

1 Chronicles Devotionals

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1 Chronicles DEVOTIONALS

Our Daily Homily
F B Meyer
Today in the Word-Moody Bible Institute

1 Chronicles 1:1

Adam, Seth, Enosh.

This is an ancient graveyard. The names of past generations who were born and died, who loved and suffered, who stormed and fought through the world, are engraven on these solid slabs. But there is no inscription to record their worth or demerit. Just names, and nothing more.

How strange to think that if Christ tarry, our names will be treated with the same apathy as these! So far as this world is concerned, we and all our generations shall pass away. As the flowers of the field, so we shall perish from the earth.

But each of these lives fulfilled a necessary part in the progress of the race. Each was in turn father and son; each passed on the torch of life; each contributed something to the fabric of humanity rising like a coral island from unknown depths. The hilltops would not be possible but for their lower courses which touch the valleys. We could not have the somebodies without an immense number of nobodies. The flowers of the race were prepared for by the slow progress of the plant through years of growth.

But each was the object of the love of God. Each was included in the redemptive purpose of our Lord; each contributed some minute particle to His nature; each is living yet somewhere; each will have to stand before the judgment-bar of God; each is predestined to live in the unknown world that lies on the other side. It is a stupendous thought to imagine the whole race, rooted in Adam, like one vast far-spreading tree. Ah, reader, be sure that thou art taken out of the first Adam, and grafted into the second— the Lord Jesus; and abiding in Him, see that thou bring forth much fruit to His glory.

1 Chronicles 1:1-3; 2:1-9

You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. - Psalm 61:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

According to tradition, Ezra the priest wrote Chronicles after arriving in Israel with a group of returning exiles in 458 b.c. Originally one book, Chronicles was later divided into two by translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament books originally written in Hebrew). Ezra definitely includes some of the stories found in Samuel and Kings, but he chose to focus on different details and in some cases included accounts not found in other books.

The original purpose of Chronicles was to encourage the Jews who were returning from exile in Babylon by reminding them of their identity and history as God's people. Assuming that most were already familiar with main events on the national-historical timeline, Ezra selected narratives that would fill this purpose. As we study this book this month, it's helpful for us to remember that Chronicles does not strive to relay every historical detail. Those details that were included have been carefully and consciously selected to encourage God's people.

Nine chapters of genealogy, the longest such passage in the Old Testament, open 1 Chronicles. One theme running through the book, present even here in the genealogy, is that of pleasing or displeasing God. Er's sin is left unspecified in Scripture (2:3; Gen. 38:7); Achar (also known as Achan) had stolen spoils of war at Jericho that were devoted to the Lord (2:7; Josh. 7:1).

In Hebrew culture, the construction of genealogies was fluid—for instance, generations might be skipped, or certain branches might be listed in greater detail. One of the purposes in 1 Chronicles was to trace the priestly line in order to resume proper national worship. Overall, the historical line began at Adam, an encouraging reminder that God's plan for His people dated back to Creation. This is true for us as well: a's believers, we have an incredible heritage of people who have trusted, followed, and worshiped the Lord (Ps. 61:5). They are the "great cloud of witnesses" surrounding us as we run our own races of faith (Heb. 12:1).

APPLY THE WORD One way to set a good tone for this month's study might be to set aside time to research your own family history, especially its spiritual dimensions. What are your roots? How has God been working in your extended family through the years? What spiritual heritage—a key part of our identity as believers—have you received and how can you best pass it on? Even if you are a first-generation Christian, genealogical digging might turn up a few surprises!

1 Chronicles 2:1

These are the sons of Israel.

It is noticeable how irrevocable the Divine sentence is on a human life. Of Er, the grave, impartial voice of Scripture says, he was "wicked in the sight of the Lord"; of Achan, he was the "troubler of Israel, and committed a trespass in the devoted thing." These sentences are recorded with such precision as to admit of no dispute, no appeal; and they sum up the life.

But was there not much else in each of these men? Were there not tender or chivalrous moments? Did they never shine for a moment in some transfiguring ray? Was all their life dyed with these sad and somber hues? Ah, it may have been so— still the one thing that the Scripture tells of them is the sin in which all their life seemed to culminate and express itself. With unerring accuracy God can distinguish the one act or word by which the character is revealed. He may forgive it, but He holds it up as the epitome or summary of what the life was.

Let us see how we live, walking before God with reverent fear, watching and praying, because any moment may give birth to a word or act, which may characterize our life in all coming time. It must be remembered, however, that all these things emanate from the heart. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; but the issues of life proceed thence: it therefore must be watched with all diligence and care. What a man thinks, that he is. The chance word or act is a true indication of the inner life. Therefore it is preserved for all aftertime by the voice of God. See that your heart is perfect before God. There is forgiveness; but there is also the unerring verdict.

1 Chronicles 3:1

These were the sons of David.

But how different they were to the Son of David! Contrast any one of these with our blessed Lord, and what an infinite chasm lies between them! Solomon was the most reputable of them, but a greater than Solomon was born in Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger. Surely the least earnest must be struck with the difference in these sons, and that Son. But in this difference, is there not the most conspicuous proof of His miraculous conception? Even though the story of His wondrous birth had never been preserved for us by the evangelists, we should have felt convinced that something like it must have happened, in virtue of which He should be the Man of men, the one absolutely flawless and perfect flower on the stem of humanity. With new emphasis we read the familiar words, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

We, too, who have been born once, need to be born again. To be born of a David does not ensure perfectness of heart and life. Though born of parents, who were after God's own heart and are passed into the skies, we need to be born again, or we may repeat the sins of an Ammon, an Adonijah, an Absalom. It is a serious question to ask whether, like David, we have called his greater Son our Lord. This is the true mark of the new birth. Those who are born of the Holy Ghost call Jesus Lord, and none other. The recognition of the supreme lordship of Jesus is imperative for the peace and right ordering of the heart and life. So we pass to our true stature in Jesus.

1 Chronicles 4:9

Because I bare him with sorrow.

The products of sorrow have been the rarest gifts to mankind. The books, hymns, discoveries, deeds, to which men and women have been urged by sorrow, or which have been born into the world amid heart-rending soul-travail, are those which will never be allowed to die, because perennial sources of inspiration and comfort. It was thus with the child of whom we have this brief record. We might becomingly weave the four petitions of the prayer of Jabez into the supplications of each new morning hour.

To be blessed indeed.— Not the lower springs only, but the upper ones also; not life alone, but life more abundantly; not those

blessings only which pertain to the body or worldly circumstance, but those spiritual ones of the heavenlies, that are the best donation man can receive or God bestow.

A larger coast.— There is a godly ambition which may be reverently cherished for wider influence over men, not for its own sake, but for the Master's. You may feel that you have fulfilled the measure of your present possibilities, but have unexhausted powers and talents. Tell God so, and ask for a wider extent of territory to bring under cultivation for Him.

Thine hand with me.— The father puts his hand on the boy's hand as he draws back the bowstring, strengthening the thin arms of youth. So will the mighty God of Jacob do for you.

Keep me from evil.— You cannot keep your heart-door shut when a tumult of temptation or care assaults it from without; but God's peace and grace, like angel sentries, can avail you. Though tempted, you may be kept in the temptation and delivered from the evil. Thus your spirit, and the Holy Spirit, shall be ungrieved.

1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me. - 1 Chronicles 4:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

Five years ago, The Prayer of Jabez became a surprise best seller on both Christian and secular publishers' lists. The author, Bruce Wilkinson, expounded today's verses and said he has been praying them daily since 1972. His four main points are (1) that we should seek God's blessing; (2) that we should seek greater "territory" for ministry opportunities; (3) that we should depend on God's power, not our own strength, to accomplish ministry; and (4) that we should flee temptation. Christians worldwide have responded to the opening line: "This little book you're holding is about what happens when ordinary Christians decide to reach for an extraordinary life."

One reviewer commented: "It is to Bruce Wilkinson's credit to have discerned something God-inspired in a couple of formerly obscure sentences in the first nine mind-numbing chapters of 1 Chronicles. His The Prayer of Jabez has turned out to be not only an exegetical coup but also a spiritual inspiration to millions."

We know nothing of Jabez other than what is recorded here. But in these verses, we can unpack quite a bit about this man whose name means, "pain." We see that he was a man of faith—his petition that God's hand be with him is an acknowledgment that he couldn't live victoriously in his own strength. Some scholars infer that he believed the Lord's blessing on him would be a witness to others. Since God granted his requests, it seems that he asked for all these things with an upright heart.

What are we to make of his request to be shielded from harm and pain? No one since the Fall has been able to escape these common features of human existence. Additionally, suffering is part of God's plan for sanctifying believers (1 Peter 2:19-21). Remember that Jabez means, "pain." It may be that Jabez's request reflects his desire to be identified with something beyond his physical background and circumstances. We do know that our God is able to deliver anyone from a painful past into a bountiful future.

APPLY THE WORD Mentioned at the start of today's devotion, The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson (Multnomah) has sold millions of copies around the world. Whether you agree with Wilkinson's interpretation or not, there are still great truths in this story in the Bible. First, we need to bring our requests to God, crying out to Him for strength. Second, our God hears our prayers, and He answers in powerful ways.

1 Chronicles 5:20

They cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them.

Whether they cried to God before they went into the battle we are not told; but probably they did, because we read that the war was of God, and it is hardly likely that they would have prayed to Him in the midst of the fight, when the foemen's blows fell like hail on their armor, if they had not prayed before they entered the bloody fray. Men often excuse themselves for neglecting their morning devotions by saying that they will surely look to God, as they may require His gracious help, in the midst of the day's temptations and needs; but, as a matter of fact, when once they are plunged into its war they forget to look up. You must direct your prayer in the morning, and look up whilst the early shadows lie long on the dewy grass, if you would keep looking off to Jesus, amid the din of the fight.

It is very lovely to contract and preserve this habit of looking upward, and crying to God in the battle. When our feet are slipping, when the foe seems about to overmaster, when heart and flesh fail—how refreshing and strengthening to fling one eager look or cry to heaven, and say, I am thine, save me." There can be no doubt as to the issue. God is always intreated of those who put their trust

in Him. Sooner might a mother forget her sucking child than God be unmindful of one sigh, or tear, or upward glancing look from His own. Oh, child of God, put thou thy trust in God, and go through this tempestuous world as one who is confident of a Divine Ally. At any moment He will ride on the heavens to thy help. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

1Chronicles 5:23-26 5t

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol. - Exodus 20:3-4

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Cheating Culture, by David Callahan, provides a stinging indictment of contemporary American values. Subtitled Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead, the book discusses corporate scandals, tax cheating, academic and journalistic fraud, pirated music, and numerous other examples. Asserts the author: "These stories are not isolated instances. They are part of a pattern of widespread cheating throughout U.S. society ... [A]vailable evidence strongly suggests that Americans are not only cheating more in many areas but are also feeling less guilty about it. When "'everybody does it,' or imagines that everybody does it, a cheating culture has emerged."

In a similar tone, 1 Chronicles points out a story of ongoing covenant cheating or unfaithfulness by God's chosen people. As we go through this genealogical section of the book, our purpose is to highlight historical themes and background information that help us understand the main narrative of the kingship of David. Before reading or hearing that encouraging history, the original audience also needed to be reminded of the actions that had brought on the Exile in the first place.

The Exile was a judgment on Israelite idolatry: "[T]hey were unfaithful to the God of their fathers and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land" (v. 25). They abandoned the One who had given them victory and turned to the conquered idols instead—sin is often irrational in this way. In so doing, they broke two of the Ten Commandments (see today's verse). They violated their intimate relationship with God, as the metaphor of prostitution shows, though He intended them to be His pure bride (Isa. 61:10).

God sovereignly knows and rules all. He saw and judged righteously, and used a pagan king as the instrument of judgment. And so, despite their military prowess, they were defeated by their own sin and deported to foreign lands (cf. 2 Kings 17:7-20).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you find yourself swept up in the "cheating culture," willing to sacrifice integrity and obedience for "success"? If success is defined apart from God, it's really a deceptive form of idolatry. These are serious sins that God does not take lightly, as our passage today demonstrates. Repent of anything that you hold above the favor of God, ask Him for forgiveness, and renew your loyalty to Him.

1 Chronicles 6:33

Herman the singer.

This is a very brief record to put on a man's grave, but a very expressive one. To decipher that epitaph about Herman is to learn a good deal about him. From this clue we might almost construct his entire personality and character. And it would be well if it could be said of us that we had ministered with song before the tabernacle of the Lord.

Would you be a singer; not on Sundays only, but always; not with your voice only, but in your heart; not only when the sunshine pours into the open casement through the swaying boughs of honeysuckle, but when the shutters tell of bereavement and removal—then remember these rules:— (1st) God must put the new song into your mouth; (2nd) You must be fully consecrated to Him; for the song of the Lord only begins when the burnt-offering is complete. (3rd) You must not go into a strange land, for it is impossible to sing the Lord's song there.

Sing on, dear heart, sing on. There is nothing that scares off the devil so quickly as a hymn. Luther said, "Let us sing a hymn, and spite the devil." There is nothing that so well beguiles the pilgrim's step, and quickens his pace, when the miles are growing long and weary. There is nothing that brings so much of heaven into the heart. Singing makes every movement rhythmic, every service praise, every act thanksgiving. Sing when times are dark, you will make them bright; sing when the house of life is lonely, it will become peopled with unseen choristers; go down into the valley of shadow with a song, and you will find yourself singing the new song of Moses and the Lamb when you awake on the other side.

