



✦ *Spiritual
Formation
of a People of God*

a **PEOPLE**
APART

DR ALEX TANG

A People Apart
Spiritual Formation of a People of God

Reflections from 1 Chronicles

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Preface

The narratives in 1 Chronicles covered a turbulent period in the biblical history of Israel. It also documented remarkable interventions by God as He spiritually formed the Judeans to become His chosen people. The reflections in this ebook was first written and published in Asian Notes, Volume Two (Scripture Union) in Malaysia in 2002. These reflections however are still relevant for us today as we strive to become a people of God in this frantic, stressful and constantly changing world.

My definition of spiritual formation is the intentional on-going process of the inner transformation of the character of a person to become like the character of Jesus Christ Himself (person-in-formation), of becoming a community of the people of God (persons-in-community formation), and of becoming an agent for God's redemptive purposes (persons-in-mission formation) as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Adequate examples may be found in these reflections of some passages from 1 Chronicles.

May you be blessed by the reading of this ebook.

Soli Deo Gloria

Alex Tang
Reformation Sunday
31 October 2010

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God Never Forgets Us

Read 1 Chronicles 9:1-34

¹All Israel was listed in the genealogies recorded in the book of the kings of Israel. The people of Judah were taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. ²Now the first to resettle on their own property in their own towns were some Israelites, priests, Levites and temple servants. ³Those from Judah, from Benjamin, and from Ephraim and Manasseh who lived in Jerusalem were: ⁴Uthai son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, a descendant of Perez son of Judah. ⁵Of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn and his sons. ⁶Of the Zerahites: Jeuel. The people from Judah numbered 690. ⁷Of the Benjamites: Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah; ⁸Ibneiah son of Jeroham; Elah son of Uzzi, the son of Micri; and Meshullam son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah. ⁹The people from Benjamin, as listed in their genealogy, numbered 956. All these men were heads of their families. ¹⁰Of the priests: Jedaiah; Jehoiarib; Jakin; ¹¹Azariah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the official in charge of the house of God; ¹²Adaiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah; and Maasai son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer. ¹³The priests, who were heads of families, numbered 1,760. They were able men, responsible for ministering in the house of God. ¹⁴Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, a Merarite; ¹⁵Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal and Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zicri, the son of Asaph; ¹⁶Obadiah son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun; and Berekiah son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites. ¹⁷The gatekeepers: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman and their brothers, Shallum their chief ¹⁸being stationed at the King's Gate on the east, up to the present time. These were the gatekeepers belonging to the camp of the Levites. ¹⁹Shallum son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his fellow gatekeepers from his family (the Korahites) were responsible for guarding the thresholds of the Tent just as their fathers had been responsible for guarding the entrance to the dwelling of the LORD. ²⁰In earlier times Phinehas son of Eleazar was in charge of the gatekeepers, and the LORD was with him. ²¹Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was the gatekeeper at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ²²Altogether, those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds numbered 212. They were registered by genealogy in their villages. The gatekeepers had been assigned to their positions of trust by David and Samuel the seer. ²³They and their descendants were in charge of guarding the gates of the house of the LORD—the house called the Tent. ²⁴The gatekeepers were on the four sides: east, west, north and south. ²⁵Their brothers in their villages had to come from time to time and share their duties for seven-day periods. ²⁶But the four principal gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted with the responsibility for the rooms and treasuries in the house of God. ²⁷They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning. ²⁸Some of them were in charge of the articles used in the temple service; they counted them when they were brought in and when they were taken out. ²⁹Others were assigned to take care of the furnishings and all the other articles of the sanctuary, as well as the flour and wine, and the oil, incense and spices. ³⁰But some of the priests took care of mixing the spices. ³¹A Levite named Mattithiah, the firstborn son of Shallum the Korahite, was entrusted with the responsibility for baking the offering bread. ³²Some of their Kohathite brothers were in charge of preparing for every Sabbath the bread set out on the table. ³³Those who were musicians, heads of Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night. ³⁴All these were heads of Levite families, chiefs as listed in their genealogy, and they lived in Jerusalem.

The two books of Chronicles were written for the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem during the post-exilic period. Those Israelites who returned grew up in exile in Babylon and Assyria. They grew up far from the land God had promised Abraham. They knew the Temple had been destroyed and wondered whether they were still the chosen people. Had God forgotten them?

The Chronicler reminded his audience that the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness to God. But he also reminded the people of their ancestors. In the first eight chapters, he presented the historical records from Adam traced through Abraham down to Israel's twelve sons and their descendants in great detail. Not only their names but also their functions were mentioned. God had not forgotten them.

