

After God's Heart

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Psalms 63:1-8

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As we come to this Psalm tonight, we must recognize that this is a *Psalm of David*. This is important because immediately, knowing that it was David who penned it, there should be a certain amount of familiarity we feel.

David is relatable. When you read the Psalms, he seems to put your thoughts down on the parchment better than you could. He captures our hearts' emotions the highs and the lows, and puts words to them.

We know that David was a man acquainted with great success, as well as great failure. Despite his failures, the Old Testament records David as "*a man after His [God's] own heart*" in 1 Samuel 13:14.

This takes place after Saul's great failure to obey God and wait for Him. He rushed ahead of God, and it cost him the kingdom. Notice, that even after David's life, the N.T. records the same thing:

Acts 13:22

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.*'

I want to discuss for a moment what God meant when he referred to David as "*a man after My own heart.*"

Depending on how you read that phrase, you may come to one of two conclusions. First, you may read it from the perspective of the fact that God had placed into David a heart like His own.

That when it came to God's thoughts, desires, perspectives, and ultimately His will, He put them into David so that David would lead God's people in God's way.

On the other hand, if we look at it from the perspective of David, then we would conclude that God sought a man who had modeled his life *after the heart of God*. So that David was the one who sought God and lived his life after God's thoughts, desires, perspectives, and His will.

Meaning, God found a man with a life modeled after His Word, and set him to be king of His people.

To put it another way, *A man after God's own heart* is similar in phraseology to "*pursuit of God*." When I say, "*pursuit of God*", some of you think immediately of *God's pursuit of man*. Other of you think of *man's pursuit of God*. Which is it? Which was it for David?

Both.

This was the Divine sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man working Hand in hand to bring about God's will in David's life.

David has his failures ***like any man***, but he received this title from the LORD.

John MacArthur

A man after God's heart, however, is not a perfect man. He is a man who sees his sin for what it is and repents of it... David may justly be termed a man after God's heart because (unlike Saul) his greatest desire came to be the doing of God's will.

Is this how God would describe me?

Is this how He would describe you?

Not wife, husband, parents, friends...but God.

However that question is answered in your own life today, I want to look at this Psalm as an outline for how you and I can become men and women who are ***After God's Heart***, just like David was.

In this Psalm we see 4 Characteristics of a life ***After God's Heart***. These 4 things will serve both as a test for your current walk with God as well as a roadmap to *becoming the man or woman who is after His heart*.

1. A Seeking Soul (1-2)

The first characteristic we find is that David was a man who ***sought God***. Let me show you how God's sovereign Hand and David's human will is at work here:

Psalm 27:8 (David)

⁸ ***When You said, "Seek My face,"***
My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

You may ask the question...what does that actually look like? Well, in verse 1 he addresses God **6 times**, and shows us how he *seeks God*.

VERSE 1a:

*O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;*

Early will I seek – Dawn, Dim, Dark, To be up early with any task, To search for, *Look early, Look diligently for, Seek with longing.*

The idea is **both** that he sought God **early in the morning**, but also that **he made it a priority to seek God**. Let's look at both of these ideas:

There is something to **spending the morning with God**! Before the day is started, taking the best part of your day to **seek Him**!

Psalm 5:3 – David

³ My voice You shall hear **in the morning**, O Lord;
In the morning I will direct it to You,
And I will look up.

Let me ask, ***what is the first thing you set your mind on when you wake up?***

There is a good possibility that the first thing on your mind is what will occupy that place much of the day. Also, that thing – whatever it is – likely has the place of highest **affection** or highest **anxiety** in your life.

One wise Christian said, ***“If I wait till the evening to seek the Lord, then the devil will always be one day ahead.”***

We see in Mark that this was something Jesus did as well:

Mark 1:35

³⁵ Now **in the morning**, having risen **a long while before daylight**, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

For Jesus, as the perfect and sinless Son of God, His priority was to spend time with the Father, **how much more** should that be ours?

I'm not going to lay a legalistic standard on you; this is one of those areas that you need to *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

But, if you don't already have a habit of spending your morning with the Lord, **start first thing tomorrow**. Set an alarm for 15 minutes earlier than usual, get up, pray, and spend time with Him in His Word. ***You will never be the same...***

But as I mentioned, this is not only speaking of the morning in a strict sense but also making **seeking God** the **priority** of his life!