1 Chronicles 7:23

It went evil with his house.

It is an old-world tale, and those tears have long since been wiped away. What led to the death of so many of the stalwart sons of Ephraim is not quite clear; but apparently they made a raid from the hill-fastnesses on the men of Gath to lift their cattle, and were repelled with great disaster. At any rate, they were slain by men of Gath, that were born in the land. They were part of the early nations of Canaan, that should have been destroyed. This suggests a significant train of thought. We must beware of the tendencies and impulses which were born in us, which we have inherited.

They are strong in all of us. Parents transmit to an awful extent their own passions. What a reason this is for carefully curbing them! I have known the children of drunkards, grown to middle-life, who have confessed that they have never spent a day without the conscious craving for alcohol. These are the men of Gath, born in the land, who will slay us unless we are on our guard.

There will be irremediable sorrow if we yield to them. Many days of mourning will not avail to wipe out the sad and bitter memory of the disaster, when once they have wreaked their wild will on us. If permitted within, they will, like traitors, open the door to Satan without.

But faith is the victory. He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God; he in whom Jesus lives by the Holy Spirit; he who knows the Stronger than the strong man armed, shall be kept from falling, and preserved unto God's heavenly kingdom. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

1 Chronicles 8:33–34

Esh-baal... Merib-baal

Baal was the idol-god of Zidon and of many surrounding nations. This idol, representing the sun in his productive force, was worshipped with impure and scandalous rites. The introduction of this name into the appellation of one of Saul's sons indicates the secret root of the declension and consequent misfortunes of that ill-fated monarch. In the earlier part of his reign he was perfect in his allegiance to Jehovah—Jonathan means "Gift of Jehovah"—but as the years went on, he became proud and self-sufficient; he turned to Baal, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit rushed in to take His place, as wind rushes in to fill a vacuum.

The name which Jonathan gave his son had another significance. Merib-baal is one who opposes Baal. It is as though he would indelibly, stamp upon his child an undying hatred and opposition to that idolatry which was undoing his father's character and kingdom. In this choice of his child's name we also gather the deep-seated piety and devotion of that noble soul, whose heart was true to God amid the darkening shadows of his father's reign. It was this that probably drew David and him so closely in affinity.

How absolutely necessary it is for the peace of a household that there should be a oneness of devotion to God! Where that is the first consideration, there is peace and blessedness; and that it may be so, it is of the greatest importance that the parents should be constant in their godly allegiance. The ruin of Saul's home, family, and realm, began in his personal disloyalty to God; and how far he influenced the nation for evil it is difficult to estimate.

1 Chronicles 9:22, 29, 31, 33

Chosen to be porters ... appointed over the furniture; ... the singers.

What a busy scene is suggested in these words! When the morning broke, it called to duty first the porters who opened the House of God; and then, after due ablution, each band of white-robed Levites began its special service. There was no running to and fro in disorder, no intrusion on one another's office, no clashing in duty, no jealousy of each other's ministry. It was enough to know that each had been appointed to his task, and was asked to be faithful to it. The right ordering of the whole depended on the punctuality, fidelity, and conscientiousness of each.

So it is in the Church of Christ, each is specially gifted for some post to which he has been set apart. One to see to the gates, admitting souls to the kingdom; one to the baking in pans, attending to the feeding of the household of God; some are appointed to the furnishing and maintaining of the House of Prayer; others to the psalmody, as the hymn-writers of our praise and holy song. How beautiful it is when we dwell together in this unity, not envying one another, nor interfering in each other's ministry. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Whatever is successfully done by the Church is accredited by Christ to each faithful servant, just as the impression produced on the audience by an orchestra is the result of each instrument, even to the piccolo, doing its part. Whatever is done by the whole, is done by each part of the whole. Be content with the position to which thy Master has assigned thee, and let thine eye be single unto Him. So shall each have praise of God.

1 Chronicles 9:22-33 9†

I ... delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. - Colossians 2:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Church government in modern times can take many forms, depending on your denomination or tradition. Do you refer to your main leader as “pastor,” “reverend,” “teacher,” or simply call him by his first name? Is there a “church board” or a “council of elders”? Are leaders “appointed,” “elected,” or “called”? Is the authority structure hierarchical or cooperative? How is church discipline practiced (or not)? However churches structure themselves, some form of ecclesiastical organization is essential to the smooth running of all the things your church does.

When the Jewish exiles returned to their homeland, in many ways they needed to start over in reorganizing their national religious life. Here's the timeline: the return had begun under Cyrus about 538 b.c., with the temple rebuilt by about 516 b.c. This marked the end of the seventy years of captivity, which had begun about 586 b.c. Ezra arrived with the second wave of returnees under Artaxerxes, followed by Nehemiah in about 444 b.c. The system of priests, Levites, and sacrifices had been on hold through the Exile (cf. Ps. 137)—but as the genealogies show, people had been keeping track. These facts were, after all, at the core of their national identity. How appropriate on this Fourth of July, when we reflect on our identity as a nation, to be reading about how Israel rediscovered and reconstituted its own national identity. In this context, a description of religious duties is richly meaningful. The mention of activities such as mixing spices for incense, polishing the temple furnishings, or baking showbread told the original audience that the sacred dimensions of their national life were ready to begin again, that the covenant relationship with God could be renewed.

Today's verse reminds us that God loves order in worship because He Himself is a God of order. “Order” is not a cold quality but a warm virtue, something our Lord delights in, and part of His righteousness that works against sinfulness and disorder (James 3:16).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

On a smaller scale, we might imitate the organization of the Levites in our family or small group devotions or Bible study times. For example, in addition to a leader, other roles might include an artist, who makes a passage come alive through reading, drama, visual art, or music; an encourager, who makes sure all group members feel involved; an historian, who takes responsibility for historical and cultural background; and a connector, who offers ideas for contemporary applications of truths studied.

1 Chronicles 10:1-14 10t

Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord. - 1 Chronicles 10:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

In Shakespeare's famous play, *King Lear*, the king made the error of listening to the self-serving flattery of his two older daughters rather than the loving rebuke of his youngest. Most of the drama then relentlessly shows the cascading consequences of his choice—consequences that include betrayal, civil war, a kingdom in chaos, extreme suffering, and death. Too late, Lear saw the truth—not only who had genuinely loved him, but also the sinful pride that had governed his perceptions and decisions.

Like Lear, King Saul found himself a tragic victim of his own sinful choices, as summed up in today's verse. Chapter 10 begins the historical narrative of Chronicles and serves as both a prelude and a contrast to David's story that follows.

At the end of a losing battle against the Philistines, Saul chose to kill himself rather than face capture. He was right to fear the enemy's abuse, for when they found his body they hung his head in their god's temple as a trophy of victory. The brave men of Jabesh Gilead, however, demonstrated courage and respect by rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons and giving them proper burials (cf. 2 Sam. 2:4-7).

Saul's death had multiple causes. He fell on his sword—that's the physical cause. But although it appears that he was in control at the very end of his life, in reality his death also had a spiritual dimension. In the big picture, God, the sovereign King of the universe, had judged and punished Saul: “the Lord put him to death” (v. 14). We may not fully understand the relationship between our choices and God's sovereignty, but as Moses had warned the covenant people long before: “[Y]ou may be sure that your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

Despite their troubled history, David didn't rejoice over Saul's death, even though he surely knew that he would now become king. Instead he recognized the tragedy and lamented, “Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!” (2 Sam. 1:19).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The negative examples in Scripture, like Saul, are not usually as thrilling to study as the positive role models. If we believe that all Scripture is given for our benefit and instruction, then we have something to learn from the sad tale of Saul. His kingly career had so

much promise at the beginning, but his continuous lack of obedience had devastating consequences for his career, his family, and his own life. Our calling, no matter what the ministry, does not allow us to behave any way we want. God continues to demand obedience.

1 Chronicles 10:13

So Saul died for his trespass. (r. v.)

It is suggestive to ponder the threefold analysis of Saul's trespass as given here. He kept not the word of the Lord— this probably refers to his failure to execute the sentence on Amalek; he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit— this errand had taken him to Endor on the eve of the battle; he inquired not of the Lord— this was conspicuously the case in his persecution of David.

Do we sufficiently inquire of the Lord? We ask the advice of our friends and religious teachers; we sometimes use doubtful methods of ascertaining God's will, as allowing the Bible to drop open, or interpreting some coincidence in the way we secretly desire to follow; besides which there is an increasing tendency in society to use the crystal, to consult spiritualistic mediums, to employ palmistry. These latter, of course, repeat the sin of Saul, in going to Endor; and the resort to them on the part of children of this world shows that the heart of man must have something exterior to itself for worship and trust; if it has forsaken God it will deal with the devil, rather than drift on alone. But let us all cultivate more carefully the blessed habit of waiting on God. If we ask Him for guidance, He will be sure to impart it; only we must put aside all selfish and personal ends, desiring to know His will, with a single purpose, and an unalloyed determination to follow it at any cost.

Christ has told us that willingness to do His will, is the sure organ of spiritual knowledge. "He that wills to do His will, shall know." Be of good cheer, beloved, God hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know His will, and see that just One, and shouldst hear the voice of His mouth.

1 Chronicles 11:1-3; 2 Samuel 5:1-511

You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler. - 2 Samuel 5:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the Sunday opening His Passion Week, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem riding the colt of a donkey. A large crowd gathered. Excitement was in the air. Was this the Messiah for whom they'd been waiting? To show respect, some spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from nearby trees and placed them in front of Jesus.

Shouts rang out. 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!' (Matt. 21:9). 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' (Mark 11:10). 'Blessed is the King of Israel!' (John 12:13). In more ways than those present realized, the King had indeed arrived, and He was indeed descended directly from David, the greatest king Israel had ever known.

Have you ever connected Palm Sunday with today's readings? In many ways, the journey to Passion Week started here, as David began his rule over all Israel. Once again, the Word of God delivered by Samuel was fulfilled, though he didn't live to see it. The anointing of David was realized as he assumed the kingship, first of the south and then of the entire nation.

After Saul's death, the southern region of Judah confirmed David as king, but the north continued to try to follow the old dynasty. When Abner, the northern military commander, switched sides and joined David, a turning point was reached that resulted in David's conquest of Jerusalem and rule over all Israel.

David was only 30 years old at the time, but he had already lived an eventful life and waited a long time for God's promise to be fulfilled. His kingship marked a 'golden age' in the history of Israel. More importantly, as we've already seen (July 23rd), his family tree will bring to the world God's gift of His Son, Jesus.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today, we suggest you do something creative in connection with the story of Saul, concluded in today's reading. Show the tragic lessons of his life through a poem, song, painting, or other art form. What you do can show the truth of Saul's life and bring glory to God. As our study of the life of Samuel and Israel's early history as a kingdom draws to a close, we invite you to look back at the month's accumulation of 'Today Along the Way' activities. Is there one you were planning to do but haven't yet? Is there one you would like to do now that didn't interest you previously? Is there one you know you should do but were hoping to avoid? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to an activity that He wants you to do. Then plan to do it with His help.

If you need a suggestion, flip back two days to the 27th and discover the power of the promises of God!

1 Chronicles 11:10-25 11t

It is God who arms me with strength... He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. - Psalm 18:32, 34

TODAY IN THE WORD

Late one night, bomb squad police officers Danny McGuire and Jerry Farrell were called to the scene of an explosion. A live pipe bomb was still on the floor next to a dead body in a badly damaged apartment. Under the circumstances, the two men couldn't wear their bulky, protective bomb suits or even move around freely. Nonetheless, they went in and successfully disarmed the bomb. McGuire's citation for the Superintendent's Award of Valor, the Chicago Police Department's highest honor, called it a "selfless act of bravery."

Danny McGuire Jr., also a police officer, agreed: "He disregarded his own safety so he could help other people. The reason I'm a police officer is because I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps. My whole life, I have wanted to be like him. Other kids looked up to sports heroes. I looked up to my dad."

The world needs more true heroes. David's "mighty men" qualify! They were the king's elite forces, military leaders, and personal bodyguards. That's why many were non-Israelites; in that day, it was common for rulers to employ foreigners as bodyguards so that they would be loyal to him alone and couldn't be used in political plots or coups. The exploits described in today's reading exemplify the fact that God was blessing David and giving him victory on every side. The nation's source of strength was ultimately not military but spiritual.

The best story is found in verses 15-19. "The Three" risked their lives to go on a daring raid against the Philistines. At one level, their actions appear foolhardy, for all they did was fetch water, but perhaps they genuinely wanted to honor the king. In any case, David honored both them and the Lord by pouring out the water as a drink offering. His action thanked God for preserving the men's lives, hailed their courage and devotion to the king ... and probably warned them to choose their missions more wisely in the future!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Speaking of heroes, who has been a model or mentor in your life? How has this person helped "arm" you for victory on the battlefield of life? Which qualities or biblical virtues do they possess that you most admire and want to grow in? How have they helped you develop and mature in your daily walk with the Lord? Reflect on these questions, then write a note of appreciation. If you can't think of anyone, ask God to put such a person in your life.

1 Chronicles 11:17

Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!

David had often drunk of this well. As a boy he had gone with his mother to draw its clear, cold water. It was, therefore, associated with the happy days of childhood and youth that lay behind the haze of the years. In the sultry afternoon, as, from the cave in which he was hiding, he looked across the valley where his ancestress Ruth had gleaned in the fields of Boaz, to the long straggling town of his birth, it seemed as though nothing could stay his passionate longing for a draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem that was at the gate.

