

# Honoring God



**THE HELPING HAND**  
Seventh Day Baptist  
Adult/Youth Sabbath School Lessons  
December 2019 - February 2020

## Honoring God

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**Steve Osborn, Editor**

**The purposes of *The Helping Hand in Bible Study* are:**

- to provide for adults and older youth a quarterly for personal or group use in gaining a continually renewed knowledge of the Bible, Christian beliefs and church life, particularly that characteristic of Seventh Day Baptists.
- to enable such study of Christian convictions as will develop the students' abilities to share their faith.
- to strengthen appreciation of Seventh Day Baptist heritage and conviction of the Sabbath's truths.
- to nurture moral and spiritual aspects of daily living and decision-making.
- to provide resources for daily devotions.
- to encourage the educational ministry of Seventh Day Baptists around the world.

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**Subscription rates:**

Single copies, \$4.50; Annual subscription, \$17.00 in USA; \$21.00 outside USA.

Orders should be sent to the SDB Christian Education Council, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678.

**Postmaster:**

Send address changes to: The Helping Hand, 3120 Kennedy Rd., P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678

The Helping Hand (USPS 239-700) is published quarterly by The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference's Christian Education Council, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678. Periodicals postage paid at Janesville, WI 53547.

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## Editor's Page

Determining how to honor God with our lives should be a major emphasis for every believer. Paul's exhorted the Colossians, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17). One of the first ways we seek to honor God is in our worship.

This quarter explores ways of doing just that. The Old Testament sessions recall how David and Solomon honored God by establishing the center of worship in Jerusalem and building the Temple. The New Testament sessions focus on Jesus' teachings about right attitudes that honor God through worship.

Unit I, "David Honors God," has five sessions: four from First Chronicles and one from Luke. The first three sessions are from First Chronicles and tell about David's bringing the ark to Jerusalem, leading the people in offering a psalm of thanksgiving, and planning to build a house for God. Session 4, the Christmas session, considers Mary's visit to Elizabeth as found in Luke. Session 5 returns to First Chronicles and David's prayer of gratitude for God's promise of a dynasty.

Unit II, "Dedicating the Temple of God," has four sessions that explore Solomon's dedication of the Temple in First Kings. Solomon honors God by providing a place for the ark, by offering blessings to God for fulfilling the promise to David, by praying that God would hear prayers offered in the Temple, by calling the people to keep God's commandments, and by offering sacrifices to God.

Unit III, "Jesus Teaches about True Worship," has four sessions that explore what Jesus says about honoring God through one's spiritual practices. Matthew points to right attitudes in obeying God only and in honoring God in almsgiving and in prayer. The prayer of Jesus provides a comprehensive life approach in honoring God. Luke teaches about perseverance in prayer as a way to honor God.

I pray you will be richly blessed as you study God's Word and seek to allow it to impact your life for His glory.

For the Kingdom,

Steve

# 1. David Worships God in Jerusalem

1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 14-16, 25-29a

## Daily Bible Meditations

Angie Osborn

### Sunday

### Deuteronomy 18:1-5

As those called to minister before the Lord, the Levites would inherit no land. That sort of seems unfair until you read verse 2. The Lord was their inheritance—so much better than land! With that inheritance, came a promise that God would provide for their needs. Like the Levites, we have the Lord as our inheritance, through Jesus Christ. Like the Levites, God has promised to provide for our needs. As you go through your day, take time to bask in your heavenly inheritance. Take time to notice what that inheritance is and thank Jesus for making it so. Take time to notice how God provides for your needs and thank Him!

### Monday

### 1 Chronicles 13:5-8, 13-14

David had the best intentions. He was excited to bring the ark back into Jerusalem. Unfortunately, he did not pay attention to the details. God had set out some specific instructions about how the ark was to be moved and who could move it. David ignored God's directions and the result was the death of Uzza—and a lot of confusion and fear on David's part. As we seek to do the Lord's work, it is important that we face it with joy and celebration. But it is also crucial that follow God's lead and His plan. Through understanding of the Scriptures and prayer, we can do His work His way!

### Tuesday

### 1 Chronicles 15:4-13

David had been humbled by his first attempt to move the ark. This time, he understood the importance of following God's directives. He read Scripture, prayed, repented, and tried again; this time following God's plan. Often, we get caught up in ministry opportunities but get focused on the emotion, or the program, or the numbers, or.... Like David, it is important for us to be sure that God is at the center and it is His direction we are following. It is important to be excited about the ministry we are doing; it is important to have a good program and plan; but it is most important that we focus on the presence of God and doing things the way He would have us do them.

### Wednesday

### 1 Chronicles 16:1-6

Finally, the ark—the representation of God's presence—was returned to Israel! David's response to the ark's return to Israel was



one of praise-filled worship. He had learned from his past mistakes and was focused on basking in the presence of God. David also appointed Levites to commemorate the occasion and to thank and praise God. We, too, need to commemorate what God has done for us. Too often we do not take time to remember and thank God for all He has done. How can you commemorate what God has done in your life? Today, focus on what God has done in your life and with the excitement and heart of David—worship Him!

### **Thursday**

### **1 Chronicles 16:37-43**

The day that the ark was presented was a day of worship, sacrifice, and celebration. David did not plan for it to stop there though; it was only the beginning. David instituted ongoing service and worship before the Ark of the Covenant at its new resting place in Jerusalem. In doing so, David highlighted the importance of regular, daily worship. It is easy to get busy during the week and limit our focus of worship to Sabbath, but we are called to worship at all times. We are reminded of this in Psalm 113:3, “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.”

### **Friday**

### **Romans 12:1-8**

Paul encouraged the Romans to present themselves as living sacrifices to God. That means acknowledging that everything we have, even every breath we take, belongs to Him. Then, with that in mind, turn every part of our lives back to Him as an act of worship. What we do on Sabbath in corporate worship is important in our spiritual growth. However, Paul reminded us that worship is a full-bodied, whole person experience that happens as we live out our faith. The quality of our worship comes in how we live out our faith every day, not just the corporate worship we join in weekly with our church family.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 14-16, 25-29a**

David had made his mistakes, but this time, he listened to God’s instructions, and followed His plan. As a result, the ark was placed and there was great rejoicing. In reading chapter 15, it is clear that David really took his time to create a detailed plan that would result in worshipping and rejoicing in God’s faithfulness. When God reveals His presence in our lives, we should also respond with great rejoicing. This Sabbath, take time to reflect on God’s faithfulness in your life. Be specific, notice the details, and then worship Him and rejoice in His never ending faithfulness!

**Study** 1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 14-16, 25-29a

**Background** 1 Chronicles 15

**Devotional** 1 Chronicles 16:7-13, 28-33

## Key Verse

Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the horn, with trumpets, with loud-sounding cymbals, with harps and lyres (1 Chronicles 15:28).

## Heart of the Lesson

People are joyful and excited when they move into a new building. What is the appropriate way to celebrate? David commanded the priests to invite all the musicians and all the people to join in shouting, singing, and dancing as they rejoiced in what God had done for them.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. What are some ways that we celebrate big moments? Are there specific things that should or should not be done? What are some things that strike you as noteworthy in the celebration arranged by David in this passage?
2. What do David's preparations for bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem demonstrate about the importance he placed on the Ark? What do they demonstrate about David's relationship with God?
3. What significance had the Ark played in the history of Israel as God's chosen people? What do you think the impact and significance was to the Israelites to see the Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem?
4. Search for passages from the Law that describe some of the ritual involved in the priests and Levites consecrating themselves (v.14). What tensions do you observe between this and the exuberant singing and dancing described in this passage? How does your understanding of God help you to strike a balance between reverence and celebration?
5. What can we learn about worshipping God from this passage? How can we learn to appreciate a diversity of emotional responses in our worship? How can we incorporate a variety of physical activity and sensory input to enhance our corporate worship?

## Understanding and Living

Chris Galarneau

We should keep in mind, as we read from the Chronicles, is that these accounts of Israel's history were written after the exile. The Chronicler (who is unknown to us today) was concerned with inspiring the Israelites to remember their roots and the relationship they had enjoyed with God as His people. The Chronicler had hope and believed the promises of God and wanted his people to do the same. A comparison of this passage with its parallel account in 2 Samuel 6 reveals the Chronicler's desire to show the Israelites that this was their story. His perspective bends to include all of Israel and a strong focus on kingship.

Also note that the event recorded in our passage was the second attempt by David to move the Ark. The first attempt, in chapter 13, stopped short when Uzzah, one of the men charged with driving the cart on which the ark was carried, was struck dead while reaching out his hand to steady the Ark when the oxen pulling the cart stumbled. There was a three-month pause between the first attempt and the second attempt.

### *Preparation*

The first 3 verses of chapter 15 set a tone of preparation. The first thing that stands out is that while David was building his own residences, he was

concurrently preparing a place to house the Ark. The second thing is the warning in verse 2 that only the Levites could carry the Ark, as Israel had been instructed (Deuteronomy 10:8). David had found out 3 months earlier the importance of honoring the methods God had given for the transport and handling of the Ark. This time, he was prepared. The third thing that should catch our eye is that David "assembled all of Israel" to bring the Ark to Jerusalem (v.3). These verses capture the expectation, the reverence, and perhaps the awesome fear that those assembled were feeling.

There was no doubt in the mind of David that this preparation was important. He had great concern for obedience to God in his life. This life of chasing after God was on full display in his approach to moving the Ark of the Covenant. God certainly deserved the adequate respect and reverence that David showed through his actions.

Today, we are invited not just into relationship with God, but because of Christ, we are invited as adopted sons and daughters into God's family. However, God is still the Righteous Creator and deserving of our respect and reverence. We must always remember that God is to be revered and respected above all things.



### ***Orderly Worship***

It is important to see that David was concerned with transporting the Ark the correct way this time. God had set the parameters for how the Ark should be handled. Amongst these was that it was the Levite's job and honor to carry the ark. David's attention to this reminds us that when God sets guidelines within which we must work, we have to pay attention to them. We do not get to just come to God on our own terms, but must always do so according to His parameters.

David made sure the right people were carrying the ark (v.2), that the priests consecrated (made holy or set apart from common use) themselves (v.14), that they used the correct equipment (v.15), and they wore the right things (v.27). In their first attempt to move the Ark, "David and all Israel" had celebrated with all their might and played a variety of instruments (1 Chronicles 13:8). While their intent was not wrong, they did not do it in the right way and suffered the consequences. In this second attempt, David made sure it was the Levites leading things, those who were skilled played the instruments, not everyone. In other words, this effort was informed by the Law. It was not a random expression, but one guided by the truth of what God had commanded.

### ***Joy Filled Worship***

David still displayed his exuberance, excitement, and joy to honor God in bringing the ark to Jerusalem as recorded in verse 25. He did not abandon the desire to worship through music and singing. His intent to celebrate with all of his might and to lead others was a good one and a right one. The Chronicler recorded that as they went along, David was dancing and celebrating. There was a spontaneous and emotion-filled component to their worship as they brought the Ark along. Our worship should be filled with emotion, and it certainly can have spontaneous components as well.

We can safely assume that this was pleasing to God, as it is noted that God went along with them and helped them (v.26). Also, God did not make an outburst (v.13) along their way as He had in their previous attempt (see chapter 13). There are no negative statements against their joy—in fact it is highlighted throughout the passage.

### ***Bringing it Together***

The type of ceremony described in the moving of the ark is foreign to us, as we are living under the New Covenant rather than the Mosaic law. We do not have priests or ephods like they did in those days. We do not offer sacrifices or even have regulated processions. However, these

concepts are not completely unknown to us. Jesus said that true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Worship in spirit is that joy-filled exuberance that we see on display in David's enthusiasm and dancing. It is captured in the statement in 1 Chronicles 13:8 that David and all of Israel worshipped with all their might.

We are not called to worship merely in spirit, but in truth as well. Our worship must be informed by the truth of God. For David, this meant the truth of proper handling, care, and respect for how God said the Ark must be handled. Worship without truth is merely an expression of emotion without meaning. On the other side, if you worship in only truth, you will have an emotionless statement without joy, which is neither refreshing nor pleasing. True worship incorporates both emotion and truth. It is that balanced approach that leads to the holiest and purest form of worship.

