

# Looking on the Heart

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the heart in our relationship with God, highlighting that He values our intentions and desires over mere actions.*

**Duration:** 31:15

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:1

**Topics:** "Godly Wisdom", "Heart Condition"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Brian leads the congregation in reading Proverbs chapter 4. The scripture emphasizes the importance of listening to the instruction of a father and not forsaking God's law. It encourages seeking wisdom and understanding, as they bring preservation and protection. The sermon also highlights the contrast between the path of the just, which shines brighter, and the way of the wicked, which is darkness. Additionally, the sermon shares a story of a young girl who desired to be a missionary but was unable to due to a heart condition, illustrating that God looks at the heart and values the intention to serve Him. The sermon concludes with the example of David, who was blind to his own sin until it was revealed to him by the prophet Nathan.

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## Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Proverbs chapter 4 for our scripture reading this morning. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verse, and Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses. And shall we all stand as we read God's Word? Hear ye, children, the instruction of a father, and attend to no understanding.

For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved, in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words, keep my commandments, and live.

Get wisdom, get understanding. Forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee.

Love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing. Therefore, get wisdom.

And with all of thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee. She shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.

And she shall give to thine head ornament of grace, and a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, and I have led thee in the right paths.

When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straightened, and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction. Let her go.

Keep her, for she is thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

For they seek not, except that they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The way of the wicked is as darkness, and they know not at what they stumble. My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes, keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, and remove thy foot from evil.

Let's pray. Lord, we pray that today we might have a pure heart before you. When you look upon us, Lord, and you see that which is within, may you be pleased.

Lord, remove from us any thought or desires of evil, and let us walk, Lord, in your righteousness, and in the path where you lead. Help us, Lord, to do good, and to love good, and to hate evil. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

You may be seated. Tonight we'll be studying 1 Kings chapters 7 through 9. So we encourage you to read them over. Go through the Bible with us as we go from Genesis to Revelation.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 8th chapter and verse 18. Well, actually, let's begin with verse 17. Solomon is talking to the people at the dedication of the temple.

He said, it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Jehovah, God of Israel. And Jehovah said unto David, whereas it was in your heart to build a house unto my name, you did well that it was in your heart. One thing that the Bible stresses all the way through is that God is much more interested in the attitude of my heart than he is my actions.

Jesus was constantly rebuking the Pharisees, because though they were doing the right things, they had the wrong attitude in their heart. He likened them unto whitewashed sepulchres. He said, outside you look so clean, so neat, but inside you're just filled with dead men's bones.

He rebuked them because they made the outside of the cup very clean, but inside of the cup was all kinds of evil. Jesus said, the law has said, thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that if you look upon a woman and lust after her in your heart, you've already committed adultery.

In other words, it's what's in a man's heart is more important than his actions themselves. You can have correct actions, but a wrong attitude. Or you can have actually a right attitude and even wrong actions, but I would rather be in that position.

I would rather to have the right attitude and even though I might be doing something that isn't wrong, God can correct the wrong that I'm doing in a hurry. But oftentimes it takes a lifetime to change the attitude of a person's heart. When we are first introduced to David, God, we find was looking at David's heart.

God had rejected Saul from being the king over Israel. And God had sent Samuel down to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the new king. And when the eldest son Eliab came in, handsome, tall, good physique, Samuel in his heart looking at him said, surely this is the one that God has chosen.

And God said to Samuel, look not at how handsome he is, nor at his height because I have refused him. The Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance. God is looking at the heart.

And so God saw the heart of David. He saw the heart of a shepherd. He saw a heart that was after God and after the things of God.

And God was looking at the heart. God knows what's in the heart of man. In the 39th verse of this chapter, as Solomon is praying in his dedication of the temple, he said, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place and forgive and do and give to every man, according to his ways, whose heart, you know, for you even you only know the hearts of all of the children of men.

God knows our hearts. As David in giving his final instructions to his son, Solomon said to him in 1 Chronicles 28, 9, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts.

He understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. And if you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

In Proverbs 21 to Solomon said, every way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord ponders the hearts. The Lord said to Jeremiah, I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins and I give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.

In Luke 16, Jesus said to the Pharisees, you are of those that justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. In Acts 1 24, as they were preparing to sort of cast lots to find a replacement for Judas Iscariot, they prayed unto the Lord and they said, you Lord know the hearts of all men.

