

A Spiritual Heart Check

Texts: 2 Samuel 7:1-2; 12:1-13; 15:23-26; 1 Samuel 18:6-7, 14

General Direction

To perform a ‘heart check’ through the life of Israel’s most famous king, King David, who was a man of passion and destiny and whom the Bible describes as ‘a man after God’s heart’. [Deliver this message after the reading for Week 4 is completed.]

Back Story

During the period of the Judges, *Israel had no king and everyone did as he saw fit* (Judges 17:6). The prophet Samuel anoints Saul, Israel’s first king, who turns out to be a disappointing failure. Saul is rejected, and the Lord chooses David, “a man after God’s heart”, to lead the nation. David, a shepherd, and the youngest of the sons of Jesse, is hurled into national prominence after defeating Goliath when Israel was at war with the Philistines. But Saul is jealous of David’s popularity, and tries to have him killed. David’s rise to the throne will involve years of pain and frustration, but during this season of suffering, David will develop as a man of faith.

Sermon Purpose and Outline

David is known as “a man after God’s own heart”. What does it mean for a person to have a heart that beats in alignment with God’s heart? This sermon will explore several episodes from David’s life, revealing what it looks like to be a person whose heart beats with God’s heart.

Sermon Question: What are the results of your spiritual heart check?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. How is your heart of worship? | 2 Samuel 7:1-2 |
| 2. How is your heart of repentance? | 2 Samuel 12:1-13 |
| 3. How is your heart of trust? | 2 Samuel 15:23-26 |
| 4. How is your heart of humility? | 1 Samuel 18:6-7, 14 |

Sermon Introduction

2,400 people a day die from it. 80 million people in the United States live with it. The cost of preventing it was \$48 billion in the U.S. alone in 2008. 17 million people around the world die from it each year. Strangely, much of it is preventable. What is it? It's **heart disease**. From strokes and high blood pressure to heart attacks, the world is suffering immensely from something that is largely preventable with good habits like eating right and exercise. But most of us are not doing the things that prevent this disease from advancing. Maybe we should all stand up and do some jumping jacks right now?! Okay, maybe not, there aren't enough doctors in the house!

But, let's do something together. Let's take our pulse. It's simple. Just place the tips of your index, second, and third fingers on the palm side of your other wrist, below the base of the thumb. Or, place the tips of your index and second fingers on your lower neck, on either side of your windpipe. Now press lightly with your fingers until you feel the blood pulsing beneath your fingers. You might need to move your fingers around slightly up or down until you feel the pulsing. Do you feel it? Good! You're alive!

Creative Teaching Tool

Hold up a stethoscope as you talk next about how it is used to listen to a person's heart. To increase the effectiveness of this illustration, locate a recording of a beating heart that can be played or use this sample <http://www.jamglue.com/tracks/602315-sound-effects-heartbeat> (possibly at the beginning of the talk, and increasing for the first 30 seconds or so as the point unfolds) as you are talking about the stethoscope.

How's the health of your heart today? In the medical world, a doctor uses a stethoscope to listen and see if the beat has any irregularities, and he uses an ECG or a CT scanner or a cardiac MRI machine to look inside determine your heart's condition. Even though we've all just demonstrated that we're alive physically, that's not the pulse God takes of our lives. He takes our spiritual pulse. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, *The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart.* As Pastor Rick Warren says, 'the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart'. God doesn't look at the outside, he looks at the inside.

God actually has a 24-7 lock onto your spiritual heart condition. He peers into the inner workings of your life with his Holy Spirit. Is that fascinating to you, or is it a bit scary? God's spiritual

stethoscope measures your spiritual condition; he takes your spiritual pulse. What do you think yours sounds like to him?

Before we jump into our story, let's clarify what the Bible means when it uses the word, **heart**. The word is used over a thousand times in the Bible. The heart is considered to be the center of our emotions, desires, passions and appetites (Genesis 18:5, Leviticus 19:17, Psalm 104:15). It represents who we are at the center, it's the place around which our moral, spiritual and intellectual life revolves. The Bible tells us our heart can be hardened (Exodus 4:21), that it is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), yet despite our sin nature the law of God is written there (Romans 2:15), and God's cleansing grace happens there (Acts 15:9). Emotions like joy, love, courage, anger, sorrow are attributed to our hearts. So the Biblical concept of the heart essentially represents who we are.