When David paired these two things together, the Ark was successfully brought to Jerusalem. In their preparation and their worship in truth and spirit, God was truly honored. When we take the time to prepare well for worship and make sure we are worshipping in both spirit and truth, God will be truly honored by our worship as well.

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Examine the ceremony by which the Ark was brought to Jerusalem.
2. Appreciate the diversity of emotional responses that flow from authentic worship.
3. Embrace physical activity and sensory input as important aspects of worship.

### *Teaching Activity*

Ask participants to recall worship experiences that evoked diverse emotional responses. What happened that led to those varying responses? Compare and contrast current Christian worship celebrations with this significant celebration in the lives of God's people. Discuss ways we can worship that involve all of our senses. Plan a worship celebration involving music, movement, and other sensory experiences.

### **Looking Forward**

We considered the joyful, worship celebration of Israel as they transported the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Next, we will learn to thank God for His greatness and provision as David did at the Ark celebration.

## 2. A Heart Filled with Gratitude

1 Chronicles 16:8-12, 28-36

### Daily Bible Meditations

Angie Osborn

#### Sunday

**Isaiah 45:20-25**

The Lord calls *all* men and women to worship Him. In this passage, the Lord points out that “other gods” and idols cannot save—only He can because He is the one true God. Isaiah 45 is a good reminder for us to take stock in where we place our faith. Do we rely on gods that cannot save (money, job, love, you fill in the blank)? Or are we truly putting our faith and trust in the one true God? In our fast-paced world, it is easy to get distracted and let “idols” sit on the heart’s throne. As you worship the one and only true God today, put your faith wholly in Him, knowing that He is the Lord of all!

#### Monday

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

God laid out a plan for the Israelites to give the first portion of their harvest back to Him. In this example, giving of tithes and first fruits is also tied to remembering. The Israelites were reminded of how God had faithfully provided for all their needs and that He would continue to do so. Our God is a generous God. We may not always recognize His generosity as we go through our everyday lives. But as we look back, we can see that He faithfully provides. As you give back to God with your tithes and offerings, remember all He has given you, reflect on all He has done in your life...and thank Him.

#### Tuesday

**Psalms 105:1-15**

My Bible titles Psalm 105 as “The Eternal Faithfulness of the Lord.” Take a moment and reflect just on that title. We serve a God who is, indeed, eternally faithful. In this passage, the psalmist reminded the people of God’s mighty deeds. Remembering God’s past miracles and faithfulness encourages us as believers to continue to trust Him and remain loyal to Him. The Bible is full of encouraging examples of God’s forgiveness, His provision, His love, and His faithfulness. Take some time to reflect on His eternal faithfulness in your life today and rejoice in His love!

#### Wednesday

**Psalms 106:40-48**

Psalm 106 details Israel’s rebellion and God’s divine compassion once again. Over and over, God provided for the Israelites.

Over and over, the Israelites got distracted or frustrated and turned away. It is easy to think, “Oh those Israelites, when will they learn?” But could the same be said for each of us? Over and over, God provides and remains faithful. Over and over, I doubt, try to control my own destiny, and rebel against Him. Thankfully, God forgives those sins through Jesus Christ! I am able to confess those sins and praise God for His faithfulness, despite my stubbornness; and He continues to love me and pour out His blessings!

### **Thursday**

### **1 Chronicles 16:14-18**

These verses are a part of a passage where David was offering thanksgiving to the Lord. In verse 15, we are reminded that God’s covenant is forever and spans over a thousand generations. God has made a covenant with each of us as we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. His covenant is filled with promises and offers forgiveness for our sins. He has provided a way for us to be in close relationship with Him, through Christ. Today, reflect on what that covenant really means in your life and take time to thank Him for His love and faithfulness!

### **Friday**

### **1 Chronicles 16:28-36**

David continued his offering of thanks to the Lord in these verses. As we read his praises, we are reminded that God’s love is steadfast and forever. As children of our Heavenly Father, we can rejoice! Our God does not waiver in His love for us. He does not give up on us when we make poor choices. His love for each of us began before Creation and continues for eternity! Like David, we can praise the Lord, for He is good! Reflect today on His love for you. As you do, thank Him, praise Him, and share your story!

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Chronicles 16:8-13, 19-27**

We serve an amazing, loving God! He has indeed done wondrous deeds for all people! It is amazing that the God who created the universe has made Himself available to all people. He has provided a way for us to have a relationship with Him through Jesus. He promises to provide for our needs and that He will remain faithful. The Bible is full of examples of His love and commitment to those who willingly go to Him. Our lives are also filled with examples of His works! Take time this Sabbath to remember His works in your life and confidently share your experiences of His love with others!

**Study** 1 Chronicles 16:8-12, 28-36

**Background** 1 Chronicles 16:7-36

**Devotional** Deuteronomy 26:1-11

## Key Verse

Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples (1 Chronicles 16:8).

## Heart of the Lesson

People easily get discouraged when looking at turbulent conditions in the world. How can we find courage to face these problems? David's people sang a psalm of thanksgiving and a psalm of worship to God for all the great things He had done for them and for the greatness of His being.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. What things going on in the world today are discouraging to you or people you know? How do you typically respond to discouraging events or conditions? What has helped you to find courage in the past?
2. What event was being celebrated by David and Israel in 1 Corinthians 16? Given what you know about the history of the Ark of the Covenant, how were the commands to seek the Lord's strength and presence (v.11) appropriate? What would the memory of the Ark mean to people reading this during Israel's exile?
3. Compare the "song of David" (v.8-36) with the psalms where its words appear (Psalm 105:1-15; 96:1-13; 106:1, 47-48). Why do you think the Chronicler chose to record those specific parts of the psalms David likely sang? What do they reveal about his purpose in recounting these events?
4. What events from Israel's history were included in their song of celebration? How would revisiting those events help the Israelites in their celebration? How would being reminded of them help the exiled Israelites?
5. What events can you look back to in your life as evidence of God's hand at work? How does remembering them bring hope and courage in the midst of discouragement? What are some specific ways you can celebrate those events?



## Understanding and Living

Chris Galarneau

The book of 1 Chronicles is largely historical narrative and is easy to understand in typical narrative story format. Remember that the Chronicler recorded the events of Israel's history, some of which are paralleled in 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, from a vantage point of looking back from some time after Israel's exile. In 1 Chronicles, he focused on David's impact and accomplishments, rather than his foibles and failures—though they were recorded elsewhere. The Chronicler's goal was to remind the people of his day who they were and what God had done for them in hopes of inspiring confidence in them that He could (and would) do them again.

Our passage from 1 Chronicles 16 was preceded by a momentous event in King David's rule, which we examined last week—the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark, to the Israelites, was more than a symbol. It was a reminder and a representation of God's presence amongst them and a place where they as a nation had traditionally experienced the manifestation of God. The arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem was a time for exuberant worship! Today we will take a look at a continuation of that

story. The Ark had been brought to Jerusalem and placed inside the tent that David had prepared for it. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were given and the people were given a blessing by David.

### *A Call to Action*

As we pick up in verse 8, keep in mind the amount of activity that had preceded the start of the song that was sung. All of Israel was celebrating and worshiping God—giving thanks and praise—as the Ark made its way to the tent. A lot of action had taken place and now the activity was ramping down, but the worshipful joy, awe, and wonder of the people had not.

The first four verses of this song are laden with calls to action. “Oh give thanks...call upon His name...Make known” (v.8), “Sing to Him...sing praises...Speak” (v.9), “Glory in...be glad” (v.10), “Seek” (v.11), “Remember” (v.12). Though there is a clear emphasis on action and activity, that action was not directed at the singers, but rather was a call to focus their hearts and actions on God. Verse 8 starts with “give thanks to the LORD,” and “make known His deeds.” These beginning statements give a framework for the song. First, we give thanks and we do that by singing, seeking,

glorying, speaking, and remembering. Second, we are propelled by a heart of thanks to proclaim who God is and what He has done.

When someone gives us a gift, there is often a series of events that happen afterwards to express our gratitude. We may, upon opening the gift, let out some kind of excited sound—a gasp, a little squeak, a laugh, or one of many others. Next, we typically verbally say, “Thank you,” and may even give the person a hug. You may, even days after the fact, send a thank you card to the person to ensure they know that you are grateful. There is a lot of action in the ways we give thanks, even in our relationships with other people. It should be no surprise, then, that David called for a series of actions—actions of worship—to express our thanks to God.

### ***A Call to Remember***

Verse 12 transitions from calling for actions from the worshiper to God to calling the listener to remember the times when God had interceded for and delivered them. For the original audience, this was the reminder that God had led Abraham to the Promised Land and had established an everlasting covenant with Abraham’s descendants. This was an important reminder of an everlasting covenant for a

people that had been taken from the land of promise.

When David wrote this song, he called back to the times of the Patriarchs—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who received God’s promise, but did not get to see the nation that would come from them. Even though they did not see the fulfillment, they felt the blessings of the covenant. They wandered and were not harmed and saw that God was with them. For his readers in exile, this was a reminder that God was still with them and that there was still hope for them.

Today, we can read (or sing) this song with the same hope. We have an everlasting covenant with God, sealed with the blood of Jesus. We not only have the promise that God is with us, but that we have the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and guide us. We can join in this song too, because we are all adopted sons and daughters of God and this is the history of His people and His actions in the world!

### ***A Call to Proclaim***

In verse 23, the song transitions again, this time from remembrance to proclaiming. Israel was to be the shining beacon in the night, shining out the greatness of God as well as the futility of the idols the people of the world worshiped.

We might think of idolatry only as people praying to statues or images. It is that, but there are other forms of idolatry we might fall into today. Idolatry can be giving priority to anything above God. It is not as far removed from our lives as we often think—career, wealth, and fame top the charts of idolatry today. The need for God in people's lives is just as great today—we need saving from our useless idols as much now as they did then.

This song gives a clear call to make the name of God great among all people. This same charge is echoed in the Great Commission. This mission also rings out, week in and week out, in God's gathered family all around the globe. When we truly see God's greatness—when we see His splendor and His beauty—we will be filled up with praise for Him.

Recognizing God's actions in our lives should drive us to give thanks—to worship and honor Him. Then, it should drive us to remember that God was in every step of the journey; we should remember that we are part of a larger story; and that should drive us to share this amazing news with as many as we can. How can you make God's name known where you are today?

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Analyze the psalm sung when David brought the Ark to Jerusalem.
2. Rejoice in the wonderful things God has done on behalf of His people.
3. Express thanks for God's greatness and provision.

### *Teaching Activity*

Have the group make a list of attributes of God highlighted in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36. What other attributes of God can you list? How can remembering these attributes of God help us overcome discouragement in turbulent circumstances? Invite participants to share personal experiences where this happened for them. Using David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 as a model, write personal prayers of thanksgiving to God for His acts of faithfulness and deliverance.

### **Looking Forward**

We examined the way David recounted the wonderful attributes of God in his celebration of moving the Ark. Next, we will ponder how we should respond when God's plan for our lives does not match the way we expected to serve Him.

# 3. Building God's House

1 Chronicles 17:1, 3-4, 11-14; 21:18, 21-27

## Daily Bible Meditations

Angie Osborn

### Sunday

### 1 Chronicles 22:6-13

David planned the Temple and thought he would be the one to build it. God, however, had other plans. He did not want David to build the Temple, but wanted Solomon, David's son, to do it instead. I am sure it was difficult for David to give up his life-long dream of building a "house" for God. But he accepted God's direction and was obedient to it. As humans, we plan and scheme, but sometimes God steps in and makes it clear that He has other plans and pushes us in another direction. Our response should be like David's—we should be willing to set our plans aside and follow His leading.

### Monday

### 1 Chronicles 28:2-10

Solomon was given the daunting yet honored task of building the Temple. In 1 Chronicles 28:20, David encouraged him by saying, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don't be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you" (NLT). That advice is true for each of us as we seek the Lord's will for us. What is He calling you to do? Something scary? Something overwhelming? Something that stretches you? Whatever it is, He has given you the gifts and the talents to do it and He will be by your side. So, go forth in courage and confidence! Take that step of faith and trust that He is with you.

