

The Game of the Heart

A SOAP Bible Study for Pool Players and Followers of Christ

Theme Verse

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."
— Proverbs 4:23

S — Scripture

Primary Scripture

Proverbs 4:23

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Additional Scriptures

1 Samuel 13:14

"The Lord has sought out a man after His own heart."

Acts 13:22

"I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."

Psalms 33:3

"Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy."

Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

O — Observation

The discussion centered on what it means to live and play from the heart. In billiards, many players focus on winning, rankings, and results. Yet Scripture teaches that God is more concerned with the condition of our hearts than our accomplishments.

Tom Rossman described the heart as the control center of life. When bitterness, anger, pride, resentment, or unforgiveness enter our hearts, they affect our thoughts, decisions, and actions.

Just as a player cannot consistently play well when distracted, believers struggle spiritually when their hearts are burdened with unresolved issues.

David was called a man after God's own heart—not because he was perfect, but because he continually returned to God in humility, repentance, and obedience.

Key Observations

- God looks at the heart before He looks at performance.
 - A healthy spiritual heart produces healthy decisions.
 - Winning does not determine our worth.
 - God's purpose is greater than our successes or failures.
 - Joy comes from loving God and serving Him, not from earthly achievements.
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A — Application

1. Heart Check

Think about your life right now.

- Is there someone you need to forgive?
- Is there bitterness, disappointment, or anger you're carrying?
- Are you allowing a past loss to define your identity?

Write your answer:

Action Step

Ask God to reveal any impurity in your heart that is affecting your relationship with Him or others.

2. What Is Your Identity?

Many people base their value on:

- Winning
- Success
- Titles
- Achievements
- Recognition

But God says your value comes from being His child.

Reflection

Do you define yourself by:

- What you do?
 - What you've accomplished?
 - Or who you are in Christ?
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Action Step

This week, remind yourself daily:

"My worth comes from Christ, not my performance."

3. Playing with Joy

Psalm 33:3 tells us to:

"Play skillfully, and shout for joy."

Notice it doesn't say:

"Play perfectly."

God wants us to enjoy the gifts He has given us.

Reflection

What activity has God placed in your life that brings joy and can be used for His glory?

Action Step

Use one of your gifts this week as an act of worship rather than performance.

Pool Table Illustration

Imagine you've missed the winning shot.

How do you respond?

Response A

- Anger
- Frustration
- Self-condemnation

Response B

- Learn from the mistake
- Trust God with the outcome
- Enjoy the opportunity to play

The world says:

"You are what you achieve."

Jesus says:

"You are Mine."

The difference is the condition of the heart.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God mentions the heart so often in Scripture?
 2. What does it mean to be "a man or woman after God's own heart"?
 3. How can unforgiveness affect our spiritual lives?
 4. Have you ever based your value on success or failure?
 5. What does "playing skillfully with a shout of joy" mean in your everyday life?
 6. How can we use our passions and hobbies to point others toward Christ?
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P — Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for caring more about my heart than my accomplishments. Help me guard my heart and keep it focused on You. Reveal any bitterness, pride, anger, or unforgiveness that may be holding me back.

Teach me to find my identity in Christ rather than in success or failure. Help me use the gifts and passions You have given me to bring glory to Your name.

May I live, serve, and even play with joy, knowing that my worth is found in You alone.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Weekly Challenge

Every morning this week pray:

"Lord, help me guard my heart and play skillfully with a shout of joy."

Then ask yourself:

Am I playing the game of life to win for myself, or to honor Christ?

Write one way you can demonstrate the heart of Christ this week: