

## A Man After God's Own Heart

June 26, 2016

If you've ever attended Sunday School as a child, then you know as well as anyone, the story of David and Goliath:

- How David, as a young shepherd slew the giant with one stone and a simple slingshot... And how he grew up to be a great king in Israel.
- But, as we began talking about last week, there is so much more to David's story.

Beyond all his dismal failures or profound accomplishments, what marks David's life is **his ability to freely receive the passion of God's heart** for him even in his weaknesses...

- to freely accept that even the worst of his struggles would not invalidate his relationship with God.
- David's story points not so much to a man, but to a God whose love is more extravagant and rich than we could ever understand.

That's why he could write with such confidence in **Psalm 23**, "*Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.*"

- He didn't believe he would never struggle again... he simply believed that **through those struggles & challenges**, God's goodness & love would never dim.
- With all of his heart, David believed in God's unfailing love... he believed in the passion of God's heart for him.

In **Psalm 147:11**, we read a song that he wrote in worship to God... where he writes, "*The Lord delights in those... who put their hope in His unfailing love.*"

- He lived with a confidence that he was the object of the Father's delight... that the Father's love would never fail... we see this running throughout the Psalms...
  - o *Your love is ever before me (Ps 26:3)*
  - o *Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens (36:5)*
  - o *How priceless is your unfailing love (36:7)*
  - o *Your love is better than life (63:3)*
  - o *You are good and Your love endures forever (100:5)*

And so, this morning, I want to talk about what it was that allowed David to experience this kind of intimacy with God.

- But before I focus in on that, I want to talk a little bit about what can so easily keep us from walking in that kind of intimacy ourselves.
- So, let's just **stop for a moment to pray** as we move forward.

As you read through the first few chapters of the Bible, you'll see in **Genesis 3**, just how God walked together with Adam through the Garden each day... how they just hung out together!

- Whatever Adam did, he **did** with God. Wherever Adam went, he **went** with God. Whatever Adam felt, he **felt** with God.
- Amongst so many other wonderful things, they were **inseparable friends**.

But one day all that changed. One day, God shows up like He had every day before that... except this time, Adam isn't there. And so, **God calls out**, "*Adam, where are you?*"

- But when Adam hears God calling him, we're told that he hid from God behind some trees.
- So God calls out to him again... "*Adam, where are you?*"
- But this time Adam answers Him, "***I heard you in the garden and I was afraid b/c I was naked, so I hid.***" (Gn. 3:10)

Because of his disobedience and sin, that perfect fellowship he once enjoyed each and every day with God was broken.

- And, in that moment, the **peace & joy** he once experienced in his relationship with God were replaced by **fear & shame**.
- And in his shame, what did he do? **He hid from God**. And that drive toward hiddenness has been with us ever since.

You see, in a very real way, **shame demands secrecy & darkness...**

- Though, we can **either respond to that shame by hiding from Him...** or by **coming out** from behind the bushes into the Father's loving and forgiving arms.
- In the Book of James, James talks about confessing our sins one to another.

You see, there's something very powerful that happens when we step out of our hiding.

- In Revelation 12, for example, **John calls satan** the “accuser of the brethren.”
- Well, when we come out of our secrecy through confession, for example... when we come out of hiding, we take away his power to accuse!

Truth is, there are **times** in my life when I respond to my “stuff” by running as fast as I can into God’s loving embrace.

- And yet there are **other times when I go into hiding...**
- When I choose to hide from God rather than step out from behind my sin or whatever I may be struggling with...
- Somehow **not wanting to expose my unloveliness** to a God whom I know to be so lovely and good.

Like you, I believe God is with me... and yet, **as much** as I would love to live in the intimacy of His presence all the time,

- the truth is that there are times when I’ll choose **hiddenness over intimacy.**
- To be honest, for me personally, it’s not that I’m trying to hide from God as much as I’m **trying to avoid dealing with** whatever it is I’m struggling with.
- And, **because God requires transparency and authenticity,** I **choose to remain hidden from Him** rather than having to deal with my “stuff” ...
- choosing to hide from Him **rather than live in the grace & love & tenderness** He so desires to lavish over me.

I read about a 3-year-old girl named **Marissa** some time ago who was playing with her grandmother’s garden hose...

- getting herself and everything around her completely soaked.
- So, her grandmother **gently asks her to stick with her task** of watering the flowers.
- But Marissa can’t get away from this incredible new discovery... that if you mix water together with dirt, you get this amazing, fun-to-play-with *stuff* called MUD!

Of course, her grandma told her not to put water on the dirt because the mud will turn everything into a big mess.

