

UPCOMING

THIS SUNDAY 11/19

Introducing River West, 12:30 at Pastor Guy's Home @ 18123 Westview Drive, LO. Lite lunch provided.

2007 Israel Trip Info Meeting, 7:30pm
River West Community Center.
Contact Tina Anderson

UPCOMING SUNDAY 11/22

Thanksgiving Eve Service, 6:30 pm & 8 pm at River West Lake Grove

THURS-SAT 11/23-25

River West Office Closed

Cover Photo: Jon & Cher Cadd recently ministered to these children and families, victims of the on-going war and unrest in Congo. Through Mission Aviation Fellowship, the Cadd's have spent the last 20 years using an airplane to reach Africa for Christ.

RIVER WEST GREENTREE: 1595 Greentree Road, Lake Oswego, OR 97034
RIVER WEST LAKE GROVE: 15751 SW Quarry Road, Lake Oswego, OR 97035
OFFICES/COMMUNITY CENTER: 16148 Boones Ferry Rd., Lake Oswego, OR 97035
phone 503.699.2226 / fax 503.697.9663 / email info@riverwest

FRIDAY 12/8

Family Christmas Craft Night benefiting the HOTEL Ministry, 6:30 pm at River West Lake Grove

SUNDAY 12/17

All Church Service, 10 am at Lakeridge Performing Arts Center

SUNDAY 12/24

No morning services
Christmas Eve Service, 5, 7, 9 and 11 pm at Lake Grove. Childcare provided for 5 & 7pm services.

Week of 12/25- 1/1

River West Office Closed

NOTES

RIVER WEST CHURCH

Building a Community
of Christ for the World



next
step | 11.19.2006

www.riverwest.org

WELCOME

Open your heart. Engage your mind. Together with others, reach for something real, deep and lasting. Come with your hurts, hopes, joys and fears. Expect something good, challenging and different. Here's why: Jesus Christ is alive and present with us as we gather to worship, pray and love one another in his name. That's what we believe! That's why we have come today.

At River West our mission is to build a community of Christ for the world. As we focus on Him in worship and the teaching of the Word, our prayer is that we will sense His presence and respond to His love. Life flows from this! To be in community means to share something in common with others. It is our shared faith in Jesus Christ that creates our sense of fellowship with Him and each other & from that flows our desire to share His love and grace with our community and world.

Our worship gathering is an important expression of our shared faith and life. But true community is built in other important ways as well. At the heart of our mission is what we call our Community Groups. These groups allow us to build relationships and grow deeper in our faith in Christ. For more information about various Community Groups call Pastor Adam at the church office.

Contact Pastor Josh regarding Student Ministry & Youth Groups for kids from 6th grade through High School. Our Children's Ministry Director, Lindsie Bailey would love to talk to you about fun stuff for kids at River West!

RESPOND

Visitor? Need info updated in the directory?
Want to sign up for something? Give us your info:

Name: _____

Children's names: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Best contact phone: _____

Which service do you attend? 8:45am 10am 11am 5:30pm

Sign me up for _____

Comments, questions, interests _____

Add/Update me in the directory

Paying Attention to Your Heart Exodus 7-14

Pastor Jonathan Alexander

The Battle for the Heart

Throughout the story of God, the “heart” is the richest biblical term that describes the totality of our inner nature—our emotions, our thoughts and our will. The heart is central to all we are and all that we will become. It is the “wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). So goes your heart, so goes your life. That’s why God calls His people to “love the LORD your God with all your heart...” (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-40). He calls them to fix all of their lives upon Him. But our adversary Satan knows the design and plan of God. The Enemy knows that if he can win our hearts, he wins our will. The battle is fought and won or lost in the human heart.

Throughout Exodus’ story of redemption, the real battlefield becomes the hearts of all the characters involved --Moses’, Israel’s, Pharaoh’s, ours. If we are to find and experience “the way out,” the road to redemption,

we are going to have pay attention to our hearts.

