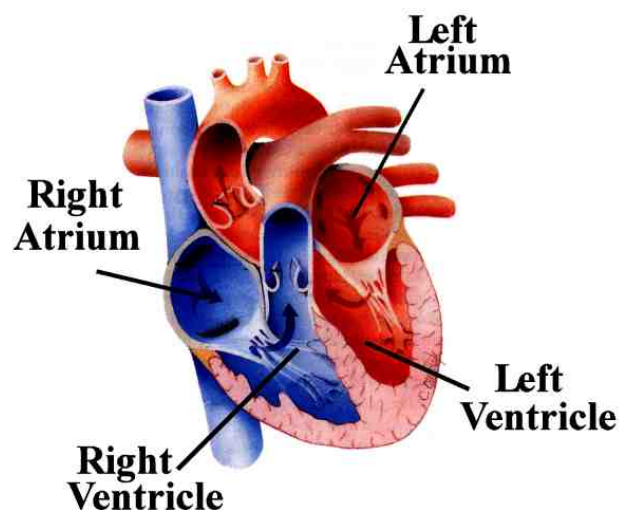
The Four Chambers of the Moral Heart

TEXT: Romans 10:10

INTRODUCTION:

1. Any heart disease is threatening; however, the spiritual disease of the heart is the most threatening.
 - a. Great progress has been made in understanding the disorders of the physical heart
 - b. Great leaps and bounds have brought us to a point to where bypass surgery has about the same risk as an appendectomy.
 - c. However, what kind of progress has been made to understand the moral center of man's being: To some, it has been shrouded in myth and fiction.
2. The moral heart, like the physical heart, is constructed of four chambers.
 - a. All four chambers have a distinct function and each must be kept in proper working order to ensure a healthy heart.
 - b. The Physical Heart: The upper two chambers are called the "atria" – the lower two are called the "ventricles."

[The heart consists of four chambers in which blood flows. Blood enters the right atrium and passes through the right ventricle. The right ventricle pumps the blood to the lungs where it becomes oxygenated. The oxygenated blood is brought back to the heart by the pulmonary veins which enter the left atrium. From the left atrium blood flows into the left ventricle. The left ventricle pumps the blood to the aorta which will distribute the oxygenated blood to all parts of the body.]



c. The Moral Heart: four chambers to the moral heart are: Knowledge, Feelings, Conscience, Will

1) **The Digestive Chamber**

2) **The Combustion Chamber**

3) **The Judicial Chamber**

4) **The Executive Chamber**

3. Let's now begin a study of the four chambers of the moral heart, and notice that when we keep these in good working order we will be the kind of Christian God wants us to be.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE INTELLECT IS THE DIGESTIVE CHAMBER OF THE MORAL HEART:

A. This chamber equips man for three activities:

1. **Knowing**

2. **Thinking**

3. **Understanding**

B. This is closely kin to that of the digestive organs for the physical man

1. The mind not just a receptacle but a facility for knowledge just as the stomach is not just a silo but a refinery for food.

2. The intellect collects and stores (knowing), chews and breaks down (thinking), and then distributes and assimilates (understanding) the information and experience gathered through the five senses.

C. Faith is an act of intellect, not an act of the emotion.

Romans 10:17---So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

D. There are three rules for the care of the intellect that correspond to the three God-given faculties that it possesses:

1. Proper diet

2. Proper exercise
 3. Proper clothing
- E. The proper diet for the intellect is “truth”

John 8:32---And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 14:6--Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

- F. The proper exercise for the intellect is the “study and meditation” of truth

1 Timothy 4:13---Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

2 Timothy 2:15---Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- G. The only way to clothe the intellect and protect it from the hazards of such elements as falsehood and myths is by “applying the truth to oneself.”

II. THE EMOTION IS THE COMBUSTION CHAMBER OF THE MORAL HEART:

- A. As the word e-motion suggests it is the portion of the heart that moves man.

