



**A
LETTER
FROM YOUR
PASTOR:
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by Lee Shipp

THE HEART OF WORSHIP

How does God measure a man? Does He take a poll for the most popular candidate? Does the Lord file through the leading theologians of the day? Does He search the pool of intelligent, influential, and prominent men? What would constitute a real man? Would God take the measurements of their shoulders or their hearts? Would God test the strength of their arms and legs or examine the strength of their spirit? Would He review the vows, promises, and dreams so many have made, or would He consider their devotion and integrity?

I think we already know what God is after in man, "Oh, that there was a heart in them ... (Deuteronomy 5:29). God is looking at our hearts! It is the heart that reveals the kind of people we are.

God looked down upon humankind. Why? To see if any understood. God's conclusion: they are all corrupt and have done abominable iniquity; no one does good – their foolish hearts say there is no god (Psalm 53)! How tragic. How sad.

And God cried. He cried so the hearts of His creation would hear: "... [you] have removed [your] heart far from me (Isaiah 29:13). It was not that our hearts got distracted or cold; we removed our hearts from God. All that Lord wanted was for us to love Him wholeheartedly (Deuteronomy 6:5), but we did not.

Is there hope? Can anything be different? Can we love God with our hearts? Because of grace, the answer is, "Yes!" God will saturate our hearts with His love if we allow it (Romans 5:5). There have been men and women who experienced this grace. The Bible calls them worshippers. God is still looking for these worshippers today.

What was it about David that attracted God? It had to be David's faith in his heart. With his whole heart, David praised God. You will not see many men in your church praising God this way. Maybe with a half-heart, some will praise God, but what a rare sight to see a man praising God wholeheartedly. David's response to God was from the heart. When God told David to seek His face, David responded in his heart. David's heart said, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek (Psalms 27:8). David's heart was all in, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him ... my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him (Psalms 28:7).

There was a passion of worship in David. David loved the Lord. With his whole heart, David sought the Lord. He took God's Word and hid it in his heart. God was real to David. God was worth pursuing and even better at catching. Every day was a brand-new pursuit of God: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psalms 63:1).

You may assume that this is just poetry, which is our world's problem. God is not real to people. Worship is not authentic. People who claim to love God have removed their hearts far from Him. But not David; David will seek God early. David will go to church looking for the power and glory of God. When others are content with their dry and barren hearts, David will run hard after God, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:1-2).

A HEART FOR WORSHIP

David, there is a man for you, a man after God's own heart. He was a

man doing what he was created to do, and God enjoyed his love and worship. Today, so many believers want to be used and do something for God. Why is there no heart of worship in us? Many think they would be happy and satisfied if they could have some great ministry. No! Satisfaction is intimacy with God, not working for God. Period. Nothing else. Everything else is a by-product of our worship. Likewise, every evil thing is a by-product of our lack of worship.

Oh, if others could see me. Suppose people could see my gift. If God touched and made me great, I would have value. This is the frequent cry of so many I encounter around the world. Beloved, wake up. Quit with this charade. Beloved, in His presence, is the fullness of joy. Instead of turning your heart back to God, you will continue to live, hoping for someone to see and appreciate you. When all along, God is inviting you to draw near. He also says to you, "Seek my face." But what will your heart say?

All David wanted was God. However, look at the life of this man who caught God. In every area of his life, he is consequential, animating, and provocative! Even when it came to sin and disgrace, even in this, David did it with all his might. David's life is full. Whether displaying his brilliance on the battlefield, his failure as a father, his timeless worship and songs, or his unrivaled empire as king – his life is full!

When did it start for David? Probably when he was about eight years old, he lay under the stars and beheld God's wonders as his sheep sighed in the distance. David was alive before God, and the longing of God's heart changed his life! David knew that God wanted a relationship with him. David cried "when I consider the Heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him?" This knowledge about God forever changed David, and thus compelled his heart upon its worthy pursuit – fellowship with the living God. A living man must have a living God. God must be experienced; words and doctrines will not be sufficient.