The Trajectory of the Heart

Consider this: Your heart determines your character, and your character determines your destiny. As we experience the increasing chaos and destruction of the plagues in Exodus, we see that Pharaoh’s heart gets harder and harder. The man who already viewed himself as a god to all around him, is filled with more and more pride. And finally, he reaches the point of no return. The unrelenting arrogance in his heart has determined who he has become, and who he has become determines his destiny and ultimately his destruction.

This section of Scripture contains what seems to be a profound theological tension. Did Pharaoh harden his heart? Or did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? Ten times in the story, Pharaoh is said to have hardened his heart. And another ten times, God is said to have hardened

Pharaoh’s heart. At the root, it seems to be a discussion about the sovereignty of God and the freewill of humanity.

There are several things to consider. First, the intricacies and resolution of these types of theological quandaries are best ultimately left to the mysterious nature of God (Deuteronomy 29:29). However, that should not preclude us from wrestling with the deeper things of God.

Second, God is never the “author of evil or sin,” and Pharaoh’s hardened heart was sin (Exodus 9:34).

Third, if Pharaoh’s hardened heart and disobedience were considered sin, then he is responsible for his own petrified heart. Lastly, if Pharaoh was a “puppet,” there wouldn’t be much glory for God in that. The glory that God receives in the Exodus story is the victory over evil in the midst of a very real conflict and battle.

Perhaps the best way to “resolve” the tension in this section is, what one author writes, “This is the biblical way of asserting that the king’s intransigence has by then become habitual and irreversible; his character has become his

destiny. He is deprived of the possibility of relenting and is irresistibly impelled to his self-wrought doom.”

The hardening of a heart starts with seemingly small compromises and then quickly spins out of control. It is like a boat drawn more and more quickly over the edge of a massive waterfall. As each moment passes and the boat is not aggressively steered towards the safety of the shore, the likelihood of a safe ending quickly disappears. Such is the trajectory of the heart. Once again, if we are to find and experience “the way out” --the road to redemption-- we are going to have to pay attention to our hearts.

God’s Antidote: A Humble Faith

Part of the beauty of Exodus is found in the lives and nature of the people in the story. Pharaoh and Moses are portrayed as anti-thetical characters. Pharaoh, the proud and obstinate king of a notoriously arrogant nation is the personification of evil. As the story progresses, so does the callusing of Pharaoh’s own heart.

In contrast, Moses, the reluctant humble servant (Numbers 12:3), increasingly opens his heart to the person and power of God. As the story progresses, Moses’ heart shows us

the antidote to a hardened heart: “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:10). That sounds a lot like the life of Jesus. In faith and humility, He gave Himself over to the will of His Father. And after three dark days in a borrowed tomb, as light and life poured in, the Father exalted Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) through the Resurrection.

So, fix your eyes and your heart on Jesus, the Risen Christ, the One who is “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

Questions for Further Personal Reflection & Group Discussion

Take some time to respond to what we have been learning in Exodus. Was there anything from Sunday’s sermon that you felt the Lord had intended just for you?

Let’s Talk About Your Heart

Read the following verses: Proverbs 4:21-23, Ezekiel 11:18-21, Psalm 86:11-12, Matthew 6:21 and Matthew 12:34. What do these verses have to say about the human heart? How is our heart involved in our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Hard Hearts

What do you think causes people to be “hardened” in their hearts towards the Lord?

What caused Pharaoh to be hard-hearted (see Exodus 9:34 & 35)?

Fix Your Heart on Jesus

Was there a time when you hardened your heart to Christ? What happened?

Is there an area where you are resisting the Lord right now in your life?

What would it mean or look like for you to cooperate with God?

We were reminded this week about God’s initiative and commitment. (Phil 1:6, 2:13, Eph 2:4-5 & Romans 5:6-8) How can this understanding of God give us hope in times of discouragement?