Show which of these two you have chosen. God, as he looks at us today, is looking upon our hearts. He knows what is there.

We might be looking at you and admiring you and thinking what a godly, wonderful, sweet person they are. But what is God saying about you as he sees your heart? You may be looking at yourself and those around you this morning and you might be thinking, I'm as good as anybody here in this row. I don't need to cast myself upon God's mercy.

He'll surely accept me as I am. And God is looking at your prideful heart and saying, that's an abomination. In the church of Laodicea, they were saying, we are rich, we're increased with goods, we have need of nothing.

But Jesus said, you are wretched, you are miserable, you are poor, you are naked, you are blind. You see, they had one opinion of themselves, but Jesus had a far different opinion of them. What's in my heart? God knows.

And it's so important that my estimation of myself be in harmony with God's estimation of me. But herein lies a real problem. I don't always know my own heart.

Jeremiah, the Lord said to him, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.

There is nothing more deceitful than the human heart. In Proverbs, we read, the way of the fool is right in his own eyes. There's a way that seems right unto man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

Every way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord ponders the heart. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet they've not been washed from their filthiness. David was aware of the difference between his opinion of himself and that of the Lord's.

He recognized that the Lord knew him better than he knew himself. He said, Oh Lord, you have searched me, you've known me. You know when I sit down, you know when I rise up.

You know my thoughts before I even think them. You surround me when I am walking and when I'm lying down. You're acquainted with all of my ways.

Such knowledge is too great for me. I cannot attain it. What knowledge? The knowledge of myself.

Socrates cried to his students, know thyself. But that is the hardest bit of knowledge to come by. And when you do finally come by it, it's probably the most painful knowledge you'll ever come by.

The knowledge of self. David, talking about how God so thoroughly knew him, said such knowledge is too great for me. I cannot attain it.

And that is why at the end of the 139th Psalm, David prayed, search my heart, O God. Know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there is a wicked way in me and lead me in your way everlasting.

Oh Lord, you search my heart and lead me in your path. Many times we are blind to our own sins until we see them in others. There was that interesting case where Nathan, the prophet, was sent to David to rebuke David for his sin with Bathsheba.

And so Nathan told a story to David. He said, there was a man in your kingdom who was extremely wealthy, had flocks, herds, servants. Next door to him, there lived a very poor man, had only one little ewe lamb.

Oh, he loved it. It was like a pet. It was like a child.

It ate at his table. It slept in the house. It was just a family pet.

The wealthy man had guests that came. He ordered his servants to by force go and take from the poor neighbor, the one ewe lamb and to slay it in order that he might feed his guest. David became angry.

He said to Nathan, that man shall surely be put to death. And Nathan said, David, you're the man. David sinned with Bathsheba.

David had many wives. Here was the one soldier, faithful wife. David took her as his own.

Had the man put to death. And David was really seeing now his own sin through the illustration of someone else. And it looked horrible.

And it's interesting how that we are so prone to justify what we do until we see it done in others. And then the heinous of the sin becomes very real to us when someone else is doing it. But there's another side to this coin.

God sees our heart. He sees all the evil that's there. But the other side of the coin is many times there are things in our heart that we would like to do for God and are unable to do because of circumstances or situations.

And we're just not able to do that which is in our heart and which we would love to do for the Lord. This was the case with David in his heart to build a temple for the Lord, a house for God. But God restrained David from doing it.

David received the promise from God that he would give to David his son who would build the house that David was desiring to build. And now that house has been built. The people have gathered for the dedication.

And Solomon is telling the people, it was in the heart of David, my father, to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And the Lord said to David, my father, whereas it was in your heart to build a house unto my name, you did well that it was in your heart. Oftentimes our desires to serve the Lord, to give to the Lord, it's in our heart to do it.

But we are unable to do it due to different circumstances. And perhaps like David, you're very disappointed that you haven't been able to do the things that are in your heart to do for the Lord. But God in looking at your heart and seeing that it is the desire of your heart says, that's good.

In as much as it was in your heart to do it, that's good. Many years ago, many years ago, a young girl in Los Angeles going to Biola felt a call of God to go as a missionary to China, a medical missionary. And so upon graduating from Biola, she went to the university, got her medical degree, and then made application to the mission board to go to China as a medical missionary.