- But, **do you think that stopped Marissa** from making mud? No. In fact, she felt a deep calling to make even more mud. In fact...

- She made **mud cakes**, mud **hot chocolate**, mud **candy**... all the normal stuff you make with mud!

Well, as her grandmother was just about to turn around to see what Marissa was up to, she shouted out to her, ***“Don’t look at me, grandma... don’t look at me, ok?”***

- So her grandmother, who **apparently is a bit passive** when it comes to discipline, said, ***“ok,”*** and went back to her reading.
- You see, **even the tender soul of a little child** expresses this **innate desire** to be **unobserved** in our wrong.
- That’s why that out of all the prayers we offer most frequently, the **one that we least acknowledge making**, is... ***“Don’t look at me, God.”***
- ***“I heard you were in the garden. I was afraid so I hid. Don’t look at me God.”***

A businessman on the road checks into a motel room late at night. He opens his laptop to check his email but the thought just comes to him...

- ***“Maybe, just for a second or two, I’ll check out some porn.”*** **His wife will never know...** no one will never know.
- And to make sure of that, his browser will let him do all the searching in secrecy.
- And why? Because **darkness requires hiddenness** in order to exist. ***“Go ahead, nobody will know.”***
- But before you start watching those clips, you’ll have to say that little prayer first: ***“Don’t look at me, God.”***

You **take credit at work** for something someone else did... ***“God, don’t look at me.”*** You **flirt with a guy** you know is totally wrong for you... ***“Don’t look at me, God.”***

- A **student at school** who is struggling through her test all-of-a-sudden realizes that the paper next to her is in clear view.
- A church attendee, who wants so badly to heap a whole-lot-of judgment on somebody else, just lets them have it.
- The couple who claims to follow God but refuses to give up sleeping together.

You can do any of those things, **but first you have to say a little prayer:** ***“Don’t look at me, God.”***

- **You don’t say it out loud**, of course. You don’t admit it even to yourself. But it’s the choice your heart makes.

- Have you ever done that? Is it something you're saying to God right now in your life?

Maybe you've been feeling so far away from God... and whether it is the **struggle you're having** with a particular sin

- **OR** the **apathy you may be feeling toward it...**
- Those feelings **of shame & unloveliness** you feel right now... unless you choose to face up to those issues before God... *will* always cause you to hide rather than to run to Him.
- So, what keeps us from that human tendency toward hiddenness?

Well, a lot of that is driven by our understanding of who God really is... His goodness & faithfulness, for example

- In Romans 2, Paul says that *"it's His kindness that leads us to repentance."*
- You see, for Paul, **knowing the Father's love & delight** compels Him to step out of hiding, back into the Father's loving arms.

I remember hiding under the bed from my mom and dad after doing something I shouldn't have.

- What would make me come out of hiding... especially when I knew that I'd get punished?
- Well, it was the simple belief that my mom and dad loved me... that I could trust who they were.

It's what compels us to run to God when our natural inclination might be to hide from God.

- There's just no way I can experience a rich, intimacy relationship with my parents while hiding under the bed
- You see, our own hiddenness is one of the biggest hindrances we have to experiencing the closeness of God in the everyday moments of our lives.

It's true that in our **shame & guilt**, hiddenness becomes a natural response of a sinful man or woman before a holy God.

- But when we get a hold of His grace & mercy... then that **natural response to hide in the face of our sin & struggles** will begin to dim
- as we **learn the freedom & joy of being known and loved by God in our weaknesses.**

He's here this morning inviting you out from behind whatever you might be hiding behind...

- *Will you come be with me? Will you **step out of the shadows and out of the darkness?** Will you do that?"*
- *Will you be willing to just stop and say, "All right, God. It's really hard for me. The truth is, God, there's a big part of me that doesn't want you present in this part of my life, but I'm willing to surrender.*
- *I'd rather let go of whatever it is, my anger, my addiction, my pride, my junk. **I'd rather let go of that, God, than let go of you.***

For me, there is no one in the Bible who had to face up to these issues more than David.

- With all of his issues and struggles, David... more than anyone... could have chosen to hide from God...
- And yet, perhaps more than anyone in the Bible, he discovered the **freedom of being known & loved by God in his weakness and shame.**
- **It's why David was considered to be, in Acts 13:22, a "man after God's own heart."**

But what is so interesting to me is that Luke, the author of Acts, not only describes David as that man after God's own heart... but goes on to say that **"David did all of God's will."**

- The thing is... if you know anything about David, there were times in his life where he **didn't even come close** to living life according to God's will.
- And yet, Luke **understood David's life through the broader lens of the Father's love & mercy.**

In **1 Samuel 13**, with Saul still reigning as king over Israel, we're told that **"God sought for Himself a man after His own heart."**

- It's easy to read right past this... but the truth is that these kinds of verses give us insight into the **passionate longings** of the Father's heart.
- The ultimate lover of all of life... is **seeking after... searching for** something for Himself...
- But, **what would God seek after for Himself?** What would a king of Kings seek after? A 60" curved 4k ultra-HD TV? A dream vacation to the Caribbean?
- What would God... what would the **King of Kings** be seeking after?

