

1 Chronicles

Week 2

Monday: 1 Chronicles 15-19

Tuesday: 1 Chronicles 20-24

Wednesday: 1 Chronicles 25-28

Thursday: 1 Chronicles 29-2 Chronicles 5

Friday: 2 Chronicles 6-11

Introduction

Rose-colored glasses

As we discussed last week, the writer of Chronicles has a very different perspective than the writer of Samuel and Kings. It's as if the Chronicler was looking through rose-colored glasses when examining the lives and reigns of David and Solomon. In the Samuels and Kings, the reader is privy to the good, the bad, and the ugly concerning these two rulers of Israel. The Chronicler, on the other hand, for various reasons, chooses to leave out the unfavorable details and focuses primarily on the role of the kings in relationship to the building of the Temple and the life of worship surrounding it.

Our chart highlights two significant areas of difference between the accounts recorded in the Chronicles and those of Samuel and Kings.

A Mighty David

As you can see in the drawing, King David shines brighter than Solomon in the Chronicles. In 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, it hints at the idea that David desired to build the Temple for God, but in 1 Chronicles we see that David is given credit for everything regarding the Temple except for the actual construction. He

provided the plans, the resources, and the vision that rallied the nation to commit to this grandiose building project. From the Chronicler's perspective Solomon was little more than the construction foreman on the project. Don't be mistaken, Solomon is heralded as an incredibly wise and powerful king - the most powerful in the world - but when it comes to the heart and passion behind the Temple of the Lord, all the credit goes to David.

A Musical Production

Throughout the Chronicles there is a noticeable emphasis on the role of the musicians in the daily process of worship in the temple. Oddly, this aspect of the priestly duties is missing from the Samuel/Kings account. The Chronicler's inclusion of the musical side of worship is further evidence of his theological bias and purpose. As the nation was attempting to rebuild itself after the Babylonian exile, it was important to reconnect to not just the physical space of the Temple, but also to the heart of worship in the Temple.

That is the purpose of music and art in worship. Art takes us beyond the concrete, physical realities of God's Kingdom (not to say that they are not right and important) and into the heart and soul of worship. Art opens our soul to be able to connect to God in a more dynamic and colorful way.

It makes sense that a book that emphasizes the supremacy of David would also emphasize the importance of music in worship. After all, David was one of the most prolific song writers of his time. The majority of the Psalms are attributed to David. Perhaps, as you read this week, you could mix a few of David's Psalms into your quiet time.

Also, this week, be aware of the role of music and art in your environment. Even if you are not an artist, what would your world be like without music or works of art? Ask God to show you if, perhaps, you could grow in your appreciation and incorporation of art in your worship experience.

Monday: David's Prayer

1 Chronicles 17:16-27

To what event is this prayer a response?

As you read through this prayer, make a list of the different attitudes that David displays toward God.

Food for thought:

How do you respond when things go your way? Are you a good winner? Or, do you allow success to get to your head, inflating your sense of self-worth, leading you to receive credit for your good fortune, and tempting you to believe that you deserve the good that has come your way?

How should we respond when the winds of fortune blow our way or when the blessings of God pour out on us? Should we shy away from it in some type of self-abasement, claiming that we are not worthy to receive such things? Should we reject the offer of good will extended to us by others or by God?

In David's prayer we see a good model for how to handle it when good things happen.

- 1. Be Humble.** (v. 16-17) To be humble is not to put yourself down. Humility is the act of seeing yourself the way God sees you, not the way you or anyone else sees you. God sees truth. God sees His child, who has been set free and given gifts to be used for His Kingdom. In humility we can say with David, "I am nothing, but you, oh Lord, have looked at me as though I were the most exalted of men." In Christ you are an heir to the glory of God. Rejoice in that and carry that esteemed position with a cloak of humility.
- 2. Be Thankful.** (vv. 18-19) To give thanks is to give honor where honor is due. When someone gives you a gift you say thank you because you didn't do anything to produce this gift. All that we have in life is a gift from God, so we should be in a constant state of thanksgiving.

A thankful heart says, "Wow, God, what you have given me is awesome, thanks!"

3. **Give Praise.** (vv.20-22) A thankful heart leads naturally into a heart of praise. When the realization washes over you that the Almighty God of the universe has freely given good things to you out of the goodness of His heart, you can't help but stand up and shout, "Lord, you are the best!"