1. The emotions are fueled by the intellect.
2. The information and experience gathered through the five senses and digested by the intellect feed and ignite reactions within the emotion chamber.
3. Our emotions, spark a chemical change within the body that “turn on” a man for action – to flee, to fight, to cry, to rejoice, to love. [III.---See a lion nearby]

1 Peter 1:13---Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- B. How does a person control his emotions? : By steering his intellect

1. He turns off his emotional burners by turning his head or his attention and by refining the mixture of information and experience which fuel his emotion
2. A man controls his emotions by pondering wholesome things.

Philippians 4:8---Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

C. If we never master our self we are always a slave to another.

III. THE CONSCIENCE IS THE JUDICIAL CHAMBER OF THE MORAL HEART:

A. Conscience is the apparatus that sits in judgment over a man's actions and is for this reason described as the Judicial Chamber of the heart.

1. It is constantly on watch delivering its verdict on past, present, and even future action.
2. It commends or condemns past action, accuses or excuses present conduct, and approves or disapproves contemplated activity.

Romans 2:15---who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)

B. The conscience is properly a judicial and not a legislative chamber.

1. The conscience does not make laws, it only enforces them
2. The conscience must be informed properly of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil, sin and righteousness, vice and virtue
3. The conscience is good at judging and policing action, but it is only as dependable as the standard it has been taught.

C. It is vulnerable to three sorts of injuries:

1. An uneducated or misinformed conscience like an ignorant jury or a sleeping dog will let the trespasser go free, so that Paul said when he persecuted the church

Acts 26:9---Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

2. It can be disregarded and so trampled upon, like unshod feet, the conscience grows callous after its blisters heal and becomes dull and insensitive:

Ephesians 4:19---who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

3. A lie is its worst enemy, just like a false witness is the foe of a court room. For this reason the conscience of liars and hypocrites are said to be seared:

1 Timothy 4:2---speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

IV. THE WILL IS THE EXECUTIVE CHAMBER OF THE MORAL HEART

A. Man is endowed with the power of choice and the will is the seat of that faculty.

Mark 8:34---And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

1. The other chambers are subject to the will.
2. The intellect empowers the will to make informed decisions, but the attention of the intellect is turned by the will.
3. A man decides with what to fill his intellect like he does his belly, by a pattern of choices he develops habits of thought, and having understood a truth he decided what to do about it.
4. While the will must push the intellect, it must restrain the emotion.
 - a. The emotions tug at the will like a horse at the reins, but the will is in the saddle and tames the hearts (or emotion) by turning the head (or intellect) this way and that.
 - b. In fact, we sometimes say to the impatient, "Hold your horses!"

B. The conscience lobbies the executive chamber of the will to act in accord with justice.

1. The will decided whether to heed or to trample the appeals of the conscience.
2. Furthermore, by an act of will man applies the intellect to the training of his conscience and so chooses his counselors like a president chooses his cabinet.
3. He can fill it with flatterers who always applaud him or fill it with wise advisers who censure him when necessary

Conclusion: We need to learn how the moral heart functions and keep it healthy.

HOW TO FILL AN EMPTY HEART

TEXT: Matthew 12:43-45

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Matthew 12:43-45 we will find Jesus describing the spiritual condition of the generation of His day
 - a. He had just described them as “evil and adulterous” (Matt. 12:38-39)
 - b. He also described how they would be condemned by the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 12:41-42)
 - c. In our present text of study, they are described as “this evil generation” (Matt. 12:45)
2. Using the example of demon possession, Jesus warned it is not enough just to go through the process of having one’s sins forgiven
 - a. Unless reformation continues and something positive is put in its place — the end might prove worse than the beginning
 - b. Such had been the case with the Jews of Jesus’ day
 - c. There is an important lesson to be gleaned that applies to us today as well:
 - 1) It is a lesson on the evils of “neutrality” or disinterest
 - 2) We must replace evil with good

C. **Matthew 12:43-45--READ**

DISCUSSION:

I. **THE DANGER OF AN EMPTY HEART**

A. Our heart is like a home

1. In it can reside things that produce much harm:

Matthew 15:19---For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

2. But it can also be the source for much good:

Matthew 12:35a---A good man out of the good treasure of his heart^[a] brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

B. Our house can be cleansed

1. For our heart is cleansed

Hebrews 10:22---let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Acts 15:8-9---So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us,⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

