

INTRODUCTION

- A. Hey everyone – good morning. I'm Barry and I'm one of the ministers here at WellSpring. And if this is your first time with us or if you are new to WellSpring, it's great to have you.
- B. Andy Stanley said: "The easiest person in the world to deceive is the one in the mirror." It's true. The easiest person in the world to deceive is the one in the mirror.
- C. Do you know how you can tell if you struggle with deceiving yourself? If you've ever sucked in your gut when you stood on a scale! If you've ever done that, you know you have a problem with self-deception.
- D. In Scientific American article called, "Living a Lie: We Deceive Ourselves to Better Deceive Others," Matthew Hutson wrote, "People mislead themselves all day long. We tell ourselves we're smarter and better looking than our friends, that our political party can do no wrong, that we're too busy to help a colleague." _Matthew Hutson

In 1976, the biologist Robert Trivers suggested an explanation for why we constantly are deceiving ourselves. He said, "We dupe ourselves in order to deceive others, creating social advantage." _Robert Trivers

We deceive ourselves in order to deceive others – we want to look better than we really are because it makes us feel like we are better, or have it together more, or are more successful, than others.

- E. Think about it...
 - 1. When job hunting, what are we trying to do? It's to our advantage to be a better candidate than anyone else; so research shows 40% of people lie on their resumes. People fudge a little bit here and there – deceiving themselves that this is who they really are in order to deceive others into hiring them.
 - 2. Or why do we go into deep debt to buy things we really don't need? We tell ourselves we need something, even if we can't

afford it, because we think we will feel better about ourselves or that others will admire us more for having the bigger home, the more expensive car, or the better life.

3. And there is no better example of deceiving others than social media. Everyone's life on social media looks great. People snap selfies. They're happy. They are always surrounded by a group of people having fun - having experiences other people wish they could be having.

“Look at my life...isn't it great? Don't you wish you were me?”

We want people to think that we have it all together because it might allow us to feel better about ourselves.

4. It's just not uncommon for us to deceive ourselves to better to deceive others.
5. Why is that?

F. Do you know how I know something inside me isn't right? There are quite a few things, but here's one...

1. It makes me happy when the University of Kentucky loses a basketball or football game. Isn't that terrible?
 - a. I was born in Knoxville, my dad's a UT grad, and I grew up in Louisville and became a Louisville fan in high school. And both Tennessee and Louisville are Kentucky rivals. I've just never liked UK. So when UK loses, there is a part of me that is happy.
 - b. Did any Vol fan feel bad for Alabama or shed a tear for the Crimson Tide after last week's big game? Nope. Not even a bit. Not even a drop.
 - c. When my young son, Jake, was about 6 years old, he told me he was going to be a UK fan. I told him: “You can be a UK fan if you want, but I will never take you to a UK game or buy you UK gear. But if you want to be a UofL fan, I will take you to games and buy you all the UofL gear you want.”
 - d. I'll admit, it was manipulative...but it worked. He's a UofL fan.
 - e. Sports fans know what I'm talking about.
2. There is also something inside of us, me included, that takes some subtle amount of pleasure when someone else fails.

- a. Maybe you were let go and after that the department tanked. Admit it, it felt good.
- b. Any country music fans? In 1999, Toby Keith had a song called, "How do you like me now?" It's about a girl who wouldn't give him the time of day in high school. But now that he's hit the big time, he's not so subtle, "How do you like me now?" Look what you missed out on!
- c. It like Republicans who acted angry, but maybe were somewhat satisfied, to see gas prices go up to "prove they were right" about President Biden. "I did that!"
- d. Or when Democrats hoped that President Trump would die from Covid? There were some...or a lot.
- e. Or why do some people hope that Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg go broke?
- f. Or why do some people hope that California collapses into the sea or why are some people glad Florida got hit by a hurricane?
- g. Why is that? And why do we think we are still okay with thinking those kinds of things?
- h. Or why do we think that it's fun to make fun of people? Or gossip? Or that it's okay to take things that don't belong to us? Or that no one is really being hurt by our addictions? Or...I could keep going and eventually I would hit you too.
 - i. But we often deceive ourselves into thinking that there isn't anything wrong with us for doing those things.

Transition: There is a reason why the easiest person in the world to deceive is the one in the mirror.

BODY

I. **THE PROBLEM IS THE HEART.**

- A. French philosopher Blaise Pascal said, "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing." _Blaise Pascal
 - 1. The apostle Paul once wrote, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." _Romans 7:15
 - 2. We think things, do things, and say things that don't make any sense – not even to us...unless we are narcissistic...and it's because our

heart has weird and sometimes twisted reasons even we don't understand.

