

Worship From The Heart – Part 1

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August 19-20, 2006

1 and 2 Samuel: The Heart After God Series

2 Samuel 6

I've been doing a series from the Old Testament books on 1 and 2 Samuel in which the focus of our attention has been on our hearts. The Bible spends a lot of time talking about the condition of your heart. The heart in the Bible is not, as we've discovered, the fist-sized muscle in your chest that pumps blood through your body. The heart is the Bible's way of talking about the real you, the authentic you, the you below the surface of appearance. We've been looking at 1 Sam. 16.7 as a kind of theme verse for this series.

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1Sa 16:7 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 human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

The heart is what you are all about – what attracts you, what motivates you, what makes you tick.

One of the things that people who are new to church life and some who are not so new struggle with is why the church takes time each week for singing songs to God, for taking bits of bread and juice in communion. Particularly to those of you who are sensitive to the problems in the world, you might say: Why take a half hour of the time of thousands of people to sing songs to Jesus, to say nice things to him, to go through the ritual of communion, particularly when you look out at the world and there are continued bombings in Iraq, unrelenting violence in the Darfur, the world of AIDS, racism, poverty, and marital breakdown. Some of you might say getting together and singing songs to Jesus a diversion from the real action. To put it even more plainly, why waste time on worship when there is real work to be done? Does it make sense to spend our time on communion, taking bits of bread and juice each week, into our already over-fed bodies when so many people in the world have no bread and no drink at all?

Have any of you ever wondered why we take time to worship especially in light of issues of justice and in light of all the other things that we need to do – clean our homes, take walks, do art, earn money, mow our lawns, lead a small group, relate to our kids and friends, practice hospitality, eat, hug people, witness – in light of all the other things we're supposed to do, especially doing good for other people. Why worship?

Before I talk about the heart of worship, I do feel a need to answer the question: why worship?

Here is one answer. We Christians take time to worship for the same reason we Christians take time to pray; because we Christians believe (or at least we try to believe) that the most important activity in the world is not ours, but God's. When we worship, we are pinning our hope on the fact that God is working, that God is on the move even when we're not working, and even when we're not on the move. Worship focuses our attention on God and his activities.

Let me ask you a question: do any of you struggle with worship because it seems like you aren't doing anything productive? It makes sense for you to come to church 15-30 minutes late, or during the announcements, because you don't get that much out of singing. Maybe you don't like the style or whatever and you aren't doing anything productive during the worship part of our services. Let me let you in on a little secret. You are right, in part, and being right in part you have totally missed the point.

The truth is, friend, that you are not being productive when you stand in a church building and focus your attention on God and thank him, or speak to him, or praise him for 25 minutes a week at church. And that is the point. Worship gets us to pay attention to the truth that our activity and our moral energy, and our doing justice is not what ultimately matters. What ultimately matters is God and his activity. Having a specified time each week and having a time each day when you intentionally stop working and stop producing and focus your attention and heart on God and his activities is central to your spiritual health.

I mean, what is necessary for a human being to be saved? To be saved you have to stop relying on your own accomplishments, your own productivity, what you can generate from your own person and you have to pin your entire faith utterly and completely on what God has done in and through his Son Jesus Christ. To be saved you intentionally choose to not rely on yourself, but on God who saves.

As Gene Peterson puts it in his Message version of Romans 4.4-5,

SLIDE

If you are a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it is something only God can do, and you trust him to do it – you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked – well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, *by God*. Sheer gift.

David confirms this way of looking at it, saying that the one who trusts God to do the putting-everything-right without insisting on having a say in it is the fortunate man.

But this is an ongoing life lesson. This is a lesson absolutely central to spiritual health. This is a lesson central to the formation of your heart. How do you deal with a difficult marriage? By relying not on yourself, but trusting wholly in God in his strength to get you through. How do you do battle with temptation? By relying not on yourself, but trusting wholly in God and looking to God to get you through. Now, one of the things that the universal church has taught for 2000 years is that individuals who claim to be followers of Christ ought to have a heart of worship. On one level this is not saying very much because to be a human being is to be a worshipper. The word “worship” in the Bible means to surrender to something, to fall down in submission, to attach your heart to something. Every human being is a worshipper. We all submit to something or someone. We are all surrendered to something. We are all attached and give our hearts to someone. The only question for any person is what are you surrendered to, what are you attached to, what have you submitted yourself to?