4. **Get Aligned.** (vv. 23-27) At the close of David's prayer he makes a request of God. Does he say, "now that you have given me all this good stuff, will you throw in a new yacht as well?" No. David's request is that God would do what He promised. Does that mean that if David didn't ask for it that God would not keep His promise? This seems like a strange request. Why does David make this seemingly redundant petition? In asking for God to keep His promise, David is verbally aligning himself with God's will. We know that we have reached a place of maturity when our will is aligned with God's will. Many times people ask if they should ask God to grant the desires of their heart, or if they should ask for God to do His will in their life. The correct answer is that our goal should be for the desires of our heart to match the desires of God's heart, so that the question becomes moot. In making this request David is saying, "Yes, Lord, I believe your promise and I agree that what you want for me is what I want for you as well."

In many ways there are parallels between this prayer of David and the prayer of Jesus in Matthew 5,

“Father, you are hallowed, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is Heaven.”

Once again, the main reason that David was a man after God’s own heart was because he was not a king after the king’s own heart. From the beginning to the end, David was just a servant of God who had an authentic, open relationship with the maker and lover of his soul. May we be able to pray with the heart of David this week.

Tuesday: A Musical Production

1 Chronicles 23:1-5

What were the different roles assigned to the leaders of Israel?

1 Chronicles 25:1

For what purpose was music practiced in the kingdom of Israel?

Food for thought:

There are two observations from today's reading:

- 1. Different people have different tasks.** One of the greatest lessons that any group of people can learn is that it takes a plurality of leadership and an interconnection of disciplines to be healthy. In the church, specifically, it is a natural tendency for the leader to feel that he has to do everything, to carry the burden of all responsibilities, and to be the servant to all. While the leader should always maintain a servant's heart, it is ludicrous to believe that one person could be good at and accomplish all the tasks that need to happen to shepherd a healthy church community. Look at what David did. He divided up the responsibilities into four basic areas: construction supervisors, judicial overseers, gatekeepers/protectors, and musicians. These four functions are radically different and require very different skill sets to perform well. If the community of God is to be healthy, then it needs to be diversified in its duties and delegated in the carrying out of those duties.
- 2. Musicians were in equal status with everyone else.** This observation stands out because a) I am an artist and am always combing scripture for validation, and b) it runs contrary to our culture's pragmatic attitude toward leadership. In our society, when times get tough the "fluffy stuff" gets thrown out first. And what is the fluffy stuff? Art. This is very evident in the school systems, both public and private. When there is no money, art class is the first

thing to get cut. Most Christian schools don't even have art classes because they can't be justified in the budget. This is a tragedy and, I believe, brings grief to the heart of God. We were created in the image of God. God is a creator and we were designed to be creative and imaginative. If our society was nothing more than construction workers, politicians, and policemen, then it would become dull, boring, and not worth building, governing, or protecting. David established the musicians as the fourth corner of the leadership edifice because he knew that it was through the arts that windows to the eternal mind of God can be opened, allowing the life-giving light of His glory to bring the dullness of everyday life into full color.

There are two questions for you today. First, do you know your place in the body of Christ? And, second, are you actualizing your place in the body of Christ. Whatever you were designed to do, that is what God expects you to do for Him.

Wednesday: A Different Perspective

1 Chronicles 28

What great thing did David want to do for God?
Why was he not allowed to do it? (v. 2-3)

Who was chosen to do this great thing? (vv. 4-7)

What was the reason that David gave for Solomon to acknowledge God and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and a willing mind? (v. 9)

According to this chapter, who was the real mastermind behind the construction of the temple?
What was Solomon's role in the project?

Food for thought:

There are two observations from today's reading. The first comes from a biblical studies perspective and is designed to help you grow in your handling of scripture. The second comes from a pastoral, devotional perspective, designed to help you in your spiritual formation.

Biblical Study

It was mentioned in the introduction that the Chronicler had a very different perspective on the history of Israel than the writer of Samuel and Kings. This difference is most evident in relationship to the building of the Temple. In the Samuel/Kings account, it is mentioned that David desired to build the Temple, but that it was Solomon who was the real mastermind behind the construction. According to the Chronicler it was actually David who did all the work for the Temple construction -- plans, preparations, and financing -- while Solomon simply executed his father's instructions.