In the necessary physical examination, it was discovered that she had a heart condition that precluded the mission board from sending her to China. Now that was in her heart to do. But the mission board said, we cannot send you to China with that heart condition.

She was very disappointed. And at a subsequent missions conference there at the Church of the Open Door, she met a young girl who felt a call of God to go to China as a medical missionary, much like her own call. This young girl had completed all of her courses.

She had been accepted by the mission board. The only thing she lacked was support. And so this first girl said, I'm working as a nurse at the hospital.

I'll make a covenant with you. I will take a half of my salary to support you on the mission field. And you can go in my place.

And so she cut back her whole expenses, got an inexpensive apartment, lived very frugally. And with half of her salary, she donated to the other girl to go to China as a medical missionary. In time, she received promotions there in the hospital.

Actually moved into a supervisory position in the nurses. And was at another missions conference where she met another girl who had felt a call of God to go to China as a medical missionary, had fulfilled all of the requirements, only needed support. And she said, I'm making enough now.

I can support you too. And so she began to support the second girl as a medical missionary to China. She continued to be advanced until she was now in an executive position at the hospital.

And she met a third girl who had a desire to be a medical missionary, had fulfilled the requirements, only needed the support. And she said, I'll tell you what, I'll support you too. And at the last, she was supporting three girls as medical missionaries in China.

She has since gone to heaven. She's met the Lord. And what do you think the Lord said to her about her desire to be a missionary, a medical missionary in China? Did she fulfill that call of God upon her heart? You know she did.

Many times over. It was in her heart to do it. God saw her heart.

And God said, in as much as it's in your heart to do it, you've done well. Oh, how important that it is our heart to do the work of the Lord. It may be that we won't have the opportunity to do the things, but at least it's in my heart to do it for God.

Sometimes we are deeply disappointed in our inability to fulfill the desires of our hearts. But God in looking at the heart counts what is there. Her story is much like David's.

It was in David's heart to build the house for God. He couldn't do it. But what he did then was he drew up the plans and he gathered all of the materials and money necessary to build a house.

He, you know, you can't, I can't build it Lord, but you did it say I couldn't provide the funds for the building of it. And so David amassed the funds, drew the plans for the building of the house, because that was in his heart to do. Sometimes we cannot do all that's in our heart, but God looks at the heart and accounts it as though we did.

He's pleased when he sees that it is our heart to do the right thing. God looks at our hearts this morning. He's looking at each one of our hearts.

He knows what's in our heart. As God looks at my heart, as God looks at your heart, is God pleased with what's in your heart? Or is God disgusted with what's in your heart? That's why in Proverbs, as Solomon was repeating the instruction of his father, he said, keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Jesus said a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good.

And an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, brings forth that which is evil. For of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Like David, we need to pray, search me, O God.

Know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in your way.

Everlasting. Let's pray. Father, you have searched us.

You have known us. You know our hearts. Help us, Lord, to know our hearts.

Help us, Lord, to see our heart as you see our heart. Lord, may our assessment of ourselves be in harmony with your assessment of us. Don't let us be deceived, Lord.

But help us to have a heart for God. Even as David was a man after your heart. So, Lord, may we be men and women after your heart.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Shall we stand? The question is, what is in your heart today? God knows.

God knows our hearts. And it's so important that my heart is right before God. That the desires of my heart are things that would please God.

It may be that as you, through the help of the Spirit, look at your heart today. There are things there that are not pleasing to the Lord. There are plans.

There are desires. There are wishes that are out of step with God's plan and desires. And you need to have a heart that is cleansed.

And only God can cleanse our hearts. But God wants to cleanse our hearts and will cleanse our hearts if we'll just but let Him. The pastors are down here at the front this morning to pray for you.

As soon as we're dismissed, if there's something that is in your heart that you know is displeasing to the Lord, I would recommend that you come forward as soon as we're dismissed and just ask one of the pastors to pray for you. That God might do His work of cleansing the mind, the heart, from the impurities that are there. That when God looks upon your heart, He'll be pleased and He'll say, that's good.

May the Lord be with you and may the Lord guide and direct you. May He draw our hearts towards Him. May we have a heart's desire to do His will above everything else as we face a new year that we might have a heart after God and the things of God and a renewed commitment of ourselves to know Him better, to walk more closely in fellowship with Him.

That this might be the greatest year of our lives as we see God at work. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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