### Tuesday

### 1 Chronicles 21:28–22:1

It is helpful to read all of chapter 21 to gain better insight into the context of these verses. As I read chapter 21, verses 24-26 stuck out. Ornan was willing to give David the land as well as oxen, wood, and wheat for the offering. David's response in verse 24 was to say he could not offer an offering to the Lord that cost him nothing. As we serve our Heavenly Father, we are also called to sacrifice. We are called to give our whole selves to the Lord as living sacrifices. We are called to die to ourselves, which seems scary, but we rise again in right relationship with Him and that holds many blessings!

### Wednesday

### 2 Samuel 7:1-11a

David looked around his home and realized that it was very nice. The Ark, however, was not in such a nice place and that seemed wrong to David. He began to plan for building a temple. God,

however, had other plans. He was preparing to “plant” Israel and it was not time for His temple to be built, and David was not the man to do the job. As the Israelites wandered, God was with them. His mobility had been their protection as He moved with them. The Ark represented God’s presence to the Israelites. With Jesus, God’s presence, through the Holy Spirit is always with us. The God of the universe makes His home in our hearts when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

### **Thursday**

### **1 Chronicles 17:7b-10**

David wanted to build a home for the Ark of the Covenant which represented God’s presence. God turned it around and instead told David of how He planned to build David’s house. He began by reminding David what He had already done in his life. He went on to tell David that under his reign, Israel would be permanently and securely established. God also promised to establish a dynasty for the house of David—an ongoing legacy for David long after his death; including a direct link to Jesus, God’s Son. Through God’s greater plan, David’s house would make a way for all who accepted Christ to be in right relationship with God again.

### **Friday**

### **Psalms 138**

In times of trouble, we sometimes wonder where God is and if He hears our prayers. The reality is, God *does* hear our prayers, in *all* situations. He is there and wants us to reach out to Him. David did not get caught up in using “prayer words” as he poured his heart out to the Lord. He was real. He poured out what was truly on his heart and did not hold back. God wants us to go to Him. He wants to hear our praises, thanks, concerns, frustrations...all of it. Through it all, good and bad, He is there. He is listening and ready to bring hope and comfort.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Chronicles 17:1, 3-4, 11-14; 21:18, 21-27**

We do not understand all the reasons why, but it was not God’s plan for David to build His house. Maybe He knew it would go to David’s head; or that the people would begin to idolize David. Whatever the reason, God made clear that a spiritual “house” is more important than a physical one. God shared His plan for the legacy that David would have, including a direct line to the Savior. David was obedient to God and did not build the temple. God was faithful and David’s legacy went far beyond his rule as king. Today, take time to pray and listen...what is your role in God’s plan?



**Study** 1 Chronicles 17:1, 3-4, 11-14; 21:18, 21-27

**Background** 1 Chronicles 17:1-15; 21:18-30

**Devotional** Psalm 138

## Key Verse

When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever (1 Chronicles 17:11-12).

## Heart of the Lesson

People are not always able to accomplish what they desire to do for others. Is it possible to see a positive result even when our desires are not accomplished? Although God did not agree for David to build a temple, God promised that his son would.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. Describe a time when your plans did not work out the way you had hoped. What positives did you see in the way things turned out? In what ways did you see God's hand at work in it? Was there something wrong with your plan or did God just have something better in mind?
2. What are the different ways the word "house" is used in 1 Chronicles 17 (see v.1, 4, 10, 12)? How do we see that David's desire would be fulfilled, but not in the way he expected? How does the play on words help us to understand that God's ways are much higher than ours?
3. Did God's rejection of David's plan indicate a rejection of David himself? How did God use David's past, present, and future (in 1 Chronicles 17:7-11) to make sure David understood this? What solace could David take from God's promises (17:12-14)?
4. What did David's approach to offering a sacrifice to God in 1 Chronicles 21 reveal about his heart? What is significant about the location where this took place? How did God affirm His acceptance of David's offering and what would that mean?
5. What lessons can you learn from David's experience about making plans to do something for God? What process can you use to seek to understand if your plans line up with God's plans? How will you respond if the answer is, "No?"

## Understanding and Living

Darwin Steele

### *Desire for God's House*

The lesson for today comprises two separate actions by David to secure a place of worship for God. The first represented David's actual desire for a "house of God" and the second, more specifically, a place of sacrifice to stop a plague. Both were important to securing a place to worship God. The lesson takes us to what a "house" was to mean for David, including the eternal promise. God had something very wonderful in mind for David in his desire to build a "house" for his Lord.

David's story is significant because of the faithfulness of God towards David as the King of Israel. Chapter 17 of 1 Chronicles opens with David revealing to Nathan, the prophet, his marvelous desire to do something for God. After all, God had blessed David with a beautiful house and David wanted to reciprocate the blessing. Can you imagine how that must have excited David? Can you think of a time when you had a marvelous idea that would honor God and bring glory to His name? If so, you can understand David's desire to give back to God just a bit of what had been given to him.

Some years ago, I was privileged to meet a sports humorist

named Patrick MacManus and discovered that we shared a love of the humor found in roadkill (catch me at Conference and I will explain). His excitement in discovering a new way of presenting something tragic as humor fascinated me. In that meeting, I came away with a burning desire to do "something"—perhaps a new devotional dedicated to sportsmen and outdoorsmen. The years passed and I came to understand that gifts differ with the folks that possess them. It was not time—it may never be—for me to write something like that. Like David, coming face to face with what God had planned for him, I, too, found that God had a different road for me.

### *A Different Road*

David felt, keenly, that the blessing he had been given would need to be reciprocated to fully honor the Lord. The prophet Nathan, quite likely, got excited about this idea of a house for God—so much so, that he told David, "Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you" (v.2). As a man of God, Nathan saw to David's core and noted the genuineness of his heart. Thus, Nathan could give David the confident reply of "go for it." But the Lord had a different

plan for His house and also plans for a different “house” in mind for David.

David, even in his excitement, did two things well here. First, he shared his vision with a trusted man of God. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall, But in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14, NKJV). When one has the humility to share, ask, and then be obedient to critical thinking, that person will find themselves approved by God and man. Jesus noted this: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14:28-30, NKJV). Sharing a vision, idea, or plan is a good way to validate the call of what God really wants done with that venture.

Second, after the Lord’s plans were revealed, David was humbled and confident enough to say, “Thank you,” appropriately. Read David’s prayer in 17:16-27 and the way he closed that section. David had now been the recipient of a mighty covenant—one that would seat his family firmly in the kingship

and would be the seed that brought Christ to mankind.

### ***David Stumbled***

David was human—much like you and me, I am sure. Yes, his heart genuinely wanted the Lord. But there were times when he (and we) do something and that is not exactly what God wanted. David began a census that brought a plague on Israel—despite wise council to not do this. So, in Chapter 21, we find that David had been commanded to build an altar of sacrifice to stop the plague. David purchased the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite and built an altar. He then offered sacrifices and God brought an end to the illness that afflicted the people of Israel.

Why is this significant? Why this place? It cost David a great deal, money-wise. It cost Israel those that died in the plague. This was an expensive piece of property, was it not? The cost was high indeed, but this place was located on Mt. Moriah, where Solomon later built a house for the Lord. God used this, even in the sin of David, to secure the place that the Temple was to be built and where He would be worshipped.

### ***God’s Plans***

You and I desire to do so many things for God. I would even say that most of us jump

right into “work” that we think will bring honor and glory to the name of Christ. Like David, we are grateful for what God has given us. We want to do more, and we may even be willing to sacrifice for that vision. However, like David, we need to learn to put our dreams up for critical feedback. We must be willing to surrender those dreams if that critical look shows they do not match up with God’s plans, and revise our walk to align with God’s planning. Our dreams, when aligned with God’s plans, will cost a costly price—even, and including, our lives.

Despite the cost, submitting brings a blessing. For David, it was an assurance of his “house” being established forever—through Jesus Christ. For us, there is no less a promise. Proverbs tells us this: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV). David’s plans produced a plague when he failed to listen to God, yet God used even his failures to further His purposes. Listening provided an eternal promise without the stain of pride. Our question is, as always, “Are we listening?”

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Contrast the “house” David wanted to build for God with the “house” God promised to David.
2. Reflect on how God’s plans are greater and more satisfying than the plans we make for ourselves.
3. Seek God’s wisdom in planning for the future.

### *Teaching Activity*

Ask participants to explain how they determined which dwelling to rent or buy, what factors influenced their decisions, and how they made this dwelling not just a house but a home. Use a concordance and other Bible reference tools to discover the ways the term “house” is used throughout both Testaments of Scripture. Lead a discussion on the “house” that God promised to establish for David.

### **Looking Forward**

We have seen how David responded when God refused to allow him to perform his dream service for the Lord. Next, we will review Mary’s humble response to being used by God.

# 4. The Lord Is with You

Luke 1:39-56

## Daily Bible Meditations

Angie Osborn

### Sunday

**Luke 1:57-66**

Not much about John's birth was normal. His parents were "too old" to have a child, but by God's grace, they did anyway. By cultural standards, he should have been named after his father, but by his parent's obedience, he was not. His father was caused to be mute when he asked for proof that his wife would bear a son, but when he confirmed the name "John," God restored his voice. God does not always go about things in the way we would expect. Sometimes He provides miracles—like an elderly couple having a child. Sometimes He throws curve balls—like going against cultural norms. Even when things seem odd, if God has a plan, it is the best. Jump out in faith and enjoy the ride!

### Monday

**Luke 1:67-79**

John's birth meant that God was working actively to fulfill His promise. Zechariah recognized that God was doing what He had promised and praised Him. Not only did Zachariah praise God for his son, John, but he also pointed to Jesus, the Messiah. John's job would be to *proclaim* salvation and Jesus would *bring* salvation. It is amazing to think that John's birth was the beginning of the enactment of God's ultimate plan. All through the Old Testament, prophecies were made and here they were coming to fruition. God is faithful to His promises...on that we can depend!

### Tuesday

**Isaiah 7:10-17**

The prophesy found in Isaiah chapter 7 is foundational to Christianity. God meant the sign to be earth-shaking. God meant it to be such a sign that when it was actually fulfilled in history, men would stand back and say, "I saw God do it! Only He could accomplish this!" And yet, a virgin giving birth to the Messiah was nothing compared to who He actually was—Immanuel, God with us. This special child would become God among His people. The prophesy was fulfilled in the life of Jesus. In Jesus, God came to us. He came to bring salvation and grace. That is truly a miracle...God with us!

### Wednesday

**Luke 1:26-33**

"With God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37, NKJV). The angel proclaimed that to Mary as he shared God's plan for her to give



birth to God's Son. It is impossible for a woman the age of Elizabeth to conceive, but she did. It is impossible for a virgin to conceive, but she did. These were not things that happened with no explanation—they happened because with God *all* things are possible! What impossible circumstances are you facing? Lean on God, trust His plan, and believe that with Him *nothing* is impossible!

### **Thursday**

**Luke 1:34-38**

Mary had just received some pretty hefty, life-changing news. It is easy for us to rejoice at the news that Mary would be the mother of Jesus. But Mary had to be filled with so many questions, doubts, and concerns. What would people think? Was this for real? How would she explain this to Joseph? How would this impact her future plans? Mary's response to God, however, was one of obedience. Even though her life would never be the same, even though she might face criticism, she obeyed. Mary willingly took the role that God had for her in His master plan. When God wants to use us, are we willing to set aside our doubts and fears to trust in Him and His plan?

### **Friday**

**Matthew 1:18-25**

Now it was Joseph's turn to receive some hefty, life-changing news. Mary, his fiancé was pregnant, and he knew he had nothing to do with that. His first response was, understandably, to break off the engagement. He would do so quietly to save face for Mary. But then, he received a visit from an angel who let Joseph in on God's plan. Like Mary, Joseph must have had many questions, concerns, and doubts. Like Mary, Joseph responded in faith and trust. He accepted his role in God's ultimate plan. He walked forward in faith, trusting God. How can you step out in faith today? What is God calling you to do? What is He calling you to trust Him for?

### **Sabbath**

**Luke 1:39-56**

Sometimes, when God does big things in our lives, we want to shout it from the rooftops. Other times, we need time to process and the company of a fellow believer who can understand or just listen. Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, after receiving her big news. Elizabeth responded in joy and praise. She lifted Mary up and encouraged her. When God asks big things of us, it is important to have those brothers and sisters in Christ who can walk with us. Sometimes we need assurance and encouragement. Sometimes we need validation. Sometimes we just need a listening ear. Who can you share your spiritual journey with?