Sometimes longings like his take possession of us. We desire to drink again the waters of comparative innocence, of childlike trust and joy; to drink again of the fountains of human love; to have the bright, fresh rapture in God and nature, and home. But it is a mistake to look back. Here and now, within us, Jesus is waiting to open the well of living water which springs up to eternal life, of which if we drink we never thirst.

Purity is better than innocence; the blessedness which comes through suffering is richer than the gladness of childhood; the peace of the heart is more than peace of circumstances. We have solace in Jesus, which even the dear love of home could not equal; and before us lies the reunion with the blessed dead. How shall we thank Him who, at the cost of His own blood, broke through the hosts of our foes, and won for us the river of life; and who forevermore will lead us to the fountains, where life rises fresh from the heart of God? Listen to His voice as He bids us drink abundantly: "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

1 Chronicles 12:16-22

Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you. - 1 Chronicles 12:18

TODAY IN THE WORD

War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars is a collection of more than 200 letters written by soldiers of all

ranks over the last 150 years. "Every day these letters are getting thrown away or lost," said the editor. "This is a tragedy. They are the first unfiltered draft of history. To me this is the great unknown literature of the American people." The director of a PBS documentary based on the book added, "There's a drama that happens in war that's like no other. The soldiers are so close to death that they talk about the things that are most important to them. In the letters, you're looking into people's souls."

David's success in war testified to the fact that God's hand was with him—it was as if his army were "the army of God" (v. 22). The returned exiles, the original recipients of this book of Chronicles, needed the encouragement of remembering these "glory days," while modern readers can learn from the principle that faithfulness and obedience are every believer's strength.

Not much is known about Amasai, except that he was later among David's "mighty men." By the Holy Spirit, Amasai recognized that joining David meant joining God (v. 18). While the Spirit didn't indwell believers in Old Testament times, He did come upon selected people on specific occasions in order to send special messages or empower them for important deeds or acts of service. We also know, of course, that the Spirit inspired the prophets and other writers of Scripture (Heb. 1:1-2).

"The army of God" is probably a host of angels. God is often pictured in Scripture as a mighty warrior—for example, in Exodus 15, when Moses and the Israelites praised Him for the miraculous victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea. A common biblical title for God is better translated "Lord of hosts," a phrase that the niv translates as "Lord Almighty."

APPLY THE WORD Trusting in God's strength is the only way to true spiritual victory. If you wish, memorize one or more Bible verses to remind yourself of this fact. A good place to start is Philip- pians 4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Another helpful verse is 1 Corinthians 1:25: "The weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." Other good choices for Scripture memorization include Psalm 20:7-8; Psalm 44:1-8; and Psalm 118:14-16.

1 Chronicles 12:38

All these men of war, that could keep rank, came to make David king.

The crowning of David secured the unity of Israel. Because all these men of war converged on the chosen king, they met each other, and became one great nation. The enthroning of David was the uniting of the kingdom. Herein is the secret of the unity of the Church. We shall never secure it by endeavoring to bring about an unity in thought, or act, or organization. It is as each individual heart enthrones the Savior that each will become one with all kindred souls in the everlasting kingdom.

Is your heart perfect to make Christ king? We read in 1 Chronicles 12:33 of Zebulun, whose warriors were not of a double heart; the margin says they were "without a heart and a heart." The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways; he is not to be relied upon in his loyalty or service to his king. The only blessed life is that of the man whose eye is single. It is only such an one that receives anything from the Lord. Let us ask that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be perfect toward Him, and so perfect to all who hold Jesus as King and Head, though they differ from us in minor points. Different regiments, but one army, one movement, one king.

Let us learn to keep rank, shoulder to shoulder, and in step, with our brethren. Too many like to break the ranks, and do God's work independently. Fifty men who act together will do greater execution than five hundred acting apart. There is too much of this guerilla fighting. Unity is strength; and in their efforts to overthrow the kingdom of Satan it is most essential that the soldiers of Christ move in rank and keep step.

1 Chronicles 13:1-8 13t

David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God. - 1 Chronicles 13:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Did you know the Ark of the Covenant might be located in Ethiopia? No, this is no Hollywood movie script. Many Ethiopian Jews and Christians believe they are descended from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and that the Ark is now in a chapel in Aksum, guarded 24 hours a day. Scholars have not been permitted to study the relic and so have been unable to judge the claim. Even so, Ethiopians believe that when the temple is rebuilt during the end times, they will return the Ark as a gift (as described in Isa. 18).

David understood the importance of the Ark of the Covenant. Having made Israel militarily more secure, he turned his attention to putting the nation back on a sound spiritual foundation. His first priority was to recover the Ark and bring it to his new capital city of Jerusalem. At that time, the Ark had been in Kiriath Jearim for about a century. The Philistines had captured it in battle, but after plagues struck their cities they had returned it on a new oxcart to Kiriath Jearim, where it had remained (see 1 Sam. 4-6).

The Ark was important because it symbolized God's presence with His people (see Ex. 25:10-22). The "atonement cover" or "mercy seat" showed forgiveness, as blood was sprinkled there on the Day of Atonement. The cherubim represented God's holiness. The two tablets of the Ten Commandments had been placed inside, a reminder of the Mosaic Law and covenant.

Many things were right about David's desires and behavior with regard to the Ark. He consulted with other leaders. He acted in a spirit of respect and worship. This reflected a personal love for God, on display for all to see as he celebrated before the Lord (v. Cool, as well as a sense of kingly responsibility. Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem signaled to the nation that they were all under God's rule and would once again be seeking to live under His authority as His covenant people.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Though David's heart was in the right place, it appears he neglected to submit his decision in today's reading to the Lord. Let's not make the same mistake! If you're faced with a key choice in the coming week—and odds are you will be—be sure to pray over it with an open mind and heart. Don't assume you know what God wants or that He will “rubber stamp” apparently good desires and plans. And give thanks that His wisdom is ours for the asking (James 1:5).

1 Chronicles 13:9-14 139

The Lord's anger burned again Uzzah, and he struck him down. - 1 Chronicles 13:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the earliest days of the Mosaic Law, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu brought unauthorized fire before the Lord in the tabernacle. Their disobedience dishonored the nation's worship and their own calling as priests, and God immediately struck them down as proof of His uncompromising holiness. To further emphasize that the service of the Lord took priority over earthly concerns and must be done on His terms, Aaron's family was not permitted to mourn their deaths (Lev. 10).

Down through Jewish history, this episode had been remembered as a warning. David had heard the story—he should have known better than to act carelessly with sacred things. He had also heard what had happened after the Philistines had returned the Ark: some men looked inside and were put to death by God for their irreverence (1 Sam. 6:19-20). David should have checked the Law for rules concerning the Ark: It should never have been put on a cart. It was to be carried with poles by priests and was never to be touched by anyone for any reason (Num. 4:15). So when Uzzah put his hand out to steady it during transport, he sinned. All of them, including him, should have known better. Ignorance, if it was that, was no excuse.

From a human perspective, David's anger is understandable. He may have been thinking: “God, you're unfair! I'm trying to lead Israel to worship you again. Why do you have to go and punish someone?!” God is God, however, and His ways are higher. He knew David's heart, but His holiness and clear commands demanded obedience. Good intentions did not excuse carelessness. In addition, David's anger reflected his pride (at the public humiliation for him as king) and guilt (he knew what he should have done). It may have been on this very day that he learned a lesson he later taught to Solomon: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10; see v. 12).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

David thought he was pleasing God with his plan for the Ark, but he failed to follow God's instructions when executing his plan. His anger showed pride ... his big moment was spoiled by tragedy. Are you doing the same as David? Is there something you're doing for self that you've convinced yourself is really for the Lord? Apart from the duplicity of our own hearts, Satan loves to confuse and corrupt our spiritual understandings and motivations. The Lord cares about our intentions, but He also cares about our obedience.

1 Chronicles 13:12

And David was afraid of God that day.

There was no reason for David to be afraid of God, if he conformed to the rules laid down in Leviticus. There it was expressly ordained that the Ark should be carried on the shoulders of the priests, because the cause of God must proceed through the world by the means of consecrated men, rather than by mechanical instrumentality. David ignored this provision when he placed the Ark on the new cart. He disobeyed the distinct law of the Divine procedure. What wonder that Uzza was struck dead! Fire will burn if you persist in violating its law. Obed-edom, on the other hand, studiously obeyed, so far as he knew them, the Divine regulations, and to him the Ark was a source of blessing; just as fire will toil for us in our furnaces and grates, and be the greatest possible benediction to human life, if only we carefully conform to its ascertained and immutable law.

God is to us what we are to Him. To Pharaoh, blackness and darkness; to Israel, light and help. To the froward, He is froward; to the merciful man, merciful. To one of the thieves, the cross of Christ was the savor of death unto death, because his heart was impenitent; to the other, the savor of life unto life, because his heart was soft and believing. You need not fear God so long as you walk in His ways and do His will. He is to be feared only by those who violate His law. God is a consuming fire. He will make a breach on those who disobey Him. He will consume the evil of our inner life. But let Him be welcomed into your life and home; let the

Ark, which is the symbol of His presence, dwell within; bring up your children to minister unto Him; and you will be blessed with all that you have.

1 Chronicles 14:1-17 141

So David's fame spread throughout every land, and the Lord made all the nations fear him. - 1 Chronicles 14:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Thirteen students from Moody Bible Institute, led by professor Dr. Samuel Naaman, spent last summer serving God in Kabul, Afghanistan. By working to provide humanitarian assistance, they learned first-hand about the situation and people in that war-torn nation. The team helped feed the children of war widows and rebuild a hospital at which they also planted a rose garden, an act with special significance in Afghan culture. Christians are not allowed to carry out evangelistic activities in Afghanistan; nonetheless, by living out Christ's love to those in need the Moody team shone the light of Jesus brightly. As should we all, they glorified God's name among the nations.

In today's reading, we see God's name being glorified among the nations. David could have had a swelled head over his military successes, but the evidence shows that he acknowledged God as the true King of Israel. For instance, he interpreted Hiram of Tyre's gifts as proof of God's favor (v. 2). A second example is that he asked God for a battle plan against the Philistines, not just once but twice. God gave him two victories, including direct help from the "army of God" (v. 15; cf. 12:22).

When Hiram sent workmen and materials to help build a palace, it was more than a simple gift or gesture of goodwill. It was a recognition of the legitimacy of David's kingship, like sending an ambassador or granting diplomatic recognition in modern times. The consolidation of David's position is also shown in his accumulation of wives and children. Polygamy is never God's will (Gen. 2:24), and David's actions disobeyed the Law (Deut. 17:17), but it was a common Near Eastern custom and way to claim or pursue power. Though the writer of Chronicles didn't explicitly condemn it, his readers would have known that these marriages sowed the seeds of future trouble. At that time, however, David's rise in power spread the fear of the Lord among the nations (v. 17).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's passage brings to mind world missions, which is also focused on glorifying God among the nations. To become more involved with the missionaries your church supports, write to one and propose a "photo exchange." That is, perhaps once per month you can mail or e-mail one another current personal or family photographs. This might help you keep up with children's growth, for example, or give more opportunities to learn meaningful details of one another's lives. Such personal involvement is sure to encourage you both!

1 Chronicles 14:15

Then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee.

What was this "going"? It was not merely a fitful breeze stealing through the leaves; it was not the going of the wind; but of angel squadrons who were proceeding against the enemies of Israel. This thought often occurs in Scripture— as when Jacob met God's host; and the warrior-Savior told Joshua that He was captain of a host whom God had commissioned to take Jericho; so also the horses and chariots of fire surrounded Elisha. Harken to the measured footfall of God's host, beneath which the mulberry trees sway, though no wind stirs the sultry air.

God's hosts go forth against His foes and ours. Perhaps we should feel less oppressed with the burden of the fight if we realized this. The battle is not ours, but God's. He will deliver the Philistines to us so that we shall have to do little else than fight and spoil. Oh, believe in the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Lonely missionary in some distant station of the foreign field, listen for the moving in the tops of the mulberry trees! God is stirring for thy succor. Thou art a coworker with Him in making known His salvation; and He will prosper thee.

Let us wait for our instructions. David inquired of the Lord; let us not anticipate Him. It is useless to go up until He has gone out before us. We may as well save ourselves from disappointment by quietly waiting for the salvation of our God. But oh, be sure that those who wait for God shall not be long before the God for whom they wait shall go forth before them to smite the host, whether it be the hosts of temptation that oppress the inner life, or the hosts of spiritual foes that oppose the progress of God's work.

1 Chronicles 15:1-16 151

For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great. - Psalm 25:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the night when Christ was betrayed, despite being specifically warned, Peter denied his Lord three times. He must have felt as though all was lost. How could Jesus forgive that? Yet on the Day of Pentecost, Peter received the Holy Spirit along with the others and preached a powerful sermon that led about three thousand people to trust Christ as Savior that very day (Luke 22:54-62; Acts 2). Despite all, Christ forgave Peter and had big plans for the role that the apostle would play in the life of the early church.

In today's reading, David probably felt the same as Peter. With the best of intentions, he had blown the Ark recovery in a big way. During the three months it stayed at Obed-Edom's house, he had plenty of time to relive his sin and its tragic consequences. We can also infer that he spent those months praying, confessing, inquiring of the Lord, and searching the Scriptures (v. 13). Finally, he was ready to try again. David had clearly learned from his mistakes, and much was done differently this second time around. The Ark was carried properly, on poles. Priests and Levites were used more correctly and formally. A period of consecration preceded the move.