- B. God's Word, the Bible, told us what the problem is thousands of years before Pascal when Jeremiah, a spokesman for God during a time of great trouble for God's people, wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" _Jeremiah 17:9

The reason why we are so easily able to deceive ourselves is we are easily deceived by our own heart.

1. ***Above all things***, the heart is deceitful.
2. Our heart isn't naturally good or kind or loving or patient or peaceful or faithful or gentle or able to show self-control.
3. Above all things, the Bible says, the heart is deceitful.
4. Some of us probably disagree with that. We want to believe that people are honorable and good and that they want to do the right thing.
5. But the Bible says the heart is so far gone that we can't fix it! It's beyond cure.

- C. If we look at what the Bible says about the heart, we have to go to both the Old and New Testaments.

1. In the Old Testament, the word "heart" is the word in **Hebrew: "leb."**
 - a. The Hebrews used the term "leb" to refer to the inner part of a person that refers to our will, our mind, our awareness, our emotions, and our understanding.
 - b. They didn't just see the heart as an organ or just emotions. As a matter of fact, thousands of years ago, people really didn't understand the inner workings of the body. The ancients saw the heart as an all-encompassing way to describe the inner person.
 - c. They used it to refer to moral character and determination. They saw the heart as a place of knowledge, and memory and reflection; which actually, as we know, are brain functions; but to the Hebrews, those things happened in the heart – in the inner person.
 - d. They saw the heart as the driving force behind our character, decisions, words and deeds.

2. In the New Testament, written in Greek, the word for heart is the word in Greek: "kardia."

- a. It was seen as the source of our spiritual life.
- b. It included the emotions we experience, the thoughts we have, and our will in life.
- c. It also describes the center of our longings, desires and feelings.

3. The Bible doesn't just describe the heart as an organ inside of us - our heart is us. It's who we really are on the inside. It's the inner you, the inner me.

4. So the reason why we deceive ourselves is because of what is going on inside of us.

5. Remember Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" _Jeremiah 17:9

And, as Andy Stanley suggested: What goes on inside of us, what goes on inside the heart, isn't a problem that can be solved; it creates a tension we continuously have to resolve.

1. Nietzsche said that we are motivated by power.
2. Marx said that we are motivated by money.
3. Freud said it is sex that motivates us.
4. We all know the tension that those things create.
5. But we just can't snap our fingers and make those inner desires go away. There isn't any magical dust that can be sprinkled over us to make the tensions disappear.
6. The heart isn't a problem we can solve; it creates a tension we have to continuously resolve.

E. It's one of the reasons that God's word says in Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." _Proverbs 4:23

- 1, Above all else, guard your inner being, for everything you do flows from inside.
2. It's interesting, Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful *above all things*," and Proverbs 4:23 is saying, "*Above all else*, guard your heart."
3. Let's mash them together: "The heart is deceitful above all things, so above all else guard your heart."

4. We spend so much time worrying about what our outsides look like and honestly, we need to be more concerned about what is going on on the inside of us.
5. Another translation of Proverbs 4:23 is, "Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it is the wellspring of life." _Proverbs 4:23
6. That's interesting...since we are at WellSpring.
7. A wellspring is the source.
8. According to the writer of this proverb: the wellspring of life, the source of life, is the heart.
9. And if we don't understand that the heart is the source of life, we will never be able to have the kind of life that God intended for us to have.
10. And that's what we are about as a church. We want to help people discover that the source of real life comes from a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. The Healer of our heart.

Transition: Today, we are introducing a new series of sermons based on the heart – the inner life. It's because we believe that Jesus will help you have the best life possible if we let Him have control over our heart – our inner life.

II Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, who said, 'Let there be light in the darkness,' has made his light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ." _II Corinthians 4:6 (NLT)

Into the darkness of our heart, into the darkness of our inner selves, God shines a light – and that light is Jesus. And we begin to see ourselves and the people and the world around us "in a new light."

And during this series, we are going to be looking at a man who saw God differently; he saw himself differently, and he saw life differently. And we are able to hear his stories and read what he wrote and see how God affected his heart. His name was David.

II. **DAVID IS KNOWN AS MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.**

- A. Does that mean that David's heart looked like God's heart? Or that David was consistently chasing after the heart of God? Both can be true and both are important for us.