For those of us who live in countries where Christianity is not a majority religion, we sometimes wonder, like the exiled Israelites, whether God has forgotten us. When we are persecuted, when our rights and privileges are revoked, and when we are not free to worship, then it is time to remember that God never forgets us. Isaiah, when he wrote of the returning exiles, used two illustrations to show that God had not forgotten about them – (i) a mother not forgetting her child, and (ii) a husband not forgetting his wife. It is the same with us. No matter how difficult the situation we are in, we can cling to the truth that God has not forgotten us. He who knows the number of hair we have on our heads is not likely to forget us.

No matter how trying a situation you are in now, the Lord knows all about it. He has not forgotten you.

Bring Honour to His Name

Read 1 Chronicles 10:1-14

¹Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him. ⁴Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died. ⁶So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together. ⁷When all the Israelites in the valley saw that the army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them. ⁸The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹They stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news among their idols and their people. ¹⁰They put his armor in the temple of their gods and hung up his head in the temple of Dagon. ¹¹When all the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard of everything the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹²all their valiant men went and took the bodies of Saul and his sons and brought them to Jabesh. Then they buried their bones under the great tree in Jabesh, and they fasted seven days. ¹³Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, ¹⁴and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

The last battle of King Saul, the first king of Israel, was fought on Mount Gilboa. The Philistine army attacked and the Israelite army fled. Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua were killed. Saul himself was wounded by the archers. He asked his armour-bearer to kill him. The soldier refused and Saul killed himself by falling on his own sword. When the Israelites saw that their army had fled and their king was dead, they fled the valley, leaving it for the Philistines to occupy. The next day, the Philistines found Saul's body. They stripped him of his armour and cut off his head. Then they sent the news throughout their homeland. They put the armour in the temple of their gods and hung Saul's head in the temple of Dagon.

The events that took place brought shame to the Lord. The Israelite army fled, leaving the civilians defenceless and the valley was conquered. God's army fled! To avoid humiliation, Saul committed suicide. In his death, he brought dishonour to the Lord. News of his defeat, the defeat of Yahweh's king was proclaimed throughout Philistine. Saul's armour hung in a temple and his head in the temple of Dagon.

Do we bring shame to our Lord by our behaviour, in our relationships with others and our disobedience to Him? When we fail in our Christian walk, when we fail to live what we preach, we dishonour God and bring shame to Him.

Lord, let me honour Your Name. Help me to be faithful and to walk in obedience to Your Word.

Spiritual Authority Comes from God

Read 1 Chronicles 11:1-9

¹All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. ²In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD your God said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler." ³When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had promised through Samuel. ⁴David and all the Israelites marched to Jerusalem (that is, Jebus). The Jebusites who lived there ⁵said to David, "You will not get in here." Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David. ⁶David had said, "Whoever leads the attack on the Jebusites will become commander-in-chief." Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, and so he received the command. ⁷David then took up residence in the fortress, and so it was called the City of David. ⁸He built up the city around it, from the supporting terraces to the surrounding wall, while Joab restored the rest of the city. ⁹And David became more and more powerful, because the LORD Almighty was with him.

After the death of Saul, the elders of Israel anointed David king of Israel. His first act as king was to capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites. Joab was made commander-in-chief because he led the attack. David and Joab rebuilt the city. David made it his capital and it became known as the City of David. David became more and more powerful because the Lord Almighty was with him.

Spiritual authority comes from God. When Saul was king, David was the general who led Israel's army. Even then, the people of Israel recognized that David had spiritual authority. They recognized that God had appointed David as shepherd and ruler over Israel. This was confirmed when David became king. He was successful in capturing Jerusalem, which was reputed to be an impregnable fortress. And he became more and more powerful, uniting Israel into one nation.

All of us have some form of authority, whether as father or mother of a family, older sibling over a younger sibling, higher ranked employee in a company or an employer. We also have spiritual authority in the community of believers. We often associate spiritual authority with pastors. But it is important to recognize that all of us have spiritual authority. Fathers have spiritual authority over their families. More mature Christians have spiritual authority over younger Christians. Church leaders have spiritual authority in their churches. Spiritual authority comes from God. It is not for us to lord over other people but to be shepherds to them. When we have this understanding of spiritual authority, the Lord will bless us.

Lord, thank You for giving us spiritual authority. Help us not to abuse this authority but to use it to help each other to expand Your kingdom.