Matthew 6:33

³³ But **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

God will take care **of the necessities** of our lives as we seek after the one true necessity we have – God. Sometimes, **even good things** can begin to crowd out the **needed thing...**

Luke 10:42

⁴² But **one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."**

At the end of the day, you and I both will **make time for what matters most to us**. The question is, *are you willing to make time to seek Him? AND are you actually going to do it?*

If you're a believer in Christ, I trust that the desire is there, but now it's time to respond.

VERSE 1b:

***My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You**
In a dry and thirsty land, Where there is no water.*

If you look at the title above verse 1, you see that David wrote this while in the **Judean Wilderness** as he was fleeing for his life. This was either him fleeing from Saul as recorded in 1 Samuel 22, or when he fled from his son Absalom's treasonous takeover in 2 Samuel 15.

Either way, David was found in a literal dessert, but his soul was well provided for by His God.

David knew his soul's real need. His souls greatest need was more of God. He describes his soul as **thirsting** after and **longing for** God.

David was fleeing from either Saul or Absalom, and he has found himself in the **Judean wilderness**. He was in a literal desert.

There is no doubt that tonight, some of you are with David on this one. The circumstances of life, the relationships gone wrong, the health crisis, or financial issues have you in a type of desert of your own.

It was in David's lowest moment that he realized and sought his greatest need.

Charles Spurgeon

A weary place and a weary heart make the presence of God more desirable; if there be nothing below and nothing within to cheer, it is a thousand mercies that we may look up and find all we need. How frequently have believers traversed their own experience in this “dry and thirsty land,” where spiritual joys are things forgotten, and how truly they can testify that the only true necessity of that country is the near presence of their God! The absence of outward comforts can be born with serenity when we walk with God, and the most lavish multiplication of them avails not when He withdraws.

As he looked around, he couldn't help but notice that the physical attributes of thirst and desire for water, matched his spiritual desire for **fellowship with God**.

Maybe the same is true for you tonight, where can you go, and what can you do?

John 7:37–38

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**” ³⁸ **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”**

We can take Jesus' words as a pattern for the weary believer, or the one who does not yet believe but recognizes their *thirsty* soul.

Recognizing your need: **If anyone thirsts...**

Responding to His invitation: **let him come to Me and drink...**

Receiving the promise of life: **out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**

Jesus gives the same invitation, in a different way to those who are *weary*...

Matthew 11:28–29

²⁸ **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** ²⁹ **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

David knew exactly where to go when he was weary, weak, troubled, or *thirsty*. Look at verse 2:

Psalms 63:2

² **So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.**

This is what it means to **seek God**. Notice, that it was this desire after God that caused his response **to look for God!** This is one of the reasons he was a *man after God's heart*. He was in pursuit of God!

Within the Tabernacle of God, David learned what it meant to worship God and know God. It was a picture of what was in heaven, given by God to Moses.

The sacrifices showed that He is holy, the ordinances were types and pictures of how one was to approach God. The Scriptures taught showed God's character and what He required of David.

So, David **looked for God in the sanctuary**.

Looked – Gaze at, Perceive, Behold, Look, Contemplate.

David had many fond memories of meeting with the Lord in the tabernacle as he worshipped Him and learned about Him there, so he found himself meditating on and **thinking of the God of tabernacle**, more than the tabernacle itself. ***It was God that made it special.***

Psalm 27:4

⁴ **One thing** I have desired of the Lord,
That will I **seek**:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And **to inquire** in His temple.

David was a man who sought God, and in all the seeking, **David found God**. ***Have you?***

When I ask if you're seeking God, I'm not asking if you're doing all the things... David saw the types and pictures for what they were, they were means to an end, and the end was God Himself.

Jeremiah 29:13

¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, **when you search for Me with all your heart**.

The first characteristic of having **a heart after God's** is **seeking Him**. This happens as you spend time in His Word, prayer, meditate on His works, worship Him, and seek His face.

Which leads to our 2nd characteristic of living **after God's heart**.