2. Our conscience is purged from dead works to serve God ? ... Hebrews 9:14

C. We are expected to “fill” our home

1. Through faith Christ Himself is to dwell in our hearts:

Ephesians 3:17---that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

2. God’s peace and grace are to fill our hearts:

Colossians 3:15-16---And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

3. Even God’s law is to be written in our hearts:

Hebrews 8:10---For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

D. What happens when we do not fill our heart?

1. Remember the maxim: “Nature abhors a vacuum” ... This idiom is used to express the idea that empty or unfilled spaces are unnatural as they go against the laws of nature and physics
2. If we do not make the effort to fill our home with good things, then evil things are likely to return, and with a vengeance!

3. Consider the **example of the Corinthians**:

1 Corinthians 6:11 ... They had been washed, sanctified, and justified

- a. Yet later they were engaged in sinful conduct once again... 2 Corinthians 12:20-21
- b. We must fill our hearts with good.

4. Consider the **example** of the **false teachers** mentioned by Peter:

2 Peter 2:1, 20-22---("the Lord that bought them"). They had been bought by the Lord, and escaped the pollution of the world through Jesus Christ But they had become entangled again. For them, "the latter end is worse for them than the beginning."

E. How do things become worse than at the first?

1. In the case of the **false teachers**, they had...

- a. Forsaken the right way (2 Pt. 2:15)
- b. Eyes full of adultery, hearts trained in covetousness (2 Pt. 2:14)
- c. Even denied the Lord who bought them (2 Peter 2:1)

2. In our case...

- a. Our hearts can become "hardened" ...

Hebrews 3:12-13---Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:26-29---For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses.²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 6:4-6---For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, ^[a] to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

- b. In such a case, how true the statement: “The last state of that man is worse than the first!”
- c. How important it is, then, that we do not let the home of our heart remain empty and thus invite worldly things to take up residence.

F. To avoid this, here are some thoughts on...

II. FILLING THE HOME OF YOUR HEART

A. Filling it in principle...

- 1. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”

1 Peter 3:15---But sanctify the Lord God^[a] in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

- a. The word “sanctify” means to “set apart”
- b. Set a special place in your heart for God as the Ruler of your life
- c. We must regard Christ as holy in our hearts

- 2. Be selective as to what goes into your mind a.

- a. Set your mind on things above:

Colossians 3:1-2---If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

- b. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly:

Colossians 3:16---Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

- c. Follow the example of David---

Psalm 101:3-4---I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. ⁴ A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness.

- d. Think upon things that are good and wholesome:

Philippians 4:8---Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

- 3. Remember, transformation of character begins with renewing the mind:

Romans 12:1-2---I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

B. Filling it in practice...

- 1. Utilize every opportunity to study God's word... 1 Peter 2:1-2

- a. Attend all services of the church
- b. Participate in the Bible study programs that are offered
- c. Read your Bible daily... Psalm 1:1-6

- 2. Fill your heart with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

- a. For this is how you...
 - 1) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... Colossians 3:16
 - 2) Allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit... Ephesians 5:18-19
- b. Sing at church, at home, in the car; sing alone and with others.

- 3. Let your mind dwell on things that are worthy of praise and virtue... Philippians 4:8

- a. Be selective about what you watch on television and in the movies

- b. Choose your books, periodicals, magazines, etc., carefully
- 4. Choose your friends carefully:
 - 1 Corinthians 15:33**---Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”
 - a. They will either help you to be strong or hinder your efforts... Proverbs 13:20
 - b. We cannot have communion with darkness and expect the light of God to dwell in us!... 2 Corinthians 6:14

CONCLUSION:

1. What is the condition of your “home” (heart)?
 - a. Are you are filling your “home” things that are good?
 - b. If not, then your heart becomes an abode for every evil thing, and the condition of your heart may become seven times worse than before!
2. Have you experienced the initial cleansing of your “home” (heart)?
 - a. Have you been cleansed by the blood of Jesus in baptism?
 - b. If so, wonderful; but don’t be deceived into thinking that you do not need to be concerned about filling that dwelling with the presence of God and all that is good!
3. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16)