God's Mighty Warriors

Read 1 Chronicles 12:1-40

(1 Chronicles 12:1-38) ¹These were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish (they were among the warriors who helped him in battle; ²they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed; they were kinsmen of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin): ³Ahiezzer their chief and Joash the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, Jehu the Anathothite, ⁴and Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the Thirty, who was a leader of the Thirty; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad the Gederathite, ⁵Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah and Shephatiah the Haruphite; ⁶Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer and Jashobeam the Korahites; ⁷and Joelah and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham from Gedor. ⁸Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the desert. They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains. ⁹Ezer was the chief, Obadiah the second in command, Eliab the third, ¹⁰Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, ¹¹Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, ¹²Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, ¹³Jeremiah the tenth and Macbannai the eleventh. ¹⁴These Gadites were army commanders; the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand. ¹⁵It was they who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks, and they put to flight everyone living in the valleys, to the east and to the west. ¹⁶Other Benjamites and some men from Judah also came to David in his stronghold. ¹⁷David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in peace, to help me, I am ready to have you unite with me. But if you have come to betray me to my enemies when my hands are free from violence, may the God of our fathers see it and judge you." ¹⁸Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said: "We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you." So David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands. ¹⁹Some of the men of Manasseh defected to David when he went with the Philistines to fight against Saul. (He and his men did not help the Philistines because, after consultation, their rulers sent him away. They said, "It will cost us our heads if he deserts to his master Saul.") ²⁰When David went to Ziklag, these were the men of Manasseh who defected to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu and Zillethai, leaders of units of a thousand in Manasseh. ²¹They helped David against raiding bands, for all of them were brave warriors, and they were commanders in his army. ²²Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God. ²³These are the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the LORD had said: ²⁴men of Judah, carrying shield and spear—6,800 armed for battle; ²⁵men of Simeon, warriors ready for battle—7,100; ²⁶men of Levi—4,600, ²⁷including Jehoiada, leader of the family of Aaron, with 3,700 men, ²⁸and Zadok, a brave young warrior, with 22 officers from his family; ²⁹men of Benjamin, Saul's kinsmen—3,000, most of whom had remained loyal to Saul's house until then; ³⁰men of Ephraim, brave warriors, famous in their own clans—20,800; ³¹men of half the tribe of Manasseh, designated by name to come and make David king—18,000; ³²men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command; ³³men of Zebulun, experienced soldiers prepared for battle with every type of weapon, to help David with undivided loyalty—50,000; ³⁴men of Naphtali—1,000 officers, together with 37,000 men carrying shields and spears; ³⁵men of Dan, ready for battle—28,600; ³⁶men of Asher, experienced soldiers prepared for battle—40,000; ³⁷and from east of the Jordan, men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, armed with every type of weapon—120,000. ³⁸All these were fighting men who volunteered to serve in the ranks. They came to Hebron fully determined to make David king over all Israel. All the rest of the Israelites were also of one mind to make David king.

This list of warriors is indicative of the strong support David enjoys. There are more than fifty names in the list. Each individual is significant and has his own story to tell. But it is the cumulative effect of all these warriors that leads to David being appointed king, to the capture of Jerusalem and the building of the temple for Yahweh. Without them, David would not have succeeded. Each one is a volunteer. Each has his own expertise, either with shield and spear, or in strategic planning. Yet it is not as individuals but as a team that they become a formidable force. They are in one mind to make David king.

We are called to be warriors for the kingdom of God. We are told to put on the armour of God and take up the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith. We are to persevere until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, like David's mighty warriors, we can be formidable and successful only if we work as a team, united under one purpose.

The mistake we often make is to be a lone warrior. Our Christian walk becomes too individualistic. It becomes God-and-I only. We try to do everything alone, outside the community of faith; more often than not, we fail. We need each other. We need to be in a community of faith. There is no such thing as a 'lone ranger' Christian.

Lord, make me one of Your mighty warriors. Give me Your grace to work with my brothers and sisters.

Good Intentions are Not Enough

Read 1 Chronicles 13:1-14

¹David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. ²He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the LORD our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasturelands, to come and join us. ³Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul." ⁴The whole assembly agreed to do this, because it seemed right to all the people. ⁵So David assembled all the Israelites, from the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim. ⁶David and all the Israelites with him went to Baalah of Judah (Kiriath Jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD, who is enthroned between the cherubim—the ark that is called by the Name. ⁷They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it. ⁸David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. ⁹When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. ¹⁰The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God. ¹¹Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. ¹²David was afraid of God that day and asked, "How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?" ¹³He did not take the ark to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹⁴The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house for three months, and the LORD blessed his household and everything he had.

The ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines before Saul was made king. The Philistines kept the ark for seven months and returned it to the Israelites because the Lord was inflicting disasters on them. The ark was brought back to Israel and kept at the house of Abinadad in Kiriath Jearim. After David was made king in Hebron and he had rebuilt Jerusalem, he wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. David made this decision by consensus. He discussed it with his military commanders, then the assembly of Israel and then the priest and the Levites. Everybody agreed because it seemed such a good idea to bring the ark of the Lord God who is enthroned between the cherubim, to Jerusalem the new capital. On the day the ark was moved, David and all the Israelites celebrated with dancing and musical instruments. But when the Lord struck down Uzzah because he touched the ark, David was afraid. He left the ark at the house of Obed-Edom. David realized that in their intention to glorify God, they had not heeded God's instructions.

Good intentions are not enough. Good intentions must be carried out with proper respect to the holiness and reverence of the Lord. There can be no shortcuts. Sometimes we become too familiar with God. We treat God as our doting grandfather whom we approach to have our every little whim satisfied. We forget that God is the Lord of all creation. He is holy and pure, and we are but His sinful creatures.

Good intentions are not enough. Careful consideration must be given to the holiness of the Lord and reverence for Him.

The Lord Blesses the Faithful

Read 1 Chronicles 14:1-17

¹Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs, stonemasons and carpenters to build a palace for him. ²And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and that his kingdom had been highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel. ³In Jerusalem David took more wives and became the father of more sons and daughters. ⁴These are the names of the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, ⁶Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet. ⁸When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went out to meet them. ⁹Now the Philistines had come and raided the Valley of Rephaim; ¹⁰so David inquired of God: "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The LORD answered him, "Go, I will hand them over to you." ¹¹So David and his men went up to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, "As waters break out, God has broken out against my enemies by my hand." So that place was called Baal Perazim. ¹²The Philistines had abandoned their gods there, and David gave orders to burn them in the fire. ¹³Once more the Philistines raided the valley; ¹⁴so David inquired of God again, and God answered him, "Do not go straight up, but circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. ¹⁵As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army." ¹⁶So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army, all the way from Gibeon to Gezer. ¹⁷So David's fame spread throughout every land, and the LORD made all the nations fear him.

In the Old Testament, the Lord blessed faithful kings with favour, children and military victory. Hiram, king of Tyre paid tribute to King David by sending cedar logs, stonemasons and carpenters to build a palace for him. Many children were born to David. David defeated the Philistines in two separate engagements.

The way David led his army against the Philistines showed his attitude towards the Lord and why the Lord was happy with him and blessed him. The first engagement was at Rephaim. Instead of depending on strategic planning, David asked the Lord what to do. The Lord told him to go ahead and attack. David obeyed and was victorious. The second engagement was at Gibeon. Again, David's military strategy was to ask the Lord. This time the Lord told him to move his army around to the back of the Philistines and attack when they heard the sound of marching at the tops of the balsam trees. David obeyed the Lord and was again victorious. David's military tactics were unorthodox. God's ways are not our ways. David understood this. David, a hardened warrior with many years' experience of tough warfare behind him, was willing to ask the Lord to lead him. It shows the depth of humility and trust David had in the Lord.

The Lord's ways may seem unorthodox to us, maybe even illogical. Many times, we would prefer the normal way, using our experience and our mind to overcome problems and to plan our future. Let us follow David's example and trust in the Lord. Then like David, we will receive blessings for our obedience and faithfulness.

Spend time in prayer and ask the Lord to show you His way in decisions you have to make.

The Heart of Worship

1 Chronicles 15:1-28

¹After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. ²Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever." ³David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it. ⁴He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites: ⁵From the descendants of Kohath, Uriel the leader and 120 relatives; ⁶from the descendants of Merari, Asaiah the leader and 220 relatives; ⁷from the descendants of Gershon, Joel the leader and 130 relatives; ⁸from the descendants of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the leader and 200 relatives; ⁹from the descendants of Hebron, Eliel the leader and 80 relatives; ¹⁰from the descendants of Uzziel, Amminadab the leader and 112 relatives. ¹¹Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. ¹²He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. ¹³It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." ¹⁴So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁵And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD. ¹⁶David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals. ¹⁷So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berekiah; and from their brothers the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah; ¹⁸and with them their brothers next in rank: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, the gatekeepers. ¹⁹The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals; ²⁰Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to *alamoth*, ²¹ and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azaziah were to play the harps, directing according to *sheminith*. ²²Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it. ²³Berekiah and Elkanah were to be doorkeepers for the ark. ²⁴Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also to be doorkeepers for the ark. ²⁵So David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of units of a thousand went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-Edom, with rejoicing. ²⁶Because God had helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed. ²⁷Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the singers, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs. David also wore a linen ephod. ²⁸So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouts, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps.

