

**LEADERS NOTES**  
**LIVING BEYOND THIS LIFE - WORSHIP PART XII**  
**“THE EXCHANGE”**  
**AUGUST 16-17, 2008**

*Deuteronomy 15:7-15 describes three kinds of heart hazards: hard-hearted, mean-spirited, and selfishness. What are some examples of heart hazards you have experienced? How can you prevent your heart from these hazards?*

We are warned throughout Scripture to care for our heart. God urges us to care for our heart because it is the center of our internal life, affecting our intellect, emotions, and will (Woman’s Study Bible). Proverbs 2:23 exhorts us to guard our heart above all else as it determines the course of our life. When we neglect our heart and allow selfishness or ungodly things to influence it, we can experience various heart hazards.

In the instance of King David, we see him experience the heart hazard of hard-heartedness as a result of neglecting his heart. After a time of laziness, inactivity, and indulging his flesh, King David’s heart grew harder and more callous to wrongdoing (2 Samuel 11). Eventually, his hard-heartedness and selfishness leads him to adultery, murder, and lying. King David’s heart became hard over time – hard-heartedness is a process of hardening little by little. David made many seemingly small decisions that added up to bigger and bigger sins. As he sinned, he ignored his heart and the knowledge that he was doing wrong. Sin distances us from God. After awhile, as God seems so distant that it becomes easier to rationalize selfish behaviors and actions not in accordance with His will despite the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The more we ignore and disobey the Holy Spirit, the harder our heart becomes. We have to prevent hardness from growing in our hearts by being quick to recognize the conviction of the Holy Spirit and ask forgiveness. Meeting with God regularly and allowing Him to speak into our lives also helps to prevent hard-heartedness.

Another heart hazard is mean-spiritedness. Mean-spiritedness arises from a lack of compassion and empathy for others. Jesus exemplified the utmost compassion and empathy for others and for us. When we allow the word of Christ to richly dwell in us, we are able to grow in compassion and empathy (Colossians 3:16). We need to feed on the Word of God and God’s presence through worship and prayer so we can allow His heart to penetrate our own. Christ alone can transform our mean, hard, selfish heart into something new and beautiful (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The third heart hazard, selfishness, arises out of a focus on the self. When we spend too much time and energy focusing on our desires, problems, worries, or self, selfishness arises in our heart. One of the surest ways to take the focus off of ourselves is to focus on God through praise and worship. As we set our minds on God (Colossians 3:1-3), we are able to better grasp new aspects of God’s heart for us and for others.

*If God doesn’t need anything, how can we give Him something of value? What area of your life can you give to God this week?*

God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfect (Isaiah 44:24-26), so what can we give God that He desires? Even though God doesn’t *need* us, He desires to be in relationship with us. The greatest gift we can give Him is the gift of ourselves – our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits. In Luke 22:15, Jesus remarks that He “eagerly desired to eat this Passover” with the disciples before His time of suffering. Jesus’ desire was to engage in deep relationship with the disciples as well as provide a way of salvation for their eternal lives. How can we refuse our Savior the one thing He desires of us? Jesus made it very clear what God desires and commands of us – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). Additionally, we please God and fulfill His command when we love others (Mark 12:31). As we love God with our whole being, we become more like Him and begin to love the things He loves and to hate the things He hates – this also pleases Him (Psalm 45:7). It pleased God when Solomon asked for wisdom and discernment to rightly judge

between good and evil (1 Kings 3:9-10). Living a godly life as we discern right and wrong and obey God's heart pleases Him (1 Thessalonians 2:4, 1 John 3:22).

Because God desires our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits, we please God when we give Him ourselves through worship, praise, and the sacrifice of our lives (Psalm 104:34, Romans 12:1-2). We can give God our heart by surrendering our desires, hopes, emotions, and will to God. Asking God to align our heart to His own brings us into closer relationship with God.

***In what ways has God given to us without expecting anything in return? How can you give to God or others this week with no expectation of return?***

First and foremost, God has given us His unconditional love knowing that many will not love Him in return. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us (John 3:16). Romans 5:8 says that Christ demonstrated this unconditional love in that He died for us even though we were undeserving and sinful. God has also given the gift of eternal life for those who believe in Christ (Romans 6:23).

God has given much to both the saved and the unsaved. Both receive His gifts of life, sun, rain, food and provision from the earth (Matthew 5:45). Christians, also, receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39), adoption (Galatians 4:4-7), sanctification (Romans 6:22), a new life (Romans 6:4), a new family, strength (Ephesians. 3:16), power, wisdom (James 1:5), spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6), and so much more.

Although we can never out give God, we can give Him many things that will bring Him joy and glory. We can give God our hearts, lives, attention, time, voices, talents, money, possessions, obedience, and service. Giving to others without an expectation of return is another way that we can give to God. 1 John 4:10-11 says, "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." We can give to others by fasting and praying for them, serving them, meeting needs without drawing attention to our service, giving money anonymously to someone in need, and encouraging them. Giving without expectation of return is a great way to bring glory to God and blessing to others.