



**Barefoot Ministries®**

# Message Outlines:

## A Contrast of Two Hearts

### Topic/Theme:

Serving God Wholeheartedly

### Scripture:

1 Kings 15:11-14; 2 Chronicles 25:1-2, 14-15a

### Get to the Point:

Have we given God our entire being or are we holding back a part of ourselves?

### Context Commentary:

Asa succeeded his father, Abijah, as King of Jerusalem. Asa, unlike his father, was a reformist king. Abijah had been a King who “committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God” (1 Kings 15:3). Conversely, when Asa succeeded his father, he “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 15:11) by expelling the cult prostitutes, removing all the idols that his predecessors (including his father and grandfather) had set up, deposing the idolatrous queen grandmother, and destroying the queen grandmother’s cult image of Asherah.

Asa’s actions are admirable, not only for his willingness to buck the status quo, but because he understood that the kingdom’s future was hopeless without God as its true king. Therefore, Asa sought to live a life that was fully committed to God until his death. He wasn’t willing to allow outside forces to divert his attention and commitment from God.

Contrast Asa with the life of King Amaziah. Scripture records that he “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly” (2 Chronicles 25:2). Amaziah tended to do things only halfway. He put to death the people who had murdered his father, King Joash, but failed to follow all the way through by fulfilling the law’s requirement that the sons of the murderers also be put to death. He tended to do the things he wanted to do, without considering what God wanted (vv. 5-8). And even when God assisted him and his army by helping them defeat the Edomites, how did Amaziah respond? He “brought back the gods of the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down to them and burned sacrifices to them” (v. 14).

Amaziah is emblematic of many people today. They are content to follow God as long as the relationship doesn't infringe on what they want to do with their lives. God is seen as the cosmic butler or maid, who is there to meet our needs, but doesn't require anything of us. In other words, God is not particularly necessary, but He can be useful, especially in terms of validating what we want to do anyway.

Contrast this with the God of Scripture, who doesn't just ask for commitment, but *for our very lives!* The God of the Bible loves passionately, and in fact is willing to suffer in our stead in order to win our return. Christian tradition calls this divine love the "passion" of the cross—a love that is, literally, "to die for." It is the love God showed us in Jesus Christ, and it is the love God hopes we will return.

This is why trying to serve God with only half our hearts is a doomed enterprise. Any love that is only self-seeking rather than others-giving will ultimately fail. Only when we are willing to give God our entire being can we begin to understand who God is and what He wants to do in our lives. And only when we can begin to love wholeheartedly will we come to grasp just how "wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18).

## Outline and Options:

### Icebreaker: Opposites Attract

Make sure each person has a piece of paper and a pen/pencil. Using the power point, play the antonym game. Go to the first screen of the antonym game and say, **On the screen you see a number of words. Take a few moments to write down the antonym, or opposite word, for each word listed.**

Give the class a few minutes to complete the antonyms. They may not know the opposite of every word; that's okay—encourage them to guess. After a few minutes, go over the words together, revealing the antonyms on the screen as you do (use the second slide of the antonym game in the powerpoint). For each antonym a student correctly identifies, he or she gets a point. Award a small prize (e.g. a candy bar or something similar) to the person who received the most points. If there is a tie, use the tie-breaker question and just allow those who were tied to participate. If there is still a tie, declare all remaining parties "the winners" and move on.

This game of opposites will help move students into a mindset which will allow them to better understand the contrast between King Asa and King Amaziah.

### Illustration Option 1:

*Use the following illustration or a similar one from your own life:*

Imagine our local high school team has had a good season. (I know that may seem like a stretch!) The team has pretty much romped through the season, beating opponents easily. Now it is the last game of the year and we are playing our hated cross town rivals who are undefeated and who are the only team to have beaten us last year. Obviously, this is a big game, but fortunately, it will be played at our stadium. All week long businesses and homeowners put signs in their windows and on their lawns urging our team to victory. At school, there is a huge pep rally on Friday afternoon.

Friday evening looms and it appears as if the entire city has turned out for the game. People are everywhere, screaming for the team to win. They are pumped.

