

Living with God by Heart



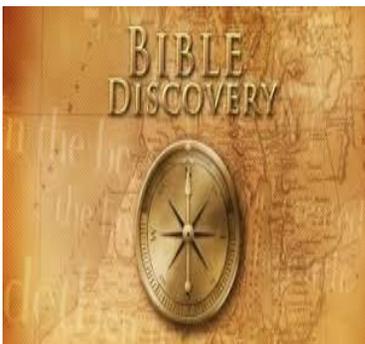
“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴ Parents do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”



Consider the Prophet Samuel treading down the path to the home of Jesse of Bethlehem to anoint a successor for King Saul. One by one Jesse parades seven of his tall, good-looking sons but the Lord is clear He’s not chosen any of them telling Samuel, *“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* [1 Samuel 16:7] When asked if these were all his sons, Jesse answers with seeming surprise, *“Well there’s still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.”* It’s this ruddy young man whom the Lord instructs to have anointed. It’s David – he who’d later be considered *a man after God’s own heart*.

As we consider living with God by heart, Chuck Swindoll writes, “When God scans the earth for potential leaders, He is not on a search for angels in the flesh. He is certainly not looking for perfect people, since there are none. He is searching for men and women like you and me, mere people made up of flesh. But He is also looking for people who share the same qualities He found in David. God is looking for men and women ‘*after His own heart*’” [1 Samuel 13:14].

We’re expected to effectively raise our children, work as worthy employees or caring employers. If we’re to live with God by heart we must understand it starts with effectively caring – developing a *love* relationship with God. Do you doubt being in a love relationship with the Lord your God, the Son who gave you life eternally with Him? Let’s check First John. The word “love” is found 53 times in the Epistle, 34 times in chapter 4:7 through 5:3 alone. Only the John’s Gospel speaks of God’s love more. Such love’s not "eros" - the passionate love one has for their spouse - it’s not sentimental, sensual or even social love; it’s "agape" - the supernatural love of God. Apostle Paul reminds us, *“...God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* [Romans 5:8].

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This is the love God puts in our hearts when we say YES to Christ as Saviour, when we’re indwelt by the Holy Spirit, receiving the nature of God. Only God makes it real; only God enables us to extend it to others. God’s love is always about showing concern for the well-being of others. It’s always seeking another’s benefit regardless of their worthiness of such love. The whole New Testament carries this message of the love of God.

But while 1 John says *“We love because He loved us”* it also tells us *“...anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”* That’s where the gospel compels us to love one another if we’re to live with God by heart. So today, our second trait to becoming God’s irresistible church is: LIVING HEART FIRST. It’s not living with the *me...me...me* edict of our modern society; it’s not

focusing on outward appearances such as we saw with King David's older brothers; it's looking to the heart of God and desiring to travel the pathways down which He alone leads us.

Today as we celebrate *Grandparent's Sunday*, this year's theme is "Do Something Grand". It's our call to grandparents and older adults – "grandfriends" to share your wisdom, perspectives and values with young people. It's our call to children, grandchildren and young adults to connect and serve with your grandparents or grandfriends in your community. It's our call to families to live from the heart providing a safe, loving environment for all who live in our homes and within our hearts as family. It's our recognition we believe each of us can and must do something grand for family every day of the year!

Today, in honouring our grandparents, it's fitting we consider living with God by heart. Obviously grandparents whose grandchildren live with them, often being raised by them, play vital roles. However, even as grandparents whose grandchildren don't live with us, we've a crucial role supporting our grandchildren's parents offering great resources - parenting tips, a listening ear, even affordable child care. Even if you're one of many with little contact with your grandchildren, your importance, the impact you bring to family, comes by living heart first. It's been aptly said, "*A mind will reach a mind, but only a heart will reach a heart.*"

Lest our non-grandparents feel you've escaped my attention and are losing focus, God directs all of us through Ephesians to reemphasize our hearts for the needs of one another – for children and parents, and for employees and employers – "...*doing the will of God from our heart!*" [vs. 6] We're called to "*serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord*" [vs. 7]. It's complying with God's command that whether employee or employer we behave the same way. It's a lesson for each of us. Just as God uses a heart focus to spiritually equip the family to grow, to love, and to support the family, and encourages workplace relationships, so too God directs our hearts to spiritually develop His Church. We find this here in the history of this place where our forefathers lived with God by heart. We find living with God by heart in our people today as we examine the commitment and blessing of service rendered in this place. As we focus on having a heart for where God's leading us, spiritually growing us, God moves our church forward.

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It means no "sacred cows" are safe. As multi-generational families seek to find ways to bring our generations together for the great benefit of our families, so we too look to trim anything which hampers spiritual growth, hampers living with God by heart. As grandparents serve as role models, teachers, nurturers, providers and mentors bringing physically, spiritually, and emotionally healthy relationships to others at the other end of the age spectrum in their families, so we too as Christ's body recognize the bond which is ours, individually and corporately leading one another to draw near to God.

