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GOOD NEWS GUIDE

“THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE”

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Having a Heart for God

How is your heart? Not your physical heart; your spiritual heart — the heart God examines to see what kind of person you are, and how your relationship with Him is progressing. God doesn't go by appearances; He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:9). He sees all of its secrets (Psalm 44:21). He loves you — He absolutely and unconditionally **LOVES YOU** — and He wants you to be the best you that you can possibly be.

What does it mean to have a heart for God? It means to try to be like His Son, Jesus. It means to love God and try to please Him and obey Him. It means to love your neighbor as you love yourself.



What does a heart for God look like? For this I'll use alliteration — a list of words all starting with the same letter or sound — to make it easy to remember.

A heart for God is:

- **Caring**
- **Compassionate and Comforting**
- **Confessing and Contrite**
- **Courageous**
- **Committed**
- **Confident**

Let's look at these attributes.

Caring. There are two aspects of caring: loving and nurturing. What you love most, what is nearest and dearest to your heart, is what you care most about. God wants you to love Him with all your heart; to care deeply about your relationship with Him. That's why He invites you and instructs you to call Him "Father."

Nurturing means taking care of, supporting, and meeting the needs of others. Part of having a caring heart is to help others whenever possible. This is especially true if you are a parent — you are called to care for, to care about, the children God has given you.

Compassionate and Comforting. To be hard-hearted is to lack compassion. As Christians we are called to be tender-hearted, to feel pain when others are hurting, and to give comfort if we are able. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2) What law of Christ? The one that says "Love your neighbor as yourself." We're also called to receive comfort from God and pass that comfort on to others. (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Confessing and Contrite. "Confessing" also has a double meaning. It has to do with witnessing — with "confessing" our faith in Jesus Christ to others, so that they may "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" as God intends. (1 Timothy 2:4) It also means admitting before God that we have done wrong; we have failed to obey His commandments; we have served self instead of serving God. We all sin, and despite our intentions and efforts we all sin again. Getting to be sinless is a life-long process. If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and make us clean in His eyes. (1 John 1:9)

"Contrite" means feeling sorry — really sorry — for doing wrong or failing to do right. It's not easy. We think saying a simple prayer, admitting that we've sinned, is all that's necessary. But our sinning hurts God, and it should be painful for us as well. Searching our hearts, bringing ourselves to feel truly sorry that we've sinned yet again, is worth the effort. Sin is serious. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) Without God's gift of grace, paid for by Christ's death on the Cross, we would all go to hell, to eternal death, eternal separation from God and from life, light, beauty, and everything that is good.

The sacrifices that please God are "a broken spirit and a contrite heart." (Psalm 51:17)



And we need to repent — to turn away from the behavior or temptation that caused us to sin.

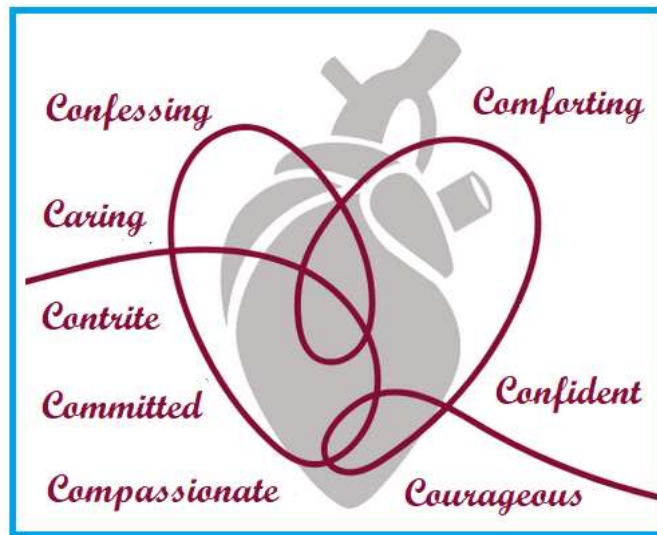
Courageous. Courage is being able to face danger or hardship with strength; to be brave. The word “courage” is derived from the Latin word for heart. The Old Testament mentions that people’s “hearts melted” from fear. When we want to strengthen someone’s resolve, we say “take heart.” We “encourage” him or her, which means that we impart courage.

The world is a daunting place. There is much to be afraid of. But we know that we can count on God to give us courage when we need it. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

A person who has a heart for God is courageous, because he or she looks to God for courage. It takes courage to die as a martyr; it also takes courage to be a voice for truth and a witness for Christ.