In **John 4:23**, we read that God is seeking after worshippers... lovers who *not only* express their love to Him but who **open their hearts to receive the depth of His love** toward them.

- He is seeking men & women who will **receive into their hearts & minds** the simple reality that He delights in them...
- **that you trigger** in the heart of the Father a love that you will never understand!

I don't think anything touches the Father's Heart more than **when we are able to receive & live in the truth of His endless love** toward us...

- **When we're able to understand what David wrote in Psalm 149... that "The Lord delights in His people."**
- Guys... how engrained is it in your heart of hearts that God delights in you... **that He enjoys you??**
- How many of you know that God ENJOYS you? That He LOVES your company? That He DELIGHTS in listening to you?

Do you remember the **last time you felt the longing of love**... desperate for that love to be received and reciprocated?

- Well, know that **that longing is but a dim shadow** of the love that fills God's heart.
- When you feel the pang and longing of love... it is a faint, passing glimpse into the impassioned, intense love that is in the heart of God for you and I.

In fact, David describes the heart of God for us in **Psalm 36:8** as **"The River of God's Delight"**.

- The River of God's Delight is that place where **love never fails**, where **love never dims** or **abandons**... where love is **always patient and kind**...
- It's that place of **walking in fellowship** with the Holy Spirit... that place of **living out** the Spirit-directed, Spirit-inspired life.
- You see, God is searching for men and women whose desire is to make their rest in the River of His Delight!

You know... many people believe that what God is searching for... what God is seeking after... are men and women who will follow His commandments.

- But, as **important** as obedience to the Father is, **I don't believe it's the ultimate characteristic** of a man or woman after God's own heart.

- If not... then what is? What does it mean to be a man or woman after God's own heart?
- What is it that allows us to *not simply talk about the River* but jump in the river ourselves?

I think there are four central characteristics of what made David, and makes us, men and women after God's own heart.

- And, I believe that to the degree we are able to understand and receive what I'm sharing here...
- **To that degree** will we be able to end that tendency to hide from God...
- And begin living the kind of Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed, Spirit-empowered *life-in-the-river* that Jesus promised.

### 1. Being a person after God's heart means first & foremost understanding the passion of God's heart for us even in our weaknesses.

I believe that throughout David's life, even through the worse of seasons, David lived with a confidence regarding God's desire for Him!

- David knew the heart of God... He lived with a profound understanding that he was the delight of his Father...
- that God loved Him... and that God's kindness, mercy, and desire for Him would never dim.
- If you were to **interview God** about why David was made an archetype of **the kind of person the Father desires us to be**, I think He would say,
- *"That David... he's something alright! But how uniquely... how profoundly he understands my desire and delight for Him... for all people. He knows My heart."*

In **Psalm 103:4**, David writes that God has crowned us with loving-kindness and Tender Mercy.

- David has been anointed as King over Israel... his crown has earned him unimaginable wealth and power.
- But the crown David ultimately wore... his **favorite crown**... was the crown of God's mercy & kindness in his life.
- David defined his life through the lens of God's mercy... rather than his title or accomplishments or his struggles.

So, let me ask you... do you struggle to embrace God's heart for you in the face of your weaknesses and sin?

- **Deuteronomy 7:8** says, "*The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations!* <sup>8</sup>*Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you...*"
- I know I've said this to you so many times before... but guys... **we don't have to be lovely to ourselves to be lovely to God.**
- It's God's grace... God's unmerited favor poured out on our lives.

## **2. The second thing that I believe defined what God meant when He called David a man after His own heart was David's confidence in God's mercy even in his sin and weakness.**

Reading the Psalms... especially in their historical context... shows just how resilient David is in the grace and mercy of God.

- In **Psalm 18**, for example, we read about how David had just come out of 7 painful years running and hiding from Saul.
- In fact, David had **just spent the last 16 months hiding in Philistia** from the **3000 assassins** Saul had commissioned to find and kill him.
- He was warned by a prophet named Gad to return to Israel... but **David was just too afraid...** too afraid to follow God... too afraid to be the leader God had called him.