- B. David lived 3,000 years ago and his life was anything but ordinary. Three short stories about his life...
1. David was born in a Jewish family - the youngest of seven sons. He grew up during a time of national transition.
 - a. The Israelite people had cried out to God that they wanted a king like all the other nations around them. And God didn't appreciate it one bit. God said, "Why would you want an imperfect man ruling over you when you have Me?" Good point. But the Israelites wouldn't stop their whining for a king: "We want a king. We want a king." So God said, "Okay, I will give you what you want, even though you aren't going to like it."
 - b. You know, that's how God works? He will sometimes let us have what we long for and don't need so that we will grow to appreciate who He is.
 - c. God selected a man named Saul to be Israel's first king. He was tall and handsome. A very striking figure. He had executive presence. But on the inside, Saul was insecure and struggled with being patient with God and obedient. So God decided that Saul's time to be king would be up soon and that none of his sons would inherit the throne.
 - d. God then led the prophet Samuel to the home of a man named Jesse. God told Samuel that one of Jesse's sons would become king after Saul. They gathered Jesse's six oldest sons around Samuel - and these were good-looking young men and they started with the oldest and Samuel thought, "Surely God is going to choose this one to become king." But God said, "Nope, he's not the one." The second oldest - surely this was the right one - not the right one." Third. Fourth. Fifth. Sixth. None of six was the one that God had chosen to become king after Saul.
 - e. Samuel said to Jesse, "Do you have any other sons? The Lord hasn't chosen any of these sons of yours to be king." "Well, there is one out watching the flocks in the fields." And Samuel said, "Go get him." And they brought David before him and God said, "It's that one."
 - f. It tells us that David was ruddy and handsome. In other words, David was full-blooded, and glowing and handsome.
 - g. We actually have a picture of what David looked like...(photo).

- h. But it wasn't what David looked like on the outside that God saw; it was what was on the inside.
 - i. When choosing David, God's words are recorded in II Samuel 16:7. God says, "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. Man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart."
 - j. David's heart was much more important to God than his physical appearance.
- 2. The second story about David is a familiar one. As a teenager, he takes on the Philistine giant Goliath with just a slingshot and is victorious.
 - a. Only a young man with godly character and fortitude could have taken on Goliath, let alone win.
 - b. And for that, David was adored by the Jewish people – which caused King Saul to become very jealous of David – so jealous that Saul would try to kill him – which would cause David to run for his life.
- 3. Which leads us to a third story...
 - a. Once Saul and his army were chasing David. David and the men who followed him were hiding in a cave. At that same time, Saul had to go to the bathroom and he entered the cave to relieve himself. And David's men said to him, "David, now's your chance to kill Saul and become King." But David wouldn't do it. He saw King Saul as the Lord's anointed. Instead of killing him, David snuck up and cut off the edge of Saul's robe.
 - b. And after Saul left the cave, David exited the cave and hollered out, "King Saul!" And the King stopped and looked back toward the cave where he just had been. And David said, "I could have taken your life today, but I didn't." And the David held up the edge of the robe he had cut off and Saul was embarrassed and ended the chase.
- 4. But eventually, like God had said, after 40 years as king, Saul and his sons would die in battle. And David would become king over all Israel at the age of 30.
- 5. In Acts 13:22, a thousand years after David had been king, the apostle Paul is addressing a crowd of people and he is talking about David's rise to power. And Paul quotes I Samuel 13:14 and says, "After removing Saul, he made David their king. [God]

testified concerning [David]; 'I have found David...a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' _Acts 13:22

6. A man or woman after God's own heart is a person who will do everything God wants him or her to do.

- C. But above all other things, the heart is deceptive. And even David, who God said was a man after his own heart, would be deceived and betrayed by his own heart. One of the stories from the life of David we will look at during this series is the account of how David took another man's wife for his own and had the man killed. The amount of deception and self-deception in the story of David and Bathsheba is shocking. Even a godly man or woman has to watch out for the deceptions of the heart.
- D. Honestly, would any of us want a movie made of all our faults and failures? Probably not.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, loved practical jokes. As a joke, he once sent a telegram to each of 12 friends. All were men of great virtue and respected in society. The telegram simply read, "Flee! All has been discovered." To his shock, within 24 hours, the story goes, all 12 had left the country! There may be some exaggeration in the story, but the point is that many people have dark secrets that haunt their consciences.

Transition: So the question is not just how could God consider a David a man after his own heart, but knowing what we know about ourselves, how can we ever become men and women after God's own heart?

That's going to be the focus of this series. How could David – a murderer, an adulterer, a liar - ever be known as someone after God's own heart – and how can we?

So how do we resolve the tension created by the heart? One way is through...

III. **WORSHIP**

- A. To be a man or woman who is a man or woman after God's own heart, to be the kind of man or woman who will do anything that God wants us to do, we need to be men and women who worship.
- B. When I was young I didn't understand worship. I thought worship was something that I went to. And when I was young, I would fake being sick so I wouldn't have to go. I would rather stay home and watch the original Star Trek series than go to church.

But over time, as we grow in our faith, we begin to understand that worship isn't something we go to. We discover that worship isn't a noun, it's a verb. Worship is something we do, not something we go to.

- C. And here's a pro-tip, **God has wired you for worship.** You are. Whether you realize it or not. We are all wired to worship something.