First of all, let us be clear. This apparent discrepancy does not mean that the Bible contradicts itself. When you match up both stories you will see that both are accurate and true, but are told from different perspectives. The writer of Samuel and Kings was trying to show the sovereignty and grace of God in spite of the wickedness of His people. Therefore, he hung out all the dirty laundry of the royal families for the world to see. The Chronicler, on the other hand, leaves out all the nastiness in an effort to show how God was preserving His plans for the Temple and proper worship throughout the generations.

The perspective of the Chronicler on the role of

Solomon in the construction of the Temple actually solves a great mystery that was created by the account of 1 Kings; how could such a wise man fall so far away from God?

In 1 Kings Solomon asks God for a discerning heart, and it appears that, as a result of this discerning heart Solomon comes up with these wonderful plans for the Temple. While it doesn't specifically say that, the flow of the story definitely implies it. At the height of Solomon's glory it seems that he is the wisest, most godly man to have ever lived. Then, in a whiplash-inducing reversal, Solomon takes a nose-dive off the cliff of paganism and never recovers. How could this happen to a man with such wisdom?

The Chronicler makes it clear. Solomon was just the "wrist" in the building of the Temple. He was just the physical means to get the job done, but not the heart and soul behind it. Solomon asked for a discerning heart, and God gave it to him, but what if he never really used it to its full potential? It seems that, throughout Solomon's entire career, his wisdom was more externally focused. He became enraptured in science, art, politics, architecture, and Temple building, but, perhaps, he never really had a heart for God. Notice that he spent 7 years to build the Temple, but 14 to build his own house. He loved women, power, and money.

If the plans for the Temple were truly a gift from the Spirit to David, and Solomon was just the physical means to accomplish the job, then it makes more sense why he could have strayed so far away from the heart of God and the true purpose of the Temple. It also makes sense why he is repeatedly warned by his father and the Lord to keep his heart focused and not get distracted.

Devotional thought

Look at v. 9 again. David told Solomon to serve the Lord wholeheartedly and with a willing mind because the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. Yikes! Let's ponder that for a moment.

The phrase "every motive behind the thoughts" is literally translated "the formation, or the root source, behind the thinking process." The term translated "formation" comes from pottery and is used to describe what a potter does to clay when making a pot.

This same phrase is found in Genesis 6:5

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the Earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

This verse was the explanation for why God was justified in sending the great flood to destroy the human population.

David was warning Solomon that God sees past all our smoke screens, pleasantries, and Christian nice-nice, and knows what we are really all about. We can't fool Him.

Here's the bottom line. God didn't care how wonderful Solomon looked on the outside. It was the "formation of his thoughts" that would be the measuring stick for God. David was a man after God's own heart because the Spirit of the Lord had His hands on the raw clay of David's mind. What do the hands look like that are forming your thoughts today?

Thursday: A Giving Heart

1 Chronicles 29:1-20

What did David give toward the building of the Temple? (vv. 1-5)

What request did David make of the people? (v. 5)

How did the people respond? (vv. 6-9)

What is the source of all wealth and glory? (vv. 10-16)

What attitude did the people have toward God?
Toward themselves? (vv. 13-14)

What pleases the Lord? (v. 17)

Food for thought:

In the 21st century, standing in the wake of massive stone churches, Crystal Cathedrals, million dollar dog houses, and more church building campaigns than one would care to remember, it is difficult to read a passage about giving to a construction project without a bit of jadedness. Yet, here it is. There are no two ways around this passage. David is standing in front of the nation and saying, "Look guys, I gave everything I own to the Temple building project. How much are you going to give?" In response to David's invitation the people stepped up to the plate and poured out gold, silver, bronze, and jewels so that the Temple of God could be magnificent.

Here are a few thoughts:

- 1. God is not opposed to buildings.** We must always be careful to not become prideful or judgmental if our decision is to not center our worship or community on a physical space. God blessed the construction of the Temple. He was proud to place His name there and let His presence be represented by the ark of the covenant. It is true that He had no problem abandoning the building when the hearts of the people strayed from Him. It is also true that, later on, the first churches in Acts had no need for a building. Yet, that does not mean that having a building is wrong or evil. Just like any good thing, a building can become a physical distraction from a true relationship with God, but, used properly it can also bring great honor to Him as well.
- 2. Our physical resources do not belong to us.** Probably the greatest trap of our culture is the

concept of personal possessions. We believe that we have the right to carve out a piece of land and say “mine.” We believe that if we work hard then we have earned our gold, that it belongs to us, and that we have the right to do with our money anything that we choose to do. Mine, mine, mine! This passage reminds us that nothing belongs to us. Everything belongs to God. He has given it to us out of His grace, not our merit. God gives us physical resources for two reasons. The first is to provide for our basic needs of food and shelter. The second is to teach us about stewardship. As a Christian, one of the paths of spiritual maturity is to move from the idea of ownership to stewardship. A steward is a servant who has been put in charge of his master’s physical resources. The master trusts him and expects him to take good care of those resources and to bring about an increase through good management of those resources. Everything comes from God, belongs to God, and is to be used to bring glory to His name.