Only one thing seems to have stayed the same—the spirit of worship, especially as expressed in music (v. 16). In Jerusalem, the king had prepared a place for the Ark, a “tent” similar to the previous tabernacle. He had likely found the detailed instructions in the Law. From a human perspective, David took a huge risk by trying again. What if something else went wrong? But he moved ahead in faith and humility, believing that God's will done in God's way brings God's blessing, and even more important, that God forgives sin. This was a key lesson to learn, for this wouldn't be the last time David would need second chances and extra grace. Peter would have understood.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Are you feeling like a failure? Have you “flamed out” or “hit rock bottom”? Take heart from David's story. Though his sin and disgrace were painfully public (and this isn't the only time that would be true), God extended grace to His child. God is the God of second (and third, fourth, etc.) chances. So if you're stuck in self-pity, anger, or confusion, or you think there's no way God could forgive what you've done this time, think again! His grace never runs out.

1 Chronicles 15:22

And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song.

The carrying of the Ark to its right place was associated with every expression of gladness on the part of king and people; but there were some who were specially set apart as the exponents of the general joy. In the old time such were David, Heman, Asaph, Chenaniah; in our time, Watts and Doddridge, Wesley and Toplady, Keble, Havergal, and Bonar.

It is good to be for song. Many a heart that cannot rank as a musician or poet, may yet be susceptible to the joy of the Lord, which is ever passing through creation, catching it up so as to express it. As the Ark of the Lord comes to its place within you, sing.

Song is harmony with the life of God. The will of God sometimes enters life as a sigh, as David's first attempt to move the Ark; but afterward it becomes a song, as in the second attempt. Enshrine the Ark of God with its tables of stone, its mercy-seat of fellowship, its worshipping Cherubim in the Holy of Holies within; and you will find sighs turned to songs, tears to thanks, mourning to the garment of praise.

Worship the will of God. Conform your life with it. Draw on the ground a circle to represent God's will, and step into it, resolving never to step out of its blessed precincts again. Dare to believe and confess that Paradise lies within, though it may be veiled to sight and sense. According to your faith it shall be unto you. If you believe that heaven is there, you will find heaven. The Ark of God is ever a provocative of song. His statutes seem awful in the distance; but so soon as we begin to practice them, they turn to songs.

1 Chronicles 15:25-16:6 152

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. - Psalm 100:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Christian band Third Day recently issued two albums of worship music. Immensely popular and the winners of many awards, Offerings and Offerings II featured such memorable tracks as “King of Glory,” “You Are Beautiful,” and “Sing a Song.” Lead singer Mac Powell explained: “If we're musicians and we want to play music and yet we have a message to share, the first thing to do is know what we believe and why, but as far as the music side, make quality music that is going to open up people's ears to hear that message. I'm not saying the music is more important, but you better make some quality music or people are not going to want to hear you, period.”

In other words, the content and spirit of worship matters, and it should be offered to God to the best of our ability. David understood this, and his right attitude is found from several angles in today's reading. First, respect and honor are part of genuine worship. David

made sure that a full complement of leaders accompanied the Ark, including the king's counselors (political), army commanders (military), and priests and Levites (spiritual). Their presence acknowledged God as the Source of their ability to govern and lead, showing the nation that they trusted not in themselves but in the Lord. Second, rejoicing permeates worship. Given what had happened the first time around, the atmosphere here could easily have been one of fear or caution, but instead we read of singing, dancing, and shouts of joy. Third, we understand that worship includes prayer and sacrifice (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

As David danced and celebrated before the Lord, his wife Michal saw what was going on and “despised him in her heart” (15:29). She thought he had lost his royal dignity cavorting about in such a manner, but she failed to understand the heart of true worship, the self-abandoning joy David felt in God's presence. For her pride and incomprehension, she remained childless the rest of her life (2 Sam. 6:20-23).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

A heart of worship should be every believer's goal. One book that might help you gain a heart like David's is *Sacred Pathways*, by Gary Thomas (Zondervan). Reflecting on both Scripture and church history, the author suggests nine ways to love, worship, and commune with God. You can find this book and others mentioned in “Today Along the Way” at your local Christian bookstore or from online retailers like or

1 Chronicles 16:1-12, 23-29 161

TODAY IN THE WORD

Qin Shi Huang was China's first emperor, the first leader to defeat China's warring states and unify the nation in 221 B.C. But Huang left behind more than a dynasty and a unified country. To signify his rule, He had artisans create an enormous army of life-sized warriors and horses in terra cotta, more than 8 of which have been unearthed in a series of extensive excavations since 1974.

It's mind-boggling to think of the effort human rulers will exert in an attempt to immortalize themselves. But the only immortal Ruler in the universe, “the only God” (1 Tim. 1:17), does not want His people to build clay soldiers, pyramids, or other monuments in honor of Him. Instead, He desires our worship.

David—one of earth's greatest kings—understood this truth better than most people. And he certainly knew how to put together a worship service that brought to the Lord “the glory due his name” (1 Chron. 16:29).

This beautiful psalm of praise was the centerpiece of a wonderful service celebrating David's return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (see 15:1). The king put up a tent to house the ark, which was not a monument but a visible symbol of God's presence among His people.

As you read these verses you'll see that this worship service had it all. There were offerings, instrumental and choral music, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Although for our purposes we have omitted the verses that deal specifically with Israel's history, it's important to note how often this psalm calls on God's people to remember His “wonderful acts” (1 Chron. 16:9) and “the wonders he has done” (v. 12).

Add to this the poem's many ascriptions of glory, majesty, and honor to the Lord, and we come away with valuable lessons about the content of worship. Using phrases repeated from Psalm 29:1-2 (see November 2), David captured the heart of worship in verses 28-29.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's text also notes that offerings were part of the worship that David and the Israelites gave to the Lord (vv. 1-2).

We don't bring animals to a tabernacle or temple, but we are still commanded to worship God with our gifts. Paul called the gifts of the Philippians a “fragrant offering” to God (Phil. 4:18). Our gifts of worship are not limited to financial gifts (see Heb. 13:15), but the tithes and offerings we give to God are a measure of our love and devotion to Him.

1 Chronicles 16:7-36

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. - 1 Chronicles 16:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Historian Albert J. Raboteau wrote about the worship of African Americans in the days of slavery: “The presence of God became manifest in the words, the gestures, and the bodily movements of the believers... The emotional ecstasy of the slaves' worship services conveyed their belief that the whole person—body as well as spirit—made God present and so the human person became an image of God. By encouraging them to believe the biblical doctrine that everyone was created in the image of God, worship

helped Christian slaves to fight off slavery's terrible power to depersonalize its victims."

David, with a similarly whole-person approach to praising the Lord, would have felt right at home. His psalm commemorating the safe arrival of the Ark is an all-out celebration of who God is and how He loves His people. What we have here is a kind of medley: Verses 8-22 match up with Psalm 105:1-15; verses 23-33 with Psalm 96; and verses 34-36 with Psalm 106:1, 47-48. Those psalms don't list an author, but it's reasonable to conclude either that David had already written them and drew from them on this occasion, or that he later borrowed from this composition when writing more psalms later.

The psalm opens with a call to worship (vv. 8-13). Those who remember the wonders God has done will seek His face and sing His praises. He is a covenant-keeping God, always faithful to His people (vv. 14-22). Like the returned exiles hearing or reading Chronicles, the Patriarchs too had been homeless, but God had protected and blessed them.

Furthermore, He is glorious among the nations (vv. 23-33). He is not some local idol, but the Eternal Sovereign, Creator and Lord of all nations and nature. The concluding verses remind us again of all these themes (vv. 34-36). "Amen," which we also say today, is related to the Hebrew verb "believe" and indicates an affirmation of something firm and true.

APPLY THE WORD Though we may not all possess David's musical gifts and abilities, we can still imitate his spirit of praise by writing our own "psalm." First, recall a recent blessing for which you're thankful. Then compose a prayer or poem of gratitude and rejoicing. If you're not feeling particularly creative, you might "cut and paste" favorite verses from biblical psalms. Finally, offer your prayer or poem to the Lord as an expression of thanksgiving and worship (Col. 3:16-17).

1 Chronicles 16:7-36

Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. - 1 Chronicles 16:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

Following God's instructions, Moses and the people of Israel constructed the tabernacle while camped at the base of Mount Sinai. When they set it up and moved everything inside, including the Ark of the Covenant containing the tablets of the Law, an awe-inspiring event occurred. The glory of the Lord descended with such power that Moses could not even enter. The people saw it as a cloud by day and as fire by night. It was a sign to them that God was present with His people and that He would bring them safely to the Promised Land (Exodus 40).

Joy is found when God dwells with His people, a truth rediscovered in today's passage. The occasion for David's joyful psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 was the return of the Ark to Jerusalem. God didn't let him build a temple for it, but He did give him the privilege of bringing it to the capital city. Where had the Ark been? It had been captured by the Philistines in the days of Eli, and then returned to Israel after plagues broke out in the cities where it was kept. Israel was leaderless and the Ark ended up at a private home in Kiriath Jearim (see 1 Samuel 4-6). It remained neglected during the reign of Israel's first king, Saul. But when David ascended the throne and made it a priority to lead the nation back to faithful worship of the Lord, the situation changed.

A great deal of planning and preparation went into this special day, including arrangements for facilities, offerings, musicians, Levites, and even refreshments (v. 3), not to mention composing this psalm. Just as in Moses' time, joy is found in God dwelling with His people (vv. 10-12). When we truly understand His awesomeness, joy and rejoicing are natural responses from overflowing hearts (v. 27). In fact, all peoples and all of creation cannot but help declare our joy in His sovereign reign (vv. 28-33).

APPLY THE WORD Much of today's psalm consists of calls to praise the Lord for His many excellent qualities, not least of which is His faithfulness to His people (v. 15). When we gather for congregational worship and sing hymns and praise choruses, we are doing exactly what the Israelites did: praising the Lord for who He is and what He has done. Without Him, nothing can inspire genuine joy; with Him, joy is possible even in the worst of circumstances. Joy flows from worship—worship flows from joy.

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Furthermore, He is glorious among the nations (vv. 23-33). He is not some local idol, but the Eternal Sovereign, Creator and Lord of all nations and nature. The concluding verses remind us again of all these themes (vv. 34-36). "Amen," which we also say today, is related to the Hebrew verb "believe" and indicates an affirmation of something firm and true.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Though we may not all possess David's musical gifts and abilities, we can still imitate his spirit of praise by writing our own "psalm." First, recall a recent blessing for which you're thankful. Then compose a prayer or poem of gratitude and rejoicing. If you're not feeling particularly creative, you might "cut and paste" favorite verses from biblical psalms. Finally, offer your prayer or poem to the Lord as an expression of thanksgiving and worship (Col. 3:16-17).

1 Chronicles 16:9

Talk ye of all His wondrous works.

We do not talk sufficiently about God. Why it is so may not be easy to explain; but there seems a too great reticence among Christian people about the best things. In the days of Malachi, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." We talk about sermons, details of worship and church organization, or the latest phase of Scripture criticism; we discuss men, methods, and churches; but our talk in the home, and in the gatherings of Christians for social purposes, is too seldom about the wonderful works of God. Better to speak less, and to talk more of Him.

But probably the real cause of our avoidance of this best of topics, is that our hearts are filled with so much which is not of God, and they speak out of their abundance. You may judge the contents of a shop by what is put in the windows, and you may judge of the inner life of too many Christians by the subjects which are most familiar to their lips. The heart does not seek for God and His strength, nor His face continually; and therefore we find it hard to talk of all His wondrous works.

But go back in thought to the day of Pentecost. One of the first signs of the descent of the blessed Spirit was that the crowd heard every man speaking in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. What God has done in the past, as recorded on the page of Scripture; what He is doing day by day in the world around, and in our hearts; what He has promised to do on the horizon where heaven and earth shall blend in the Second Advent; yield fit themes on which His children may beamingly talk to each other, till He goes beside and talks with them till their hearts burn.

1 Chronicles 16:23-36

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name ... Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. - 1 Chronicles 16:29

TODAY IN THE WORD

The second half of Romans 1 describes the progressive effects of sin on human thought and action and the growing moral corruption and degradation that follows from a refusal to worship the Creator (Rom. 1:18-32). Based on the natural world alone, people should know enough to seek Him and are "without excuse" for their rejection and suppression of the truth. How did Paul describe the root sin? "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened ... [They] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images" or idols.

To glorify God, then, is to recognize His worthiness to be worshiped—and to fail to glorify God is to worship something else, which is sure to be wrong. Today's reading, a psalm of David composed for the occasion of the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (parts of this song are found in Psalms 96, 105, and 106), shows us the proper recognition that God is worthy and the proper response of worshiping and giving glory to God. Everything that He is and does calls forth praise, so much so that only willful sin can blind us to His incomparable greatness.

The key verse in the passage reads: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name" (v. 29). "Ascribe" basically means to recognize the truth of something, to name it for what it is, and the truth is that honor and glory and worship are "due his name." We are to see and proclaim the truth of who God is—His strength, splendor, holiness, and lovingkindness. "The Lord reigns," pure and simple (v. 31). The destiny of history is for all nations to praise Him (vv. 23-28), eagerly joined by all of creation (vv. 30-33; cf. Rom. 8:19-22). God is

the Creator, the King, the Everlasting One. His love endures forever, and His justice and power will carry the day.