Now, it may not be God. We can worship our work, or money, or our family, or cars, or sports teams, or other people. We can worship ourselves. But everyone worships something or someone because we are wired for worship.

The great new is that we are also given the freedom to choose what we worship.

- D. **Worshipping God is ascribing worth to God for who He is and what He has done.**

1. When we sing, we are ascribing worth to God for who He is and what He has done.
2. When we take communion, we are ascribing worth to God for who He is and what He has done by sending Jesus to pay for our sin on the cross.
3. When we pray, we are ascribing worth to God for who He is and what He has done and what He will do.
4. When we give, we are ascribing worth to God for who He is and putting our trust in Him for what He will do with our finances.
5. When we listen to a sermon, we are ascribing worth to God for who He is and putting our trust in Him for what He will do in our own life when we put His word in practice.

- E. If you have a real Bible, and not just the one in your phone, in a real Bible, in the middle is the book of Psalms – or a book of songs. Songs of praise and worship.
1. Of the 150 songs, most scholars suggest David wrote about 73 of them – if not more.
 2. He wrote some before he became king and some after. He wrote songs during the good times and the bad. He wrote songs when he was confident and bold and others when he was afraid.
 3. But David wrote songs ascribing worth to God for who He was, what He had done, and what He would do.
 4. A lot of people actually like to pray the Psalms. In other words, you open up a Psalm and read it as an actual prayer to God.
 5. Like the song David wrote that is known as Psalm 23. When you pray it, here's is what it sounds like as you begin...

“Lord, you are my shepherd, because of you I don't lack anything. You make me lie down in green pastures, You lead me beside quiet waters, You refresh my soul. You guide me along the right paths for your name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for you are with me...”_Psalm 23:1-3

F. When I was a freshman at Bible College, I was 18 years old and it was the best of times and the worst of times. It was the best of times because I had freedom and had good friends and I was having fun; but in a Bible college sort of way, and not in a buck wild kind of way.

Most of the time, I was pretty happy; but other times I found myself feeling alone and insecure.

One particular afternoon, I remember sitting in my dorm room by myself, feeling pretty low, when I grabbed my New American Standard Bible and opened it up to the middle, then put my finger down on a page. And these were the words I read...from the Psalms...written, not by David, but by Asaph...

“Whom do I have in heaven *but You?*
And with You, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart *may* fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;

You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
But as for me, the nearness of God is good for me;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
So that I may tell of all Your works." _Psalm 73:25-28

Those words of worship written by Asaph 3,000 years ago, brought me comfort and peace. And I just thought it was pretty cool that I had randomly pointed to those verses and that they were exactly what I needed to hear. But that wasn't an accident.

- G. When we open up our hearts to God in worship, we oftentimes hear exactly what we need to hear.
1. Maybe you've been trying to work things out on your own, but we should place our trust in Christ alone.
 2. Or that God needs to be magnified in your life more now than ever before.
 3. Maybe we needed to hear that the things we are putting before God, the things we are worshipping, the things that aren't making us any happier or any more content, is our heart's way of deceiving us into believing we don't need God.
 4. But when we open up our hearts to God in worship, God makes sure we hear exactly what we need to hear.

CLOSING

- A. Every funeral is a little bit different.
1. I've done dozens. Some for the young and some for the old. Some who died naturally and some tragically. In some there is gratitude for how God has called someone who has been a faithful follower of Jesus home. And at others, it's just been brutally sad.
 2. About three weeks ago, a man I was just getting to know, Troy Birdsong, suddenly died. Troy and I were similar in age. We had only gotten to really know each other at the men's retreat. And then two days later, he was gone.
 3. When we were planning the service, I met with Troy's wife, Toni. And Toni made it clear that, at the end, she wanted to worship. Troy and Toni hadn't been a WellSpring long, but he was about to begin singing with the worship team. For years he had sung on the

praise team of their previous church. So at the end of Troy's celebration service Toni wanted to sing.

4. And Rob led us in three songs and did a great job. And together, though we all were experiencing grief, together we just worshipped.
5. We thanked God for the fact that He the Waymaker – the light in our darkness. We thanked God for His amazing grace and that we are thankful that God removes the chains that hold us down – which reminded us that Troy's chains were gone forever and that he had been set free. And then we closed out with a song that reminded us, in spite of the passing of a loved one, that God is good.
6. Together, we worshipped.

C. One day, you and I are going to die. Statistics show that one out of every one person dies. And after you and I are gone, people are going to gather around a table, have a meal, and eat coleslaw and ham and potato salad. But while everyone else is eating, what will we be doing?

We are either going to be just beginning to worship God forever - or we are going to regret not being able to worship God at all.

My hope and prayer that, like David, we will become men and women after God's own heart, who embrace and adore worshipping God, both now and forever.

D. In just a moment, we are going to sing a song of decision...