- 3. It is always a matter of the heart.** You cannot pay God off. Many times people think that if they give a lot of money to charity then they can say that they are a good person and not have to deal with the real issues of the heart. God doesn’t need your money, because, remember, it’s not your money anyway. God wants your heart. He wants you to be authentically in love with Him and focused on His kingdom and not your own. The truth is that giving money to the work of God’s Kingdom will not in any way affect your relationship with God, but a person who has a real relationship with God will, without

hesitation, give back generously to the master who has given to him. It's called the overflow of a transformed heart.

Where is your heart today? Are you fearfully holding on to your gold? Or, have you surrendered your notion of ownership and become a steward of God's resources? Imagine what could happen if every Christian in the world gave with the same spirit as David's people did in this passage.

Friday: The Big IF

2 Chronicles 7:11-22

A conditional clause has an **if** and a **then** in it; e.g. **if** you do this, **then** I will do that. In today's passage there are two conditional clauses.

What hypothetical situation is God setting up in v. 13?

If the nation gets into this situation, what is the conditional clause that God has set up? (v. 14)

if...

then...

The second conditional clause is directed to Solomon. What are the conditions? (vv. 17-22)

if...

then...

Food for thought:

Today's passage is a good reminder of some fundamental principles that have been woven throughout this devotional from the beginning.

- ☀️ God's people can mess up.
- ☀️ There are always consequences for sin.
- ☀️ God always provides a way of redemption and reconciliation.
- ☀️ It's always about the heart

Let's focus closely at the actual process of the path of redemption and reconciliation that God spells out in v. 14. When God's people, who are called by his name, get tripped up and distracted from their relationship with Him, how can they make things right? What does it take?

1. **Humility.** The opposite of humility is pride. That is what got us all in trouble in the first place. The serpent planted the seeds of pride into Adam and Eve's mind, suggesting that they could become like God and would no longer need Him. Pride is the root of all our sin. We believe that we can make our own choices and that we know better than God. Then, when we do make a mistake, we are too proud to admit it, so we stand in the corner with our arms crossed and our jaw clenched. The first step toward reconciliation is to realize that crow is the healthiest meal you could ever eat. Put your pride in your pocket and say, "I blew it!"

2. **Communication.** After we release pride, then we have to talk to God. We can't talk to God when we are in sin. Think of it in these concrete terms. Imagine that God is a person and you and He are standing in a dark room. All light in the room is coming from the face of God. God is facing you. To be in sin is to be facing away from God. If you are facing away from God, what are you looking at? Darkness. The first step to reconciliation is to start talking. You can talk to someone with your back to them, but is that really the most conducive posture for authentic, loving communication? Typically, when you are talking to someone with your back turned to them it is because you do not want to look them in the eye. Yet, the conversation must begin. It's a start.

3. **Seek and Turn.** In order for there to be real reconciliation, there must be actual movement toward the face of God. If there is movement toward the face of God, then there will be the natural, opposite movement away from the void of darkness. This is the literal meaning of the word "repentance"; to turn in a different direction. You see, it is one or the other. You are either facing into the darkness, or you are facing the face of God. You can't be doing both. One of the traps of our contemporary Christianity is the belief that we can have a relationship with God by facing into the darkness and talking over our shoulder. That is no relationship. To be reconciled to God is to turn away from the darkness - the pride, envy, lust, etc. - and look into the loving eyes of your Heavenly Father; to let the light of His glory warm your face.

God has promised that if His people would do this, then He will forgive and heal them. Look at v. 15. God says, *"Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place."* Paraphrased, God is saying, "I'm always here. I'm always facing you, shining my light on you. I'm always ready to hear you and welcome you when you turn around. Don't face the dark, turn and face me."

Where are you facing today?