**Study** Luke 1:39-56

**Background** Luke 1:39-56

**Devotional** 1 Samuel 2:1-10

## Key Verse

And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior (Luke 1:46-47).

## Heart of the Lesson

People often wonder if they truly deserve the praise that others give them. How can we be gracious about the honors we receive? When Elizabeth called her blessed, Mary humbly praised God, confessing that all that had happened to her was in fulfillment of God’s great plan of redemption.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. Has someone else ever received credit for something you did? Have you ever received credit for something someone else did? How did you respond in each situation? What is it like to be rightly honored for something you did? Is there a right and wrong way to respond?
2. Why did Elizabeth’s baby leap in her womb in Mary’s presence (v.41)? How was this a fitting precursor to who Elizabeth’s baby would be and what his purpose would be in God’s plan?
3. Based on Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary, do you think they had already spoken about Gabriel’s visit to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)? Why or why not? Either way, how did Elizabeth’s words demonstrate her true understanding of the situation?
4. Was it appropriate for Elizabeth to heap praise on Mary this way? What can we learn about the importance of embracing our role in God’s plan from the way Mary and Elizabeth are portrayed in this passage?
5. How did Mary respond to Elizabeth’s praise? What impresses you the most from her song? Which of her words demonstrate she was willing to give credit where credit was due?
6. Is it wrong for us to accept honor for a job well done? Why or why not? Why might it be important in certain circumstances to allow others to honor us? What can we learn from Mary about the right way to receive honor?

## Understanding and Living

Darwin Steele

### *Graciously Accepting Praise*

Is it not exciting when you are given a complement that transcends anything you have ever heard before? Here, in this dialog between Elizabeth and Mary, praise was given, and a song of thanksgiving was shared in an intimate moment between cousins who loved each other very much. What made this special was that both women loved the Lord and were grateful for their part in His perfect plan.

Mary, having heard the Good News from Gabriel, sought out her cousin Elizabeth. They did not have cell phones in those days, so the news that Mary carried could not have reached the ears of Elizabeth. Thus, we have this marvelous happening; Elizabeth knew why Mary was there and it was so momentous for her, that even her baby leapt in the womb for joy. Spontaneously, Elizabeth greeted her cousin, crying out, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (v.42, ESV).

Mary did not take the praise for herself, but right away broke into song and prophecy of joy that magnified the purposes of God and the sovereignty of His will. She graciously accepted praise and gave the true Author His rightful credit. How do you accept praise?

### *Song of Praise*

Mary’s response to Elizabeth’s greeting is called the “Magnificat.” This word is Latin and means “magnify” (or “exalt,” “glorify,” etc.). Luke, writing in the Greek, used the word “megalunei” for “magnify,” which, according to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance is from “megas” which means “to make (or declare) great, i.e. Increase or (figuratively) extol—enlarge, magnify, shew great (online at biblehub.com/greek/3170.htm). Thus, Mary’s response showed that Mary was showering praise on the Lord.

Some writers think that Mary combined many such songs of praise from Hannah’s in the first Book of Samuel, to the writings of Isaiah and Habakkuk. Perhaps she did, but I believe this song (and it is a song, meant to be sung) was totally spontaneous. Mary had just arrived at Elizabeth’s home—no time to settle in or make any kind of preparations; simply a beautiful response to the greeting given. This truly is a Song of Praise. The Lord was indeed, through the Holy Spirit, with Mary.

### *The Lord as Savior*

Mary opened her song with a beautiful acknowledgement that God alone provides salvation—in this case, a personal salvation. She sang, “My soul magnifies

the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for [H]e has looked on the humble estate of [H]is servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for [H]e who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is [H]is name” (Luke 1:46-49, ESV).

Why would Mary believe such things to be true about herself? To understand that, one must read what happened to Mary beforehand. When the angel, Gabriel, visited her (Luke 1:26-38), Mary had no inkling what was to befall her. Yet, out of all the poor, single, virgins in Judea, God chose her. Earlier, Luke had recorded that Gabriel was very explicit in what was to happen to her and the blessing that would come from that Godly visitation. As proof of his message, Gabriel was the one to tell Mary about Elizabeth’s pregnancy—once again, through divine communication, no cell phones allowed! That is the reason Mary left in haste—not only was the child she bore, the Son of God, but Elizabeth’s son would be the forerunner of the Christ (Mary’s Son).

Mary understood completely the importance of this divine event; perhaps through teaching and studying Scripture previously, but certainly through the Spirit that had been bestowed on her. Notice as well that Mary,

through the Spirit, was able to look forward into the future and see how this lowly maiden would be blessed because of the Child; she would be remembered. In everything that Mary had done so far, even in her own personal psalm, she recognized that the Lord alone could receive the glory of this event.

It might make us wonder a bit, “If God is with us, then how do we accept praise? Do we give credit where credit is due? Or is it okay to retain some of the praise for ourselves?” Mary had no such problem. In her mind it was clear that the Lord, alone, is worthy of praise.

### ***A Tribute of Submission***

The balance of the Magnificat is a cry out—or maybe a tribute is a better word—to the strength and justice of the Lord. Notice the words Mary used: mighty, holy, mercy, fear, strength, put down, exalted, filled, and sent away. Every descriptive word Mary used here, ascribes to God the ultimate authority, the right to final judgement, and the exclusive ability to give or withdraw mercy. This is the Creator God, the One and only Judge. Only He could do the things that had been accomplished.

Why is this important? Mary had a specific role in the coming of the Christ and she understood the hugeness of this event. Luke earlier recorded this, “And the



angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:35-38, NKJV).

Mary’s song gave glory and honor to the One that can do anything and everything. It was a cry of submission, gratitude, love, and even remembrance. Mary’s song was a prayer that was unique as this young lady and is something we can learn from. Mary foresaw her role in the coming Messiah—so should we. Mary honored the God who makes all things possible—so should we. Mary gave glory to God—so should we.

Mary, in carrying out her role and being submissive to God’s will, carries with her an example of how you and I should be. Small as each of our roles are, they still are important! Perhaps one day, we also may sing a song of thanks for how God is using us to further His Kingdom. Sing a song of praise today!

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Survey the themes present in Mary’s song of praise.
2. Value Mary’s place in the unfolding story of God’s saving work.
3. Commit to your own roles in furthering God’s kingdom.

### *Teaching Activity*

Find a recording of the Magnificat and play it for your class. Instruct participants while they listen to imagine they are Mary having just received this incredible news. Have them journal the thoughts and feelings they experienced while listening to the song. Compare and contrast Mary’s Magnificat with Hannah’s prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10). How were the two women similar? How were they different? How do they inspire faith in us?

### **Looking Forward**

We admired the humility of Mary’s response to being told she would give birth to the Savior of the World. Next, we will reflect on David’s response to receiving great promises from the Lord.



# 5. David's Prayer

1 Chronicles 17:16-27

## Daily Bible Meditations

Angie Osborn

### Sunday

### Psalm 89:19-37

God entered into a covenant with David—a covenant that would stand the test of time and last forever. Through Christ, we are also in covenant with God. Through Jesus, the covenant is completed with both the blood sacrifice of Christ and the oath of the Lord. When God makes a covenant, He will always stand by that covenant. He will not change the terms; He will not cancel it. Through Christ, we are able to be in a right relationship with God the Father. We are promised His presence, through the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. Praise God that He is faithful to His promises!

### Monday

### 2 Samuel 7:11b-17

Sometimes, God asks us to look beyond the here and now. Sometimes we will not get to see His whole plan in action. Sometimes, we will have a part to play in a bigger picture. The promise that God made to David was one of future fulfillment. If David had a “what’s-in-it-for-me-right-now” attitude, the promise would have meant nothing to him. But David had faith that God had a plan and it would serve to bring glory to Him. David’s joy in God’s promises to him were spiritual. He knew the Messiah would come from his dynasty and from that would come an everlasting Kingdom. David understood that he had a role in God’s plan and took joy in that.

### Tuesday

### 2 Samuel 7:18-22

God made a covenant with David—one filled with promises. David could have had a prideful response. The God of the universe was giving him an amazing gift. David’s response, however, was humble. He recognized the God’s gifts were not a reflection of David’s greatness, but a reflection of God’s greatness. God gives us many gifts in life. The most amazing gift is that of His Son, Jesus. Through Him, we have salvation and the promise of eternal life with the Heavenly Father. Our response should be like David’s, one of humility and thankfulness, recognizing that the gifts we receive are a reflection of God’s greatness.

### Wednesday

### 2 Samuel 7:23-29

God glorified Himself by keeping His promises to Israel. David’s prayer was focused on the greatness of God and what He had done, as

well as what He had promised to do. He also bragged on the nation of Israel a little, but immediately admitted that their greatness was due to God's work on their behalf. David's prayer was heartfelt and genuine. When we pray, it is important to do so with an attitude of worship. Too often, we go before God with only a prayer list. While He does want to hear our needs, He also deserves our heartfelt praise and our recognition of His promises.

### **Thursday**

### **1 Chronicles 22:2-5**

David had been told that he would not be allowed to build the Temple. He was, however, able to plan for the building of the Temple. He worked with Solomon to plan and share his wisdom. David's response could have been one of frustration—he wanted to build the temple. When God told him he could not build the temple, he responded in obedience and humility. He accepted God's plan and found a way he could contribute. God may not always call us to do what we think we should be doing, but He will use us as long as we are obedient to Him. What part is He asking you to play?

### **Friday**

### **1 Chronicles 22:14-19**

In this situation, David was an example of someone who works in the background and may receive little or no credit for his or her contribution. David would not build the Temple, but he would make all of the preparations behind the scenes. He also used his influence to instruct the people to assist his son in the work. Without those details being taken care of, Solomon would have had a very hard time getting the job done. Sometimes, we are called to work in the background. Others may not see our contributions, but they are important too. Like David, we may not see the finished product, but we can rejoice knowing we played a part in God's plan!

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Chronicles 17:16-27**

In verse 26, David said, "Now, O Lord, You are God, and have promised this good thing to Your servant." This statement was David's foundation of faith. In all things, he clung to the fact that God is God. God's promises are true, and He can always be trusted. Today as you worship, thank God for who He is. Think of specific examples and instances of how He has revealed Himself to you. Reflect on His promises and how He has shown those to you. Thank Him for being God, the Lord of all creation! Rejoice that you have been brought to Him through Jesus Christ!

**Study** 1 Chronicles 17:16-27

**Background** 1 Chronicles 17:16-27

**Devotional** Psalm 89:19-37

## Key Verse

“O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (1 Chronicles 17:20).

## Heart of the Lesson

When a person receives a great promise, he or she may feel honored. How does one respond when one has been so honored? When God promised to make him the head of a great dynasty, King David prayed a prayer of gratitude, praise, and petition.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. When have you received a promise you did not deserve? How did you respond to the promise and to the promiser? Did this change your outlook on yourself and/or your circumstances?
2. Review the context leading up to this passage (1 Chronicles 17:1-15) to remember what David had experienced prior to this prayer. What had he wanted to do? How did God respond to David’s plan? What promise did God make to David instead?
3. How would you characterize the content of David’s prayer? How might he have been tempted to respond differently in this situation? What does this reveal about David? About his relationship with God? About his understanding of his position before the people and before God?
4. What one word did David repeatedly use to refer to himself in his prayer? Why was this appropriate (see v.4)? How did this demonstrate David’s acceptance of God’s promise?
5. Compare David’s initial question, “Who am I,” with the responses of Moses (Exodus 3) and Gideon (Judges 6) to receiving God’s calling on their lives. What core character trait in these responses? How is this crucial to being used by God?
6. Think about how your prayers reflect your attitude toward God’s plan and your role. Are there aspects of your prayers that need to change in light of understanding David’s prayer?

## Understanding and Living

Darwin Steele

### *People Who Change the World*

In an article titled, “15 Ordinary People Who Changed History,” Reader’s Digest tells the following story:

Tired from a full day’s work, Rosa Parks boarded a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955 and forever became one of the inspirational people who changed the world. When she refused to obey the driver’s order to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus so a white person could sit there, she was arrested for civil disobedience. Parks’ act of defiance, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott that followed, are recognized as pivotal moments in the civil rights movement.