The game wages back and forth through the first three quarters. Our team scores first on a ten yard run by our tailback, but the other team quickly comes back and ties the score. When the fourth quarter starts, the score is tied 17-17. Then a few minutes into the quarter, the other team returns a punt 65 yards for a touchdown. The rest of the quarter seesaws back and forth as neither team can gain an advantage. Then with only two and a half minutes left in the game, our offense gets the ball back. Everyone in the stadium knows that this is the last chance to win. Our coach calls for a timeout, and carefully outlines the next series of plays for our offense. A five yard run here. A fifteen yard pass. A twelve yard run. Another pass. Slowly but surely our offense is making its way downfield. Soon, our team is at the five yard line. There's only thirty seconds left, and we have a first down. Again our team calls timeout. The coach doesn't explain what is at stake here; he simply tells the team to go out there and give it their best. After two running plays and an incomplete pass, it is fourth down, with our team on the one-yard line. This is it. The coach calls for a full house backfield; the team lines up, the ball is snapped, the tailback takes it and surges into the line.

Whap! There is a huge pile of bodies for the referees to untangle to determine if he had made it into the endzone. Everyone in the stadium holds their breath in anticipation. Then the ruling comes: He didn't make it. We lost the game.

The team had worked so hard all season long, trying to obtain their goal of winning the league championship. But in the end, they came up just a little bit short.

Outline:

1. I want us to look at two kings in the Old Testament, one who did things right, and the other who exemplifies what it means to come up just a little short.
2. The first is King Asa. We read about him in 1 Kings 15:11-14. (*Read the scripture*)

- a. Did you notice the scripture said that Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life? *(see corresponding slide)*
    - i. What a testimony. To be known as one who gave his entire life to the Lord.
  - b. It wasn't easy. Asa's father and grandfather, who were the kings before him, had committed great evil.
    - i. They had allowed foreign gods and idols to be worshiped, and they themselves had committed many sins.
  - c. For Asa to do what was right in God's eyes took some real courage.
    - i. He wasn't merely changing for himself, but he was removing all the idols from the land, so that Israel could also come back to God.
3. The other king is King Amaziah. His story is found in 2 Chronicles 25:1-2, 14-15a. *(Read the scripture)*
- a. Quite a contrast, isn't it? These verses said that Amaziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly. *(see corresponding slide)*
    - i. That means he did all the right things, but not because he wanted to.
    - ii. He did them out of a sense of moral obligation because he felt he had to.
    - iii. Obviously, there was no real relationship between him and God, as evidenced by the fact that late in his life he started praying to other gods and idols.

- iv. Most youth groups have a lot of good kids, but not very many Christian kids. Let me explain.

### **Personal Illustration:**

*(Adapt as needed):* I've been involved in youth ministry awhile now. During that time, I've had a chance to watch hundreds of kids pass through our youth group. And as I've watched these teens, I have become convinced on two things. The first one is that we don't have many really bad kids in our youth group. Really we don't. Oh, every now and then I have had to deal with one who became messed up in drugs, or was involved in vandalism or something like that. I even had one teen that was sent to prison. But those are definitely the exceptions. Overall, we don't have many bad kids.

The second thing that I've observed about the teens that have come through our youth ministry is that we have an awful lot of good teens. I mean an awful lot. We have teens who are involved in all sorts of good things. We have teens who volunteer their time as candy stripers or working at places like a Rescue Mission. We have teens who are involved in sports, and who work good jobs, and are ranked in the top of their class. We have teens who are involved in leadership roles, both at school, and at church. We have some really good kids. But you see, that is what worries me. We have an awful lot of really good kids, but how many are completely wholeheartedly God's?

### **Interactive Activity Option:**

Have kids form pairs and have each pair brainstorm on the concept of good kids vs. Christian kids. Have them construct a list of characteristics for each group. They should come up with one or two qualities that distinguish a truly Christian kid from a good kid—someone who lives a good, moral life, but may or may not be completely sold out to God. What is the difference? Can we tell any difference?

After a few minutes bring the pairs back together and have them share their distinct qualities. Then move on to the rest of the lesson.

4. Good teens are more like King Amaziah. *(see corresponding slide)*
- a. They do things out of moral obligation or because they feel they have to.
    - i. They know all the right things to say and do, and most of the time they even enjoy what they are doing.

- ii. On the outside, they look just like a Christian. They often even talk like a Christian. But they have no real relationship with Jesus Christ.
- b. My concern is that we have too many good teens and not enough Christian teens.
  - i. Christian teens are those teens who are in a love relationship with Jesus Christ. *(see corresponding slide)*
  - ii. They are the ones who do all the right things, not because they have to, but because they love God and want to please Him.
  - iii. Doing the right things is not looked at as a burden, something they have to do.
  - iv. Christian teens look at it as a way for them to become more like Jesus.
    - 1. Christian teens are those teens who go the extra mile, giving to others even when they don't feel like giving any more.
    - 2. Christian teens are the ones who reach out in love to others, sharing not only love but also the good news of the gospel.