APPLY THE WORD Joy stands out clearly in today's reading as a quality closely associated with God's glory. He is joy, and when we glorify Him we feel joyful. We are glad, we rejoice, we give thanks, we cry out our praises, we fall on our faces, we dance like David, we raise our hands. The nations sing, the seas resound, and the fields are jubilant. Are God's power, wisdom, and love just dry theological facts for you? The poetry of Scripture, especially the Psalms, can help infuse these facts with joy!

1 Chronicles 16:37-43 163

My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my soul. - Psalm 108:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

For about thirty years, Lawrence Dutton has played the viola in the Emerson Quartet, one of the best chamber ensembles of modern times. When the group released a recording of Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross, originally composed for a Good Friday service, he commented, "Haydn was a believer. To realize I'm playing his musical interpretation of some of the most important Scripture is inspiring." A committed Christian, Dutton wants to honor God through making music: "[T]here are wonderful moments where, as I'm approaching something difficult or leading the music, I offer it up to God as a gift in honor of Him."

By this point in 1 Chronicles, David's love of music in worship is obvious. Musical instruments and choirs were front and center in the procession accompanying the Ark. The priests' and Levites' duties with regard to music and praise are listed carefully, showing how close these issues were to Israel's heart. In those days, trumpets were longer than the modern version and didn't have keys. The word was also used for shorter rams' horns. Cymbals, perhaps made of copper, were similar to those today. A lyre was a 10-stringed, harp-like instrument, while the harp itself has a proud pedigree stretching from Genesis (4:21) to Revelation (15:2-4). David himself played the harp (1 Sam. 16:23) as well as writing many of the psalms.

We're not sure why the Ark was placed in Gibeon, though we know it remained there until Solomon built the temple. Since David had prepared a special tent in Jerusalem as well, two main worship sites existed and a high priest was needed at each location—Zadok in Gibeon and Abiathar in Jerusalem.

"For his love endures forever" (v. 41) was a kind of short prayer or chorus that signaled the truth of God's covenant lovingkindness. The Hebrew term is *hesed* (used about 250 times in the Old Testament) indicates both love and faithfulness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Singing "new songs" to the Lord is a good thing (Rev. 5:9). Today, we encourage you to seek out some new music to add to your favorites. You might ask a friend or a family member to introduce you to an album, artist, or style of music you haven't heard before. Or you could visit a Christian bookstore (local or online) and listen to sample songs beyond your usual choices. It's not new for new's sake—the goal is to be challenged in a fresh way to praise the Lord.

1 Chronicles 17:1-15

I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you. - 1 Chronicles 17:10

TODAY IN THE WORD

The heart of worship is always ready to adore our great God. That was the attitude not only of David but of countless believers through history. Augustine, for example, prayed: "O Lord in whom all things live, who commanded us to seek you, who are always ready to be found: to know you is life, to serve you is freedom, to praise you is our soul's delight. We bless you and adore you, we worship you and magnify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

For David in today's reading, a heart of worship meant he didn't want to live in a palace while the Ark remained in a tent. He wanted to build a proper temple. But he didn't rush ahead, as he had done previously. Instead, he consulted Nathan the prophet, showing that he had learned an important lesson about submitting all his plans, even ones with good motives, to the Lord. God's answer, however, was "no"—the honor of building a temple would go to his son, Solomon.

Though the request was denied, the Lord's answer was much richer than what King David had asked for. In what is often called the "Davidic covenant," God confirmed that the kingdom would be secure, remaining enemies would be subdued, and a golden age was about to begin. The themes of homecoming and safety (v. 9) would have been especially poignant to the returned exiles for whom Chronicles was first written. They would also have been encouraged by the long-term promise that David's throne and house would be established forever, a promise with clear messianic implications (v. 14).

Jesus Christ fulfills that promise. His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, were both in the line of David. When He was crucified, it was

under a sign proclaiming Him “King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37). And the last book of the Bible opens by identifying Him as the “ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5).

APPLY THE WORD As with David, God has promised us many things within His plan of salvation. Keeping these promises close to our hearts can strengthen our faith. Good verses to memorize include Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14; and Hebrews 9:28. In Christ, we have a “living hope ... an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade,” and we are “shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

1 Chronicles 17:23–24

Do as thou hast said, that thy name may be magnified forever.

This is a most blessed phase of true prayer. Many a time we ask for things which are not absolutely promised. We are not sure therefore until we have persevered for some time whether our petitions are in the line of God’s purpose or no. There are other occasions, and in the life of David this was one, when we are fully persuaded that what we ask is according to God’s will. We feel led to take up and plead some promise from the page of Scripture, under the special impression that it contains a message for us.

At such times, in confident faith, we say, “Do as Thou hast said.” There is hardly any position more utterly beautiful, strong, or safe, than to put the finger upon some promise of the Divine word, and claim it. There need be no anguish, or struggle, or wrestling; we simply present the check and ask for cash, produce the promise, and claim its fulfillment; nor can there be any doubt as to the issue. It would give much interest to prayer, if we were more definite. It is far better to claim a few things specifically than a score vaguely.

David’s argument was not simply that his house might be established, but that God’s name might be magnified forever. It is good when we can lose sight of our personal interests in our keen desire for His glory. When we are so delivered from egotism, that Christ is all and in all. Let the attitude of your soul be more toward the glory of God; and as you quote promise after promise for the enthroning of Christ, the saving of men, and the sanctification of your soul, dare in humble faith to say, Do as Thou hast said, that thy Name may be magnified forever.

1 Chronicles 18:13

He put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became servants to David.

Edom and Israel were closely related, but there was constant rivalry and war between the two peoples. Sometimes Israel held the upper-hand for a little; but Edom soon broke loose again, and resumed the old independence, with the border forays (2 Chronicles 21:10; 25:11–14; Psalm 137:7). Now as Edom stands for the flesh, which hungers for the savory dish, and is willing to give even its birthright of spiritual power to secure it— this long feud is full of interest to us. It reminds us of the strife of Romans 7, between the will of the renewed man and the law of the members, ever striving for mastery.

We turn on the pages of our Bibles to Isaiah 63, where a mighty Conqueror is seen coming toward the southern frontier of Palestine, with His back on Bozrah and Edom. His garments are dyed with the blood of Israel’s foes; and behind Him cities are desolate and depopulated, territories are laid waste without inhabitant, and Edom’s hostility is forever quenched in blood. What a portraiture is here of Jesus “mighty to save,” who in His cross triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. He has overcome the world, the flesh, and the prince of the power of darkness; and stands forevermore between us, and our former oppressors.

Let us resign the conflict wholly to Him. We have sought in vain for victory by resolutions and endeavors; by close attention to religious duties; by occupying our mind with various interests, so that we had no leisure to be tempted; by diet and exercise. Now, hand the conflict absolutely over to Jesus: do not even try to help Him: just let Him do all: be quite still, and when temptation comes, let Him meet it.

1 Chronicles 19:13

Let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God.

Those were days in which rough soldiers, like Joab, did not hesitate to speak freely of God to their companions in arms. It is a sorry thing that it is considered a breach of etiquette to mention God’s name in polite society. “It is not good form!”

We are reminded in these words of Joab of Cromwell’s memorable advice to trust in God and keep the powder dry. David’s General felt that the ultimate issue of the battle must be left to God; but that nothing could absolve him and his soldiers from doing their best. They, at least, must make careful dispositions for the fight, and show themselves valiant.

This balance of statement and thought between God’s work and ours is an evidence of fine Christian sanity. We must believe that God is the ultimate arbiter, but we must ever speak and act as though the responsibility were entirely on ourselves. To believe that

God will do all, and therefore to do nothing, is as bad as to believe that God leaves us to our unaided endeavors. We believe in the strength and sufficiency of God's purpose; but we know that there is a link in the chain of causation which we must supply.

The servant of God who counts most absolutely on the communion and cooperation of the Divine Spirit will be most careful in making all needful disposition for the fight. He will leave no stone unturned to secure the victory, though he knows that the ultimate decision rests with God. The conquests of the cross recorded in the Acts of the Apostles were the result of the united action of the Holy Spirit and the men who were sent forth with the message of the gospel. "We are laborers together with God."

1 Chronicles 20:1

The time when Kings go out to battle.... But David tarried at Jerusalem.

There are times and tides in the affairs of men. Favorable moments for doing and daring, for attempting and achieving. Hours when the ship must be launched, or it will have to wait for another spring tide. Days when the seed must be sown, or it will have to tarry till another autumn. Royal natures show their quality by taking advantage of times like these, when God and circumstances favor a great attempt.

Alas, if long-continued prosperity has robbed the kingly soul of its desire or power to use its sacred opportunity! Once missed, it may never recur; and the soul that has missed it contemns itself, and loses heart, and surrenders itself to lower and ever lower depths of temptation.

Beware of moments and hours of ease. It is in these that we most easily fall into the power of Satan. The sultriest summer days are most laden with blight. There is no such guard against temptation— next to the keeping power of Jesus, which is all-sufficient— as occupation to the full measure of time and capacity. If we cannot fill our days with our own matters, there is always plenty to be done for others. You think that no one has hired you, but it is not so; the Master has sent you into His vineyard. If you cannot do one thing, you can another. There is the ministry of intercession for those who are in the field. There is the exercise of worship, in which you take your place amongst the priests. There is the ministry of comfort to some of the sad hearts within your own circle. Redeem the time, because the days are evil. Watch and pray in days of vacation and ease, even more than at other times.

1 Chronicles 21:8

And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. (r. v.)

His sin lay in the spirit of pride and display. He vaunted in the growing numbers of Israel, and credited them to himself, as the result of his own prowess and prudence. All such boasting is very abhorrent to the all-holy God, who will not give His glory to another. It was the sin of Nebuchadnezzar, when he said, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" It was the sin of Herod Agrippa when the people shouted, saying, "The voice of a god, and not of a man"; and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, "because he gave not God the glory."

We are all tempted to it when we count up the number of our adherents and converts; when we unroll our securities and vouchers; when we count up our assets; when we display our jewels. All these are gifts entrusted to our care by our Father and Savior, to be held in trust as a matter for gratitude rather than for pride.

How greatly David had fallen from the level of his own sweet sonnet!—"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty." Oh, let us ask our Master Christ to teach us how to be meek and lowly in heart, that we may find rest unto our souls; let us endeavor to be as little children, devoid of self-consciousness; and let us be careful, as we survey the growing treasures and power of our lives, to remember the Apostle's words "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

How well John the Baptist parried the temptation to jealousy, when he said, "A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven."

1 Chronicles 21:20-22:1

I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing. - 1 Chronicles 21:24

TODAY IN THE WORD

Since the Marxist government of the African nation of Eritrea forbade independent churches in 2002, Eritrean Christians have been severely persecuted. At least nine hundred believers have been arrested and imprisoned incommunicado, with neither charges nor trial. Christianity Today reported last summer: "Many of those arrested are held in metal shipping containers. Sweltering in the daytime and cold at night, the containers have no sanitation. Infectious diseases and diarrhea are common... Eritrean authorities torture Christians to try to force them to recant or stop practicing their faith."

The cost of obedience for these brave believers is high. True obedience always comes with a price tag, as David expressed in today's verse. Araunah the Jebusite (the original inhabitants of Jerusalem) was apparently a normal farmer doing a normal day's work with his sons. He turned around and saw the angel with the sword, then turned again and saw the king and his officials ... no wonder he put his face to the ground! By offering the land and materials for sacrifices, he showed both reverence and generosity.

David, however, knew it would be wrong to take advantage, that his power as king shouldn't be used in that way. Especially under these circumstances, he himself must pay the full price as concrete evidence of his repentance and changed heart. The price of six hundred shekels was about fifteen pounds of gold! When David offered the sacrifices, God responded with fire from heaven, dramatically demonstrating His acceptance of the king's actions (21:26).

A larger plan was at work here: God had chosen the site for the temple (22:1; cf. 2 Chron. 3:1). His fire consecrated this place traditionally known as Mount Moriah, where Abraham was willing to offer Isaac. David might have composed Psalm 30 on this day: "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime" (v. 5).

APPLY THE WORD What has your obedience cost you? That is, what have you given up for God? If nothing comes to mind, perhaps you have yet to learn the lesson David articulated in today's verse. If things do come to mind, arm yourself against false regrets with Jesus' promise that those who have sacrificed to follow Him have much better things in store for themselves (Mark 10:29-31). As Paul said, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

1 Chronicles 21:8-19 218

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. - 1 Chronicles 21:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

After the death of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, one analyst summarized his leadership skills in this way: "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on... The genius of a good leader is to leave behind him a situation which common sense, without the grace of genius, can deal with successfully."

The same words might be said of King David, but in today's reading his misdirected leadership cost Israel dearly. Finally seeing his sin regarding the matter of the census, he confessed and took full responsibility (v. Cool. He didn't try to make excuses, but pleaded for the Lord to remove his guilt. God did forgive David, but He also had to punish him. The king had publicly shown his pride and faithlessness, so to uphold God's honor the punishment needed to be public as well. Since the king was a "shepherd," when he went astray it was inevitable that the nation, or "sheep," would suffer too (v. 17).

God offered David three choices. We can see in this evidence of His grace as well as a test. The king passed—by throwing himself on God's mercy he showed that he had learned his lesson and put his trust back where it belonged (v. 13). When the plague hit, David was further granted a vision of an angel with a drawn sword as an awe-inspiring warning, which led to renewed repentance by him and other leaders (v. 16). Seventy thousand people died, but the mercy of God intervened and stopped the plague as the angel reached Jerusalem. Divinely shown the exact location where judgment ceased, David hurried there to offer sacrifices.