David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem ended in disaster. In this second attempt, David was careful to follow the Lord's instructions. The Levites carried the ark. They carried it with poles on their shoulders as Moses had commanded, not in a cart as in the previous attempt. All Israel was assembled in Jerusalem for the occasion. The priests and Levites were told to consecrate themselves. David organized the Levitical musicians and their instruments. The Levites and priests were assigned responsibilities in the worship of the Lord when the ark was in the tent. When all arrangements were finalized, all Israel went to accompany the ark to Jerusalem. David, the Levites and the musicians were dressed in robes of fine linen.

Compare all these preparations with those at the first attempt. The first attempt incurred the wrath of God because things were not done in the prescribed manner. Worship of the Lord God is a serious matter. We must be careful not to trivialize worship. The Israelites trembled and worshipped with awe and reverence. Have we lost the sense of awe in our worship? Is our worship service a light-hearted karaoke sing-along?

The sense of awe is the heart of worship. The Lord taught the Israelites to worship Him with certain prescribed practices. The ark was the symbol of the awesome presence of God. When the temple was built, the ark was placed inside.

Lord, give me a sense of awe as I come to worship You.

He is the Alpha and the Omega

1 Chronicles 16:1-36

¹They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God. ²After David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. ³Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman. ⁴He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel: ⁵Asaph was the chief, Zechariah second, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, ⁶and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. ⁷That day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this psalm of thanks to the LORD: ⁸Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. ⁹Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. ¹⁰Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. ¹¹Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. ¹²Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, ¹³O descendants of Israel his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. ¹⁴He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. ¹⁵He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, ¹⁶the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. ¹⁷He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ¹⁸"To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit." ¹⁹When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it, ²⁰they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. ²¹He allowed no man to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: ²²"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." ²³Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. ²⁴Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. ²⁵For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. ²⁶For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ²⁷Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. ²⁸Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ²⁹ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. ³⁰Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. ³¹Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" ³²Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them! ³³Then the trees of the forest will sing, they will sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. ³⁴Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. ³⁵Cry out, "Save us, O God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, that we may glory in your praise." ³⁶Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise the LORD."

When the ark was installed in the tent in Jerusalem, David burst forth in a wonderful psalm of thanksgiving. In the first part, his listeners were exhorted to give thanks to the Lord, to call on His name and to remember what the Lord had done. David recalled the history of his people from the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He reminded them of the covenant and of the time they were protected when they were wandering in the wilderness. In the second part of the psalm, David spoke of the glory, splendour and majesty of God and why He deserved their worship.

Have we taken time to look back and recall the wonderful work God has done in our lives? God's work in our lives did not begin at the time when we accepted Him as our Saviour. It began even before we were formed in our mother's womb. As we look back, we are thankful for the persons and events God has used to shape our lives and make us the persons we are today. These are spiritual markers, linking our past to our present. Give thanks to the Lord for these markers.

We live in uncertain times where there is political, social, economic and religious turmoil. Yet we can face the future with confidence. We know that the Kingdom of God will be established.

Look back and see God's spiritual markers in our lives. Look forward and see our Lord on the throne. Let us give thanks to Him who is the Alpha and the Omega.

A House for a House

Read 1 Chronicles 17:1-15

¹After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent." ²Nathan replied to David, "Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you." ³That night the word of God came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in. ⁴I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt to this day. I have moved from one tent site to another, from one dwelling place to another. ⁵Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders whom I commanded to shepherd my people, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'" ⁶"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock, to be ruler over my people Israel. ⁷I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name like the names of the greatest men of the earth. ⁸And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ⁹and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue all your enemies.'" ¹⁰"I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you: ¹¹When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹²He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. ¹⁴I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.'" ¹⁵Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

Some time after the ark was installed in the tent, and David was established as king of Israel, he wanted to build a temple to house the ark. In the Near Eastern culture of those times, there was a close link between the king (who was often regarded as divine) and his god. Hence the magnificence of the temple must match the magnificence of the palace.

The Lord's answer, conveyed through the prophet Nathan, was unexpected. The Lord did not want David to build him a house (temple). Instead the Lord would build a house for David! By building a house for David, the Lord promised to establish David's dynasty. His children would succeed him and God would never give the throne to another. The dynasty would last forever.

This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ who came from the line of David. The kingdom of God is both now and in the future. It is through David and his descendants that God has worked His plan of reconciliation with mankind. Jesus came to die for our sins on the cross. By bearing our sins, Jesus opened the way for us to be reconciled to God. He rescued us from eternal damnation. There is no other way for salvation. Take time and reflect on what a great gift God has given us and what He has done for us. David wanted to build a house for the Lord; instead God gave him an eternal dynasty.

Lord, I thank You for your plan of reconciliation. Your Son of the house of David, has come to save us from our sins.