And yet, even during this time, he writes in **Psalm 56:8**, "***You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.***"

- David was living in disobedience and in fear... And yet, He knew in his heart of hearts that the **Father's mercy surrounded** him.
- He knew that God was there... even in his despair; He understood the essential heart of God...
- "*David... I saw every tear you shed... I saw the despair that gripped you... the compromise that overcame you... **but I saw your cries for deliverance.** Your men may see you as a hypocrite... but your tears are stored in my bottle... written in my book.*"

Then David writes in **verse 9**, "***This one thing I know... that God is for me!***"

- You see David **continued to have confidence** in the love, mercy, and goodness of God **even when he struggled** in his sin and disobedience.

- Now some people may hear what I'm saying here as being "weak" on sin... or as giving license to sin.
- And yet, David knew that **as much as his sin grieved the heart of God**, that God's mercy and love would not end.
- It's why David wrote in **Psalm 55**, "*It's Your kindness, Lord, that leads us to repentance.*"

Still, David lived out these last 16 months in fear... not only of Saul's assassins, but the Amalekites who had captured some of his family...

- the Philistines who were now beginning to turn against him, as well as his own men who were turning on him.
- David's own fear, compromise, and unbelief is like a flood of water drowning him... so he writes **Psalm 69:1-2**, **"Save Me, O Lord, for the floodwaters are up to my neck..."**
- "*I can't deliver myself from my own inward fears... the rivers are overwhelming me...!*"
- And in that moment David writes, in **Psalm 18:16**, that "*He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew me out of deep waters.*"

Now delivered from these 7 years of running, David is finally made king... and there to interview him was Bill O'Reilly.

- "*David, in spite of the fact that all your enemies have been beaten... after all you've done, you're still made King... why did that happen?*"
- Well, David says, in **vs. 19**, **"Because His mercies never end! Because He really delights in me."**
- "*But David, you've been disobeying the prophets, your own men haven't liked you, you've been living in a foreign land. In light of the last 16 months, why do you think you've made it where you are?*"
- **"B/c I knew that God was FOR ME!"**

In fact, at the end of **verse 35**, David writes, **"Father... your gentleness has made me great."** "*Thank you Lord for being gentle with me when I was stumbling.*"

- He builds on this in **Ps 130:3-4**, "*If You, O Lord, kept a record of our sins, O Lord, who could stand? But God doesn't record them... He washes them with forgiveness!*"
- So, let me ask you... does your confidence in God's love and mercy toward you grow dim against the backdrop of your sin and struggles and weaknesses?
- "*You delight in showing unfailing love.*" Micah 7:18

**3. The third thing that I believe defined what God meant when He called David a man after His own heart was David's confidence that his struggles did not invalidate his walk with God.**

Believe me, if you were struggling & stumbling through life the way David was for those last 16 months of hiding,

- not only those around you... but Satan would be there to whisper in your ear... what a **hopeless hypocrite** you are.
- But David says, *“forget it... I'm a lover of God... and God loves me... He has delighted in me. Even though I shed those tears of fear and regret while in hiding... He loved me every step of the way... He desired me... and His gentleness has made me great.”*
- “This crown I will be given as king over Israel means nothing to me compared to the **crown of His kindness and tender mercy.**

That why he wrote in **Psalm 69:9** that *“Passion for YOUR house, Lord, fills my heart.”*

- But just remember that he's saying that against the backdrop of **verse 5**, where he wrote, *“I'm a fool and I'm sinning in a hidden way.”*
- In other words, ... *“My zeal, my genuine love and passion for You is not invalidated b/c I'm struggling in weakness.”*
- That's why David can talk about his zeal in **vs. 9** in the same sentence as he talks about his sin in **vs. 5-6.**

My failure today does not invalidate what is in my heart. So many people invalidate their love for God b/c of their struggles.

- Peter certainly felt this away after he betrayed Jesus three times. He felt like a hopeless hypocrite... but he wasn't.
- It's why Jesus went right to Peter after His resurrection... and asked Peter three times, *“Do you love Me?”*
- You see, Jesus already knew the answer... and yet, He was wanting to validate Peter's heart toward Him... **Not** for His sake... but for Peter's!

Are you struggling with something in your life right now... perhaps with something that is making you feel like a hypocrite... someone too unlovely for God to love?

- Guys... its time we took hold of this truth... and digest it once and for all. **That our walk with God is not invalidated b/c of the struggles we face.**
- You see, without really understanding this, **our response to our sin and struggles will always be to run from God...** to hide from Him... rather than run **to** Him.
- But, as strong as that desire to hide might be... will you choose to freely receive the passion of God's heart for you in your weakness?