**No "sacred" cows are safe!**

Where does that leave us today?

Foremost it means as God's Spirit equips and leads, being God's irresistible church depends on us following His lead. If we're walking with Christ, it's going to show. If we love our service in the church, no matter how large or small, then our place of service is going to sparkle and radiate, it will give glory to God, it will gladly give service to those He brings our way. When we serve by living with God by heart, rather than in drudgery - feeling compelled, we'll serve with overflowing hearts, not from an empty sense of duty.

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Using the example of grandparents; Arthur Kornhaber founding president of Foundation for Grandparenting, author of *The Grandparent Guide*, writes, “It’s the only relationship in which people are crazy about each other simply because they’re breathing”! Kornhaber says further, “Grandparents and grandchildren are hard-wired to connect in ways different from parents and children. They’ve this adoration and unconditional love and joy in one another’s existence.” Applying Kornhaber’s description to God’s church, becoming “hardwired”, being “crazy” about one another simply because we’re breathing, finding such unconditional adoration, love and spontaneous joy in serving with God’s people, we’re encouraged to undertake

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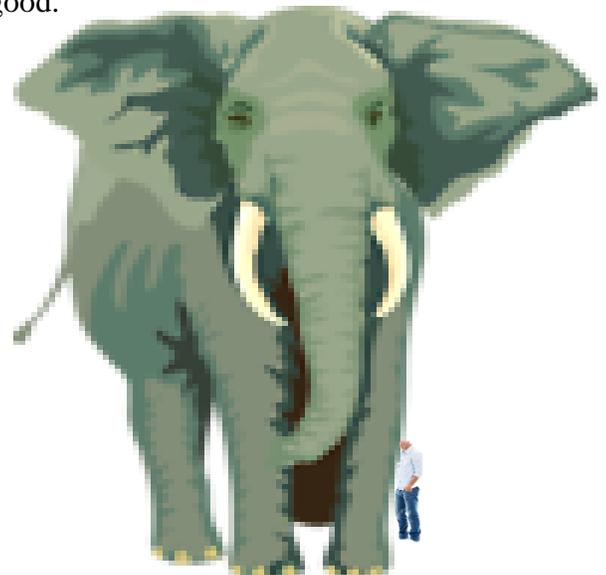
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the process of living heart first in our own lives. Does this take effort? Absolutely! But let me warn you - anytime something requires exertion, people step out the side door quickly – and very early! However, if we would really live lives with God by heart, if we would chose to depend on God for direction following His example, demonstrated in His Son Jesus, if we would let living heart first affect our work, our relationships, our church what then? All things are possible if our hearts are in it! Together with Paul we can say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” [Philippians 4:13] However, living with God by heart doesn’t occur accidently. It’s only by a vigilant commitment from everyone. Good News: we can live this way because God’s Holy Spirit dwells within us!

We see this Good News lived out through 3 distinct characteristics if we’re willing to live with God by heart...

- 1) **Quick to forgive** – Living with God by heart overlooks flaws and crooked teeth; it loves despite circumstance and difficulty. Its focus is on what’s internal, not the outer dressing. It’s mentally and emotionally forgiving those who’ve wronged them – even without the other seeking forgiveness. Because of living in freedom through grace, forgiven by Christ’s sacrificial love; because of no longer designed to hold grudges, those who live with God by heart have a lightness in their step, a spiritual buoyancy that comes from no longer carrying all that extra baggage.
- 2) **Capacity to Receive Godly Correction** - Living with God by heart welcomes improvement even when requiring repeated corrections to get us where we need to be. The Holy Spirit uses this to free us from deeply ingrained habits working on us a little at a time. As when driving a car, we need to make corrections to remain in the center of our lane, we too need to receive Godly correction, and recognizing this, receive it with humility realizing God does this for our good.
- 3) **Live a Surrendered Life** – While this may seem obvious it requires to be restated. Living with God by heart means willingly yield our plans to God’s will for our lives. Along with the Psalmist we’re to understand that having God give us the desires of our heart comes from having our delight in the Lord. [Psalm 37:4]

I love the words of Mother Teresa who surrendered to God’s will for her life, living out her famous words, “*In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.*” People who live like that yield their agendas, their great ideas, their destinations to God. I’m not suggesting it’s easy to do. We’ve each preconceived ideas of what God wants in



order to do His miraculous work through us as His body. We've each a concept of where God is leading us. And those notions don't always agree.

It may be we're looking at the elephant in the room with blinders on – each seeing a different portion and having a completely different idea of what we're seeing. While we lack seeing the whole, we know the One who has the whole picture clearly laid out. That's why we require to be living with God by heart and to follow where He is leading us.

Blessings,

Pastor Dave