My dear friend, Don Williams, in his very helpful book on addictions titled *12 Steps With Jesus*, describes addiction in terms of worship. He says that addiction is nothing other than being lured into worshipping something or someone other than the living God. Don says addiction happens when we attach our desire to someone or something that controls us. As that attachment grows, it consumes us. Little by little, we become captive to the very things that give us pleasure and meaning. We are, all of us, worshippers – Christians, non-Christians, people who believe in God, people who are atheists. We are all worshippers. We all submit, surrender and get attached to something or someone.

Part of the significance of worship is that you and I become like the object of our worship. As Don writes, worship money and you will become a greedy person. Worship sex and you will become a lustful person. Worship power and you will become a corrupt person. Worship Jesus and you will become a Christ-like person.

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We become like the object of our worship.

It matters what you worship, what you bow down to, what you yield yourself to, what you give your heart to, what you’re after, what makes you tick.

The goal of becoming a Christian is to not just stamp your ticket for heaven when you die. The goal of becoming a Christian is not just to make you a nicer person, although we need to be made into nicer people. The goal of becoming a Christian is not just to improve our marriages, or even to work justice in this world. The goal of becoming a Christian is converting the object of our worship. Instead of worshipping money, or our lusts, or our bodies, or golf, or our careers, or sex, becoming a Christian means you become a worshipper of Christ. That no

one and nothing else controls us – no person, no pursuit, no obsession. We are not submitted to, we are not surrendered to, and we are not attached to anything else other than Christ. And that our hearts are on fire; we burn white-hot for Christ.

As we continue this series on the heart, I've called today's talk, "Worship From the Heart." Let's pray.

SLIDE – 2 Samuel 6.1-5

2Sa 6:1 David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand.

2Sa 6:2 He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

2Sa 6:3 They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart

2Sa 6:4 with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it.

2Sa 6:5 David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

Let me set the context for this passage. David has made Jerusalem into his national capital. He captured Jerusalem from the Canaanites. Jerusalem became the national capital of the people of Israel. And as part of the national capital, David not only made Jerusalem the center of government, but the center of worship of Yahweh the Lord. So David orders the Ark of God to be transported into Jerusalem.

Now, the Ark of God is also called the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a wooden box covered with gold inside and out. The Ark was about 3-3/4 feet long and about 2-1/4 wide and high. The Ark was a container for various holy objects. Specifically, the Ark contained the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, and it contained Aaron's rod that budded, and some manna which God miraculously fed to the Israelites in the wilderness. On the lid of the Ark were two angels with their faces turned downward towards the lid probably to avoid facing God who was present above them.

Every single item in the Ark is meant to point us to the presence of Jesus Christ.

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Worship from the heart involves the presence of Christ.

That's why in the Vineyard we always invoke the presence of God. We say, "Come Lord; Come Holy Spirit."

The Ten Commandments, which were in the Ark are a summary of God's Law, which everyone of us has failed to keep. Christ alone perfectly obeyed God's commandments. And by the grace of God, Christ's obedience has been accounted to those of us who have trusted entirely in Christ for salvation.

Not only were the Ten Commandments found in the Ark of the Covenant, but also Aaron's rod. There is a remarkable story about Aaron, the brother of Moses, and his rod. God evidenced his choice of Aaron and his descendents as high priest over all the other leaders by having his shepherd's staff, this wooden rod that Aaron used to carry, to suddenly grow blossoms and almonds. Why was Aaron's staff, Aaron's rod, placed in the Ark of the Covenant?

Well, here is a dry dead stick that suddenly infused with the life of God. And this is a picture of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus became a dead stick for our sins. But he is now eternally alive, alive with the life of God. A permanent witness to his immortality and to the power of God.

And inside the Ark was a pot of manna. The pot of manna was, of course, the gift of God which sustained the Jews in the wilderness. Jesus specifically identified himself with that pot of manna in the wilderness when he said in John 6.35,

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Jn 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus is our sustainer. He is our bread. The presence of Jesus is what we need to feed on in order to sustain our lives in God.

And there was a golden lid on the Ark of the Covenant. The golden lid was translated mercy seat in the old King James Version of the Bible. It is a wonderful picture of God's mercy covering our disobedience to his law. As the apostle James says in James 2.13b,

SLIDE

Jas 2:13 Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The golden lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant is probably not well-translated by the phrase mercy seat. It is probably better translated as atonement place, or atonement cover. The Hebrew word is

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Kapporet

The root of kapporet is

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Kippur

Which means to cover, or to atone. The whole point of the Ark of the Covenant was to be a place where God met with people. And atonement makes it possible for sinful people to meet with Holy God.