King David was called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). So, his heart is held up as a model for us to examine. As we explore several episodes from David's life, we'll peer inside the heart of this king. As we do, I want you be examining your own heart, to see if it is in shape to receive God's blessings, which God promises if our hearts are pure (Matthew 5:8). We'll do some 'open heart surgery' as it were...are you ready?

Connection to the Overarching Theme: The Journey of Faith

From the time we are introduced to the young shepherd, David, to his death in a state of honor as Israel's beloved king, he meets the challenges of his life with extraordinary faith. His deep connection with God empowers him to do mighty deeds and win the adoration of his kingdom, yet the undercurrent weaving through every story of his life is the remarkable state of his heart. His connection with God, it turns out, is both a source of strength, and a sign of his heart condition. Let's explore what the heart of such a man of faith looks like.

Sermon Question: What's the result of your spiritual heart check?

1. How is your heart of worship?

2 Samuel 7:1-2

*¹After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, **while the ark of God remains in a tent.**"*

Textual Explanation

David had a heart that was focused on worshipping God. Once David had established himself as king in Jerusalem, he found that he was deeply troubled that he lived in a palace, but the ark of

the covenant, which represented God's holy presence, rested in a tent. So David calls the prophet Nathan and announces his intention to build a temple to house the ark. This reveals the heart of David to pour a vast amount of physical resources into honoring God through building a center for worship.

In a dream, Nathan is instructed to inform David that the task of building the temple would not be his because of his life as a warrior. In a remarkable twist, David is informed that *The Lord himself will establish a house for you (7:11)*. The house that God intends to build for David is a dynasty that will include the future Messiah. It is through David's family tree that Jesus will be born. One of Jesus' titles will be "The Son of David".

David made lavish preparations for the temple which his son Solomon would build. He set aside a massive amount of money, wrote music for temple worship, and laid out the design of the temple. The desire to prepare for building a temple for public worship was a driving mission of David's life. David, the man after God's own heart, had a heart of worship directed towards God.

Application

How does your heart compare? Are you driven to worship? How high in your list of priorities is giving worship to God? Does it even make your top ten for this week? Just being here on Sunday morning does not necessarily qualify as worship. How have you shown God the reverence and esteem due him through the way you have conducted your life this week?

2. How is your heart of repentance?

2 Samuel 12:1-13

*⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." ^{7a} Then Nathan said to David, "**You are the man!**" ¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "**I have sinned against the Lord.**"*

Textual Explanation

Not all of David's actions were admirable. In fact, he is known for committing adultery with Bathsheba, one of his soldier's wives. He even brought Bathsheba's husband home on leave from battle so he could sleep with Bathsheba, to cover for her pregnancy. When he didn't cooperate, David had Uriah killed in battle. Clearly, the Bible does not attempt to shield us from the sins committed by its heroes. Aren't you glad the Bible portrays its characters in an honest fashion? There is no air-brushed hero here. Yes, David was a war hero, a king and a poet; but he was also deceitful, adulterous, and a murderer. Are you feeling just a little more normal now?

Since all of us sin, our take-away from David's big mistake is what happens after his sin. How did David respond to his failure? After being confronted with his failure, he says, *I have sinned against the Lord*. He repents and seeks forgiveness. Notice that he did not deny he did it, he did not make excuses, he did not rationalize by talking about what or who caused him to act this way, he did not blame Bathsheba for her part in the dirty deed. He honestly admitted his failure, asked for forgiveness and moved forward.

Application

How are you doing at forgiving others for their mistakes? Are you dressed in judge's robes or holding a set of jailer's keys? Do you have those who sinned against you in some lifelong debtor's prison? Or, maybe you're holding yourself hostage for the mistakes of your past. Like David, we need to let it go and let our mistakes come under the grace of God. That's the heart of the gospel! Forgiveness. God used David, and he can use you and those around you who have sinned.

Cross References

The Psalms give us a glimpse into David's heart.

Psalm 51:1-3

*O loving and kind God, **have mercy**. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stains of my sins. Wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again for **I admit my shameful deeds**.*

Psalm 51:17

God will not reject a repentant heart.

Psalms of repentance shows us a God-like response to our own sin. David, the man after God's own heart, had a heart of repentance.

Application

Unfortunately, we often associate our strongest memories of David with Bathsheba and his adulterous affair. That's regretful, because we all fail in various degrees, and when we do, we want to receive grace from others.

