

# PREPARING YOUR HEART TO SEEK GOD

## **2 Chronicles 12:13, 14**

***13 So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. 14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.***

Rehoboam was king of Judah. He succeeded his father Solomon after his death. Here we are told that Rehoboam “did evil” in the sight of the Lord. And the reason he did evil was because he “PREPARED NOT HIS HEART” to seek the Lord.

That is what I want to talk to you today about—“Preparing your heart to seek God.”

We often wonder why we can't seem to make any real progress when it comes to seeking God, or why we, like king Rehoboam, keep doing evil? The answer might be because we have not properly “prepared our heart” to seek the Lord!

*Preparation is critical for any success. Ask any performer or professional of any kind and they will tell you that without proper preparation it's impossible to increase or even sustain your performance. (Sometimes the reason a team does not succeed is not because they are less talented. Sometimes the reason a team does not succeed is because they are less prepared!)*

How do we prepare our hearts to seek the Lord? Well, before we answer that let's take a moment and discuss what a “prepared heart” looks like!

## **2 Chronicles 12:14 New International Version**

***14 He did evil because he had not SET HIS HEART on seeking the Lord.***

So, having a prepared heart means having a heart that is “set” (ready) to seek the Lord. (Before a runner begins a race, they move into a “set” position.) Similarly, before we can truly seek the Lord, we must put our heart in a “set” or ready position! We do this by getting serious and making it our aim (our intent) to seek the Lord!

## **2 Chronicles 12:14 God's Word Translation**

***14 He did evil things because HE WAS NOT SERIOUS about dedicating himself to serving the Lord.***

Notice that “preparing one’s heart” means to show that we’re serious about seeking the Lord. Can we honestly say that we’re serious about seeking God? Meaning, are we committed to seeking God with ALL OUR HEART (mentally, emotionally, etc)? If the answer is “no,” then our heart is not set or prepared to seek God. Thus, it’s no wonder why we, like Rehoboam, keep doing evil in God’s sight!

How do we prepare our heart to seek the Lord?

### **1 Samuel 7:3**

***<sup>3</sup> And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.***

Notice, Samuel told the people that if they wanted to “return to God with all their hearts,” then they needed to prepare their hearts *by putting away the strange gods* out of the land. Therefore, we prepare our hearts to seek God by removing or putting away the idols from our heart.

We cannot truly seek the Lord until we’ve removed all the idols from our heart.

### **2 Chronicles 14:2–4**

***<sup>2</sup> And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God:  
<sup>3</sup> For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: <sup>4</sup> And commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.***

Notice, Asa took away the images (idols) of the strange gods and tore down the “high places.” Afterwards, he commanded the people to seek God.

What were these *high places*? The “high places” were places where people went to worship false gods (and sometimes the true God). These “high places” were basically unauthorized places of worship.

We *still* have “high places” today. *High places* (or idols) come in the form of...

#### **a. PLEASURE or DESIRE**

### **Philippians 3:19**

***<sup>19</sup> Whose end is destruction, WHOSE GOD IS THEIR BELLY, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)***

## **b. WEALTH or MONEY**

*Ephesians 5:5*

***<sup>5</sup> For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor COVETOUS MAN, WHO IS AN IDOLATER, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.***

## **c. APPROVAL or PRAISE**

*John 12:43*

***<sup>43</sup> For they LOVED THE PRAISE OF MEN more than the praise of God.***

***John 12:43 New American Standard Bible***

***<sup>43</sup> for they loved the APPROVAL OF MEN rather than the APPROVAL OF GOD.***

If these things are more important to you than God, they are idols. Moreover, they are keeping you from seeking God!

There are other things we can do to prepare our hearts to seek God.

**2 Chronicles 11:14–16**

***<sup>14</sup> For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord: <sup>15</sup> And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. <sup>16</sup> And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers.***

Notice, the people that “set [or prepared] their hearts to seek the Lord” did so by *leaving their cities* and relocating to Jerusalem! Earlier we said that “high places” weren’t just places of *false* worship, they were also places of *unauthorized* worship. In that day, Jerusalem was the **ONLY** place God authorized for worship. Therefore, those who wanted to seek the Lord “prepared themselves” by traveling to Jerusalem, the place God designated for worship!

**Ezra 7:9, 10**

***<sup>9</sup> For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. <sup>10</sup> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.***

In a day where people are choosing convenience over duty, it's good to be reminded that there are some things that can only be done in certain places!

Ezra understood unless he left Babylon and went to Jerusalem, he could not fully seek the Lord (teach his commandments and do them). Also, we should note that it was *the hand* God (or grace) that enabled Ezra to leave Babylon!

### **Exodus 8:25, 26**

***<sup>25</sup> And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. <sup>26</sup> And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?***

Moses understood that they couldn't remain in Egypt and sacrifice unto their God (i.e. worship Him). Some of us are still trying to serve God from "Egypt" or the place we were before we were saved. However, you cannot worship or serve God from Egypt. To serve God you must go into the *wilderness*.

### **Exodus 8:27**

***<sup>27</sup> We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us.***

What does this "wilderness" represent?

### **Hebrews 13:12–13**

***<sup>12</sup> Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. <sup>13</sup> Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.***

When we talk about going into the *wilderness*, we're really talking about going "outside the camp." Going *outside the camp* is about going outside of what is 'mainstream' or comfortable. It's a place where you will be mocked or criticized. It's also a place where you are depending entirely on the Lord.