

MATTERS OF THE  
HEART

Living As God Intends



'But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

When the Lord told Samuel that people judge by outward appearance, but He looks at the heart, it was at the point when Samuel thought Eliab (David's eldest brother) was the Lord's anointed based on his physical appearance. However, God's criteria was very different to the extent that the Lord told Samuel Eliab was actually rejected. Which means the criteria God used to assess who would be king was very different from what Samuel had in mind.

Similarly, there is a perspective the Lord may have on different aspects of our lives which differs from what we think He is looking for.

This series we are delving into how the Lord views aspects of our lives (relationships, leadership, self-reflection and others) based on our heart disposition. We pray that the Holy Spirit guides us through this study and reveals God's heart on the matters of life to us.



## Day 1 Worship

'And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.' Isaiah 29:13

Worship is an important aspect of a believer's life because it speaks to how we relate with our Father. Worship has the power to bring us to a place of intimacy as we honour Him, opening up to the things going on with us and genuinely being interested in what He has to say. However the Lord Himself notes that there are times when we appear to be engaged in some form of activity on the outward, but our hearts are far from Him. In these situations it's not worship from God's perspective.

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.' Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Worshiping in spirit begins with recognizing who we are worshiping: the one true Lord. We acknowledge Him for who He is and what He has done – either in our lives directly or in the lives of others. We come to God with reverence, honouring Him in our hearts. When we sing, dance, pray or any other activity without giving Him honour then He doesn't come to Him as worship.

'But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.' John 4:23-24

For God to look for true worshipers means there are not many who truly worship Him. To truly worship God we have to intentionally set aside distractions so we can give Him our full attention. Honouring Him by not letting our minds drift away, checking our devices, conversing with others or doing anything that takes our focus off God at that point in time. Because this is a heart position, we don't need to physically be in a church or with others to genuinely worship. We can also take out moments of our day to quiet our minds and focus on God. At such times we are not making requests or tabling complaints, we are simply placing all our attention on Him. The interesting thing is as we do this consistently, we will find that many of the burdens we feel are lifted simply by genuine worship.

**Prayer:** Lord give me the heart of a true worshipper

## Day 2 Leadership

'...You said, "I have raised up a warrior. I have selected him from the common people to be king. I have found my servant David. I have anointed him with my holy oil.' Psalms 89:19-20

Leaders matter because they directly influence the people they're leading. As with other aspects of life, God has His own criteria for leadership and we see from David's example that God is more interested in the person's heart than the current skillset. This is because He knows that a heart submitted to Him will seek His guidance on what skills to acquire and will receive the necessary ability.

'God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom... ten times more capable than any...' Daniel 1:17,20

'Look, I have specifically chosen Bezalel... I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts.' Exodus 31:2-3

'...In fact, the Lord made David victorious wherever he went.' 1 Chronicles 18:13

This doesn't mean skill isn't required, far from it. Rather the Lord recognizes that if the heart is aligned to Him, the skills acquired will be used for the benefit of His kingdom so He equips such people with skill beyond their natural capacity. For instance, Daniel and His friends received a supernatural capacity to learn and the ability to lead effectively when they got into the king's service. Bezalel was an expert in all kinds of crafts, David was a skilled warrior who never lost a battle.

'Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.' Matthew 20:26

So what does leadership look like from God's perspective? Jesus made it clear that service is the foundational criteria for successful leadership. From this foundation springs other such as integrity (Prov 16:13); wisdom (Prov 3:14); boldness and courage (Josh 1: 8-9); ability to motivate and inspire (Neh 2:17); effective communication (Col 4:6) and much more.

**Prayer:** Lord give me the heart of a true leader



## Day 3 Relationships

“Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.” Galatians 6:10

Relationships matter because none of us can walk completely alone in life. We all have people that come into our lives for a variety of reasons. Some are work related, some become acquaintances, some close friends. Whatever the nature of the relationship, how we treat people matters to God. Imagine if God treated you the way you treated others, what would that look like?

“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:35

“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.” Hebrews 12:15

If we relate to others only from the perspective of what’s in it for us, we lose the opportunity to demonstrate God’s love to them and also the grace He’s open to giving us to walk in His love. This love isn’t about how we feel, rather it’s extending the love of God to others. This means we treat others with patience, kindness, without being jealous of them, proud, rude or boastful about how we perceive ourselves to be better.