Humility of a King

Read 1 Chronicles 17:16-27

¹⁶Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? ¹⁷And as if this were not enough in your sight, O God, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. You have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men, O LORD God. ¹⁸What more can David say to you for honoring your servant? For you know your servant, ¹⁹O LORD. For the sake of your servant and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made known all these great promises. ²⁰There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. ²¹And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth whose God went out to redeem a people for himself, and to make a name for yourself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? ²²You made your people Israel your very own forever, and you, O LORD, have become their God. ²³And now, LORD, let the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house be established forever. Do as you promised, ²⁴so that it will be established and that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The LORD Almighty, the God over Israel, is Israel's God!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you. ²⁵You, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. So your servant has found courage to pray to you. ²⁶O LORD, you are God! You have promised these good things to your servant. ²⁷Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, O LORD, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever."

David believed God's promise to establish his house forever. On hearing what God had promised him, David sat down and prayed, 'Who am I, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?' David referred to himself as a servant of God. Note the humility of David. Who was he that God should so favour him?

The Ming and Ching emperors of China built the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing to show their power and their relationship with their gods. We often fail to appreciate how much power kings and emperors had in the past. They were regarded as divine with powers like those of gods. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed that his greatness reached the sky and his kingdom extended to the distant parts of the earth. It was difficult to be humble in such circumstances. That David remained humble at the peak of his power as king of Israel, is a positive mark of his character.

Humility is often taken as a weakness. Today, our technology has given us ability to do things unheard of a few years ago. Pride, the opposite of humility, is the order of the day. James reminds us that we need humility that comes from wisdom (James 3:13). Humility is not weakness or resignation but strength under the control of the Holy Spirit. Humility means not thinking too highly of ourselves. Humility is remembering that we are but dust. Everything we have comes from the Lord.

'This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word' (Isaiah 66:2).

Money, Money, Money

Read 1 Chronicles 18:1-14

¹In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath and its surrounding villages from the control of the Philistines. ²David also defeated the Moabites, and they became subject to him and brought tribute. ³Moreover, David fought Hadadezer king of Zobah, as far as Hamath, when he went to establish his control along the Euphrates River. ⁴David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstringed all but a hundred of the chariot horses. ⁵When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them. ⁶He put garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to him and brought tribute. The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went. ⁷David took the gold shields carried by the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸From Tebah and Cun, towns that belonged to Hadadezer, David took a great quantity of bronze, which Solomon used to make the bronze Sea, the pillars and various bronze articles. ⁹When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer king of Zobah, ¹⁰he sent his son Hadoram to King David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory in battle over Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Hadoram brought all kinds of articles of gold and silver and bronze. ¹¹King David dedicated these articles to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold he had taken from all these nations: Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. ¹²Abishai son of Zeruiah struck down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹³He put garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went. ¹⁴David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.

David continued to have the blessings of the Lord. He was a just king and did what was right for his people. As a result, the Lord continued to bless David. He was victorious in all his battles. King David defeated Israel's traditional enemies: the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines and Amalekites. His victories brought him large amounts of gold shields and bronze. He also received articles of gold, silver and bronze from Tou, king of Hamath. King David dedicated these articles of gold, silver and bronze to the Lord. All these precious metals were later used in the construction of the temple.

The Lord blesses us in many ways – good health, a loving family, supportive friends, security and an awareness of His love for us. Sometimes God blesses us with material wealth. Like David, we must receive these blessings with thanksgiving and praise. More importantly, we must decide how to utilize the blessings God has given us. We can take the blessings and enjoy ourselves. Or we can, like David, use them to build the house of the Lord. It is our responsibility to decide how we are to be stewards of the Lord's blessings. We have to decide on the type of lifestyle and how much money is required to maintain it. We have to decide on how much to tithe, how much to give to missions and how much to save for our family's future.

Thank God for His material blessings and pray for wisdom to be responsible stewards.

Abounding Grace

Read 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:1

^{21:1}Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. ² So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are." ³But Joab replied, "May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?" ⁴The king's word, however, overruled Joab; so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem. ⁵Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah. ⁶But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him. ⁷This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel. ⁸ Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing." ⁹The LORD said to Gad, David's seer, ¹⁰"Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.'" ¹¹So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Take your choice: ¹²three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the LORD—days of plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me." ¹³David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men." ¹⁴So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. ¹⁵And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁶David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. ¹⁷David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O LORD my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people." ¹⁸Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁹So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD. ²⁰While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. ²¹Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground. ²²David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price." ²³Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this." ²⁴But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." ²⁵So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. ²⁶David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. ²⁸At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. ²⁹The tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the desert, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon. ³⁰But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD. ^{22:1}Then David said, "The house of the LORD God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

Satan incited David to call for a census, which incurred God's wrath. Through the prophet Gad, David was given three options as punishment: (1) three years of famine, (2) three months of defeat in battles and fleeing from his enemies, (3) three days of the plague. Instead of making a choice, David cast himself at the mercy of God. He took responsibility for his actions. The Lord sent the plague and seventy thousand men of Israel died. As the angel was about to strike Jerusalem, the Lord stopped him. There was deep repentance on the part of David and the elders. David was then instructed to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah. He bought the land from Araunah, set up an altar and offered sacrifices. The Lord answered him with fire from heaven, thereby confirming the site of the Jerusalem temple and the location of the altar.

