

**HELPING YOUR
CHILD HAVE A
HEART
FOR GOD**

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What is the one central desire or wish that gives focus to all the labors and dreams?
What is the one thing that having settled, would cause all of life to “fall into place,” so to speak?

→ The thing, above all things, the main thing, if you please.

More than what they can have (cars, homes, jobs), more than what they can do (excel in school, athletics, etc.) more than all of that is what we want them to **BE**.

What kind of person are you, as a dad, trying to produce in your son or daughter?

The Psalmist captures this focus for our parenting in the desire he has for himself.

Psalm 42:1,2 *To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. (2) My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Psalm 27:4 *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.*

Psalm 84:2 *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

The Psalmist David depicts a strong, focused **heart for God**.

Paul Tripp, in his excellent book, Age of Opportunity, addresses this issue.

What does a heart for God look like?

→ The central characteristic is its deep, sincere hunger to know and honor God. This needs to be contrasted with pharisaical performance of Christianity’s external duties or living for its temporal benefits.

God made His attitude clear in His rejection of “heartless” obedience.

Isaiah 1:11-17 *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. (12) When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? (13) Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths,*

the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. (15) And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; (17) Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 29:13 *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

Christ responded the same way to the "heartless," "self-righteous" duty of the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:25-28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

Matthew 5:20 *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

These passages help us look transparently at ourselves and our growing children. Godliness is defined as something more than keeping a list of behaviors (the accepted dos and don'ts of any "Christian community").

I. Some signs of a heart for God

- A. There will be an independent life of personal worship and devotion.**

- B. There will be a desire for corporate worship and instruction.**

A child, teen, who is at church without a fuss is hopefully there for two reasons:

1. He wants to corporately worship God.

2. He has a hungry, teachable spirit.

C. There will be fellowship with the body of Christ.

He will want to spend more time with others of like mindedness.
He will enjoy peers who share his faith.

Psalm 119:115 *Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

Psalm 119:63 *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

D. There will be an openness to discussions about spiritual things.

E. Decision-making will be approached from a biblical perspective.

II. Strategies for encouraging a heart for God

A. Make family worship and/or biblical instruction times a priority.

B. Look for opportunities to point your teenager or child to God.

C. Be positive and Christ-centered in your use of Scripture.

D. Use yourself as an example of the forgiving, enabling grace of God.

E. Be willing to ask for forgiveness, accountability and prayer.

F. Be a model of prayer without ceasing.

G. Be an example of hunger for God.