It means we’re to be open to understanding the perspectives of others, and not rejoicing (privately or publicly) when things don’t go well for others. It means we should be open to wanting the best for others in spite of who they are at the moment, understanding that God loves them and Jesus died for them as well (1 Cor 13:4-7). It also means we do not retaliate when insulted or seek revenge when hurt (1 Peter 3:9). It is humanly impossible to love like this in our own strength so we need grace daily to walk in love.

Relating to others as God would have us do requires a healthy dose of humility, recognising that we are submitting our lives to God so He can reach others through us. It’s not easy, but it’s possible through the help of the Holy Spirit as we partner with Him.

**Prayer:** Lord I recognise that I am a work in progress and walking in love is a journey I need to be intentional about. I ask for grace to grow in love daily



## Day 4 Giving

“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

Giving starts in the heart not the pocket. What ensures that God accepts our giving is not the value of the amount we give, but the heart with which we give. When our heart is connected to Him, our giving will be led by the Holy Spirit, not by coercion or the desire to impress others. When the Holy Spirit is in charge, we will give with the understanding that we are custodians of wealth and not owners, so our giving is an indication of us doing our part to expand the influence of the Lord’s kingdom here on earth.

'There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.' Acts 4:34-35

'...Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife’s consent, he kept the rest. Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!” Acts 5:1-4

The Bible tells us that some of the believers in the early church sold various things including property so they could all share. A couple called Ananias and Sapphira also sold their property but decided to keep some of the proceeds for themselves. There was absolutely nothing wrong with keeping the money after all as Peter noted, the money was theirs to give away. The issue God had was the fact that they decided to lie about the transaction. This means their giving wasn’t inspired by the Holy Spirit, but a need to put up a pretense.

This may seem to be an extreme but it gives us an insight into how God views our giving. While people may accept giving without questions, God will reject anything that is not from a heart that’s aligned with Him.

**Prayer:** Lord let me heart be right with You so whatever I give can be accepted by You.

## Day 5 Challenges

'But listen carefully to everything I command you today. Then I will go ahead of you and drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.' Exodus 34:11

'But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" Numbers 13:30-31

Moses sent some men to explore the land of Canaan ahead of Israel taking possession according to God's commitment to them. However, when the men saw the giants in the land, they decided the land couldn't be taken. They didn't lie about the giants; they did indeed occupy the land so the issue God had with the report wasn't that they saw giants but that they doubted Him.

'I will drive out the other nations ahead of you and expand your territory, so no one will covet and conquer your land...' Exodus 34:24

God wasn't ignorant of the warfare required to occupy Canaan which is why He gave advance comfort that He would take charge and give Israel victory as they went into battle. Likewise, there are times God may have given us a word and then we face challenges that seem insurmountable. At those times He isn't asking us to disregard the challenge, rather what He's looking for is a heart position that trusts Him despite what we face. The fact that God promised us something doesn't mean that it will be free from challenges, it does mean that our victory is assured. Perhaps there are some challenges before us that seem insurmountable. Are we viewing these challenges against our limitations or against God's unlimited capacity? What has the Lord said to you concerning that situation? Remember with God all things are possible.

**Prayer:** Lord give me a heart that always views challenges from Your perspective.

Interestingly the Israelites still took the land many years later under Joshua's leadership.

## Day 6 Strategy

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.' Proverbs 3:5-6

Simply defined, Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. God created us as thinking beings with the capacity to reason, create and formulate plans which become the strategy we execute for our lives (family, business, career, finances, etc.) based on our capacity. In spite of our inherent capacity, the Lord still advises us to put our trust in Him First because He's the only one that knows tomorrow and how we need to plan and position today for what is to come tomorrow.

'Praise the Lord, who is my rock. He trains my hands for war and gives my fingers skill for battle.' Psalms 144:1

'The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.'" Psalms 32:8-9

The steps we take today determine what our tomorrow will look like, so how then do we know how to posture accurately? The Lord answers this through His promise to guide, advise and watch over us. However, one thing He will not do is force us. We always have a choice to determine if we want to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's direction or stick to what we have already decided we want to do.

'You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.' Proverbs 19:21

'So David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.'" I Samuel 30:8

The Lord will always back His strategy and if we choose God's way then we must be willing to listen to Him for guidance on what those plans should be and how best to execute them. This will help us ensure we are not expending energy in the wrong areas or on things that will become irrelevant in the near future. One of the things David was well known for was his military strategies. He always sought guidance from the Lord, which is why we often see scripture referring to David inquiring of the Lord. He didn't rely on his past successes or errors and neither should we.

**Prayer:** Lord please guide me on the strategy for this day/week/year that will give me consistent success.



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