When we sin, the Holy Spirit is grieved. When we confess and repent, God will forgive us. But we will still have to bear the consequences of our sins. Often these consequences affect not only us, but also others, including our loved ones. We must be careful not to sin against the Lord. We have also to be on the alert against Satan who incites us to sin. It is the God of grace who saves us. Yet through it all, God's purpose was achieved and the site for the new temple was identified.

Watch and pray. Confess all sins, repent and receive the grace of God.

Listen to Your Elders

Read 1 Chronicles 22:2-19

²So David gave orders to assemble the aliens living in Israel, and from among them he appointed stonemasons to prepare dressed stone for building the house of God. ³He provided a large amount of iron to make nails for the doors of the gateways and for the fittings, and more bronze than could be weighed. ⁴He also provided more cedar logs than could be counted, for the Sidonians and Tyrians had brought large numbers of them to David. ⁵David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD should be of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations. Therefore I will make preparations for it." So David made extensive preparations before his death. ⁶Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁷David said to Solomon: "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God. ⁸But this word of the LORD came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. ⁹But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. ¹⁰He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.' ¹¹"Now, my son, the LORD be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the LORD your God, as he said you would. ¹²May the LORD give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God. ¹³Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the LORD gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged. ¹⁴I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the LORD a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them. ¹⁵You have many workmen: stonemasons, masons and carpenters, as well as men skilled in every kind of work ¹⁶in gold and silver, bronze and iron—craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you." ¹⁷Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon. ¹⁸He said to them, "Is not the LORD your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side? For he has handed the inhabitants of the land over to me, and the land is subject to the LORD and to his people. ¹⁹Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD."

In spite of his fervent wish to build the temple, David knew he was not the one to do it. He was a soldier and had shed blood in battle. He also knew that his son, Solomon, a man of peace, would be allowed to build the temple. So he made extensive preparations, collected the raw materials and recruited the necessary manpower to build the temple. He officially commissioned Solomon as the temple builder. David exhorted Solomon to devote his heart and soul to seek the Lord, his God.

In many ways, David was like Moses. Both served the Lord well but left it to another to complete their life work. Moses had to let Joshua take possession of Canaan and David had to let Solomon build the temple. But this was not a tragedy. We are all workers in God's kingdom. Some are called to plough, others to sow and yet others to reap.

Note the discipling relationship between David and Solomon, and Moses and Joshua. Aside from the commissioning of the task ahead, there was the exhortation to walk with the Lord. Solomon must have learned much from David's relationship with the Lord. In Asia, we are taught to respect our elders. We need also to respect our elders in Christ. These elders have a responsibility to disciple younger Christians to continue the work of the kingdom. There is a need for more discipling relationships in the church. The Christian walk is not just understanding the basic doctrines but living in obedience to God in our everyday life. Our elders have much to teach us.

Lord, let me be a discipler to someone and please provide someone to be mine.

The Inside Counts

Read 1 Chronicles 23:1, 28:1-21

^{23:1}When David was old and full of years, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. ^{28:1}David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors. ²King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. ³But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.' ⁴"Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. ⁵Of all my sons—and the LORD has given me many—he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. ⁶He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. ⁷I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time.' ⁸"So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God: Be careful to follow all the commands of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever. ⁹"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. ¹⁰Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work." ¹¹Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. ¹²He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. ¹³He gave him instructions for the divisions of the priests and Levites, and for all the work of serving in the temple of the LORD, as well as for all the articles to be used in its service. ¹⁴He designated the weight of gold for all the gold articles to be used in various kinds of service, and the weight of silver for all the silver articles to be used in various kinds of service: ¹⁵the weight of gold for the gold lampstands and their lamps, with the weight for each lampstand and its lamps; and the weight of silver for each silver lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand; ¹⁶the weight of gold for each table for consecrated bread; the weight of silver for the silver tables; ¹⁷the weight of pure gold for the forks, sprinkling bowls and pitchers; the weight of gold for each gold dish; the weight of silver for each silver dish; ¹⁸and the weight of the refined gold for the altar of incense. He also gave him the plan for the chariot, that is, the cherubim of gold that spread their wings and shelter the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ¹⁹"All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan." ²⁰David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished. ²¹The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command."