How could God both judge or punish and be grieved at the "calamity" and death? This seems a contradiction. Any parent who has disciplined a dearly loved child, and grieved the tears shed as a result of the pain, can understand in some way the depth of God's character that includes both His love and His righteousness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In today's reading, King David felt the full weight of the responsibility of leadership. Similarly, your church leaders bear double responsibility and are worthy of double honor (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:17). How are they held accountable? How are they honored? Check your church constitution or denominational governing policies, or perhaps ask an elder a few questions to give yourself a clearer idea of how things work at your church. Last but not least, ask yourself how you can be a more godly follower.

1 Chronicles 22:2-19

The house to be built for the Lord should be of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations. - 1 Chronicles 22:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

A will, in addition to serving important legal functions, has the potential to show the life-purposes of the one who left it. What a person has amassed (or not) to leave behind says much about how a life has been spent. What people choose to do with what

they're leaving behind says a lot about what they value or how they most want to be remembered. A will is a legacy, not only in a material sense but also in a spiritual sense.

More than almost anything, David wanted to leave behind a godly legacy. And while God had told him that he wouldn't be the one to build the temple, He hadn't told him he couldn't make preparations. So David figured the best legacy he could give his son Solomon would be to have everything ready to go. After all, the job was too big for an inexperienced king to tackle from scratch (v. 5).

God had already taken care of the real estate, so David made more physical preparations, gathering materials including dressed stone, cedar logs, iron, bronze, silver, and 3,750 tons of gold. He organized the necessary personnel, such as stonecutters and other skilled craftsmen. He also used diplomacy—for example, negotiating with Tyre for cedar—and charged the Israelite leaders with the responsibility of aiding Solomon after David died (v. 19).

This charge, recounted in part in today's reading, was probably given on a somewhat formal court occasion, reminiscent of Moses passing on national leadership to Joshua (Josh. 1:6-9). While the materials and human resources were important, spiritual preparations and resources were even more so. David told Solomon of his desire to build a temple for God's glory and His promises about that and even greater matters. Solomon would inherit this covenant, and it would be his responsibility to carry out the task of building. The keys would be obedience and courage, exercised with God-given understanding and discretion (vv. 12-13).

APPLY THE WORD This week, we're studying the godly legacy David left for Solomon. Over the next few days, we'll discuss four specific actions you might take to prepare a similar legacy for those you love. First, have you considered annotating a Bible for your children or younger relatives? Buy a Bible with large margins, and as you read through it, jot comments and responses as to what certain stories and verses have meant to you personally. This project may take several years, but it will encourage the recipients for a lifetime.

1 Chronicles 22:9–10

A man of rest ... he shall build. (r. v.)

The men of rest are the builders of the most lasting structures. Solomon builds the Temple, not David. Mary's deed of anointing, learned in much sitting at the Lord's feet, fills the world with its aroma. What is needed to make us men and women of rest?

First, a profound conviction that God is working.— Never despair of the world, said the late Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when you remember what God did with slavery: the best possible must happen. This serene faith, that all things are working out for the best—the best to God, the best to man— and that God is at the heart of all, will calm and still us in the most feverish days. There is a strong and an experienced Hand on the helm.

Next, an entire surrender to His will.— God's will is certain to mean the destruction of the flesh, in whatever form He finds it; but it is our part to yield to Him; to will His will even to the cross; to follow our leader Christ in this, that He yielded Himself without reserve to execute His Father's purpose.

Thirdly, a certain knowledge that He is working within to will and do of His good pleasure.— What a blessed peace possesses us when once we realize that we are not called on to originate or initiate, nor to make great far-reaching plans and try to execute them; but just to believe that God is prepared to work through our hands, speak by our life, dwell in our bodies, and fulfill in us the good purposes of His will. Be full of God's rest. Let there be no hurry, precipitation, or fret; yield to God's hands, that He may mould thee: hush thy quickly throbbing pulse! So shalt thou build to good and lasting purpose.

1 Chronicles 23:13

Aaron was separated, he and his sons forever, to minister unto Him.

The threefold office of Aaron suggests our own. When we are prepared to follow Jesus, through the rent veil of His flesh, living a truly separated life, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we also, as chosen priests, may exercise these functions of intercession, ministry, and blessing.

Intercession.— The fragrant incense stealing heavenward is a beautiful emblem of intercessory prayer. Let us pray more, not for ourselves so much as for others. This is the sign of growth in grace, when our prayers are fragrant with the names of friend and foe, and mingled with the coals of the golden altar. This is one of the best gifts; oh to exercise it more persistently!

Ministry.— We have many things to engage our attention, but they may be unified and elevated by the one threading purpose of doing all for the King. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever else we do, we may do all to His glory. Go up and down in the Temple, O priests; engage in song, or sacrifice, or whatever ministry you will but be sure that all is of Him, and through Him, and to Him forever.

Blessing.— As Aaron came forth from the most Holy Place to bless the congregation that waited for him; so we should bless that little portion of the world in which our lot is cast. It is not enough to linger in soft prayer within the veil, we must come forth to bless mankind. He who is nearest God is closest man. Let our smile, our touch, our words, our life, be the greatest blessing possible to those who know us best.

Blessed Spirit, realize through each of us this threefold ideal, and separate us from sin and the world, that we may be prepared for it.

1 Chronicles 24:4-5; 25:6-8 244

I will cast lots for you in the presence of the Lord our God. - Joshua 18:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

Eager to share the gospel, German missionary Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg arrived in south India in 1706. There he learned the Tamil language and studied the cultural beliefs and practices of the people. Once, when asked a question about whether Tamil Christians should give up their culture, he responded: “No, converted Tamils should not become Europeans! Conversion does not mean a change of outward appearance; rather it requires a change of mind and results in a transformed life.” He translated the Bible, founded schools, wrote hymns and sermons, translated Tamil literature into German, and encouraged indigenous church leadership. In Tranquebar, he built the New Jerusalem Church, which is Asia's oldest Protestant church and is still in service today.

Seeking to understand different cultural practices can be helpful for all Christians. In our passage, we encounter a practice quite different from our decision-making today. So, what about the practice of drawing or casting lots in the Bible? Why did they do it? What did it mean? In today's short readings, specific ministry duties for priests and Levites were assigned by drawing lots. Today's verse gives another example—the casting of lots in Joshua's day to determine tribal land divisions in Palestine.

This practice strikes our American minds as something like gambling or rolling dice. But this wasn't how the Israelites thought of it. Notice the emphasis on fairness. Delegating responsibilities in this way was “impartial” (24:5); young and old alike participated on an equal footing (25:6). Another key is that they cast lots in God's presence (Josh. 18:6); this method of decision-making showed submission to the authority and sovereignty of God. Furthermore, the Urim and Thummim, sacred lots carried by the high priest, were ordained by God for use in national decisions (Ex. 28:30). Though casting lots may grate on our Western sensibilities, clearly they were a legitimate cultural way to discern God's will. “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Prov. 16:33).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Drawing lots isn't really part of our culture, but inserting a bit of randomness in homage to God's sovereignty might be beneficial for us control-oriented Westerners. For example, some families place a basket of prayer cards on the table. Written on each card is a recent prayer request from a missionary or friend. Before each meal, they draw one or two cards from the basket, which are then prayed over. Perhaps you can adopt or adapt such a practice to enrich your own life!

1 Chronicles 24:5

Princes of the Sanctuary. (r. v.)

It is not enough for us to be in the sanctuary, we must be princes there. There must be the regal mien, which is a meek humility; the regal largesse, which is peace and blessing; and the regal might, which is self-restraint and self-control. None can be princes of the sanctuary without two things: they must be priests, come of the priestly line; and kings, royal not because of deeds of war, but because they are related to the King Himself, and are regal in their holy and blameless character.

There is only one power that can make us princes of the sanctuary— the hand of the exalted Lamb, who is Himself a Priest-King, after the order of Melchizedek. He it is who makes us kings and priests unto God his Father.

He makes us priests.— This is your position, not now to offer propitiatory sacrifices, but to present yourselves a living sacrifice; to have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way; to swing the censer of prayer between the living and the dead, so that plagues may be stayed; and to plead for the dark sad world, with its load of wretchedness, need, and sin. See that your garments are ever white and stainless.

He makes us kings.— We reign with Him. Sin and Satan, the world and the flesh, are beneath our feet. Ours the life of overcoming power, of unbroken victory, of identification with Jesus in the glory that the Father has given Him. They that receive the abundance of His grace reign. It is there for us all, but many do not know, or knowing do not appreciate. It is on our reception by faith of God's abundant grace, that we reign in this life, and the next.

1 Chronicles 25:5-6

All these were under the hand's of their father for song.

What a glorious family was here! The household was a band of choristers! From morning to night their home must have been full of holy song and psalm, or talk about the order of the Temple service, in which they were all so deeply interested. Surely no jarring note, no unholy discord, would live in such an atmosphere! The common occupation and worship must have welded the brothers and sisters into the tenderest union.

How one would like to have seen Heman coming into the Temple with his children! It was largely owing to him and their mother that they were what they were. We shall read the Psalms ascribed to him with more interest, now we know of the holy family life out of which they emanated. What interest there would be when the father had produced a new psalm to know what music would suit it best!

Parents! Be sure that you look on your children, as these Hebrews did on theirs, as the gifts of God; and remember that if He gives you many mouths to feed, He will send the where withal to feed them. Be careful also that your own hearts and lives are full of praise and prayer; what you are, the children will become. Would that mothers especially realized how they transmit their characters. But remember that you must be obeyed in the home. Heman's children were "under the hands of their father." Young people must not get the upper hand.

But if you would rule well, you must obey. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun were under the king (1 Chronicles 25:6, r. v.). The man who is himself under authority, can say, Go, come, do this or that, with the calm assurance of being obeyed.

1 Chronicles 26:1

For the courses of the doorkeepers. (r. v.)

Mighty men of valor were needed for this, just as sweet singers were for the service of song. Entrance to the House of God was restricted to a privileged few. Gentiles were excluded from certain courts, and women from another. It was incumbent also to look out for those who, like the publican in the Lord's parable, might shrink from intruding, and encourage them to enter. Doorkeepers had to combine many qualities, which would be of the greatest service if they could be repeated in each church and chapel of our great cities, for welcoming old and young.

But chiefly we are concerned with the temple of the heart. We surely need the doorkeeper there, for in the history of the inner life there is so much going and coming; such troops of thoughts pour into the shrine of the soul, and pour out. And often, in the crowd, disloyal and evil thoughts intrude, which, before we know it, introduce a sense of distance and alienation from God, as though a cloud had veiled the shining of the Shekinah. Whenever the sky is overcast within, we should question whether some traitor, some excommunicate, has entered. Our native wit is not quick enough to detect, and our strength not mighty enough to withstand, the entrance of all these evil things. Hence the necessity not only to live in the Spirit, but to walk in the Spirit, i. e., to submit everything to the Spirit's scrutiny.

It is necessary also that strict supervision should be exercised over those who unite with the visible Church, lest her holiness become diluted, and her fences broken down. Nothing is more important than the function of doorkeeping for the Church's purity.

1 Chronicles 27:31

All these were the rulers of the substance which was King David's.

There was great variety in office and gift. He who cared for the work of the field could not have known how to care for the flocks. The overseer of olive-yard and vineyard would have been a poor hand with the camels and asses. One sort of talent was needed for the herds, and another for the wine cellars; and yet there was unity in the common service of the king. We are reminded of the words of the Apostle, describing the variety in unity which must obtain in every healthy church: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord; diversities of operations, but the same God."

Each of these different men had his distinct sphere for which he was doubtless specially qualified; and it was his duty— not to be jealous of others, nor eager to imitate them, but— to be faithful in his own province. How much happier we should all be if we recognized our specific work in God's house, and kept to it, being content to serve the King as He has seen fit to determine, rendering Him the produce in due season.

How great an error it would have been had any of these begun to account the produce of cattle or ground as his own. He had nothing that he had not received, and whatever he controlled had been entrusted to his care for the emolument and advantage of his sovereign. Yet, how few of us realize that we are put in business with God's capital, for God's use. We take all and give Him a percentage, instead of using all for Him and keeping a percentage for ourselves. In this we rob God, and greatly err. We must

acknowledge that both we and all we possess belong to Him.

1 Chronicles 28:1-10

Serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. - 1 Chronicles 28:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

A book on training children in spiritual discipline reminds us: "The goal of the disciplines is to place us in a position where the Holy Spirit can do God's transforming work in us. Pursue them as a means to bring about significant change in your inner and outer lives and to model them for your children. Build them into your life and into your children's lives until you have covered all twelve disciplines—and then start over. We never master the spiritual disciplines; they are holy habits to last a lifetime."

David's charge to Solomon reflected a desire that his son pursue true godliness all of his life. We've picked up again the thread of kingship and transition. The writer of Chronicles skipped many historical events in order to fulfill his purpose of validating the heritage and identity of his original readers. The returned exiles needed very much to hear who they were, why they were there, who God was, and what He had done. Chapter 28 may be the same occasion as the one briefly introduced in chapter 23. In any case, a public ceremony took place, essentially a pre-coronation of Solomon with all the national leaders present. Again, David recounted the history of his desire to build a temple, emphasizing it as a "place of rest" (v. 2; cf. 17:9). He described explicitly how his military activities had disqualified him for the task (v. 3; compare 22:9), acknowledged God's blessing (v. 4), and affirmed Solomon's chosenness (vv. 5-7).

All this was leading up to the main plan, the building of the temple, the practical core of David's charge to Solomon and his heartfelt passion (vv. 8-10). The king-to-be should pursue obedience, worship, and service, which would be the means to inheriting God's promises and building the temple. As David had found through personal experience, God would know the truth of Solomon's heart (cf. Ps. 139:23-24).

APPLY THE WORD A wealth of ideas for giving your children a spiritual legacy beyond price may be found in *Habits of a Child's Heart: Raising Your Kids with the Spiritual Disciplines*, by Valerie E. Hess and Marti Watson Garlett (NavPress), which you can find at local or online Christian bookstores. It's full of well-organized, age-specific suggestions that can, as the introduction notes, "show you how to cultivate the life-affirming possibilities of the spiritual disciplines—or "'holy habits,' as they're sometimes known—in your children."

1 Chronicles 28:11-21 281

Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. - 1 Chronicles 28:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

The words to a German hymn for a baby dedication pray: "This child we dedicate to Thee, / O God of grace and purity! / In thy great love its life prolong, / Shield it, we pray, from sin and wrong. / O may Thy Spirit gently draw / Its willing soul to keep Thy law; / May virtue, piety, and truth, / Dawn even with its dawning youth."

In today's reading, it wouldn't be entirely inaccurate to imagine—on a national, royal scale—a church ceremony in which a child is dedicated to the Lord. In this case, the child, Solomon, was old enough to hear something like a sermon and stood on the verge of inheriting a kingship from his father and a covenant from the Lord. As we saw yesterday, David passed on to his son a solemn charge and building materials he had collected, but that wasn't all. He also gave him specific plans, including architectural blueprints, temple furnishing designs, and a personnel structure and list of ministry duties for the priests and Levites. Since we see that the Holy Spirit guided David in these plans and actions (vv. 12, 19), we understand that God had extended grace. Though David couldn't build it, he was allowed to participate significantly in the preparations for the temple. In addition, this passage is reminiscent of Moses receiving the tabernacle plans on Mount Sinai, further evoking themes of authority, identity, and heritage and emphasizing God's control over Israel's history.

If David parallels Moses, then Solomon parallels Joshua: "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" (v. 20; cf. Josh. 1:6-9). The strength and courage here are not those of the battlefield, but relate to persistence, determination, obstinate faith (cf. Ps. 27:14), and purposefulness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Here's a third specific spiritual legacy suggestion: Make a video or write a letter for your children or other loved ones, one they could

see or read on an important occasion or after your death. The topic is your prayers and dreams for their futures. Don't focus on temporal issues, but rather on eternal matters, such as the kind of godly man or woman you hope they grow up to be. You might want to include the video or letter with your will.

1 Chronicles 28:20

The Lord God, even my God, ... will not fail Thee, nor forsake Thee.

It is very comforting to take these words to our hearts; especially when we connect them with the foregoing ones about the pattern, and apply the whole passage to the temple-building of our own lives. For each of us, too, there is a pattern, an ideal, a design, based on the possibilities which God sees to be within our reach; for each, too, there is abundance of stored provision; but we are not always strong to do. In Jesus there is the complete ideal of human life; of the Child at Nazareth; of the Servant in the workshop; of the Lover in His affection for His church; of the Friend, the Sufferer, the Patriot, the Savior. Go forth and imitate Him!

Sometimes our heart and flesh fail us in the mid-passage of life. Once the energy and vigor of youth promised to sustain and carry us to the end of life, without fear or failure; but these die down, and we wonder how the remainder of the life-plan can be fulfilled. And the one sufficient answer is— God. He who helped our fathers to the very end will help us: He who did not fail or forsake them, will never leave nor forsake us, until all the work of life which He has planned, is finished.

It is probable that you will do better and more enduring work henceforth than you have ever done in the heyday and plenitude of youthful power, if you let God work all through you to His own glory. You have no need for despondency, God is sufficient. Oh to write this down on the tablets of the heart— God is; God is here; God is all-sufficient; God has begun and will finish! God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake us; therefore we may boldly say, “God is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

1 Chronicles 29:1-9

Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord? - 1 Chronicles 29:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Ten-time NBA All-Star David Robinson retired from professional basketball in 2003, but he's continued to “play hard” in another arena—education. Motivated by the love of Christ, he and his wife, Valerie, founded The Carver School for disadvantaged and at-risk children in inner city San Antonio. “We wanted to leave a legacy in San Antonio that would continue to positively influence people long after we were gone. Our vision was to give children an education that would prepare them for success not only in their work, but also in their relationships with their families and communities.”

King David's legacy of temple preparations also had a strong community element. The nation would eventually worship at the completed building, of course, but they were also given the opportunity to give toward the construction materials. After all, Solomon could not do the work alone. The people needed to put their wholehearted support behind it. More than promoting a building project, David was calling on the nation to remain faithful to God. In generosity, the king led the way by giving about 112 tons of gold and 262 tons of silver from his personal wealth (vv. 3-5). The location of Ophir is uncertain—east Africa, south Arabia, and India have been suggested—but in any case the “gold of Ophir” was apparently of the highest quality. David then urged the people to bring their freewill offerings: “Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?” The ideas of giving and consecration are linked in both the purpose of building a house of worship, and the attitude of thankfulness and praise (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).

The leaders and all the people followed David's example, leading to renewed rejoicing (v. 9). In all, “passing the offering plate” brought in 187-plus tons of gold, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, 3,750 tons of iron, and uncounted precious stones. Our hearts of true thanksgiving will be demonstrated through our generosity. Once again, the encouraging parallels to Moses and the tabernacle are unmistakable (see Ex. 36-37).

APPLY THE WORD Is your church currently building, remodeling, or expanding? Where is God in the work being done? What lessons can be learned about this from the way David approached the project of building the temple? We encourage you to analyze the issues from a biblical and not merely utilitarian point of view. Raising money and putting up a building are not the only purposes or ultimate goals. Pray that this project and the decision-makers will please the Lord.

1 Chronicles 29:10-19

Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever. - 2 Chronicles 20:21

TODAY IN THE WORD

Psychologists Nancy McWilliams and Stanley Leendorf note that ingratitude is often linked with narcissism, an extreme form of self-

centeredness. They write, “Gratitude seems to us to be an integral expression of our dependency on one another. To thank someone acknowledges our need to have been helped or enriched in the first place.” They add that the inability to be grateful for others may indicate a refusal to acknowledge a deficiency within oneself. This is no less true in our relationship with God. When we’re ungrateful to God, it’s because we have failed to see how dependent we are upon Him.

This connection between dependency on God and gratitude is quite evident in David's prayers recorded in today's passages. The first prayer in 2 Samuel 7 occurs after David has brought the ark into Jerusalem and has declared his intention to build a house for God (2 Sam. 7:1-2). But God did not want David to build a house for Him; the honor of building the temple would go to Solomon. Instead God spoke through the prophet Nathan that He was going to build a house, or everlasting dynasty, for David. Today's passage in 2 Samuel 7 captures the depth of David's gratitude and humility that God should do such a thing for him.

These same sentiments are found in the prayer recorded in 1 Chronicles 29, when David prayed before the assembly of Israel's leaders when the plans for building the temple were given to Solomon. Here we see how closely linked thanksgiving is with praise. We also see once again David's clear acknowledgment that in everything he had depended upon God's generosity. This prayer comes at the end of David's life, after he had achieved numerous military victories and had expanded Israel's borders considerably. Even so, David knew that everything comes from God's hand and ultimately belongs to Him (v. 16). An outpouring of praise is the natural response to such an acknowledgment of dependency.

APPLY THE WORD You may not have considered the connection between gratitude and acknowledging your dependency on God and others. It's easy to miss this link when much of our culture emphasizes self-sufficiency. It's important to recognize the fine line between taking responsibility for something ourselves and realizing that we need others in a certain situation. Ultimately we are all dependent upon God for everything, beginning with the very air we breathe! Realizing this dependency opens the way for praise and thanksgiving.

1 Chronicles 29:10-20

Yours, 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. - 1 Chronicles 29:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

Jaakov Topor, an Israeli baker, was well-known for his delicious cinnamon cake. Many asked him for the recipe, but he always refused. “[H]e vowed he would never tell anyone while there was still breath in his body,” said his grandson. When he died last year, mourners arrived at the funeral and found, much to their surprise, that the recipe for the famous cake had been etched onto his gravestone!

The question of legacy is far more important than even the most delicious dessert. David's “last words” are the focus of today's reading. He didn't die right after uttering them, of course, but they represent his official, for-the-record final public communication. That's why these words are the thematic core of the book of 1 Chronicles, and indeed of David's entire life.

How appropriate, given David's passion for worship, that he began with a brief psalm of praise and ended with congregational worship. Verses 10-13 are a poetic (and probably musical) fireworks display of the glory of God. We read who He is, attribute upon attribute, until we're lost in breathless awe at His splendid and everlasting sovereignty. But He is not distant—He is “our” God.

God had enabled the people to give generously toward the construction of the temple. While prayers over offerings at the average church today are usually perfunctory, David's inspiring prayer included humility, trust, and thankfulness. The Israelites had previously been wanderers, but God had graciously blessed them with a homeland, safety, and prosperity (vv. 14-17). The returned exiles reading or hearing Ezra's words might have rejoiced at this point!

Finally, David prayed for Solomon and the nation to remain faithful and committed to the Lord (vv. 18-19). History had shown that integrity and joy today could give way to faithlessness tomorrow.

APPLY THE WORD Our fourth spiritual legacy suggestion is to write out your “last words” in your spiritual diary or journal. The end of your life might come suddenly, and the “perfect speech” you'd like to make may not be possible. But you have time today to think things over and let history know exactly what you'd like to say. Pondering the meaning of our lives in this way can make a difference in ho

1 Chronicles 29:15

Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding. (r. v.)

All life has been compared to the shadow of a smoke-wreath; a gesture in the invisible air; a hieroglyph traced for an instant on the

sand, and effaced a moment after by a breath of wind; an air-bubble vanishing on the river. Pilgrims and sojourners, as were all our fathers— such is the universal confession. But even such may do a work that will last for ages. David and the men of his time, though transitory their stay on our planet, left behind them a standing evidence that they had been here.

Our life is nothing, but it may be Divine: our days are as a breath, but they may affect unborn generations: the tent of the body is laid aside, but the soul, which had dwelt in it, is immortal in its touch: it leaves traces of its own immortality behind in its works, and it lives in them. In one sense, the answer to the ancient prayer is certain: "Establish Thou the works of our hands upon us." But we may well ask, that they may be such that we shall have no need to be ashamed of.

But, for this, God must live mightily within us. Abide in Me, said our Lord.... I have appointed you that ye may bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may abide. It is impossible to be in true union with Christ without feeling the pulse of His glorious life; and where it enters like a tidal river, it can have but one result— it must manifest itself in fruit. It is only in proportion as our works are done in God, and God permeates our works, that they become sources of enduring blessing to coming time. Pilgrims though we be, yet, if our lives are spent before Him, we may build temples which will outlast the wreck of matter.

1 Chronicles 29:20; Psalm 95:6-7 292

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. - Psalm 95:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

There is one detail of prayer we haven't said much about this month. We could call it the posture of prayer, and it's important since prayer involves our total being--body and spirit.

This can be a controversial subject, because our natural tendency is to think that the way we were taught to do things is the only way. You can test this yourself. Chances are that if you grew up in a Christian home and attended church regularly, you may still feel as though there is a spiritual law that requires you to keep your head bowed and your eyes closed when you or someone else is praying.

What does God's Word say about the posture we should take when praying? It says a good deal. Today's verses are just a sampling of what the Bible says about prayer posture. The most definitive conclusion we can draw is that the Bible does not give us one definitive prayer posture. God's people prayed in just about every position possible.

When he dedicated the temple, Solomon knelt down and spread out his hands toward heaven (2 Chron. 6:13), a posture that probably required him to lift his head up instead of lowering it. David fell prostrate on the ground before God, as Jesus did when He prayed in Gethsemane.

At other times, God's people prayed with their hands raised toward heaven (Ps. 28:2). When Jesus prayed at the tomb of Lazarus, He looked up toward heaven with His eyes open. David even says he prayed in bed (Ps. 63:6).

Since the Bible doesn't tell us how to pray in terms of our posture, we are drawn back to the issue of attitude. God looks at our hearts, not just at the position of our bodies. The position we assume in prayer can, however, help us in expressing the humility, dependence, joy, and confidence we want to communicate.

For example, kneeling puts us in a posture of submission to the Lord (see Phil. 2:10). In times of anguish, or perhaps in repentance and brokenness over sin, you may feel led to fall on your face before God. In public worship where prayer or praise is being offered, standing with faces turned toward God may be the best way to express the joy of the congregation. Whatever the posture, let's make sure it reflects the attitude of heart that God desires.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Variety of expression in prayer is one of the blessings of our freedom in Christ.

Many people use their daily commute to and from work to pray, using a list to pray for certain people, for God's work, and for various circumstances on certain days. You may also want to do a ""prayer walk"" around your neighborhood, praying for lost friends and neighbors as you pass their houses.