Everything about the Ark of the Covenant communicated the presence of Jesus Christ. Worship from the heart always invokes the presence of Christ.

Worship from the heart also involves celebration, v. 5,

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2Sa 6:5 David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

You know, I never knew what a sistrum was. I always imagined in my mind's eye that it was a really cool saxophone, which is one of my favorite instruments. And that someone in David's party was wailing away on the sax. He has sunglasses on. He is playing in a bluesy style. Unfortunately, I mentioned my speculation regarding the sistrum at a seminary where I was teaching a few years ago. One of the seminary professors destroyed my fantasy about the sistrum. He Xeroxed a few articles on the sistrum and handed them to me 10 minutes after I was done teaching. Seminary professors live for moments like that. The sistrum was apparently was some sort of ancient rattle, like a big baby rattle. Or it was some type of castanet. But it was a percussion instrument, as were most ancient instruments. Most of them were percussion instruments. I just thought you'd like to know.

But this worship that's going on involves music that was really hot. People were dancing. They were raising their hands and singing. They were celebrating. It was a party happening. It was like Mardi Gras. Some people were cheering; some were crying; some were kneeling.

SLIDE

Worship from the heart involves celebration.

Do you know that celebration and joy in God's presence is something that is generally not found in any religion outside of biblical religion. The great Bible teacher, John Stott, wrote a book that I believe should be on virtually every Christian's bookshelf. It is that valuable. It is called *The Cross of Christ*. Of all the fine books that John Stott ever wrote, I think *The Cross of Christ* is his very best. Stott writes in his book:

SLIDE

The great faiths of the world including Buddhism and Islam do not understand the access to God that we Christians enjoy. The clearest proof of this is the simplest. It lies in the hymns of Christian worship. A Buddhist temple never resounds with the cry of praise. Muslim worshippers never sing for joy in a mosque. Their prayers are at their highest, prayers of submission and of request. They seldom reach the joyful note of thanksgiving. They are never jubilant with the sounds of the forgiven. By contrast, whenever Christian people come together, it is almost impossible to stop them singing. The Christian community is a community of celebration.

When we gather together, one of the things that ought to characterize our gathering is celebration, celebration in the presence of God.

But you say: You know, Rich, my week has been terrible. I'm going through a really hard time right now. If you heard my story, you wouldn't celebrate, you would weep. It is enough for me to drag myself to church. If worship from the heart involves celebration that is not something I'm capable of doing based on my current circumstances. Tears are running down my face right now.

The apostle Paul has a wonderful little phrase that I think describes what a Christian ought to be like who is going through a hard time. In 2 Cor. 6.10 he says this:

SLIDE

2Co 6:10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

It is possible to rejoice even when you are sorrowful or grieving, or in pain.

What we read in the New Testament is that God's people celebrate not only when circumstances in their life, in their families, in their weeks and years are going well. In the New Testament the people of God celebrate even in the midst of severe trial or in hardship. We see God's people singing and worshipping when they are in jail. They worship after they've been beaten. They worship in extreme difficulty. Because by faith they look beyond their current circumstances to the victory achieved by Jesus Christ at the cross and through his resurrection.

The book of Revelation was written to a church that was persecuted and was suffering and being martyred under the Roman Emperor Domitian. And yet, the book is characterized by incredible worship and celebration because of the victory of Jesus Christ. We read the Greek word for victory, "nike," (where we get the word Nike, which we mispronounce—it's nee-kae), 15 times to encourage the persecuted church. If the cross in the New Testament means anything, it means victory over our enemies. It means the defeat of Satan and sin and

addiction. If the resurrection means anything, it means victory over our circumstances, over our situation including death and hell itself.

Maybe you have had a terrible week. Maybe your circumstances right now are simply awful. Maybe you can't celebrate current victories in the area of your finances, or your health, or your love life. But when you come to church and you take communion with us in faith, you take that bread and drink the cup week after week, then despite everything celebrate the decisive victory of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is not the worst thing in the world that in some charismatic churches people go around asking each other, "Brother, sister, do you have the victory?" I know it can be unbelievably irritating, if life is hard.

But I'll tell you, friends, it could just as well be an encouragement to live life by faith in what Christ has accomplished as opposed to your current circumstances. You can, by faith in the cross, by faith in the resurrection, you can right now despite your circumstances taste and feel a foretaste of the victory. By faith I am overcoming the world. By faith, I am overcoming my circumstances. By faith I am overcoming my addictions. All my enemies are defeated. By faith week after week I can celebrate.

Have you ever lived above your current circumstances? Have you discovered the freedom of not being controlled by the latest unpleasant encounter or the inconvenient person, or a challenging situation? Have you discovered what it means to live by faith in the victory of Jesus Christ?

Friend, it is possible for you as a Christian to be sorrowful and yet also at one and the same time to rejoice in what Christ has accomplished. It is possible to celebrate, in other words, no matter what; to not be controlled by your circumstances. You come to church and you say: I have decided to focus on the victory of God in Christ. My entire hope for life is pinned on the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

But in the midst of celebration we read in 2 Sam. 6.6-7,

SLIDE

^{2Sa 6:6} When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

^{2Sa 6:7} The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

Worship from the heart does not simply involve our enjoyment of God, our celebration, it also involves obedience.

SLIDE

Worship from the heart involves obedience.

You know, God specifically commanded back in the Torah in the first 5 books of the Old Testament the way that the Ark of the Covenant was to be transported. He said to the priest that he didn't want the Ark transported on a cart. He wanted it put on poles. There were rings on the Ark and he wanted poles slipped through those rings. He wanted the Ark to be carried on the shoulders of the priests. He also said that no one could touch the Ark or go near it except for one day, the day of Atonement. And only the high priest was to approach the Ark, and that was with sacrifices.

No cart. The priests ought to carry it on their shoulders. And they shouldn't go near it except for one day a year. Certainly, no one could ever touch the Ark.

But you know, when you are having a great time and you are enjoying yourself with God, it is easy to become overly familiar with God and to play fast and loose with God's commandments. You begin to say to yourself, "Well, God, obviously doesn't care about this area of obedience in my life because we are having so much fun here. It is so enjoyable. The specific commandments that God lays down in this book, maybe they aren't so important.

Friend, there is a real danger in celebration, and in particular being in the presence of God in a church service. The danger is that you begin to believe that God doesn't care so much about your wholehearted obedience to him. If he did, he wouldn't be pouring out his Spirit the way that he is in your life. You wouldn't be seeing spiritual impacts. God wouldn't use you to help another person come to know Jesus. God wouldn't use you to heal the sick. You begin to believe that what God is doing through you is a substitute for what God wants to do in you.

Jesus warns us about the danger of confusing your spiritual impact for God for a relationship with God. In Matt. 7:21-23 Jesus utters these awful words,

SLIDE

Mt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Mt 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?'

Mt 7:23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

I've always taken this text to be a strong warning, especially to those of us who have been raised in charismatic style churches because you can participate in great worship and lift your hands to the sky, dance and sing, and prophesy and

feel the presence of God. But in your heart you can be far from God and there can be a trajectory of your life in which there is a callous growing over your heart.

Worship is not just an enjoyment of God's presence. Worship from the heart involves whole-hearted obedience to God where a human being says: God, I want you to speak to me about everything and anything. Put your finger on areas of disobedience and make me wholly yours. Knock down the idols in my life and convert me entirely to be a worshipper of you.

We are talking authenticity here. We are talking about getting past the show and past the hype and religion. You can't worship the real God unless you are willing to be authentic and wholeheartedly obedient.

Now there is a specific problem that may have been in Uzzah's life. Some of you probably don't know this, but Uzzah grew up in the presence of the Ark of God. The Ark of God was kept in his father, Abinadab's house. Uzzah saw the Ark of God every day growing up. What an amazing thing to be a little boy crawling on the floor and there, perhaps hidden behind a curtain, you know the Ark of God is there. You are playing in a room where behind the curtain there is the Ark of God.

Uzzah may be a model of the spiritual condition of 2nd generation Christians. You can become overly familiar with God. You've sung "Jesus loves me this I know" so many times growing up. You don't have a sufficient fear of sin or a sufficient fear of God. So you begin to play around as a teenager or young adult. You say: I know God. I've accepted Jesus into my heart a hundred times in children's ministry. I raise my hand every time they say: do you want to accept Jesus. I've grown up in church, around God and in worship, and around Christ. I won't be scarred by sin. I won't find myself in utter bondage or addiction. I'm just having a good time. Besides, God is always loving and forgiving. I've always learned that God will always love me no matter what.

Somewhere along the line we did not learn also that God is a mystery.

SLIDE

Worship from the heart always involves mystery.

Not just celebration, not just joy, not just obedience, but mystery.