2. A Worshipping Soul (3-4)

The person who loves God and has fellowship with God cannot help but **worship Him!**

VERSE 3a:

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,

Lovingkindness: *Chesed – Kindness, Mercy, Loving + Kindness, Merciful + Kindness, Favor. It carries the “freedom of decision” for the giver.*

When William Tyndale began translating the Old Testament from the original Hebrew to English, he came across Hebrew words that had to English equivalent. Words like Atonement, Mercy seat and **lovingkindness** were words he added to the English language to best convey what the original said.

It was God’s *love* that reached out in *kindness* to David that motivated His soul to **worship** in the way he did. Knowing this love is life at its best and its highest, life apart from it is not life, so far as the Bible describes it.

Spurgeon

Life is dear, but God’s love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honor, and wealth, and pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in [God’s] smile.

If you have never known this fellowship or intimacy with God, I probably sound nuts to you right now, but if you have, you know what it’s like to be close and what it’s like to be far.

Erwin Lutzer

*“I can tell you something worse than dying, and that is to live **out of fellowship** with the living God.”*

But notice here with me, that David’s knowledge of the **lovingkindness** of God is what motivates him to **worship!**

Psalm 63:3–4

³ **Because** Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips shall praise You.

⁴ Thus I will bless You while I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.

Look at the three phrases he uses to declare his worship:

"My lips shall praise You."

"I will bless You..."

"I will lift up my hands..."

His Words // His Attitude // His Posture

What David thought about God **could not stay inside**. His love and devotion to God was evidenced by the way he worshipped God.

The same is true for you and I, *how we worship* shows what we think about God.

When I say **worship**, I am not only referring to the first 20 minutes of service, though congregational singing and **worship** is definitely included!

I believe it would be more accurate for us to view David here as describing the *words*, *attitudes*, and *posture* of his daily life, rather than a confined time of singing.

***David's entire life was an act of His worship to God.
He had a worshipping soul.***

David was determined, regardless of his circumstances to have **a worshipping soul**. This is a decision that he made at some point and stuck to it.

Psalm 5:7

⁷ **But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your **mercy**;
In fear of You I will worship** toward Your holy temple.

Tonight, you may be like David in the sense of his situation. *Down and out*. But David offers up his worship as a sacrifice to God.

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵ Therefore by Him **let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, **the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name**.

We are to *praise Him with our mouths, and worship Him with our lives*. Do you see this characteristic at work in your life?

Now we move to our 3rd characteristic of being **after His heart** that we find in our Psalm tonight.

3. A Satisfied Soul (5-7)

A person who **seeks** and **worships God** will have **a satisfied soul!**

This is something that money cannot buy!

Many people are chasing soul-satisfaction by flesh-gratification...resulting in deeper emptiness and deeper despair.

But David has found the secret to **a satisfied soul.**

Psalm 63:5

⁵ **My soul shall be satisfied** as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise You with **joyful** lips.

The **marrow** and **fatness** were used to describe the best food imaginable, and David sees his **soul satisfied with the love of God** being like when his appetite is satisfied by the best meal one can think of.

Satisfied – To fill to satisfaction, Have enough, Fill, Be full of.

Is this not what the world is searching for?

Proverbs 14:14

¹⁴ **The backslider in heart will be filled** with **his own ways,**
But a good man **will be satisfied from above.**

The world fills itself up with every pleasure of life and pursuit of the flesh, but ultimately, God is the only true source of soul satisfaction.

When all else was going wrong, his inner man was right.

When he was abandoned by men, he was **satisfied in God.**
When he was hungry in the wilderness, he was **satisfied by God.**
When he was thirsty in the desert, he was **satisfied by God.**
When he had sleepless nights, he was **satisfied by God.**

Psalm 107:9

⁹ For **He satisfies** the **longing soul,**
And **fills the hungry soul** with goodness.

To be **satisfied** by God in this way, is to find all that you desire being ultimately fulfilled by God Himself.

David found it. **He found it in God; the same place you will find it too.** Not to mention, for the soul that is satisfied in God, **the world has lost its luster**... it just doesn't shine like it used to!

Proverbs 27:7

⁷ **A satisfied soul** loathes the honeycomb,
But **to a hungry soul** every bitter thing *is* sweet.