### **Personal Illustration 2:**

*(Adapt as needed):* Let me try to explain what I mean. Now you don't know this, but I consider myself to be a pretty romantic person. I really like doing things for my spouse that I know will make them happy. For instance, recently for her birthday I did some things that she liked—I bought her roses, took her out to dinner, and bought her a present. These were things that I really liked doing for her. But I also did some other things, things that I didn't necessarily like doing, like cleaning the house and doing the dishes so that she wouldn't have to do them. Even though I didn't like doing them, I did them because I knew they would make her happy. I do things for my wife because I love her,

not because I have to.

(Show the corresponding slide in the powerpoint.)

Let me give you another example. Imagine that I am sitting outside by the lake with my wife. It's a warm summer night, and a nice breeze is blowing. There is a full moon above the lake, and we can hear the waves lapping at the shore. My wife looks deeply into my eyes and says, "Honey, I love you with MOST of my heart." What! With MOST of your heart? Well, as you can imagine, I would feel crushed. I would want to know who the rest of her heart loved.

5. I've often thought that Jesus must feel the same way.
  - a. How often do we serve God, doing only those things we think we have to do to be Christian?
  - b. How many people serve God with only half their heart, never giving Him all of it?
    - i. I'm reminded that Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."
    - ii. You see, it isn't until we are willing to give God our whole heart that we will ever find Him.
6. You have the most powerful word in the English language at your command; your "NO" can stop even God.
  - a. God allows you to say "NO" to Him, and He respects your choice.
  - b. God has given you a will—and He has allowed you the power to keep Him from working in your life.
  - c. God will never violate your free will, but will always allow you the choice of whether to accept Him wholeheartedly.
  - d. This makes your "YES" all the more important.

## **Illustration Option 2:**

Let's say you have been kidnapped by a band of crazies known as the "Merry Men." They like to kidnap people and have an affinity for archery. They make you a deal. They say they are going to kill you, unless you can shoot 36 arrows and hit a bull's-eye 25 times from a distance of 100 meters.

You tell them that's impossible and they laugh. They know very well that it would be miraculous, because the world record held by Mary Zorn was an impressive 21 bull's-eyes out of 36 from 30 meters (outdoors in the RAIN, by the way).

They give you this one option... you can try to shoot the arrows, or you can choose one person to shoot them for you.

You decide to choose the world record holder, Mary Zorn, and they are impressed that you know who she is (they don't realize that you overheard them discussing the record while they were laughing).

So, they fly in Mary Zorn, and set up the contest. With nerves of steel, Mary lifts her bow to make the first shot. She takes aim and fires... it falls short. She is not used to this outrageous distance. She takes another shot. She somehow manages to get the arrow to fly 100 meters, but in doing so, her otherwise perfect aim is off. She fires arrow after arrow, and after 15 shots, she finally hits the target, but not the bull's-eye. Out of 36 shots, the world record holder for archery at 30 meters can only hit the target 3 times at this distance and not once the bull's-eye. The distance is too much.

Your kidnappers decide to give you another chance. They will let you take your own shots. You give it your best, but you are not world record holder in archery. Arrow after arrow falls short and wide. You don't hit the target once. Forget about the bull's-eye. And so your crazy kidnappers prepare your death at arrow point...

Getting to the heaven side of eternal life works much the same way. It doesn't matter how good you live, how many church services you attend, or how much better you are than other people. You can't save yourself. The best people in the world can't save themselves, "for all have sinned and fall short" (Romans 3:23). No one is good enough on his or her own.

7. That's why Jesus came.
  - a. He's the only one who ever lived a perfect life.
  - b. When we put our faith and trust in Him and make Him Lord of our lives,  
His perfection becomes ours.



- c. He came to die on the cross for us because He loved us. He gave His very life for us because He loves us so much.
- d. All that He asks in return is that we be willing to give Him all of our heart.

### **Further Study Resources**

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Touchstone, 1995.

Cassell, Bo. *A Perfect Life: A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Kansas City, MO: Barefoot Ministries. 2005.