Brennan Manning quotes a Jewish proverb that says:

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God is not a kindly old uncle. He is an earthquake.

I spoke about the kindness of God last week. But in our thoughts about God's kindness, we always need to add Paul's balancing statement in Romans 2.4,

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Ro 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

I like the way the Message version of the Bible puts it:

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Or did you think that because he is such a nice God, he would let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he is not soft. In kindness, he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into radical life-change.

There is so much that we do not know about God. Rob Bell in his book *Velvet Elvis* said:

SLIDE

The moment we have God figured out with nice neat lines and definitions, we are no longer dealing with God. We are dealing with somebody we made up. And if we made him up, then we are in control.

And so here in vv. 6-11 we have something of the mystery of God a God we cannot control.

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2Sa 6:6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

2Sa 6:7 The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.

2Sa 6:8 Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

2Sa 6:9 David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?"

2Sa 6:10 He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.

2Sa 6:11 The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

He says in v. 6,

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2Sa 6:6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.

Threshing floors were often built on the sides of hills so that the wind could catch the chaff and blow it away. The oxen stumbled. It looks like the Ark is going to fall and Uzzah tries to steady it. In this text we are confronted by the mystery of God's anger. God is kind, but he is not soft. God is not just a kindly old uncle, he is an earthquake. We can't get too familiar with God. We can't imagine that we understand God because he is our friend.

As Paul Waddell says in a book titled *Becoming Friends*,

SLIDE

To speak of friendship with God can sound so cozy and consoling, as if we are all snuggling up to God; however, there is no riskier vulnerability than to live in friendship with God, because every friendship changes us, because friends have expectations of each other, and because friends are said to be committed to the same things...there may be grace and glory in being a friend of God, but there is also clearly a cost. And part of the cost involves never being able to control this being called God. Never being able to tame him. Part of the cost involves being in relationship with somebody who is so far above us and beyond us that we never can say we can predict what God will do.

If mystery is not part of your view of God, then you have not yet developed a heart of worship, at least not worship of the true God.

OK, let's move on and look at David's reaction because I think that there is another application of this idea of mystery that I don't want you to miss. It says in verse 8 that David was angry because of the Lord's wrath that was taken out on Uzzah. In verse 9 David was afraid of the Lord and said, "How can the Ark of God ever come to me? He was not willing to take the Ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite and the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months."

Here is David's emotional reaction to what he observed as he looked at the judgment of God. In verse 8 he became angry. In verse 9 he became afraid. In verses 10 and 11 he pulled back, he withdrew from the presence of God. Now, certainly all of this is taking place in the context of worship. But we might broaden the interpretation of this passage to life in general and say that what we are faced with here in the beginning part of chapter 6 is a tremendously disillusioning experience in life for David. Here he thinks that he is serving God. He is going to be the one to lead the Ark of God back to Jerusalem because he knows that that is ultimately where God wants the Ark. And his heart is in the right place. He wants to follow God. What he is doing is for the Lord.

And then this mysterious and disillusioning event occurs and as a result David gets angry and afraid and withdraws from the presence of God. I see the

process occur very, very often in people's lives as we are attempting to do something with a pretty good heart. At least we think we have a pretty good heart. We are attempting to do something for God or for the church, to assist somebody else, we sacrifice and put ourselves on the line, and then it turns out disastrously. Something terrible happens.

For example, I have known people who have been involved in various kinds of para-church ministries, working for campus houses, and half-way houses and overseas missions of some kind. And somewhere along the line they get a call or they are spoken to and told, basically, that their funding is cut off. There is no more money for what they are doing, or they have been replaced, or there is some type of cut-back and that's it, they are gone. I have seen people fired from churches. That's it, you are gone. No clear warning. No explanations.

But even beyond church, there are so many utterly mysterious experiences in life. You are being faithful, at least to the best of your understanding. You serve and you give. The one thing you really want is to have a child, but you can't get pregnant. Or you get pregnant after years of trying and you suffer a miscarriage. Or you have a child born with a severe birth defect. Or your child has an accident. Or grows up and begins to use drugs.

I have known incredible wives and amazing husbands who discovered love letters and emails to their mates, written by someone who has obviously been carrying on a secret affair with their spouses sometimes for years. I've dear Christian friends who as a result of an accident now live in wheelchairs or with brain injuries, or are in constant pain.

Or, perhaps, the secret desire of your heart is to get married. And you go through one broken relationship with a man or woman after another. Or there seems to be virtually no one around you that is marriageable.