David begins **Psalm 69** crying out to God... "*Save me O Lord for the waters have come up to my neck where there is no standing.*"

- He is about to drown spiritually. "*Lord, help me. I can't deliver myself... the water is up to my neck.*"
- This is what Jesus experienced in the Cross... "*Father would you remove the cup.*"
- **If the Father had said Yes to Jesus, He would have had to say No to us in our weakness and brokenness.**
- **You see, the Father said No to Jesus so He could say Yes to us.**

**There is marvelous kindness and grace... that fills up the Heart of God...**  
it's the River of Delight!

- The River of God's delight is always available through Jesus to whosoever would drink of it...
- To whomever would **step out from whatever they're hiding behind...** into His incredible embrace.

#### **4. The fourth thing that I believe defined what God meant when He called David a man after His own heart was David's deep desire to walk in obedience.**

Look in just the first section of **Psalm 119**... <sup>11</sup>*I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you...* <sup>40</sup>*I long to obey your commandments!* <sup>47</sup>*How I delight in your commands! How I love them!"*

I mentioned earlier how Luke, in Acts 13, not only defines David as a man after God's own heart, but he goes on to say that "*David did all of God's will.*"

- And I shared that Luke was able to say that b/c **he understood David's life through the lens of the Father's love and mercy...** expressed ultimately through the Cross.

- You see, because Jesus took, on His own back, the wrath of God, we get to live in River of God's Delight.
- Without Jesus, we would remain in our brokenness and our sin... but because of Jesus, "*There is*" as Paul says in **Romans 8**, "*now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!*"

And so, when David cries out to God, "**Hear me O Lord...**" He isn't saying, "Hear me b/c of my sincerity" ... or "Hear me b/c of my dedication."

- But rather, He cries out, "**Hear me O Lord according to YOUR lovingkindness.**"
- We cry out to God even in the midst of our struggles, weaknesses, and sin because we know His essential nature... because **we know we are His delight...**
- Because we believe that His love and mercy and goodness will never grow dim.

It's what allows us to come out from behind our hiddenness and climb back onto the Father's lap.

- And guys, if you have any doubt whether this is for you, then listen to the words of God in **Isaiah 55:3**.
- He says, "***I will make a covenant with you... I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David.***"
- So, does God value our obedience? Does He love our commitment to walk according to His laws and precepts? Of course.

But understand that a life of true obedience comes only after we have found our way into the River of God's Delight!

- Paul writes in **Romans 2:4**, "***Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?***"
- **So... what leads us to live a life of obedience?** An understanding of the River of God's pleasure and delight.

Seriously guys... what it is it that will lead us to walk in humility and purity and obedience?

- It's His kindness... it's our embrace of His love over us in our lives!
- What will lead us toward greater prayer in our lives? **What motivates me to pray** is the realization that God enjoys having me in His presence...
- That He enjoys my company... that He delights in listening to me!

- I like the way R.T. Kendall says it in his book, “Did You Think to Pray.” In it, he writes,

*“I hate the thought of being a bore. I hate wasting people's time. I can sometimes tell by the look on their faces if they are not happy to see me. I fear rejection. And if I'm not careful, I can carry this fear of rejection right into the presence of God, assuming I am boring to Him too. Why should God care about me? Why should He listen to what I have to say? And why should He like my company? It is such a dazzling thought, that the same God who has countless billions of angels worshipping Him 60 seconds a minute, day and night, to whom the nations are but a drop in the bucket and who knows all about every leaf on every tree in the world, also welcomes my company—because I am important to Him.”*

In fact, in **John 7:38**, Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit would flow from within us like “rivers of living water”

- But it's up to us whether we want to sit on the shoreline with just our feet dangling in the river...
- Or, whether we jump in **only to stay in the safety of the current-less safety** of shallow river's edge.

But, guys... the JOY... the ADVENTURE... is when we swim out into the **middle of the River** of God's Delight...

- The middle... where the **current is strongest**... **where the river flows**...
- that place **where we're least in control**... but where the Spirit is so eager to hold our hands and guide us.
- In **Ezekiel 47:9** we're told that “*where the river flows, everything will live.*”

Guys... The Spirit is inviting us into the River of God's Delight. He doesn't want us to simply be talking about the river...

- He wants us swimming in the deep end of it... living the Spirit-directed, Spirit-empowered life He's invited us to live.
- In **Isaiah 55:1**, He invites you and I... all of us, saying “***everyone who thirst, come to the waters.***”
- Will you not only come to the waters... but, this morning, would you jump in? **Would you ask the Holy Spirit to fill you again...** to live the Spirit-directed life He's inviting us all to?