Every age has people who make small changes, do radical things, stand for something truer and higher than themselves. David was such a man. Perfect? By no means—he was a man of war, passion, and song; a man of contradictions. But he loved God. Out of that love came first, a respect for the providence of God and second, a yielding and humility before Him.

We have seen that David had a desire for the things of God. He wanted to build a house for his Lord. However, the Lord had a much bigger plan in mind. The actual physical dwelling would

not be built by David, but by his son Solomon. The house that David would build (or that God would build through him) was the house of his family from which the Christ—the one who would sit on the throne of David for eternity—would arise. You can see that connection as the living proof of the dual nature of Jesus Christ—both fully human and fully God. We know His provenance, or the history of how Jesus was given to men.

The prophet Isaiah offered us this: “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7, NKJV).

### *What David’s Prayer Tells Us*

David ran the gamut of thankfulness in this prayer. He began with something that set a theme throughout this prayer that is laid before the Lord. “Who am I?” This question is embedded all the way through this passage. “Who am I?” David’s heart was

right where it should have been: filled with humility; keeping himself in the proper perspective of David, the man, before a most Holy God. That is real faith. Because of the Lord's providence, His Grace, and His plan for the salvation of man, David was able to look into the future and say with awe and confidence, "And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O God; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the rank of a man of high degree, O Lord God (v.17, NKJV).

How many of us can claim such a great thing from God? David knew himself; he knew his fragility and he knew his low estate even though he was king of Israel. However, he was able to set all of that aside and look only to the will and grace of his Lord. This is worth emulating in our day. Our world looks to believers to emulate a living grace, a humble attitude, and a compassionate heart that testifies to the greatness of our Christ and King.

As this prayer is read, the reader can see that this praise was both personal and corporate; encompassing David's person, his line, and that of his people. In an article titled, "10 Things You Should Know About Corporate Prayer," Megan Hill wrote:

In that moment, it was clear to me that the church at

prayer is not a passive, half-drowsy, group of listeners; the church at prayer is a body at work, an army at war, and a congregation at worship. Whether we stand or sit or kneel for prayer, we must understand that when one person prays aloud, every person in the assembly is actually praying alongside him.

David's prayer was active. He stepped beyond himself and in the strength of an active prayer life, he prayed corporately, even though no one else was mentioned as being there. Yet, this was recorded, so I would argue that this prayer was heard (at least by Nathan, the prophet) and was intentionally corporate to include all those present. What a testimony! Active prayer—not a droning on of words but a perfect example of a living relationship with God.

You can read Jesus' response to prayer in Matthew 6:5-15. Both prayers have but one focus—the Lord. Both prayers put man in his proper place before the Eternal One but still acknowledge the wonderful gifts that God has given (and will give) to the one who prays.

Look at the confidence in which David approached the throne of God in his prayer. He took the time to thank God, but his focus included a level of trust, faith, and confidence that God



would do exactly what He had promised. That is not passive prayer! It is prayer that engages every part of a believer's life and faith walk. David looked to the future and saw that God would accomplish everything that David wanted to accomplish by building a house for God. Our question must be, do we approach the throne with an assurance of faith? Or are we blindly approaching, saying words that tumble over one another and really have no meaning or faith behind them?

### ***Modeling This Prayer***

How do we pray? That is a question worth considering. Paul was clear that prayer must be constant and thorough, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NKJV). David certainly modeled that for us. God wants us to stay in communication with Him; He wants us to pray in faith; He expects us to pray with confidence. However, He also expects that we will place ourselves in the proper attitude of who we are and Who He is. David modeled this. He also prayed with his whole being—fully engaged and active in praise. How are you praying today?

## **Hints for Teaching**

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Research the significance of David's prayer in its historical context.
2. Aspire to emulate the faithfulness of David as expressed in his prayer.
3. Embrace David's prayer as a model and write a prayer of gratitude and praise to God.

### *Teaching Activity*

Provide the context for David's prayer by forming small groups to research David's life to this point: his plans to build the temple, Nathan's role, God's response to David's idea, and God's promise to David. Ask participants to think of a situation in their lives when they received unmerited blessings from God. Ask them to use David's prayer as a model and write a personal prayer of gratitude and praise to God.

### **Looking Back**

In this Unit, we reviewed ways that David and Mary celebrated God's promises and His work in their lives. We looked for ways to apply these methods to our own lives.

# 6. A Place for the Ark

1 Kings 8:1-13

## Daily Bible Meditations

Trisha Gerstel

### Sunday

### Revelation 11:15-19

Before Solomon dedicated the temple of the Lord (1 Kings 8:22-66), he and the elders and heads of the tribes of Israel brought the ark of the Lord into the temple with much ceremony (1 Kings 8:1-13). Today we read that before God's heavenly temple will open, His ark will be set in its rightful place and the elders will offer praise. When we wish to dedicate our lives to God, we must understand and accept the covenant He has made through His Son, Jesus Christ, and we must be willing to praise Him for His commandments, which guard our hearts and bring Him glory.

### Monday

### 1 Corinthians 14:26-33a

The more we study our Bibles, the more we will understand the weight of the Apostle Paul's words when he said, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v.33). Everything the Lord does is purposeful and all is done to His glory. If a person, therefore, desires to honor God, he or she must be purposeful. We cannot allow the "details" to go unchecked. Instead, we must make an effort to spend our time wisely, use appropriate words and actions when interacting with others, be cautious in our entertainment choices, etc. All of these should be done with an aim to glorify God.

### Tuesday

### Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Today's passage shows the importance of sharing God's Word so that people "may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law" (v.12). We cannot effectively witness to others unless we share with them the Word of God, which "is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12), and "is perfect, restoring the soul...[and] making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). Attempting to share the hope and love of God without His Word is like trying to construct a house without building materials—it simply cannot be done.

### Wednesday

### 2 Chronicles 5:2-7

The Ark containing the testimony of the Lord (Exodus 25:16) served as a reminder of God's presence among His people. It

was, in essence, a portable temple where God resided. It is not difficult, then, to understand why King Solomon and the leaders of the tribes of Israel were so particular about their actions surrounding the Ark's placement in God's Temple. Solomon and the others were keenly aware of the blessing of being in God's presence. It certainly is a good reminder and motivator for us to daily be in awe of His Holy Spirit, who lives in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22).

### **Thursday**

### **2 Chronicles 5:11-14**

Music (when written to God's glory) can be a big part of filling our hearts with joy. However, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of believing that music can do something which prayer, Bible study, and communing with God cannot. If we read today's passage closely, we note that it was not the music, but rather the glory of God that was so overwhelming that the priests were unable to stand and minister (v.14). God's glory comes not from man-made melodies. They can attempt to describe God's glory, but His actual glory comes only from His presence.

### **Friday**

### **2 Chronicles 4:19–5:1**

King Solomon's actions in this passage make it clear that not only building the Lord's Temple, but also furnishing it was very important to him. He sacrificed his time, efforts, and wealth to ensure that the Temple would be worthy of God's presence, and that it would be fully equipped with items reflecting His glory. Solomon's actions were one way in which he showed honor to the Lord. His actions also challenge us to think of ways we can help build and furnish the church (both figuratively and literally) in God's honor.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Kings 8:1-13**

If today's passage seems familiar, it should. It is another account of the activities described in Wednesday's reading (2 Chronicles 5:2-7). Whenever stories are repeated in the Bible, I stop to consider why. For example, it is my understanding that the identical stories about Jesus in the first four books of the New Testament serve as a witness to their validity and importance. Why is the story of the Ark's Temple placement repeated? I believe it is to help us understand how much we are to respect and show honor toward the Lord's Word and His presence.

**Study** 1 Kings 8:1-13

**Background** 1 Kings 8:1-13; 2 Chronicles 5:1-14

**Devotional** Deuteronomy 31:7-13

## **Key Verse**

“I have surely built You a lofty house, a place for Your dwelling forever” (1 Kings 8:13).

## **Heart of the Lesson**

People have dedication ceremonies or grand openings for many different things. How are these ceremonies or grand openings celebrated? When King Solomon called an assembly to celebrate the dedication of the Temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

## **Questions for Studying the Text**

1. When have you celebrated a long-awaited accomplishment? What and how did you celebrate? What aspects of the celebration were most important to you?
2. What were Solomon and the Israelite’s celebrating in this passage—both generally and specifically? During which Feast did their celebration take place (see Leviticus 23:33-43)? How might this have been significant to their celebration?
3. Review the instructions God gave Moses for building the Ark (Exodus 25) and housing the ark (Exodus 26:33-34). What parallels do you find with the description of the Ark in this passage? Why was the Ark so important to the Israelites?
4. According to verse 9, what was inside the Ark at this time? According to Hebrews 9:4 (see also Exodus 16:32-34; Numbers 17:10-11), what other items were housed there? How do you explain this discrepancy? When might these other items have been removed?
5. What kind of sacrifice did Solomon and the Israelites offer to God in their celebration? Why did they offer such an extravagant sacrifice?
6. In what ways do you celebrate God’s presence in your life today? What can we learn from this passage about the right and wrong ways to celebrate?

## Understanding and Living

Steve Osborn

### *Celebrating God's Presence*

As New Testament believers, how often do we take for granted the presence of God in our lives? Part of the miracle of Jesus is wrapped up in His name, Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jesus also promised that when we put our faith in Him, His Holy Spirit would live right inside of us, providing much needed wisdom, guidance, comfort, etc. In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul described the Holy Spirit as a "seal" guaranteeing our presence in Christ and His in us. Do we really appreciate and even celebrate the wonderful assurance of God's presence?

The Israelites did not have the luxury of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. However, God did provide for their need to be assured of His presence with them in other ways. When Israel had fled from Egypt and was journeying through the wilderness, God went "before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light" (Exodus 13:21).

Later, after Moses built the tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting), "the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). The word

"glory" is used in Scripture to describe the manifestation of God's presence as it is experienced by humanity. So the cloud was, at that time, the way the people experienced the presence of God. We see similar manifestations of God's glory/presence described in Isaiah 4:5, Ezekiel 10:4, and Haggai 2:7. We also get hints of this in descriptions of the end of time and the return of Christ in Luke 21:27 and Revelation 1:7.

### *The Role of the Ark*

Another representation of the presence of God for Israel was found in the Ark of the Covenant. Without repeating all that has been written this quarter about the Ark, perhaps a brief summary will be helpful in understanding Solomon's celebration here in 1 Kings 8.

In the midst of Israel's desert wanderings, God gave Moses specific instructions about constructing an ark of wood overlaid with gold. Inside the ark was to be placed the "testimony" or tablets of stone which God would give to Moses. On top of the ark were images of two cherubim and between them was "the mercy seat" from where God promised Moses He would meet with Moses (Exodus 25).

The Ark, then, was a witness to God's covenant with Israel and also a representation of



His presence with them as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. We see the Ark playing an important role in Israel's history. In general, when the people of Israel honored God's presence through the Ark, things went well for them and when they ignored or neglected it...not so much.

The Ark traveled with Israel for 40 years of wandering in the desert. When they were finally ready to cross the Jordan River and enter in to take possession of the land God had promised them, they were instructed to send the Ark into the river ahead of them, at which the waters rolled back and they were able to cross. They carried the Ark as they marched around Jericho, setting the stage for God's initial victory for them in the land. Sadly, the Israelites got careless with the Ark and it was captured and held for seven months by their enemies, the Philistines. After its return, the Ark was somewhat ignored until the time of David.

### ***A Permanent Home***

The completion of the Temple in Jerusalem which Solomon was celebrating in 1 Kings 8 represented the culmination of a lot of things, not the least of which was a feeling of permanence. When David first expressed a desire to build the Temple for the Lord, he sought a permanent home for the Ark, saying, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the [A]rk of

God dwells within tent curtains" (2 Samuel 7:2). Indeed, the Ark had been housed in a portable tent, the Tabernacle, from the time it was built and all through the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. Even after the Ark was returned by the Philistines and finally brought to Jerusalem by King David, it was still placed inside a tent (2 Samuel 6:17).

As Solomon had the Ark transported from this tent to the newly-completed Temple, there were several things at play. Even though they had been living in the land God had promised Abraham for about 300 years, they likely had not enjoyed a true feeling of being "settled" there all through the period of the judges. They may have started to feel more at home once they had a king. But it was not until the reign of King David that they finally had peace from their enemies. The building of the Temple during King Solomon's reign would have brought things to completion and with it a feeling of permanence.