Ezra: A Man Who Prepared His Heart

TEXT: Ezra 7:10

Introduction:

1. The children of Judah had disobeyed God again. Because of this, God was fed up with them and they were carried away into captivity (2 Chr. 36:15-21).
 - a. They were there for a total of 70 years before they were allowed to return to their home.
 - b. Some of the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia (1:1-11).
 - c. They began to rebuild the temple, but they soon met resistance by outside forces (4:6-24).
 - d. They were allowed to again resume working on the temple (5:1-6:12). The temple is completed and dedicated, and the people of Judah celebrate the first Passover after the return of the Babylonian captivity (6:13-22).
2. In Ezra 7, we are introduced to Ezra for the first time.

Ezra 7:10---For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

- a. Ezra had a big task ahead of him.
 - b. He was a scribe that knew the law of Moses and could help the people to follow the law of God.
 - c. It was a difficult task, but Ezra was able to accept the task and perform it well because he had prepared himself.
3. WHAT about Ezra's life that led him to being prepared?
 3. TODAY: we need to be prepared, just as Ezra was prepared.

Discussion:

I. Ezra Lived a Life That Was Trustworthy (7:11-26).

- A. The king let Ezra have whatever he wanted to restore proper worship to Judah.

1. He lived a great moral life, so that others around him could know that there was something different about him.
2. He did what was right in the sight of men and God.

B. WE must live a life that is worthy of trust.

1. We need to do what we say we are going to do.
2. We need to live good, moral lives before God.
 - a. The rich, young ruler was a man who lived an honest life.

Mark 10:17-22---READ

- b. He had earned his riches and position honestly; however, he was too immersed in his possessions until they owned him.

C. In order for us to be trusted, we must trust in God.

1 Tim 4:10---For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

1. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.
2. As our trust in God grows, the trust that others have for us also grows.

D. Ezra prepared himself in that he lived a life that was trustworthy.

II. Ezra Was a Man of Prayer (8:21-23; 10:1).

A. We know of at least twice that Ezra prayed.

1. We can safely know that he was a man of prayer.
2. He prepared himself by being a man of prayer.

B. We have several examples in the New Testament of how we ought to pray.

1. Paul's example and command teaches us that we should be people of prayer.

Acts 20:36---And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

- a. Paul prayed for every church he wrote to.
 - b. Paul prayed for individuals.
2. Notice other things that Paul says about prayer.

Ephesians 6:18---“...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...”

Philippians 4:6---Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

1 Thess. 5:17---Pray without ceasing,

- a. Paul was a man of prayer.
 - b. We need to be a people of prayer.
3. Jesus also was a man of prayer.

John 17:1-26---**READ SOME**

Luke 22:39-46---The sweat of Jesus became as drops blood as He prayed.

Luke 5:16---So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

- C. If we are going to prepare ourselves for great things, we must be people of prayer.

III. Ezra Was a Man of Faith (8:22-23).

- A. Ezra trusted God to protect him.
 - 1. Ezra and those with him were making the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.
 - 2. Instead of asking the king to protect them, Ezra asked God to protect them.
 - 3. He put his trust in God rather than men.
- B. We today put our faith in God to protect us.

Matthew 6:13---And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 Thess. 3:3---But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

C. We must have faith in God.

1. Faith is important because without it, we cannot please God.

Hebrews 11:6---But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Conclusion:

1. Ezra prepared himself before he was asked to do something great.
2. We must also prepare ourselves if we are going to be pleasing to God.
3. Are you prepared for Him?

Outline of: A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

A book by Jim George

We Should Be in Pursuit of Pleasing God:

What is your heart's desire?

David was not a perfect man.
He shed much blood.
He committed adultery with another man's wife.
He had her husband murdered.
He had multiply wives.
He neglected his family, which resulted in strife and tragedy.
David was a man with feet of clay.
God's grace through repentance and forgiveness enabled David to overcome and seek God's will.
John Newton (1725-1807) was a rough, debauched slave trader but later changed his heart and life, sought to pass laws that would stop slavery, and wrote the song, *Amazing Grace*.

We should desire spiritual growth.

