

After God's Own Heart
Spiritual Foundations of Leadership

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The Bible tells us how Samuel rebuked Saul, the king of Israel at the time, and told him in 1 Samuel 13:14 that "...your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart..." (NIV, 1984). This paper is going to discuss what it means for a person to be after God's own heart through three key areas, what these areas meant for David, and conclude with whether someone today can be known like David, as one after God's own heart..

People after God's own heart exhibit behaviors that differentiate themselves from others in three key areas. Swindoll (1997) sums up these areas or priorities of life as applying to "God-appointed servant leaders" (p. 6), but this writer is going to apply them here. These areas are spirituality, humility, and integrity. First and foremost, an individual after God's own heart must have a spiritual walk with God that is deeper than that of the average Christian. The average Christian has done the minimum required by accepting Christ for salvation, but has done nothing life changing to develop his or her relationship with God. To truly be after God's own heart, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:..." Philippians 2:5 (NIV, 1984). In other words God's priorities, likes, and dislikes become that of the individual. When the individual is in conflict with God, God always wins, no questions asked!

David may have had a number of shortcomings, but it cannot be easily said that David was not a spiritual man. Being a shepherd in his youth, David probably spent much time in prayer and meditation developing his relationship with God. His faith was strong enough to face a number of giants later in his life like his battle with Goliath, pursuit across the land by Saul, and rebellion from his son Absalom. He faced these events with prayer and when each was over, he gave praise to God regardless of the outcome. For David, there was no alternative to his relationship with God in his life.

The second area Swindoll (1997) mentions is humility. To be humble is to be conscious of one's shortcomings and deal privately with God about them. In the context of this discussion,

humility must exist between the individual and God. Worship and prayer should be a sincere act, not performed as an outward sign of spirituality solely for others to see. For example, in Matthew chapter 6 of the Bible, Jesus says to pray in private rather than in public. In the same chapter, Jesus goes on to say that when fasting, do so in a way that is not obvious to other men. Jesus is saying that when worshipping God in these ways, they should be humble, private acts, not public displays of spirituality.

Humility toward God is one thing, but humility toward a fellow man can be an even more challenging trait. David provided an excellent example of both, when late in his life, he proposed a permanent temple be built for God. Nathan prayed to God and returned to David, God's reply. God acknowledges that He has blessed David as he has ruled over the people of Israel, and will continue to be with him and his children. But it was not in God's will for David to build the temple, although He promises that David's son Solomon would build it. David could have gone ahead and built it in defiance of God, or he could have disputed with Nathan. But instead, David responds with the wisdom he has gained over a lifetime. He once again goes humbly to the Lord in prayer, thanking him for blessing him with such a promise.

The last area Swindoll (1997) mentions is integrity. When someone acts with integrity, his or her motivations are honest and consistent regardless of the situation. As Swindoll (1997) says, "Integrity is what you are when nobody's looking" (p. 8).

David's life provides numerous examples of integrity. For example, the Bible records an account of when David and his men were hiding in a cave from Saul's army, and Saul entered that very cave to relieve himself. At that moment, David could have killed Saul, but David had integrity. He knew it was not in God's will for him to harm the Lord's anointed. David has seen first hand some of the errors of Saul's ways and knew not to repeat them, particularly when it came to his relationship with God. David knew that the quick fix was not the answer to his

struggle at that moment in time.

The Bible tells us that David was a man after God's own heart. The key word to note is "man". Man has not changed, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23 (NIV, 1984), and neither has the steadfastness of God changed for he "...is the same yesterday, and today and forever" Hebrews 13:8 (NIV, 1984). Since God was able to use David, a man, we know that anyone can be known as one after God's own heart just as David was. By submitting to the spiritual leadership of God, exercising humility before God and man, and by living with integrity in every occasion, any individual can be known as one after God's own heart.

References

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