I do not think it was by accident that Solomon's celebration took place at the time of Sukkot, the Feast of Booths. During this week-long harvest celebration, the Israelites were instructed to live in "booths"—temporary huts—as a reminder of how they lived from the time God rescued them out of Egypt to the time He

allowed them to settle and begin building homes for themselves in the Promised Land. It was a time of great rejoicing for God's provision. Now it was God's turn to move from tent-dwelling to permanent home as the Ark was moved to its place in the Most Holy Place in the Temple.

### ***God's Seal of Approval***

We know that God was pleased with the sacrificial, extravagant celebration of Solomon and the people of Israel because "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (v.11) as represented, once again, in the form of a cloud. So thick was the cloud, so heavy was the presence of God's glory, that the priests could not even do their job. This was what Israel always longed for—a clear sign that God's glory was present with them. It gave them a sense of peace, security, and a feeling that everything was "right" in the world.

We may struggle at times to "feel" God's presence with us. He has never appeared to me in a cloud—or in any visible form for that matter. But that does not absolve us of the responsibility and privilege of celebrating God's presence in our lives every day. Let us think creatively of ways we can worship Him with extravagance and pour ourselves into lifting His name before all people and helping extend His glory to the ends of the earth.

## **Hints for Teaching**

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Understand the significance of Solomon's Temple dedication.
2. Intuit how the people of Jerusalem felt as the glory of God filled the Temple.
3. Celebrate God's presence among those who gather in His name today.

### *Teaching Activity*

Compare and contrast the construction of the Tabernacle with the Temple (consider using artists' renderings) and discuss how the construction of the Temple would have impacted the worship of the Israelites. Consider extravagant practices that are used today to celebrate a new beginning (i.e., grand openings, inaugurations, etc.). What is the purpose and function of these practices?

### **Looking Forward**

We have considered with awe what it would have been like to experience the glory of God filling the Temple at its dedication. Next, we will, with Solomon, reflect on the promise-keeping nature of our God.

# 7. Solomon's Speech

1 Kings 8:14-21

## Daily Bible Meditations

Trisha Gerstel

### Sunday

### 2 Chronicles 6:12-21

In this passage, King Solomon's words reveal an important yet often overlooked prayer practice. While offering a prayer of dedication over the Lord's Temple, the king made a concentrated effort and took the time to name God's promises. Solomon specifically focused on those promises God made to his father, David. I believe we should imitate Solomon in this, because when we pray God's promises, we align our hearts with God's perfect will. In addition, we prepare ourselves to offer faithful prayers that honor God with our trust in His plan and His might.

### Monday

### 2 Chronicles 6:22-25

The Lord has promised to forgive our sins if we put our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38 and 10:43). However, just as King Solomon showed in his dedication prayer and Jesus demonstrated in His model prayer (also known as "The Lord's Prayer," Matthew 6:9-13), this promise does not mean we should neglect to ask for forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 reminds us that confession is key to receiving forgiveness. Not that through confession we can cause God to forgive us, but when we pray for God to forgive our daily sins, we not only admit to falling short of His glory, we also demonstrate our understanding that forgiveness is a blessed gift, not a right.

### Tuesday

### 2 Chronicles 6:26-31

In today's Scripture, King Solomon's words remind us of a truth we often wish to forget: Our actions have consequences. Sometimes those consequences are a cause for celebration (i.e. gaining wisdom through regular Bible study). But when our actions reap unwanted consequences, we are tempted to call God unfair or cruel in allowing or causing them. It is important, however, that we (like Solomon) approach this matter with a humble heart. We must accept the need for consequences and understand that they are administered from a loving heart and infinite wisdom, and with our very best in mind.

### Wednesday

### 2 Chronicles 6:32-33

It is human nature to be leery of strangers, even those who profess Christianity. How do you respond when a new person shows up at church and acts a little differently than what you are used to? Often,

our initial reaction is to question the person's motives and search for undesirable traits that can be used to justify our cynicism. In his prayer of dedication, King Solomon showed us the appropriate mindset toward strangers—a response that honors God because it is in keeping with His own thoughts and actions (Galatians 3:28). We should welcome strangers who seek a relationship with the Lord, praying for their spiritual wellbeing just as we would a friend.

### **Thursday**

### **2 Chronicles 6:34-39**

Sometimes we find ourselves in trouble through no fault of our own. Other times, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Today's Scripture is a powerful tool to help us during those times of self-made trouble. "When they sin against You...and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy" (v.36) reminds us that *nothing* is outside God's control. Even when we have strayed far from God, have dug ourselves deeper and deeper into trouble, or find ourselves entangled in worldly schemes, the Lord is in control and He is able to free us when we seek reconciliation and ask His forgiveness.

### **Friday**

### **2 Chronicles 6:40-42**

God's love is not dependent upon our actions or requests, because love *is* His nature. We read in 1 John 4:8 that "the one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." However, offering a prayer such as King Solomon's—one in which we request God's presence and grace—glorifies Him in its humility. Praying in this way not only acknowledges God's benevolence in His desire to have a relationship with us, it also articulates our own desire to have a relationship with Him. As Jesus said, "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart" (Matthew 15:18). Let your mouth show your heart's desire to love and be loved by our Heavenly Father.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Kings 8:14-21**

After the Ark had been brought into the Holiest Place in the newly completed Temple of the Lord, King Solomon addressed the people of Israel and reminded them of the history of the plans to build a temple, which his father, David, had dreamed of but was prevented by God from carrying out. By doing this, Solomon reminded the people of God's sovereignty. This practice should be a part of our lives as well: We should make regular efforts to share with others the words of God, the plans of God, and the activities of God, both from the stories of the Bible and from our own lives' stories. By doing this, *we* will remind the people of God's sovereignty.

**Study** 1 Kings 8:14-21

**Background** 1 Kings 8:14-21; 2 Chronicles 6

**Devotional** Psalm 132:1-5, 11-18

### **Key Verse**

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hand” (1 Kings 8:15).

### **Heart of the Lesson**

Many people make promises they are unable to fulfill because of unforeseen circumstances. How should people respond when they do succeed in fulfilling their promise? Solomon thanked God for fulfilling the promise made to his father, King David, when He enabled Solomon to build the Temple in which the Ark could be placed.

### **Questions for Studying the Text**

1. When have you made a promise without knowing for sure you could keep it? Did you intend to keep the promise? What prevented you from doing so? What was the result of that broken promise with the one to whom it was given?
2. From what did Solomon turn his attention in order to speak this blessing over the assembled Israelites? What was his purpose in making this speech? How did it fit in the overall dedication of the Temple?
3. What promise had God made to King David and why (1 Samuel 7)? Why did Solomon take time to remind Israel of God’s promise? How had God fulfilled His promise? Why was it important for the people to remember that?
4. In what sense did Solomon use the word “hand” in referring to God’s fulfillment of His promise (v.15)? Compare this with the way it is used in Job 34:20; Acts 4:28; and Ezra 7:6. In what way do you see God’s hand at work in your life?
5. How was Solomon honest about his personal involvement, yet still making sure God was glorified in the Temple project? What can we learn from Solomon’s example about making and keeping promises within the sovereign will of God?



## Understanding and Living

Steve Osborn

Most famous, inspiring speeches throughout history have focused on what we have the ability to do if we just put our mind to it and work at it with all our might. I think of John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country"; or Winston Churchill's "Never give in, never, never, never, never"; or Martin Luther King Junior's "I have a dream!" Speeches like these encourage us by stirring up our passion and determination.

Solomon's speech at the dedication of the Temple was different. They were celebrating an amazing accomplishment. His speech was inspiring. It was encouraging. I am certain that it stirred the people up and got them excited about what was to come. But it focused not on what we can do but on what *God* can and will do.

### ***God Helps Us Keep Our Promises***

Solomon had a lot to be proud of. Under his oversight and authority, a magnificent building project had been completed. The plans for the Temple had been grandiose with exquisite detail. It required the coordination of massive amounts of manual labor as well as the efforts of the most skilled craftsmen in the land. The project had taken seven long years to complete.

The first thing Solomon did after completing the building of the Temple was to move the Ark of the Covenant to its permanent resting place (see last week's lesson). Then Solomon proclaimed, "Here you go, God. As promised, I have built you a beautiful house where you can live forever."

It was not wrong for Solomon and the Israelites to be excited about what they had accomplished for the Lord. We can understand if we have ever participated in a church building project or some other major ministry initiative. God values hard work and loves it when we accomplish great things in His name. As Solomon reminded the Israelites, God was pleased that David had desired to build Him a house (v.18)—He just had a different plan (v.19). Paul encouraged the Colossians, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance" (Colossians 3:23-24).

The important thing to note in this are Solomon's words at the beginning of verse 20: "Now the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke." He went on to list what could be seen as his own achievements—becoming king, building the Temple, and placing the Ark inside it. But He made

sure to give credit where credit was due. He could not have accomplished any of these things on his own but only through the power and provision of God.

When we accomplish something for God, it is okay to feel good about doing it. But rather than allowing yourself to get “puffed up” over it, make sure you are acknowledging God’s role in it and giving Him all glory, honor, and praise.

### ***The Ultimate Promise-Keeper***

Solomon’s main point was that the future success of Israel was predicated not on man-made abilities but on the promises of God. God had promised Abraham that He would establish Israel as a people and give them a home. God had promised Joshua He would go with them as they entered in to take possession of the land. God had promised David not only that Solomon, his son, would build the “house” (Temple) that David had desired to provide but also that God would build a “house” (kingdom dynasty) for David—a promise which started with Solomon’s ascent to the throne and through which, centuries later, the Messiah would be born.

God’s faithfulness to keep His promises is a dramatically firmer foundation for hope—both for Israel then and for us today. Our God is a god who not only loves to make promises, but He always

keeps them as well. When we think about promises, the likelihood of them being kept depends on two characteristics of the one making the promise.

The first criterion relates to intention—do they intend to keep their promise. Humans make a lot of promises that they have no intention of following through on. From a parent who promises to think about getting their child a puppy “someday,” to a politician who reads the crowd and says what they think will garner them the most votes, we too often make promises we do not intend to keep. The value of these empty promises is less than nothing. They elicit false hope which will only end in the pain of broken promises. As Jesus taught in His parable of two sons, it is better not to make a promise than to make one and not keep it.

The second criterion relates to ability—are they able to keep their promise. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we make promises that we cannot keep. A parent may promise their child that they will plan a trip to Disneyworld and then lose their job which prevents them from keeping their promise. A firefighter, in a crisis situation, may promise a victim that, “Everything will be okay,” when they have very little control over whether or not everything will be okay.

As the ultimate promise-keeper, our God loves to make and keep promises. He not only intends to keep every promise He makes, but also, as the All-Powerful God of the Universe, He has the ability to make every one of His promises come true. The Bible is full of stories of the made and kept promises of God.

### ***Future Hope***

As Solomon led Israel into the celebration of the completion of the Temple, he made sure to direct the people's attention toward God, who had not only promised it but had also allowed them to participate in the keeping of the promise. It had taken a long time and had not ended as it was originally planned (from a human perspective). But God was in control. As they turned their attention toward a future with a permanent place to worship their God, Solomon wanted to make sure they remembered that their future hope was based on the faithfulness of God.

Our present and future hope must also be grounded in our promise-keeping God. We want to accomplish great things for Him and we will, according to His perfect will. We may not always understand the timing or the details, but we can trust Him to do what He has said He will do. And when He does, we must give Him glory and *celebrate!*

## **Hints for Teaching**

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Examine how Solomon's building of the Temple fulfilled a promise God made to Solomon's father, David.
2. Appreciate that God keeps promises, even if the fulfillment takes many years.
3. Rejoice wholeheartedly when God's promises come to pass.

### *Teaching Activity*

Have the class make an acrostic of the word "PROMISE" using words that describe our response to being able to keep a promise. Review together 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 to gain an understanding of the promise that was made and the reasoning behind it. Have the class list from Scripture all the promises they can think of that God made and kept. What does this teach us about having faith in God?

### **Looking Forward**

We compared God's ability to make and keep promises with personal experiences of being able to keep a promise. Next, we will consider God's role in helping us to approach new undertakings.