The source of spiritual growth is the Bible and prayer:

The Bible claims to be the word of God.
The Bible claims to be true and never tries to justify its statements.
The Bible claims to be alive and powerful.
We need encouragement to grow spiritually.
We need to thirst for growth.
We need to see the impact that growth will have on our lives.

We should make spiritual growth happen.

Devote your life to Jesus.
Deal with sin.
Discard spiritual laziness.
Decide the method of your growth.

Listen to the Bible or your favorite preacher on CD or online.
View sermons, articles, lecture, etc. from web sites:

www.nashvilleroad.org www.biblestudyplus.info
www.christiancourier.org and www.apologeticspress.org

Attend Bible study classes:
Nashville Road Church of Christ
Nashville School of Preaching
Amridge University

Determined to be self-disciplined.
Dedicate your life to ongoing spiritual growth.

There are benefits to spiritual growth:

You will enjoy greater intimacy with God.
You will manifest Christ-like behavior to a watching world.
You will be able to give your family the spiritual leadership they need.
You will possess the spiritual strength needed to defend against temptation.
You will provide a model of spiritual strength and maturity for other men.
You will have the spiritual resources to disciple others.

We should have the marks of a man after God's own heart.

It is a heart that is saved.
It is a heart for God's word.
It is a heart that obeys.
It is a heart that prays.
It is a heart that praises.
It is a heart that worships.
It is a heart that serves.

We Should Be in Pursuit of God's Priorities:

We should have a heart that loves our wives.

Remember our wedding.
Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

His was a sacrificial love.
His was a purifying love.
His was a nurturing love.

His was an enduring love.
His was an active love.

Live out Christ's love in sacrifice, purity, and endurance.

Have the keys to a successful marriage.

Talk with each other.
Tell each other "I love you."
Touch each other.
Tolerate each other.
Trust each other.
Treat each other.
Treasure each other.
Thank each other.

Be her best friend.
Spend time together.
Go on a date.
Become a better listener.
Renew your vows.

We should have a heart that leads our wives.

Encourage your wife in spiritual growth.
Protect your wife.
Practice ways to love by leading.

Start growing yourself.
Start giving spiritual guidance.
Start praying together.
Start leading with understanding.
Start taking a greater responsibility for household duties.
Start sharing financial decisions.
Start taking an active role in your children's lives.
Honor your wife with respect.

We should have a heart that loves our children.

Live out your beliefs, be the right example.
Remember that parenting is a partnership.
Pass on a love for God.
Find good ways to influence your children.
Provide for your children.

An active role in teaching
A consistently godly example
Constant leadership
Consistent discipline
Intercessory prayer for your children
Godly influence outside the home
Discernment for outside influences
Priorities

We should have a heart that is diligent at work.

Work is the norm.
Work is beneficial.
Work is a calling.
Work is where we can be an ambassador for Christ.
Work is where we can glorify God.
Work is where we can become a winner.

We should have a heart that glorifies God as work.

We should watch for pitfalls that lead to failure.
We should practice principles that lead to success.

Be diligent.
Be a servant.
Be a learner.
Be a leader.
Be content.
Be a model of excellence; integrity, faithfulness, punctuality, quality,
attitude, and enthusiasm.
Put God's principles into practice.

We should have a heart that loves the church.

Understand the importance of the church.
Be a member of Christ's church.
Be a useful member of Christ's church.

Attend faithfully.
Give generously.
Pray regularly.
Serve diligently.

Recognize your gifts that can be use in the church.
Aspire to be more useful to God in His church.

We should have heart that reaches out.

Be a good neighbor.
Take the initiative.
Love the unlovely.
Make contact.
Have a contrite heart.
Speak to others about Jesus and salvation.
Be willing to sacrifice to help others.

We should have a heart that builds bridges.

We Should Have a Heart that Serves the Purpose of God.

Follow David's footsteps in praise, thanksgiving, obedience, and repentance.
Pursue God's highest purposes in life.

Be a master of discipleship.
Mentor others to grow spiritually.
Take steps that move you forward.

Pass on the good you have.
Look for opportunities.
Leave a legacy that lives through others.

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