When your soul is satisfied by God, every earthly pleasure pales in comparison. But when you don't have the Lord, you will inevitably cling even to *bitter things*.

David's satisfaction was no accident. Verse 6 gives us a window into how in the midst of a severe trial he could remain **satisfied** by God.

Psalm 63:6

⁶ **When I remember** You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the *night* watches.

David couldn't help but think about God! When he laid awake at night, God was on his mind! *All that God had done* for David caused David to **meditate** on Him.

Meditate – Murmur (to self), Ponder, Imagine, Study.

Biblical meditation is almost certainly lost in our day. We fill our time with everything we can, and any free time we might have, like a black hole will pull in whatever is closest. Part of David's *fullness* here is related to him fixing his mind on the Word and works of God.

Colossians 3:2

² **Set your mind on things above**, not on things on the earth.

The difficulties of life are enough to sink anyone's ship. But look at what the Psalmist says in Psalm 77:

Psalm 77:11–12

¹¹ **I will remember** the **works of the Lord**;
Surely **I will remember Your wonders of old**.
¹² **I will also meditate** on all **Your work**,
And **talk of Your deeds**.

The highest and best thoughts we can have are accurate thoughts of God. And personal thoughts of God.

This does not mean that every single thought is about God...you couldn't live that way.

But it does mean that there is no thought absent of God...it is from Him life derives its meaning.

Matthew Henry

"Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind."

There is no doubt that the satisfaction of David's soul was directly tied to his thoughts and meditations on who God was, and what God did.

Psalm 63:7

⁷ **Because** You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

David knew whatever came, was ultimately Father-filtered. As he *meditated* on and *remembered* what God had already done for him, he was reminded of all that God already **helped** him with. As one commentator noted, *We would do well to read our own diaries.*

Though under the desert sky, he felt as though he was dwelling under cherubim's wings, *safe, secure, and **satisfied**.*

Romans 8:31–32

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Lastly, we look to our 4th characteristic of a life ***After God's Heart***.

4. A Pursuing Soul (8)

This 4th characteristic **is all about the pursuit**. David was a man **in pursuit of God**. It was the highest goal of his life to have as much of God as he possibly could!

Psalm 63:8

⁸ **My soul follows close behind You;**
Your right hand upholds me.

KJV - *My soul followeth hard after thee*

Follows Close – Cling to, Catch by pursuit, Follow Close, Joined Together, Stick, Pursue hard.

David is saying in one phrase that his soul was *in pursuit of God*, and he was *clinging to God*. He was holding tight to what he already had but continued the pursuit by seeking even more.

A pursuit of God is born out of a paradox. The moment someone comes to faith in Christ, theologically speaking, they have all of God. Yet, there should be something within them that desires to know Him more and more.

This is true of any relationship! This word we are studying is used in Genesis 2 concerning marriage. There will be no intimacy in a marriage that has no pursuit, or in a marriage that only has 1 person pursuing the other. **There must be a mutual pursuit. TRY IT! Just might save your marriage.**

As you look at your life, what would you say is your greatest pursuit?

I would submit that the fact that God created you at all is evidence enough that *He is pursuing you, are you pursuing Him?*

The apostle Paul testifies to this mentality of pursuit in Philippians 3. Paul was already saved, already walking with Jesus, already doing His will. But desired to do even more so.

Philippians 3:12–14

¹² **Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on**, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, **I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do**, forgetting those things which are behind and **reaching forward to those things which are ahead**, ¹⁴ **I press toward** the goal for the prize of the upward call of God **in Christ Jesus**.

Press on: Pursue, Follow after, Be given to, To run swiftly in order to catch someone or something.

Ultimately, Paul was in pursuit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we should strive for the same.

Tonight we saw these **4 characteristics** of a life *after God's heart*, as you take a moment to examine your own life and soul...are you: **Seeking Him? Worshipping Him? Satisfied by Him? Pursuing Him?**

I think the attitude and description of this was summarized well by Alexander Maclaren.

Alexander Maclaren

We can have as much of God as we desire...but the more we have of God, the more we long for Him, and the more we long for Him the more we possess Him.

May God grant each of us to have a heart that is after His, and may we respond to Him in seeking to have each of these characteristics at work in us.