If David is a man after God's own heart, it must have crushed him to hear the horrifying cry of God as He looked upon His creation, seeking a worshipper. How can people know God exists yet not pursue Him? It is not the atheist committing the abomination before God; it is the one who knows God exists but does not seek Him wholeheartedly. It's the one who says in his heart, not with his mouth, that there is no God. In other words, it is the one who believes in God but lives as though He does not exist. Could there be any greater offense against Heaven's Most Righteous King?

David quickly realized the question was not, "Where is God?" or "Why doesn't He speak to me and help me?" It is not the questions men ask. No. The question is the one God asks. And God's question has not changed. As in the Garden of Eden, the question was and always had been, "Adam, where are you?" "David, where are you?" God is searching. We became the question of David. After all, a man after God's heart can only have one question anyway – "What does your heart want?" David found out! God told him that no one seeks me!

Jesus made it undeniably clear when he said that the Father seeks those who are true worshippers! It is not people who confess there is a God, but those whose whole life reflect that belief. Those who pursue God in Spirit and Truth shall worship the Father, for these are the ones the Father seeks! Now, that doesn't exclude you. Don't get into that self-pity that cries because you can't sing or dance or cry about the things of God like other people seem to do. Paul told us without faith it is impossible to please God, for we must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

So many of us believe that He is, but we don't diligently seek Him! That is the grossest offense! God is not what we want ... we only seek Him for what He can give! If I can get close to God, I can get my healing, money, fame, prosperity, or a new job. God is so rarely wanted for Himself. He is pursued for things. People preach Him for money, and contemporary Christian entertainers want God to make them famous; churches are built for crowds, not the fearsome presence of the Holy God.

Churches are run today by skill, not God. He is not needed! And dare we touch the "Christian Home" today? One glance at the average "Christian home" would have to make one ask why they call themselves Christian! The teenagers are just like the world and the parents are no better. Come on and ask yourself if you live like there is an awesome, loving, faithful God! If you do, why are you so often worried? Why are you stressed out? Why do you seek so much of the world? Why are you raising your kids emphasizing the devil's world than God's world? How can you get them to school five days a week, and you can't get them to Sunday school one day a week? Why don't you have more time for God during the day? Why don't you pray more? Why isn't there more passion for God? Why does your face say that God has forsaken you? Why don't you wake up with Him on your mind? Why can't you lie awake at night and think about God? Oh, I know you believe in God ... and God knows you believe in Him... He wants to know how long you will continue making excuses for neglecting Him and breaking His heart.

THE REWARD

How does one live who believes, with all their heart, that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? In the sixty-third Psalm, the man after God's heart responded to the cry of the searching God. "Oh God, You are my God; early will I seek You; My soul thirst for you; My flesh longs for You." When I come to church, I come for You. I have looked for you in the sanctuary to see Your power and glory. I don't know why some people come. Perhaps they come to show their new wardrobe. Or maybe it is a time to see friends and make plans for the week. Perhaps it is because they are in a bind and need the assistance of God: sin may be weighing heavily upon them, they may be wrestling with their health, or their home may be in derision. But David said I come for you.

Certainly, it is not wrong to bring all our needs to the altar and cast all our cares upon the Lord. And it is wonderful to enjoy the body of Christ and look forward to seeing our friends and loved ones in church. However, the passion is for God – I want to see you! I want to behold your power. I want to worship in fear and awe before you. More than anything else, and stronger than any other motive, is my desire to faith my way into your presence to worship you. Singing is not worship. Lifting hands, though a form of praise, is not worship. Today we think praise and worship is the "praise and worship." However, worship is to see and tremble before God. David was determined to have this experience. I will not be bored ... I will not be distracted ... I do not need to be entertained ... I will not sleep ... I will look for You in the sanctuary!

"Expectation has always been present in the church in the times of her greatest power. When she believed, she expected, and her Lord never disappointed her.... Every great movement of God in history, every unusual advance in the church, and every revival has been preceded by keen anticipation. Expectations accompanied the operations of the Spirit always. His bestowals hardly surprised His people because they were gazing expectantly toward the risen Lord and looking confidently for His word to be fulfilled. His blessings accorded with their expectations. One characteristic that marks the average church today is a lack of anticipation. When they meet, Christians do not expect anything unusual to happen; consequently, only the usual happens, and that usually is as predictable as the sun's setting."