1 Chronicles 29:21-25

They ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the Lord that day. - 1 Chronicles 29:22

TODAY IN THE WORD

At the end of J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, Aragorn, the hidden king, returned in triumph to the city of Gondor. Frodo, the

hobbit Ringbearer, brought to him an ancient crown that Gandalf placed on his head, saying, “Now come the days of the King, and may they be blessed while the thrones of the Valar endure!” Wrote Tolkien: “[W]isdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. And then Faramir cried: “Behold the King!”

The coronation of Solomon is found in today's reading, on the day following David's charge to him and the freewill offerings for the temple. It was a day filled with sacrifices, feasting, joy, and abundance. We sometimes get the idea that the Law was a rather grim set of duties, but this pairing of celebration and worship is found in many places (e.g., Deut. 14:22-26). So Paul's comment on eating and drinking to the glory of God was not a throwaway line, but rich in meaning within Jewish culture (v. 22; 1 Cor. 10:31). Perhaps that American standby, the church fellowship potluck, isn't such a new idea after all!

On the same day as Solomon's anointing, Zadok was anointed as priest, showing the harmony between politics and religion as well as the submission of the king before God. The army pledged loyalty, and the people acknowledged and acclaimed all that was done. As verse 25 makes clear—a summary that is also a preview for 2 Chronicles—this was a golden age of God's blessing.

In this one day, we see many of the overall themes of 1 Chronicles. In trust, the nation sought the Lord and worshiped Him. Safe from their enemies, they enjoyed peace and prosperity with a spirit of rejoicing, understanding as well the importance of obedience. Central to all was the reality of their always faithful, covenant-keeping God.

APPLY THE WORD - Party! Today plan a worship feast like the one at Solomon's coronation—we say “party” to make sure you get a feeling of joy and celebration. It should, as so many church bulletin announcements have said, include food, fun, and fellowship, but treat these as starting points rather than a complete plan. Invite those people that you associate with good times, laughter, relaxation, and pleasure. Celebrate God's “abundant goodness” together (Ps. 145:7). Our God is not grim and gloomy—He delights in our celebrations for His glory!

1 Chronicles 29:26-30

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? - Psalm 27:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Space Services, based in Houston, is selling opportunities to send the ashes of deceased loved ones into orbit. Cost depends on weight and can range from \$995 to \$5,300. Despite the high price, it seems to be a popular option; for example, one rocket last February carried the remains of 125 people from half a dozen countries. Aluminum canisters carrying the ashes go up as part of a rocket's payload, then orbit the earth for about ten years before burning up on reentry.

David had a better destination in mind for himself after death. He and Solomon may actually have been co-regents for a brief time, but he died relatively shortly after his son's coronation. He had been king of Israel for forty years (about 1010-970 B.C.), including 33 over the entire nation from his capital city of Jerusalem. He had enjoyed a long life, earned great wealth, and achieved much for his people. These were not the only measures of success, as 1 Chronicles as a whole has already made clear—the spiritual dimensions were far more important. Perhaps the best summary of David's life was written by himself: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps. 27:1).

Ezra, the probable author, retold the story of David's life as a way to encourage the returned exiles with proof of God's guidance and lovingkindness in their national history. The themes of victory when one is on the Lord's side and seeking His glory through worship emerge as key. Along the way, we also learn that anyone can sin and be forgiven: David's attempts to bring the Ark to Jerusalem were surely a consolation to those who knew that the Exile had come about because of their sin. Now they needed to regather at the temple and through faith and obedience get right with God again.

APPLY THE WORD To conclude this month's study, pray that your heart will be prepared for next month's devotions. From the life of David, we move to the life of the Son of David, that is, 1 Chronicles today will give way to the Gospel of Luke tomorrow. Our prayer is that studying these two books back-to-back will illuminate both in stimulating and unique ways, leading all our readers to a renewed understanding of our year's theme: “Every Good and Perfect Gift: God Supplies Our Needs.”

Devotionals Our Daily Bread

Who Is Jabez?

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. —1 Chronicles 4:9

Chinese New Year celebrations are fun for children. When relatives and friends get together, it's the custom for adults to give children small, red envelopes containing token sums of money. Children often rip open their packets just to get the money, and their parents have to remind them that the giver is more important than the gift.

Similarly, when we study the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, it is important to remember that the Giver, the Lord, is more important than the gift. If we focus solely on the request of Jabez, it could be easy to make the mistake of turning it into a formula for obtaining what we want from God.

We don't know much about Jabez, except that his mother gave him a name that sounds like the Hebrew word for "distress" or "pain." We're also told that when he grew up, "Jabez was more honorable than his brothers."

What made Jabez "more honorable"? On the basis of his prayer, we can assume that he took his relationship with God seriously. There was no magic in the words of his prayer. Rather, he knew that God is the giver of all things. Jabez was honorable, I believe, because he honored the Lord.

Our prayer today should be to emulate the character of Jabez, who lived to please God. —Albert Lee [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

We can't presume to know what's best
When we begin to pray;
So we must ask, "What honors God?"
And seek His will and way. —Sper

The purpose of prayer is not to get what we want, but to become what God wants.

[Praying With Confidence](#)

1 Chronicles 13:5-10

Watch Out For Pebbles

Do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it. —Proverbs 4:14-15

My kids enjoy rollerblading. My 13-year-old son likes jumps, rails, and anything else he can do tricks on. But my daughters like long excursions on smooth paths.

Straight-line blading has its hazards too, my daughter Julie explained to me. She said that when she blades, she stays alert for big obstacles ahead like a large rock or a limb on the path. But she said that most problems are caused by small pebbles she doesn't see while watching for the big objects.

Then she made this observation: "It's like that in life. You keep watching for the big problems, but then a little one surprises you and causes trouble."

She's right. Most of us are on the lookout for life's big difficulties—the big sins. But we allow what might be considered a less serious problem to trip us up. An angry word, a dirty thought, a hateful feeling toward someone—we see these as small indiscretions. But to a holy God, all our sins are serious. Look at Uzza. He may have thought that touching the ark of God was a small infraction. But it wasn't, and he died instantly (1 Chronicles 13:5-10).

"Little sins" can cause us to fall down in our forward movement toward maturity. Sure, watch out for the big problems, but don't forget the pebbles. —J D Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It's "little" sins that trip us up
And cause an unexpected fall;
That's why we need to stay alert
To every sin, both large and small. —Sper

Little sins can add up to big trouble.

1 Chronicles 16:23-36

See You Next Time?

Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. —1 Chronicles 16:23

It was a Sunday afternoon several years ago. The whole family was gathered around the table for dinner. Our 4-year-old son Stevie led off our pre-meal prayer: "Dear heavenly Father, thank You for this nice day. Thank You that we could go to church and Sunday school today." Then, to our surprise, he said, "And we'll see You again next week."

What Stevie said in his prayer is how we often view the Christian life, I'm afraid. We easily fall into a see-you-next-time attitude about God. We forget about Him as we fulfill our daily responsibilities. We go for days at a time trying to pay the bills, keep the boss happy, and give attention to each family member. But we neglect to give God the time He deserves.

First Chronicles 16 gives us some facts about God's power and majesty that we can think and talk about "from day to day" (v.23). We can "declare His glory" (v.24) and recognize His hand of creation in the heavens (v.26). We can talk of His honor and majesty, the strength He possesses, and the gladness He gives us (v.27).

Each day brings new reasons to pray to God, to praise His name, and to proclaim His love. Let's make our worship of Him something we do "from day to day." —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Worship, praise, and adoration
Render now to Jesus' name;
Freely give your heart's devotion,
Constantly His love proclaim. —Anon.

No day is complete without worship.
[Celebrating The Wonder Of Creation](#)

1 Chronicles 25:1-8 To God Be The Glory

June 15, 2013 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful. —1 Chronicles 15:22

When Jason was asked to sing at a church he was visiting, he was delighted to participate even though he wasn't asked until a few minutes before the service started. He chose a familiar hymn, "To God Be the Glory," because it was a song that was especially meaningful to him. He practiced it a few times in the church basement and sang it without accompaniment in the church service.

Several weeks later, Jason learned that some people in the church didn't appreciate his ministry. They thought he was showing off. Because they did not know him, they wrongly assumed that he was singing to impress them, not to honor the Lord.

From the Old Testament we learn that God appointed people with skill to be involved in temple worship. From construction workers to worship leaders—people were chosen based on their skill (1 Chron. 15:22; 25:1,7).

The Lord gave each of us different talents and spiritual gifts to be used for His glory (Col. 3:23-24). When we serve with that purpose, not to lift up ourselves, we don't need to be concerned with what others think. God gave His very best to us—His Son Jesus—and we honor Him by giving our best to Him. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Master needs what you have to offer,
No matter if you think it's small;
His work on earth is done through His children,
So give Him your best, give your all. —Hess

We are at our best when we serve God from our hearts.

1 Chronicles 28:5-10 First Things First

March 19, 2013 — by David H. Roper

Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind. —1 Chronicles 28:9

When our granddaughter Sarah was very young, she told us she wanted to be a basketball coach like her daddy when she grew up. But she couldn't be one yet, she said, because first she had to be a player; and a player has to be able to tie her shoelaces, and she couldn't tie hers yet!

First things first, we say. And the first thing in all of life is to know God and enjoy Him.

Acknowledging and knowing God helps us to become what we were meant to be. Here is King David's counsel to his son Solomon: "Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chron. 28:9).

Remember, God can be known. He is a Person, not a logical or theological concept. He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, and desires as any person does. A. W. Tozer writes, "He is a person and can be known in increasing degrees of intimacy as we prepare our hearts for the wonder of it." Ah, there's the rub: We must "prepare our hearts."

The Lord is not playing hard to know; those who want to know Him can. He will not foist His love on us, but He does wait patiently, for He wants to be known by you. Knowing Him is the first thing in life. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The thought of God staggers the mind but to know Him satisfies the heart.

1 Chronicles 28:9, Read Joshua 9:1-16 Can I Trust You?

March 1, 2012 — by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. —1 Chronicles 28:9

According to lie-detection experts, "Our natural tendency is to trust people." However, not everyone is trustworthy all the time. Signs that someone may be lying include fidgeting, lack of eye contact, and noticeable pauses in speaking. Even with these clues, experts warn that it is still quite tough to tell deceivers from honest people.

Joshua needed to know if he could trust the Gibeonites. When they discovered that God wanted him to get rid of some neighboring nations (Josh. 9:24), they pretended to be from a faraway land. They arrived in worn-out tunics and patched sandals, claiming, "Our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey" (v.13). The Israelites were suspicious (v.7), but they "did not ask counsel of the Lord" (v.14); and Joshua unwisely made a peace treaty with the deceivers.

Many want to gain our trust: salespeople, financial advisors, or estranged family members. If we wonder: "Can I trust you?" we shouldn't decide quickly, based only on what seems right to us. It's better to seek counsel from God's Word (Ps. 119:105), godly people (Prov. 11:14), and God Himself (James 1:5). Wisdom from above will help us decide who to trust. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Protect us from deceivers, Lord,
Who lie and plot to take
Advantage of us and confuse
Decisions we must make. —Sper

A desire for discernment is God's call to prayer.

1 Chronicles 29:10-15 Who Owns Your Home?

All that is in heaven and in earth is Yours. —1 Chronicles 29:11

My wife and I bought our first home when we moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. During my years in the pastorate, a parsonage had always been provided. I remember the feeling when I signed a 30-year mortgage. It seemed that I was committing myself to a lifetime of debt.

Another thought has gripped me recently—I'll never own my home, even when the mortgage is paid off. You see, God is the real title holder. Everything belongs to Him.

These musings raise a vital issue in our highly materialistic culture. We as Christians must recognize that God is the rightful owner of our possessions, or they will be a cause of frustration. Our attitude will be reflected in what happens to them. A dent in the fender of our new car, for instance, can bend us out of shape. A coffee spill on the furniture can stain our attitude. A theft can easily rob us of

peace.

We need to give up ownership rights and take our stewardship responsibilities seriously. This does not mean adopting a casual, wasteful attitude about material things. In our hearts we must make a transfer of our goods to God, and then keep reminding ourselves who really owns them (1 Chronicles 29:11). This will help us use things wisely, hold them lightly, and enjoy them fully. — Dennis De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God owns the gold in every mine,
The cattle on the hills,
And in His sovereign grace He gives
According as He wills. —D. De Haan

The real measure of our wealth is the treasure we have in heaven.

[Jesus' Parables About Money](#)

[Our Eternal Home](#)

1 Chronicles 29:1-20

BAD AND GOOD OF WEALTH

Give me neither poverty nor riches ... lest I be full and deny You, and say "Who is the Lord?"-Proverbs 30:8-9

The other day I received a letter saying that I am still in the running to win the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes. I imagine that all the millions of people who received this notice would like to be the winner. But winning it might not be good for some of us. Sudden wealth could hurt us spiritually.

Agur, the writer of Proverbs 30, didn't ask God for wealth. He was afraid that if he were rich he might feel self-sufficient and try to live without God.

Yet some very godly people in the Bible were rich. Moreover, it was because many of the Israelites had great wealth that they could provide lavishly for the building of the temple. This realization led David to declare, "Both riches and honor come from You" (1 Chr. 29:12).

We can be thankful for what some wealthy Christians do with their money. A family with whom I am acquainted gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to Christian causes annually. What good their riches accomplish!

The fact remains, however, that not all of us can be trusted with great wealth. So don't set your heart on it. Instead, thank God for what you have, and be content. Then use what He has given you as a sacred trust. - H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we've been blessed with riches,
We must be rich in deeds;
God wants us to be generous
In meeting others' needs. --Sper

Wealth is a double blessing when it's used for the blessing of others.