

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

January 11, 2026

A Heart After God – The Story of David

“Devoted Heart”

1 Samuel 16:1-13

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The New York Times reported in an article in March 2024 that one-third of U.S. adults said they would probably or definitely take a drug to prevent or reverse graying if such a medication were approved. Some endorse eating black sesame seeds and blackstrap molasses to reverse graying. Others take liquid chlorophyll or douse their hair in onion juice. In online forums, posts about reversing grays can draw hundreds of replies. Humans have been trying to chase away gray for millennia. Clay tablets from the Assyrian Empire dated to the 7th Century B.C. mention using the gall of a black ox, cypress oil, licorice, and honey to turn gray hair black. Ancient Egyptians applied oil cooked with the blood of a black calf, according to the 3,500-year-old Ebers Papyrus. Evidently, it didn't work, otherwise we would be still doing it today. Tech entrepreneur Bryan Johnson, who is spending millions experimenting on himself to slow aging, posted a YouTube video detailing his regimen to reverse hair loss and graying; the video has nearly 700,000 views. Johnson, 46, uses two topical treatments. One contains an herbal extract that, Johnson acknowledges, has colored his hair. But he says something is reversing his grays. When he has looked closely at plucked hairs, he says color has returned to some of them. What is working? He isn't sure. Johnson's routine also includes more than 50 supplements daily and trips to a Honduran island for \$25,000 gene-therapy injections. Are we consumed with our outward appearance or what? Obviously, most of us do not go as far as this person does to look younger than we are. I am not critical of those who don't like gray hair and therefore color their hair. There is nothing wrong with caring about your physical appearance and doing what you can to look your best. I would ask us, though, are we as concerned with our inner self as we are with our outward appearance? Do we dedicate the same time and attention to taking care of our inner self as we do to our outward appearance? In this sermon series we will learn from some highlights and lowlights of the shepherd king David, as to what it looks like to have a heart after God.

GOD SEES AND SEARCHES OUR HEARTS

What we first learn from David is **God Sees and Searches Our Hearts**. Before David came on to the scene, God was the Israelites' one and only King. God delegated the oversight of His people to judges who were meant to lead the people according to God's will, but most of the judges were corrupt and led the nation in the ground. In time the Israelites told God that they wanted more than judges. They wanted a human king like

all the other nations around them. God heard their complaints and gave the Israelites exactly for what they asked. God then directed Samuel, who was a priest and prophet of God, to anoint Saul to be their first king. Saul was everything the people were looking for in their job description of a great king: tall, handsome, strong and hailed from the tribe of Benjamin. At first, Saul looked like the perfect king, who was godly, courageous and had great success in leading the Israelites to win battles against their enemies. Eventually, Saul became consumed with his power and success which led to him becoming proud and full of himself. Saul was so impressed with himself that he no longer consulted God and in fact rebelled against God's will. Saul's heart had become corrupt as he drifted farther and farther way from God. Look what happened when God finally had enough and decided it was time to make a change:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”
The Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’³ ***Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”***

4 Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

5 Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”⁹ ***Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the Lord chosen this one.”***¹⁰ ***Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The Lord has not chosen these.”***¹¹ ***So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”***

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

God came to Samuel and told Him to stop being depressed about Saul's evil rule over God's people. God then directed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to a man named Jesse who has a son God has chosen to be the new king over Israel. When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, he performed a purification sacrifice for Jesse and his family, he couldn't help but notice Jesse's son, Eliab, whom because of his outward appearance, Samuel thought Eliab must be the one. God then corrected Samuel by saying, *“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.”* When the Old Testament refers to the heart as in this instance it is referring to more than the physical heart as being the generator of physical life, the center of our intellect and emotional life and also as the place where we make choices that are motivated by our desires. Heart then refers to the center of all parts of our human existence or the very soul of who we are deep within ourselves.