# 8. Solomon's Dedication Prayer

1 Kings 8:22-30, 52-53

## Daily Bible Meditations

Trisha Gerstel

### Sunday

**1 Timothy 2:1-6**

It may strike us as odd that the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to pray “on behalf of *all* men, for kings and all who are in authority” (v.1-2; emphasis added). For us, this is equivalent to praying for those with whom we staunchly disagree in matters of politics (certainly not the cultural norm). Paul’s words, however, remind us of God’s desire for all to be saved (v.4) as well as His ability to work all things for our good and for His glory (Romans 8:28). Following Paul’s instructions puts our faith in God’s plan versus our instinct toward self-preservation.

### Monday

**1 Kings 8:31-32, 41-44**

In today’s passage, King Solomon prayed about something I recently learned in my own pursuit of forgiveness: Forgiveness means that I lay down my “right” to retribution and instead hand it over to a wise and just God who is far better equipped to deal righteously with the situation. When we have been hurt by the words or actions of another, the world would have us believe the only thing that will make us feel better is to get them back. However, forgoing our pursuit of vengeance allows us to experience peace over the situation as it creates a way for the love of God to reign even in the darkest moments.

### Tuesday

**Colossians 3:8-13**

Today we learn of another critical part of forgiveness—a beacon of light in our quest to be freed from something that has hurt us. As we seek to let go of an upsetting word or deed, we find motivation in focusing on God’s forgiveness of our own sins. We are challenged to take on the very heart of God that He has demonstrated toward us. It is hard to hold onto anger or bitterness toward someone else’s careless (or even cruel) behavior when we take the time to reflect upon a perfect God’s willingness to expunge our own sinful actions (often done overtly) at His own expense.

### Wednesday

**1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

When life gets complicated—when trials and tribulations come and there appears to be no end to the testing of our

faith—the believer finds strength, hope, and peace by meditating on our relationship with God as well as His love for us and the sacrifices He has made on our behalf. This is a truth that we should hold in our hearts; it also is something we should share with our Christian family during their times of need, and must demonstrate to the outside world as they observe us in our dark hours (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

### **Thursday**

### **Isaiah 56:3-8**

We sometimes think of the Bible as two distinct stories: the first (the Old Testament) a story which declares God's love toward Israel; and the second (the New Testament) a story which shows His willingness to accept us Gentiles. The truth is, however, that the entire Bible speaks of God's love for *all* people, and His will that all be saved. It was part of God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 22:18). This message is seen especially well in today's *Old Testament* reading, where, through the prophet Isaiah, God declared that His house "will be called a house of prayer for all the people" (v.7). Amen.

### **Friday**

### **Ephesians 4:1-8, 11-16**

There are many intriguing yet dangerous messages floating around in today's world. Mottos such as, "Believe in yourself," and "You can achieve anything you desire if you work hard enough," tempt us to put our hope in a fallacy. The truth is, *you* cannot do anything. All of our abilities and talents are gifts from the Lord, given for His purposes. When we use our God-given talents to elevate ourselves, the result is disunity and darkness; when we use our gifts toward God's glory, however, we honor Him and He uses us to bring light into the world.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Kings 8:22-30, 52-53**

As King Solomon made clear in his prayer, our God is a god who loves to make promises and always keeps His promises. When we face difficult times, times when we cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel and are certain there is no way out, we should remind ourselves (just as Solomon reminded the people of Israel), God keeps His promises. We can do this by reading our Bible, by listening to or reading the testimony of other Christians, and even by meditating on and/or writing about all the times God has proved His faithfulness in our own lives.



**Study** 1 Kings 8:22-30, 52-53

**Background** 1 Kings 8:22-53; 2 Chronicles 6:12-42

**Devotional** 1 Timothy 2:1-6

## **Key Verse**

“Listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive” (1 Kings 8:30).

## **Heart of the Lesson**

People begin new undertakings with anticipation of a better future. How can we mark such important times? Solomon presided at the dedication of the Temple by calling upon God to receive Israel’s worship and to continue to be their God.

## **Questions for Studying the Text**

1. Reflect on some of the significant transitions you have faced in life. Did you face those transitions with fear or hope? What factors make the difference between fear and hope?
2. What did Solomon do during the significant transition of the completion of the Temple to establish hope for brighter days among the Israelites? What did he pray for/about? How would those things impact Israel’s view of their future?
3. What posture did Solomon take for his prayer? Review other uses of this prayer posture in Exodus 9:29, 33; Psalms 44:20; 143:6; and Isaiah 1:15; 65:2. What does this posture seem to represent? What other prayer postures can you find in Scripture? Which posture(s) are you most comfortable with and what do they mean to you?
4. Even though Solomon acknowledged that God cannot be contained to a physical location, what was the importance of having a place to associate with God’s presence? How do you explain the tension between seeing the Temple as representative of God’s presence and knowing He did not really dwell there?
5. What characteristics of God did Solomon remember in His prayer? How would remembering these help Israel to anticipate a better future? What are your favorite characteristics of God? How do they help in times of transition and give you hope for a better future? How can you celebrate them in your worship?

## Understanding and Living

Steve Osborn

### *A New Opportunity*

The church I pastor is in the midst of a major transition. After 125 years of faithful ministry in Boulder, Colorado, God began stirring us up for something new. Through our participation in the Seventh Day Baptist PULSE process, we did a lot of self-evaluation and began to come face-to-face with the fact that the future of the church was somewhat bleak: our Senior Saints group had started graduating into heaven; our working class had started retiring, which also impacted our giving; many of our younger families had moved, due to economics or other circumstances, far enough away that it was not practical for them to be regularly involved; our financial reserves were rapidly disappearing.

Because so few of our members actually still lived in or near Boulder, we were at a loss as to how to allow God to impact our community through us. Most importantly, we were not seeing people come to Christ through our ministry, which was unacceptable to us. We began to pray in earnest that God would bring revitalization to our church and show us what we could do to help. The result was that we felt God leading us to sell our church building and

replant our church in a new mission field closer to where some of our key families live. It was a bold move that afforded exciting possibilities but also no guarantees (from a human perspective) of success.

What makes the difference, when moving in a new direction, between falling flat on our faces and, in the words of Pastor Rod Henry, moving into God's more preferable future. If we are relying only on human strength and ingenuity which give us no reason to expect a different outcome, our attempts at trying new things will likely result in fear and insecurity. However, when we lean on God's strength and trust Him to guide us, new ventures, while they still may be scary, can also bring hope for a better future. In today's Scripture, the completion of the Temple marked an important transition point for Israel. Solomon demonstrated through his prayer some important ways of calling on God and trusting Him to guide us through those transitions.

### *Remembering Who Our God Is*

Solomon's prayer of dedication was Part Three of the celebration he led Israel in marking the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem. First, they had a procession to relocate the ark from its temporary

tent-home into the Holy of Holies inside the new Temple. Next, he had addressed the people and reminded them of God's made and kept promises. His prayer was not focused on trying to get God to do anything new, but rather to continue doing what He had always done for His people and to lead them into this new, Temple era. It was an important transition for Israel, at least symbolically, because the Temple represented permanence for a nation with so much transience in their history: a permanent home for the ark; a permanent place to worship their God; a symbol of the fact that they would not be picking up and moving any time soon.

In the first part of his prayer, Solomon focused on "reminding" God (or was he really reminding his fellow Israelites?) of how wonderful He had been to Israel through the years. He was the god who had chosen them, had kept His covenants with them, shown them lovingkindness over and over again, and made and kept so many promises, like the ones He made to David, that they could not even count them all. The completion of the Temple being led by Solomon was one of these important promises. But Solomon also reminded God of His promise to David

of a perpetual dynasty, which although he probably did not know it at the time, would lead eventually to the coming of the Messiah to reign forever.

Remembering these and other characteristics of our amazing God can be helpful in times of transition because it helps us focus not only on all the ways He has guided and provided for us in the past, but also on all that He is capable of doing for us. It is a good reminder that no situation in which we find ourselves is too big for our God. He has been there already, so if He led us there, He most certainly has a purpose in it.

### ***Knowing What to Ask For***

Next, Solomon turned his prayer towards asking for things—which too often is where our prayers begin and end. Note that Solomon did not ask here for the "normal" things: let us prosper as a nation; thwart all our enemies; do not let another nation come in, desecrate this temple, burn it down, and carry away its treasures. Solomon prayed that God would hear their prayers, receive their worship, forgive their sins, etc.

Not that it is wrong to pray for other things. When following God into uncharted territory, it is best for us to ask God to bless us for our obedience and to

allow us to continue to serve Him in fruitful ministry. It is always right to pray that He will grant us the privilege of seeing people respond to the gospel. But most importantly, we pray that He will be honored by our attempts to extend His glory and expand His Kingdom. But what we should crave most is that wherever life takes us, He will be there with us, hearing our prayers and receiving our worship.

### *Eye on the Prize*

The further we progress in following God into this new adventure in a new mission field, the more we have recognized the need to emphasize prayer. Our church has always been a praying church. But I think the uncertainty of this experience has reminded us even more of the need to stay connected with God and to rely on Him through prayer and worship. Not only will He be the difference between success and failure, but He is the One who will define what success looks like for our church. As long as we know He is the One leading us through this transition, we can be confident that He is indeed leading us into the more preferable future He has in store for us. And that is the most hopeful, comforting place we could possibly be.

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Understand the importance of a national Temple for Israel.
2. Be grateful for God's faithfulness in covenant relationships.
3. Embrace a worshipful lifestyle in light of God's continuing goodness.

### *Teaching Activity*

Research and compile a list of benefits the Israelites would gain from their national Temple. Create collages that depict what they would consider a better future. Compare these to how the Israelites must have felt about their improved outlook with a new Temple. Compare and contrast the value of contemporary church buildings to that of Israel's Temple.

### **Looking Forward**

We studied Solomon's dedication prayer for the Temple and how it reflected our approach to transitions. Next, we will think about the conclusion of the Temple celebration and what we should expect from God.

# 9. Solomon's Blessing

1 Kings 8:54-61

## Daily Bible Meditations

Trisha Gerstel

### Sunday

**2 Chronicles 29:3-11**

There are times in our lives when we distance ourselves from the Lord, either with purpose or unintentionally through a lackadaisical approach to our spiritual disciplines. How wonderful it is to know that, just as God allowed Hezekiah to restore His temple after the Israelites had done evil in His sight, He allows us to turn back to Him during those times, ask His forgiveness, and once again pursue a deeper relationship with Him. This is a truth for which God is to be praised, and it is something we are called to practice in our own lives (Colossians 3:13) so that we may glorify Him and bring Him honor.

### Monday

**1 Kings 3:5-14**

There is a harmful trend among some churches here in the United States—belief in a false doctrine often referred to as “Name It and Claim It.” Unfortunately, many who are not yet strong in their understanding of God’s Word fall victim to this faulty teaching and believe that they can ask God for *anything* and He will grant their request. Such teaching, of course, does not reflect God’s will, as is shown in today’s passage. God grants our requests when they are in keeping with His perfect will, not when we ask according to human desires.

### Tuesday

**1 Kings 9:1-9**

While it is true that many non-believers have had success in the eyes of this world (in fact, it would probably be accurate to say that most “successful” people are non-Christians), the fact remains that true, meaningful success is not measured by an important job title or big bank account but rather by spiritual growth. As Jesus said, “[W]hat does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36). As we face a world lusting after temporal, worldly success, let us seek first God’s Kingdom and find peace in knowing that those who seek Him experience true success.

### Wednesday

**Matthew 6:25-30**

When Jesus compared “Solomon in all his glory” to the beauty of the lilies of the field (v.28, 29), He was helping His



disciples understand how meaningless earthly possessions are in comparison to the creations and provisions of the Lord. It is easy to get caught up in materialism when the world in which we live screams, “You need to have this thing or that thing or *every* thing!” Our defense against such temptation is to acknowledge the perfection of all that God has created, and to thank Him for all that He has provided. These practices produce contentment and guard our hearts against worldly lusts.

### **Thursday**

### **2 Chronicles 7:1-6**

In today’s Scripture passage, “All the sons of Israel, seeing... the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshipped and gave praise to the LORD” (v 3). I wonder how often we witness the glory of the Lord but fail to bow down and give Him praise. Do we even notice the evidences of God’s glory all around us every day? When we see the sunrise, eat a meal, witness an act of love, and so on, do we see God’s hand at work? When you do, do you bow down and praise God as did the sons of Israel?