- Take a minute right now and do some heart surgery. Ask yourself, "What do I do to myself when I sin? Do I forgive myself too easily? Or do I hold myself hostage for years over my failure?"
- Then ask, "What do I do when others around me sin? Do I dish out contempt toward others over something that I would let myself off the hook for?"

Let's grant those around us, the same grace we'd want others to give us if we failed.

3. How is your heart of trust?

2 Samuel 15:23-26

²³ *The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the desert.* ^{24a} *Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God.*

²⁵ *Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the Lord's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again."* ²⁶ *But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; **let him do to me whatever seems good to him.**"*

Textual Explanation

Where do you place your trust when the going gets tough? In your own strength? In your well-organized 'to do' list? David put his trust in his God. His life had plenty of occurrences that would cause the average church member's jaw to drop right to the floor. He was always at war with the nations around him. He was on the run from Saul and lived in various caves to escape. (I imagine you haven't tried that lately?!) His family was not one the average Christian magazine would profile on the front cover...it was a mess! He had a son who raped his daughter, and his other son killed that brother when he found out about it. One of his sons, Absalom, staged a coup attempt for the kingdom against his own father and then was killed. David, now well-advanced in years, flees the city of Jerusalem. When the high priest, Zadok, carries the the ark of the covenant out of Jerusalem to accompany David in his flight, David instructs him to carry it back into the city. Whew! Talk about stress and a series of messes!

Cross Reference

Listen to what David wrote about this, where we get a glimpse into his heart of trust.

Psalm 118:5-6

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord. He answered me and rescued me. **He is for me. How can I be afraid?***

Under great stress factors, David reminded himself that God was in charge and God was on his side and thus he should not allow himself to be afraid. David had extreme trust in God.

Psalm 73:26

*My mind and my body may grow weak but God is my strength. **He is all I ever need.***

David had a heart of trust, even when his life was at its most stressed.

Application

Well, how are you doing on this heart attitude? Give yourself a quick exam. What is your response to the stress life throws at you? Do you begin to doubt and become worried, or does your heart trust in the one who made you? Why not start leaning into him today.

4. How is your heart of humility?

1 Samuel 18:6-7, 14

⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. ⁷ As they danced, they sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

¹⁴ In everything [David] did he had great success, because the Lord was with him.

Textual Explanation

Even at the height of David's success, when he was receiving the most acclaim from others for his exploits, he gave the credit to the God. David was in the top tier of successful leaders. He killed national enemy #1 and became a hero. They even wrote songs about him! The Bible says that all Judah and Israel loved David. And how did David respond to all the fame? Listen to what he wrote in Psalm 115:1: *"To you alone, O Lord, to you alone and not unto us must glory be given."* He gave the glory to God. His heart was humble.

Application

Let's do some final open heart surgery now. Ready? How do you handle success? When everything is a ten out of ten in your life, do you think it was because of your efforts? When your kids are obedient, your bank account is full, you get to eat out a lot, your company rewards you with a trip and your car has not broken down for six months, do you say, "I've really done well lately!" When the package labeled "GLORY ENCLOSED" arrives in your mailbox, I'd like to see us mark it "Return to Sender" and send it back to where it belongs...on the doorstep of God, the Almighty One, the one who gave us the very breath we breathe.

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord search back and forth across the whole earth looking for people whose hearts are perfect toward him so he can show his great power in helping them.

Closing

David was one of the greatest leaders in the Bible. His resume included stints as a loving shepherd, a fearless giant killer, a general, and a strategic king who united kingdoms. To top it all off, he was a musician and a poet! He seems to have been in every line-up when God was handing out talent!

If you love reading Psalms, you've taken many a glimpse into the character and heart of this man. He accomplished much for God in his lifetime, yet God wasn't impressed with any of those accomplishments. God was more thrilled with David's heart.

Acts 13:22

*After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse **a man after my own heart**; he will do everything I want him to do.'*

How do you compare to David's heart? Where are you doing well? Where are you not doing too well? Conduct a heart examination by spending time with God each day, getting to know his heart. We've all experienced the joy of this process as we journey through the Bible in 90 Days.

We've looked at four 'heart conditions' of David. When God put the spiritual stethoscope up to David's heart, he found it to be **worshipful, repentant, trusting** and **humble**.

1 Chronicles 29:28 NLT

*[David] died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed a long life, wealth and **honor**.*

My prayer for all of us is that when we die we will leave behind strong evidence of these four character traits in our lives, and that among the honors given to us will be the greatest honor of all, honor for being a man or a woman after God's own heart.