God has the ability to do something we as limited human beings cannot do. God 100% accurately sees what is in the heart of every person. Even the best psychologist or the best x-ray machine cannot see deep within and accurately assess the heart of a person. Thankfully, God never judges us by our outward appearance, hairstyle, skin color, weight, physical attractiveness, gender, our financial status, level of education, job, or our many accomplishments. God sees who we really are at the deepest level of the most hidden recesses of our hearts.

A rather well-built man saw an advertisement for a job at the zoo. When he went there, he was horrified to find that the only job they had open was for somebody to play the part of a monkey. A lot of children were coming in the next few days, and the zoo, having no monkeys, needed someone to impersonate one. Since money was tight, the man decided he would take the job. He arrived before sunrise, got into the monkey outfit, and slipped into his cage. Finally, day dawned, and the children came. All he had to do was pace the floor, look rather adept at swinging between trees, and eat the peanuts and bananas whenever they were fed to him. After 8 or 10 hours, he became thoroughly exhausted. The bananas were getting the better of him. As he swung from one tree to another, rather nauseated, he slipped and fell into the lion's den next door.

He shouted, "Help! Help!" The lion then leaned over and said, "If you don't be quiet, we'll both lose our jobs."

Our physical appearance can be deceptive and hide who we really are deep in our hearts. But God cannot be deceived as He sees who we really are in our hearts. As King David himself admitted in *Psalm 139:1*, "*O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.*" We may fool each other by our outward appearances, but God knows who we truly are in our hearts.

GOD IS LOOKING FOR A HEART AFTER GOD

What then was it that God saw in David's heart that led God to choose David to be the next king? What was God looking for in David's heart that He is looking for in all of our hearts? ***God is Looking for a Heart After God.*** Evidently Samuel must have told Jesse what his primary purpose for being there was and therefore Jesse had seven of his sons come and meet Samuel to interview for the job of Israel's next king. But God showed Samuel He had not chosen any of these. Samuel was probably getting worried and desperate when he asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Evidently, Jesse had not even considered his youngest as a candidate, but Samuel had him get the youngest from the fields where he was watching the sheep. When the handsome, youngest of eight brothers, David, came into sight, God immediately told Samuel to anoint him. Even David's father overlooked him as a candidate, yet God had chosen him. Samuel poured the oil over his head with all the people watching this event, knowing well that this meant that he was anointed as King over all God's people. Imagine the shock of David's family that one of their own and the one whom even dad considered to be the least of the brothers is chosen to be the next king.

A few chapters earlier in *1 Samuel 13:14*, we are given insight about what was so special about David's heart which led God to choose him. Through Samuel, God told King Saul, "*But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.*" Saul's heart had become disobedient and corrupt whereas David had a heart that would follow wherever God would lead. This point is so important that the Apostle Paul said in *Acts 13:22*, "*But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do."*" God looks at our heart to see if it is tender, moldable, a life that is submitted God's will and apparently David's was.

In 1914, not long after the sinking of the Titanic, Congress convened a hearing to discern what happened in another nautical tragedy. In January of that year, in thick fog off the Virginia coast, the steamship Monroe was rammed by the merchant vessel Nantucket and eventually sank. Forty-one sailors lost their lives in the frigid winter waters of the Atlantic. While it was Osmyn Berry, captain of the Nantucket, who was arraigned on charges, in the course of the trial, Captain Edward Johnson was grilled on the stand for over five hours. During cross-examination it was learned, as

the New York Times reported, that Captain Johnson “navigated the Monroe with a steering compass that deviated as much as 2 degrees from the standard magnetic compass. He said the instrument was sufficiently true to run the ship, and that it was the custom of masters in the coastwise trade to use such compasses. His steering compass had never been adjusted in the one year he was master of the Monroe.” The faulty compass that seemed adequate for navigation eventually proved otherwise. This realization partly explains a heartrending picture recorded by the Times: “Later the two Captains met, clasped hands, and sobbed on each other's shoulders.” The sobs of these two burly seamen are a moving reminder of the tragic consequences of misorientation. The reminder for us is this: if the heart is like a compass ... then we need to (regularly) calibrate our hearts, tuning them to be directed to the Creator, our magnetic north. David's heart was calibrated to God, his true north.