In this speech to the leaders of Israel and his son, Solomon, David again emphasized the need to follow the commandments of the Lord. The Lord searches the heart and He knows the inner thoughts and motives behind every action. If they sought the Lord, the Lord would not reject them. But if they forsook the Lord, the Lord would reject them. Then David gave Solomon very detailed plans for the construction of the temple. These plans, he said, came from the Holy Spirit. Aside from the plans, David had organized the necessary skilled workers, priests and Levites to help Solomon in the building of the temple.

There is a parallel here with Moses who received detailed plans of the tabernacle. The tabernacle and the temple were to be the focus of worship of the Lord. But the key to worship was their relationship with the Lord.

What David understood very well, and what Jesus came to emphasize later, is the importance of our inner spiritual life. The Lord searches our hearts and knows our innermost thoughts. The temple and its finery, the rituals and sacrifices point us to the condition of our inner spiritual life. God loves us and calls us to Him. We can choose to respond to the call or to reject Him. Like Solomon, we are given the choice. Let us choose to be true to God.

Lord, enable me to serve You with wholehearted devotion and a willing mind.

Leadership by Example

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-9

¹Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God. ²With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colours, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. ³Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: ⁴three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, ⁵for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" ⁶Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. ⁷They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

David wanted to build a temple that was worthy of God. Like all parents, he worried that his son, Solomon was young and inexperienced. David had planned well to finance the great building project. From the defeated neighbouring countries, David had extracted large amounts of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and precious stones for the country's treasury. David committed these to the building of the temple. Over and above these, he donated a fortune of gold and silver from his own pocket. This so inspired the leaders and the people that they too donated large amounts of gold, silver, bronze, iron and precious stones to the building project.

David provided a powerful example of spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership is leadership by example. It is both 'do what I say' and 'do what I do'. Our Lord Jesus demonstrated leadership by example by washing his disciples' feet. Spiritual leadership is also servant leadership. It is different from worldly leadership where the emphasis is on dominance, control, prestige, power and status.

Spiritual leadership is the catalyst by which kingdom work is done. David's example was the catalyst for the generosity of his people who gave so much. The people experienced joy: it was inspired, genuine giving, not forced giving. Leadership by example must also arise out of genuine spiritual leadership. It can be imitated but the Lord looks at our inner motives. Genuine spiritual leadership is developed from spending time with the Lord in prayer and study of the Word, times of solitude and reflection and in the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

***Lord, give us true spiritual leaders who will lead us by example with integrity.
May they inspire us to give more of ourselves to You.***

Life on Earth is Transient

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-30

¹⁰David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹²Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. ¹⁴"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. ¹⁷I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. ¹⁸O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. ¹⁹And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided." ²⁰Then David said to the whole assembly, "Praise the LORD your God." So they all praised the LORD, the God of their fathers; they bowed low and fell prostrate before the LORD and the king. ²¹The next day they made sacrifices to the LORD and presented burnt offerings to him: a thousand bulls, a thousand rams and a thousand male lambs, together with their drink offerings, and other sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. ²²They ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the LORD that day. Then they acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time, anointing him before the LORD to be ruler and Zadok to be priest. ²³So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David. He prospered and all Israel obeyed him. ²⁴All the officers and mighty men, as well as all of King David's sons, pledged their submission to King Solomon. ²⁵The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before. ²⁶David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. ²⁷He ruled over Israel forty years—seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. ²⁸He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king. ²⁹As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer, ³⁰together with the details of his reign and power, and the circumstances that surrounded him and Israel and the kingdoms of all the other lands.

The last recorded prayer of David by the Chronicler starts with praises and acknowledgement that everything belongs to God. It is God's pleasure to give things to us and His pleasure that we 'return' His things to Him. David recognises that life on earth is transient. We are like aliens and strangers in contrast to God who is from everlasting to everlasting.

The last words of people often contain gems of wisdom. David in his last prayer gives us a glimpse of a life that is pleasing to the Lord. As the Chinese would say, 'It is an "interesting" life.' David had his share of failures – adultery and murder, disobedience and failure as a father to his children. Yet David has also given us a glimpse of what we can all be in spite of our faults and failings, our weakness in temptations and tendency to sin.

David recognises that God is sovereign. Everything belongs to the Lord and we are stewards of His gifts. Life is transient and this world is not our home. We are to live with integrity. There must be no dishonesty or falsehood. Without God's grace, we will not be able to draw near to the Lord, and live lives to please Him.

Lord, let my life count for eternity.

About the author

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