Or you are faithfully serving God at your work, at least to the best of your ability, sharing your faith and you get laid off. You get stabbed in the back.

What I am saying is that many, many of you have been like David. You were serving God and you were really attempting to do the right thing and then suddenly the rug is pulled out from under you. Your reaction is one of anger toward God or one of fear and withdrawal. You begin to say, "You know, somehow as a result of this deep wound, my confidence in God's goodness and my confidence in God's person has been deeply shaken. God is no longer what I thought he was. He is really mysterious to me. I thought that he was my friend. I thought, certainly, that he was going to be my protector, that everything was going to be OK, no curve balls. And now I see that he really isn't my friend and that he isn't my protector."

We pull ourselves away from the presence of God. “That is enough. I am never going to put myself in that type of vulnerable position again. I am going to take my heart away from God and seal it up somehow. Oh, I might be with other church people, but not like I was—not crazy in love with God, willing to take risks, to move, to truly sacrifice, to change jobs, to go overseas.” God’s ways are mysterious. Just because we are his friends doesn’t mean we have written a ticket to success – at least not success in the way we would define it.

David’s reaction really makes sense to me – anger and fear. I have had that same kind of reaction to a mysterious activity of God. I thought I was being faithful. I did what I thought God wanted me to do. And then the roof caved in. I found myself afraid and I withdrew. I understand in my own life and in my own Christian walk confusion regarding the ways of God.

But I also see in the life of King David that people who know God can’t stay away forever. It says in v. 12,

SLIDE

^{2Sa 6:12} Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.

From the perspective of a relationship with God and friendship with God, I don’t believe that someone who has really known God can stay away from God forever. Once we have tasted the goodness of God, once we’ve enjoyed the presence of God, once we’ve experienced the reality of God, you cannot go back to simply being a nice person. There is something so dead about just trying to be a good person when you have been God’s person. I don’t believe that someone who has been around the kindness of God and the love of God can stay away from God forever.

I’ve thought to myself many times as I’ve read this passage, what kind of guarantees did David get that the same thing that happened to Uzzah wouldn’t happen again? That if he tried to draw near to God and transport the Ark that the same thing wouldn’t happen again? What kind of guarantees did he get that his life would go well and that the rest of his life would be utterly predictable and safe?

He got no guarantees.

After your world is shattered what sort of guarantees will God give you that if you come back to him you will be blessed? No guarantees.

God is always a mystery. You will never solve the mystery of God. He is always beyond our categories and our neat formulas for how life should work and our five steps to success and seven steps to blessing.

What kind of guarantees will you get that if you really put yourself back on the line into ministry, that if you re-engage with the church again, that someone won't hurt you? No guarantees. What kind of guarantees do you get if you open your heart to friendship with the Lord again that our heart won't be broken again? No guarantees.

So, why should you do it? Because you come to a place where you see blessing on someone else and you want that blessing. Because you come to a place where you start aching and missing what you had before. Because you come to a place where you find yourself standing on the outside looking in and you don't want to be there. Because you realize that life is empty and flat and tasteless apart from God. Because you know that life has to be more than going through the motions and just surviving until you die.

David saw himself standing on the outside looking in and he saw blessing on the household of Obed-Edom and anyone who has tasted the blessing of God and is standing on the outside says to themselves, "That's what I want in my life again. Nothing else satisfies. Nothing. My business success doesn't satisfy me. Money doesn't satisfy me. Having a big house doesn't satisfy me. Normal church life doesn't satisfy me. Being promoted in my firm doesn't satisfy me. Nothing else satisfies when you've tasted the reality of God in your life.

And so when you see God working in a place again, or in someone else's life, you are drawn back to that and you say: I want it again. I'm starving for God.

When you go back, of course, you go back a little more humbly. You realize that you don't have God figured out. Life is way more dangerous and threatening than I thought it was. There are no formulas. You go back with mystery. You go back with obedience. You go back with celebration. You go back with God.

Let's pray.

Worship From The Heart

Rich Nathan

August 19-20, 2006

1 and 2 Samuel: The Heart After God Series

2 Samuel 6

I. Worship: Is It Relevant?

II. Worship From The Heart

A. Worship From The Heart Involves The Presence of God.
(2 Sam. 6.1-4)

B. Worship From The Heart Involves Celebration. (2 Sam. 6.5)

C. Worship From The Heart Involves Obedience. (2 Sam. 6.1-5)

D. Worship From The Heart Involves Mystery. (2 Sam. 6.6-12)