How Do WE CULTIVATE A HEART AFTER GOD?

How do we become a woman or man whose heart is after God? **How Do We Cultivate a Heart After God?** The **first step** is to admit about ourselves what is true about all of us, what Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, “⁹*The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?* ¹⁰*But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.*” David didn't have a perfect heart when God chose him, nor do any of us. We all have hearts that have been corrupted by the destructive power sin, all of us! If we hope to cultivate our hearts to be after God, we first need to **admit that we have spiritual heart disease**. The **second step** to cultivating a heart after God is to **turn to God to heal our sin-sick hearts**. The only way our hearts can be healed is if we turn to God and say as David wrote in *Psalm 139:23-24*, “²³*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* ²⁴*Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*” Let us be vulnerable before God and ask God to search every part of our heart and to remove anything that is contrary to His will. The leads to the **third step** to cultivate a heart after God and that is to **daily, regularly, continually invite God to change our hearts**.

In 2013, Netflix ventured into new television territory by releasing all 13 episodes of their new show “House of Cards.” Even Netflix was shocked by how many viewers watched multiple episodes in one sitting. Although “House of Cards” was 13 hours long, Netflix reported thousands of viewers consumed the entire series in the first weekend of its release. A later Netflix poll of TV streamers found that 61% defined their viewing style as watching two to six episodes at a time. Grant McCracken, an anthropologist paid by Netflix to investigate (and promote) the habit, reported that “TV viewers are no longer zoning out as a way to forget about their day, **they are tuning in, on their own schedule, to a different world. Getting immersed in multiple episodes** or even multiple seasons of a show over a few weeks is a new kind of escapism that is especially welcome to today.” This new habit of viewing TV morphed into a new word—binge-watching. Notice the phrases used to describe what we are doing when we binge-watch a show—“**tuning in ... to a different world**” and “**Getting immersed in**

multiple episodes.” That is how we should describe our life with God. When we use the various spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, studying the Bible, worshipping together, serving, and so much more, we are tuning in to God, getting immersed in God. None of these spiritual disciplines will magically transform our hearts but they do put us in a place where we are constantly immersing our lives in God’s presence where God, by His grace, will do what *Deuteronomy 30:6* says, “*The Lord your God will change your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live!*”

I invite you to join with me in 2026 to invite God to align our hearts with His heart, to align our will, thoughts, feelings, intentions, motives, desires, perspective, world view, and our actions, with God’s. That is the heart that God is looking for in each one of us. Will you join me in giving yourself to God so that your heart will be fully aligned with His heart.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *A Godward Heart*, John Piper
- *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard

Icebreaker Questions

1. If you could instantly change one outward thing about yourself and one inward thing about yourself, which would you choose, and why?
2. What's something people often assume about you based on appearances that doesn't reflect what's actually in your heart?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. The sermon begins with our culture's obsession with reversing gray hair. In what ways do you see that same mindset shaping how people approach faith or spirituality?
2. Why do you think God intentionally chose someone overlooked, even by his own family, to be king? What does that say about how God evaluates people today?
3. The sermon defines the heart as the center of intellect, emotions, desires, and choices. Which of those areas do you find hardest to fully surrender to God?
4. The faulty compass illustration highlights subtle misalignment. What are some small, "acceptable" compromises that can slowly misdirect our hearts away from God?
5. Saul looked impressive but drifted into disobedience, while David pursued God despite imperfections. What warning does Saul's story offer mature believers or church leaders?
6. Which of the three steps, admitting heart disease, inviting God to search your heart, or daily immersion in God's presence, do you most need to lean into this season?
7. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
8. How might this group pray for you this week?