DAVID
AFTER GOD'S HEART

A Man After God's Heart

In 1 Samuel 13:13-14, the prophet Samuel tells King Saul, who has alienated himself from God's favour, that "*the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and … appointed him to be ruler over his people.*" That man was David.

David is one of the most well-known and well-loved characters in the Bible. Jesus is the central character in Scripture, and David's life and reign play a key role in the overall story of who Jesus is and how God prepared for his entry into history.

David's heart for God, in all its complexity, is laid bare for us in the many Psalms that he wrote. The famous 19th century English Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon referred to the Book of Psalms as "The Treasury of David." Yet there is another treasury available to us as well - in the direct accounts of David's life.

Over the next couple of months Jamie and Tim will be bringing us a series of messages based on selected passages from 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. We have prepared this devotional guide to help you join us as we read together both some of the stories that have been written about David, and some of the Psalms that were written by him. Our passionate desire is to learn more about what it means to be a people after God's heart. And to become more fully the people who God sees when he looks at us.

All Scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

HEART

Sunday, May 3

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

David is Anointed by Samuel

REFLECTION

1. Knowing that he is to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king, Samuel assumes (at first) that it is to be Eliab, the eldest. Why might he have thought that?
2. Samuel is told "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Give some examples of how we tend to judge people by their outward appearances.
3. What are some of the ways in which this early story from David's life foreshadows the connection between David and his later descendant, Jesus?

PSALM 139

You knit me together in my mother's womb (13)

PRAYER

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (14)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts (23)

COURAGE

Sunday, May 10

1 SAMUEL 17

David and Goliath

REFLECTION

1. When David begins to ask the soldiers about Goliath, and why no one will fight him, his eldest brother Eliab comes down on him really hard. What do you think is behind this behaviour?
2. What is the basis for David's courage and confidence in facing Goliath? Why does he think he will defeat him?
3. David's defeat of Goliath defies the expectations of other characters in the story. In what ways does this foreshadow Jesus?

PSALM 27

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage (14)

PRAYER

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! (7)

Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies. (11)

INTEGRITY

Sunday, May 17

1 SAMUEL 24

David Spares Saul's Life

REFLECTION

1. Saul was out with an army, hunting David with the intention of killing him. Would it have been wrong for David to kill Saul? Immoral? Unjust? Unfair? Why or why not?
2. What are David's reasons for sparing Saul's life? What does the course of action that he chose tell us about what is important to him?
3. What does David's descendant Jesus teach his disciples about exercising one's rights against one's enemies? About the posture we should take toward those who seek to harm us?

PSALM 7

Oh Lord my God, in you I take refuge (1)

PRAYER

I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High (17)

DEPENDENCE

Sunday, May 24

1 SAMUEL 25

Abigail Saves Nabal – and David!

REFLECTION

1. When Abigail goes out to talk David down from his intention to kill Nabal and his men, she doesn't tell him anything that he doesn't already know. Why do her words cause him to change his course of action?
2. What does this story tell us about David's relationship with God? What lesson did it offer to David himself?
3. Can you think of a time when God needed to send an Abigail into your life? What was the lesson that you needed to learn?

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (1)

PRAYER

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me (4)

INTIMACY

Sunday, June 7

1 SAMUEL 30

David Strengthens Himself in the Lord

REFLECTION

1. Contrast this story with the story of David and Nabal and Abigail (1 Samuel 25). In both stories we find David about to take action to redress an offense against him and his men. What is different about the way he reacts this time?
2. Does the character of David remain the same or change over the course of his life story? If it changes, how does it change? Do you think that your relationship with God has changed your character? In what way?
3. In what sorts of situations do you personally tend to turn more toward God?

PSALM 4

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord (5)

PRAYER

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety (8)

WORSHIP

Sunday, June 14

2 SAMUEL 6

David Carries the Ark Into Jerusalem

REFLECTION

1. The account of this chapter from David's life offers a number of different lessons about the nature of worship. What are some of them?
2. David's exuberant joyfulness is starkly contrasted by his wife Michal's disapproval. What is the basis for her disapproval?
3. When you attend a public worship service, how self-conscious are you about how you act? Do you fear disapproval? Have you ever disapproved of the way in which someone else has acted?

PSALM 30

Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning (5)

PRAYER

Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O lord, be my helper! You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever. (10-12)

COMPASSION

Sunday, June 21

2 SAMUEL 9

David Shows Kindness to Mephibosheth

REFLECTION

1. Over the course of his life David had a turbulent relationship with Saul and his family and his household. Why do you think he wants to show kindness to someone from Saul's family?
2. David says that he wants to show Mephibosheth "God's kindness." What does this tell us about his relationship with God at this stage in his life?
3. Is there anyone in your life who has done something which has caused you to hold a grudge against them? What would it look like for you to show them "God's kindness?"

PSALM 103

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (8)

PRAYER

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits –
who forgives all your iniquity (1-3)

TEMPTATION & SIN

Sunday, June 28

2 SAMUEL 11

David and Bathsheba

REFLECTION

1. David is widely recognized as one of the great heroes of the Bible, and often referred to as "a man after God's heart." Yet in this story he is guilty of an escalating spiral of horrendously sinful behaviour. Lust, adultery, deceit, abuse of power, murder. How can we reconcile this story with the rest of what we know about him?
2. What does this story about David tell us about his relationship with God?
3. What does this story tell us about ourselves?

PSALM 38

For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me (4)

PRAYER

I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin (18)

Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation (21-22)

REPENTANCE

Sunday, July 5

2 SAMUEL 12

Nathan Confronts David

REFLECTION

1. Like Abigail, Nathan is a person who God uses to confront David with the truth about himself, and about his actions. How is Nathan's approach similar to or different from Abigail's?
2. What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?
3. David confesses and repents of his sins. Yet he still suffers from the heart-breaking consequences of his actions. Would you say that David is or isn't forgiven by God?

PSALM 51

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (17)

PRAYER

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. (10-11)

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