THE OVERWHELMING GOD

If you have ever been with God, then He overwhelms you. His loving kindness is better than life. Your heart loses composure; your lips break forth with praise. You love to talk about Him and extol Him. This is not a Sunday talk, and then you have a Monday talk, but while you live, you bless the Lord. You lift your hands unto His name. You want everyone to know how much you love God, how wonderful He is, and how delighted you are to be in love with Him.

When my heart is aware of God, my whole transports are moved. My heart cannot compose the joy. I lay on the bed and just think about Him. Most nights, I cannot sleep as my heart races with the pleasure of seeing Him face to face. Just thinking about Jesus causes my soul to rapture and stirs me from my slumber.

So many lie awake in fear and look out for enemies, but I watch for God. Are You summoning me into Your presence? Are You longing to be with me tonight? Dare I let sleep come between us! If you look to see if men are seeking you, you will indeed find one, for I lie awake on my bed and speak of you and fill my heart and mind with thoughts of You. My soul follows hard after You. You can't get rid of me! I would rather die than not have you!

What are you willing to do to keep your job? How hard do you fight for your rights and respect? If only some of us would fight half as hard for the knowledge of God as we do for ourselves.

You can't love a theological Jesus with passion. "Things" can't satisfy a living soul. If "things" are satisfying, it's because the soul is sick and dying! My soul thirst for what: an abstraction, a possession, riches, or something else? No! My soul thirst for the Living God! Life thirsts for life as the spirit craves spirit. David wanted someone to love and touch. David didn't want his satisfaction in many "lives" but one LIFE – God!

If a man is to be blessed, he must have one source to which he can go. Christians have never been busier: meetings, appointments, functions, rehearsals, clubs, banquets, studies, committees, and retreats. Christians have a very dynamic relationship in the things of God but not a fresh, day-by-day relationship with God.

Martin Luther said it is much easier to do a thousand masses daily than to say one true prayer. Another leader from the past said, "Much of our religious activity today is nothing more than a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life!"

I have been so thankful to God for calling our church into a prayer revival. A couple of years ago, the Lord called us, as a church, to seek Him diligently. Since this call and our step of obedience, we have seen the manifest presence of God in our services and preaching. Scores of people have testified to me of the dramatic changes in their spiritual life and relationship with God. They have fallen in love with God Himself. They have come to love the prayer meeting for its apprehending of God over any other service we have! I think this is a beautiful testimony of the beauty and delight of our God!

To become spiritual, we do not need to become active. Action is the result of spirituality! Our life is in Him, not in what we do for Him. This is why so many get burnout. They labor to become somebody or to attain to something and only end up complicating their life. We are made in the image of God – to communicate with a world we cannot see. Our comrades are angels, archangels, and seraphim, yet we are settling down here with the temporal.

The human's reproach is the tyranny of things: of material things, temporal things, things that are and then cease to be. We are made for walking with God, yet we choose to walk with devils. We are made to correspond with the Almighty, yet we choose to spend our time in front of a television. We are fashioned for eternity and shall continue when this world, and all in it, has been long burned up, and yet we continue to lay up our treasure here.

Of all God's creatures, are any more pathetic? Man is insensible and blind and deaf in his eagerness to forget that there is a God! Man is a fool to embrace this strange belief that materialism and humanism constitute the "good life." Tozer said, "I would rather be a Muslim or a Hindu or a primitive tribesman living in a cootie-infested hut in Africa, kneeling before bones and feathers and mumbling some kind of home-made prayer, than to come into judgment as a self-sufficient American businessman who ruled God out of his life and out of his business and out of his home."

Early in his life, we see a determination in David that forever sustained him. It was during his highly publicized bout with Goliath; he would rather die fighting for God than live betraying Him. He stood alone in his convictions of God's power and faithfulness. He was willing to put himself in overwhelming odds so others may know there is a God in Israel. You must believe that you are that agent. This is faith in God - that He will use me! Not to know He can, but that He will!

A man cannot seek God till God has sought the man. Once prompted, there is no limit to where a man can go. Consider yourself prompted. As with David, he went to total absorption with the Almighty. And what is his most incredible legacy? Undoubtedly, it would have to be his son – Jesus the Christ!