Committed. To have a committed heart for God is to be determined to work toward the goal of complete submission to His will, perfect obedience to His commands, and eager sharing of His love with others. The committed heart is not easily led astray; it does not waver. Like Paul, it “presses on toward the goal” (Philippians 3:12) of perfect obedience. Like Paul, it believes “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) It obeys Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.” And, like Job, it says, “Even if he kills me, I will still hope in him.” (Job 13:15)

Confident. To have a confident heart is to believe — more than believe, to know (“to know with your knower,” as my Full Gospel friend Jim Priddy used to say) — that God is who He says He is; that His Word and His Promises are true and will not fail; and that He loves you unconditionally and forever and wants nothing but good for you. In other words to have faith in God and Jesus Christ.



You can’t have faith just by deciding to have it. Faith is a gift from God, and everyone is given a “measure” of it. (Romans 12:3) But, like muscles, it is made stronger by exercise. When the Holy Spirit prompts us to do something, and we do it, our faith in God is strengthened. When we spend time with God’s word and communing with God in prayer, we allow Him to build our

faith. The more we trust Him and follow His Spirit’s guidance, the more faithful — faith-filled — and confident we become.

How is your heart? Is it a heart for God? If it is, keep up the good work! And if it isn’t yet, then you, just like me, have work to do. But take heart — we are not called to develop a heart for God on our own. In fact, there’s not anything useful we can do all by ourselves. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) Jesus is with us, to help us. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:18) The Holy Spirit has been “poured out,” as Jesus promised, and in the Spirit Jesus is with us, to help us, to guide us, to correct us, and to generate and make perfect in each Christian a heart for God.

Through the Prophet Isaiah, God said to the people of Israel: “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Isaiah 29:13) His purpose in my life and your life is to bring us to the place where we honor Him with our lips, but also with our lives and our caring, compassionate, comforting, confessing, contrite, courageous, committed, and confident hearts — hearts that are pleasing to God and a blessing to ourselves and others.

Like you, I’m a child of God who is a work in progress and, with a lot of serious work by the Holy Spirit, will eventually have a reasonable facsimile of a heart for God.

Your friend in the Lord Jesus —

Brother Roland

Psalm 51

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan rebuked him, after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. (See 2 Samuel 12:1-15)

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not
despise.
Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

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This is David's great song of confession, contrition, and repentance. What can we learn from David's attitude and his words?

- + David knows that God loves him, and is merciful.
- + He admits his sin, and acknowledges that condemnation of his actions is justified.
- + He knows he can't undo the wrong he has done; only God can "blot out" his sins.
- + He says he has been a sinner all his life, even from before he was born.
- + He acknowledges that God has given him wisdom and knowledge of truth.
- + He asks God to change him, make him clean and give him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in him. This is David's repentance
- + He asks to be allowed to continue being in God's presence, and anointed and guided by the Holy Spirit.
- + He says there is joy in being saved and knowing it, and he has lost that joy by sinning.
- + He promises to proclaim God's goodness to other sinners, so they will return to God.
- + He knows that God doesn't want animal sacrifices; He wants people who will be broken-hearted and contrite because of their own sinfulness.

We can learn important lessons from this psalm, and some applicable New Testament passages:

If you've sinned, don't run away from God. Instead, run to Him, asking for forgiveness and for help to become clean in His sight.

You can know that He is willing to forgive you — His Son died so your sins can be forgiven.

The appropriate response to His gracious forgiveness is to embrace this plan of Paul:
"... present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
(Romans 12:1-2)

Write to me with your Bible questions or address updates — new subscribers are always welcome.

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A Heart for God

When you get right down to it, having a heart for God is what life is really all about. It's a good thing that He is always with us to help, strengthen, correct, and encourage us as we struggle, fail often, and make progress. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

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S L Q T X N S P A T P O Y R P G E N C O U R A G I N L I O C K
N D E L L O R T N O C F L E S K A A U Q G E K P P G R S L O H
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Words:

CARING
COMFORTING
COMMITTED
COMPASSIONATE
CONFESSING
CONFIDENT
CONSIDERATE
CONTRITE
COURAGEOUS
DEDICATED
DEVOTED
ENCOURAGING
FAITHFUL

FORGIVING
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GIVING
GOOD
GRACIOUS
HELPFUL
HONEST
JOYFUL
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PRAYERFUL
REPENTANT
RESPECTFUL
REVERENT
SELF-CONTROLLED
SELF-GIVING
SHARING
SPIRIT-LED
SUPPORTIVE
UNSELFISH
WELCOMING