

## Me52 Devotional – The Heart of the Father

Bible References – I Samuel 13:14; Luke 15

It was said of David that he was “a man after God’s own heart” (I Samuel 13:14). What does this mean? It cannot mean moral perfection, because David was far from a perfect man. He committed adultery and murder and was not a very good father. Yet something about David was attractive to God. The answer is complex, but part of it may be that David cared about things that are important to God.

What things are important to God? We can learn about one of them in Luke chapter 15. The chapter begins with the religious leaders complaining that Jesus spent too much time with notorious sinners. Jesus responded by telling three parables.

The first parable is about a shepherd who has one hundred sheep but loses one of them. He leaves the rest of the sheep and goes off to search for the lost sheep. He finds the lost sheep still alive, brings it back on his shoulders, and then has a big party with his friends. The second parable is similar to the first. A woman has ten silver coins and loses one. She sweeps the whole house looking for the lost coin and when she finds it she calls her friends and they all celebrate together. Jesus ties these two parables together by saying that this is what it is like in heaven when one sinner repents and turns back to God.

The third parable describes a young son who grows impatient waiting for his father to die, so he asks for his inheritance in advance. His father grants his wish and the young man goes off to a foreign country and parties away his inheritance in wasteful and immoral living. Eventually the young man is reduced to poverty, comes to his senses, and decides to return to his father. The father sees his son coming from a distance, is filled with compassion for him, and runs to meet him. The son confesses his sin to his father and the father arranges a big party to celebrate the safe return of his lost son.

There is also an older son, who deeply resents the warm welcome given by the father for his profligate brother. He becomes angry and refuses to join the party, complaining that the father’s compassion is misplaced. The father responds with these words “My son, you are always with me and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again: he was lost and is found.”

It is legitimate to ask the question “Who is the main character in the third parable?”. Options include the young son, the father, or the older brother. While each answer has some merit, we would propose that the father is the main character. In this case the father represents God, who has great compassion toward any person who repents of their sin and desires to come back into relationship with their Creator.

The heart of God is to love sinners. The heart of God is to search for them and reach out to them. The heart of God is to run toward and embrace them when they repent and turn away from their sin. The heart of God is to celebrate their safe return. How much do we share the heart of the God in this regard? Are we more like the father or more like the older brother? Can it be said of us, that we are a man or woman after God’s own heart?