### **Friday**

### **2 Chronicles 7:8-11**

Too often, when we work hard to accomplish something for the Lord, we think we should be thanked and celebrated. But when the temple was completed, King Solomon and the Israelites marked the occasion with a great feast to the Lord which lasted an entire week. It was a way for the people to rejoice over God’s provision as well as the fact that they had been a part of something that brought honor to the Lord. Take time today to think about ways you could partake in such activities. Consider how you could celebrate the something (a Bible study group, a ministry, etc.) for which God has provided and through which He is honored.

### **Sabbath**

### **1 Kings 8:54-61**

There is a popular saying in my church: “Your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.” Spouting Scripture, while walking in sin, is hypocritical; promising support but failing to follow through is empty. If we wish to show the world the love of God—to have them know the joy and peace we have thanks to our relationship with Christ—we must, as King Solomon urged, “Let [our] heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God [and] walk in His statutes and keep His commandments” (v.61). Amen!

**Study** 1 Kings 8:54-61

**Background** 1 Kings 8:54-66

**Devotional** Psalm 136:1-16, 23-25

## Key Verse

“May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers” (1 Kings 8:57-58).

## Heart of the Lesson

People often mark the start of new ventures with special ceremonies or observances because they have high hopes for success. How can we know that what we propose to do will succeed? After dedicating the Temple, Solomon prayed for God’s continued faithfulness toward Israel while calling on his people to renew their commitment to God.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. Have you ever participated in the dedication of a new church building, expansion, or renovation? Who all did you invite and why did you want them to come?
2. In what ways had God “given rest to His people Israel” (v.56)? How was this evidence of God’s promise-keeping nature? How does God’s provision of rest to Israel help inform our understanding of the Sabbath?
3. What evidences did Solomon give of God’s faithfulness? How would this benefit Israel going forward? How would it give them confidence in the success of their new, Temple-filled existence?
4. Why is it important for God’s people “to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances” (v.58)? In what ways is this a challenge for you?
5. What did Solomon indicate was the ultimate purpose of the Jews (v.60)? How does this align with Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:6; and Isaiah 49:6?
6. What “new thing” in your life do you want to make sure God is a part of? How can you use Solomon’s prayer as a template for seeking God’s ongoing participation in your life?

## Understanding and Living

Steve Osborn

### *Celebration of Something New*

Recently, I have begun to pay attention to announcements posted by the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce, in the area of our church's new mission field. I have noticed quite a few announcements of Grand Opening Celebrations for new businesses. We know on one hand that this is a way for a new business to make people aware they are there. But there is also a feeling of excitement they share at starting something new that they want to share with others.

As we wrap up this unit focusing on Israel's celebration of their something new (the Temple), we can sense the excitement and enthusiasm they had. Verse 66 tells us that the people left this celebration "joyful and glad of heart." The celebration had been a smashing success! Solomon had assembled the Israelites, including the "elders" and "heads of tribes" (v.1). The priests had ceremonially transported the Ark into the Temple. They sacrificed "so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered" (v.5). This may be hyperbole on the part of the author, because here in verse 63, he mentioned that Solomon sacrificed "22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep" in addition to grain offerings, so much that the altar could not hold it all. We

are also told that the celebration went on for 14 days!

Why such extravagance in their worship celebration? We might be tempted to think that this was a waste of precious resources. Surely God would not want such a big deal made of Himself, right? I think it is easy for us to fall into the trap of "routine worship" where we go through the motions, sing the songs, read the Scriptures, listen to the sermon, put our offering in the collection plate, and anxiously check our watches to see if it is time to go home yet. Is there true celebration in our worship? Do we adequately express our awe and wonder at who God is and all He has done?

I do not think that God is any more honored by genuine worship in a crystal cathedral than a thatched roof hut. He is more interested in the attitude behind our worship which moves us to worship Him extravagantly—whether that represents a material cost or a sacrifice of time, energy, creative investment, or blood, sweat, and tears. He deserves to be honored. In our celebration of Him, we must bring Him our very best because He is the BEST.

### *God Keeps His Promises*

At the conclusion of the celebration, Solomon again reminded the people that our God

is a god who loves to make and keep promises. He expanded his scope to talk about other promises God had made and kept: He had promised rest to His people (v.56) and gave it by bringing them safely into the Promised Land; He had promised He would deliver His people out of slavery in Egypt and accomplished it through His servant, Moses (v.56); He had promised Jacob (Genesis 28:15) and Joshua (Joshua 1:9) and others, that He would be with them wherever they went and did just that for their fathers and for them (v.57).

Two times in this chapter (v.15, 24), Solomon had referred to the promises of God as being spoken by His *mouth* and fulfilled by His *hand*. These anthropomorphisms of picturing God with a human body (mouth and hand) help us to understand that making and keeping promises is a part of His very nature. And because of the inherent goodness of His promises and the greatness of His power to keep them, Israel could have confidence that this new chapter in their history would succeed. We, too, must learn to cling to the promises of God for confidence that He will not “leave us or forsake us” (v.57) and that He “causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

### ***God’s People Keep His Commandments***

Solomon laid out what he felt was their appropriate response to God keeping His promises to them (v.58). In addition to worshiping Him, which they were doing, Solomon’s longing was that the people of Israel would walk in obedience. He concluded his blessing saying, “Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day” (v.61).

I believe Solomon gave evidence here that his heart, at least at that particular moment, was aligned with God’s heart. Because the one thing God consistently asked of His people was obedience. When His people were faithful to obey all He asked of them, He was able to bless them and protect them. When they did not, which was a recurring problem, He often had to withhold His blessing and protection in order to discipline and correct them. Solomon was not foolish enough to believe that obedience would be an easy proposition for the Israelites. In his prayer earlier in this chapter he prophetically talked about times when Israel would sin against their God and incur His wrath (v.33, 35, 46). Here he indicated an understanding that the only way obedience was possible was

if God would “incline our hearts to Himself” (v.58).

I find it strange that some Christians debate the importance of obedience today. They argue that under the New Covenant, grace makes obedience obsolete. However, I cannot understand why anyone who loves God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength would not want to do all they can to follow the clear instructions He has given us—not out of legalism or some attempt to manipulate God’s favor, but in order to honor Him and show how much we love Him. Obedience has always been at the forefront for Seventh Day Baptists, as we are somewhat unique in paying special attention to His command to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.

### *The End Game*

All these things—God making and keeping promises to His people, His faithful, constant presence with them, and His people being drawn to Him in obedience—work together for a common purpose: to bring glory to God and draw the world’s attention to Him. Solomon summed up their celebration, saying “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else” (v.60). More than anything else, that is what matters in life. Soli Deo Gloria—to the glory of God alone!

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Study Solomon’s prayer of dedication.
2. Affirm God’s continued faithfulness to His people.
3. Commit to obeying all of God’s commands.

### *Teaching Activity*

Divide into smaller groups and have each group brainstorm a different way they might have concluded the Temple dedication and then have them role play for the rest of the group. Share experiences of God’s faithfulness and talk about how these experiences may have motivated participants to renew their commitments to obey God’s commands.

### **Looking Back**

We used Solomon’s celebration to dedicate the completed Temple as a springboard for discussing God’s presence, promise-keeping, hope, and new beginnings.



# 10. Single-minded Obedience

Matthew 4:1-11

## Daily Bible Meditations

Lisa Moore

### Sunday

### Deuteronomy 6:16-25

The Israelites suffered from a “What have you done for me lately?” syndrome. They complained bitterly every time their expectations were not met. Our God, who is slow to anger, was so provoked by the Israelites constant complaining that His anger was memorialized (Exodus 17:7). If we are honest, there are times we have suffered because of complaining. Whatever you are going through right now, remember you are here today as a testimony. God neither left nor forsook you. He did not promise a perfect life, but if you want a peace that passes all understanding, focus on God (Isaiah 26:3), obey His Word, and tell others of His goodness!

### Monday

### Psalms 91

This beloved psalm continues to be an encouragement to many a believer. Each verse assures us of God’s protection, favor, and love. We reap the benefits when we choose to abide under His shadow, but obedience is a choice. If we choose to dwell, we will be in the shadow. If we choose to trust Him, He will fight our battles and protect us. If we choose to love and know Him, He will deliver us. If we choose to call upon Him, He will answer us, be with us, and satisfy us. What choices are you making? Choose to abide under God’s loving shadow.

### Tuesday

### Deuteronomy 8:11-20

“I Did It My Way,” a song made famous by Frank Sinatra, boasts of self-promotion. “I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps,” “I’m a self-made man,” “I alone can fix this,” are all statements we may have heard or even said that indicate self-reliance. Stories abound of celebrities who left their faith when fame and fortune arrived, only to meet with destruction. God warned Israel not to forget Him when things were going well. It is a good warning for us as well. Let us not forget God while we pursue education, financial stability, careers, and family. His Word clearly warns us of the results—we will perish because we would not listen to the voice of our God.

### Wednesday

### Hebrews 4:14–5:10

Jesus came to this earth in the flesh—fully God and fully man—and died on the cross, shedding His perfect blood for our sin so that

all who believe on Him would become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Knowing the suffering that was ahead, Jesus prayed for a way out: “[I]f it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” but ultimately ended His prayer with, “[N]evertheless, not my will but thy will be done.” We are quick to pray for our suffering to be removed, but let us follow Jesus’ example. Our faithful obedience to God in the midst of our tests and trials will lead others to Christ.

### **Thursday**

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

He who was without sin, went to be baptized. If we were John the Baptist, I am sure we would have tried to avoid baptizing Jesus as well. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, men kept telling Him what they thought He should or should not be doing. But Jesus was never swayed by people’s opinions when those opinions opposed the will of God, even when they came from His family. Jesus obediently proceeded with His baptism “to fulfill all righteousness.” What seemingly unnecessary things are we forgoing—Bible study, prayer meeting, witnessing? Whose opinions are we following—leaders, family, friends? God is pleased when we obey Him rather than man.

### **Friday**

### **Matthew 4:12-17**

The director of a play relies on every actor following the script precisely. If actors do their own thing, the entire play is thrown off track. Jesus was a master at sticking to the script, even with what appeared to be the inconsequential decisions. Jesus left Nazareth and settled in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. Why are these details important? It fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 9:1-2). Jesus fulfilling each prophecy re-assures us that God’s plan for humanity stayed on track. As believers, we cannot afford to ad-lib our way through life. The Bible is our roadmap, the Holy Spirit is our GPS. Stick to the script!

### **Sabbath**

### **Matthew 4:1-11**

Jesus, God’s Word in the flesh, was challenged by Satan twisting this very Word. Satan tried three times to use the Word against the Word. If that is not shameless audacity, I do not know what is! If Satan boldly did that to Jesus, how much more will he do that to us? “Are you sure you are saved?” “No one loves you!” “You’ll always be alone!” “No one cares about you!” “You’ll always be poor!” These are all lies from the enemy! Do not be his willing prey like Adam and Eve were. Counterattack like Jesus did! Know the Word (Jesus) and speak His Word! Resist the devil and put him on the run (James 4:7)!

**Study** Matthew 4:1-11

**Background** Matthew 4:1-11

**Devotional** Psalm 91

## Key Verse

Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only’” (Matthew 4:10).

## Heart of the Lesson

People are tempted in many ways to turn aside from what they know is right. How can we resist such temptations? Jesus resisted the devil’s temptations by quoting the Scriptures, thus demonstrating His single-minded obedience to God.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. Describe the experience of feeling conflicted between doing what you know is right and doing what you want to do. Why do you think this conflict is so strong? How do most people you know handle temptation like this?
2. How can believers properly refer to and apply Scripture in order to find victory over temptation? Is there a danger in the use of so-called “proof texting”? How can believers ensure that they do not either misuse Scripture themselves or enable others to do so in order to justify sin?
3. How might we consider the three temptations of Jesus as tests of His: 1) Priorities (v.3-4)? 2) Confidence (v.5-7)? 3) Allegiance (v.8-10)? What did each test demonstrate and how did they go to the core of His identity and mission?
4. Is there any application for us in Jesus’ use of spiritual disciplines with a single-minded focus to resist temptations? How does this allow us to draw practical strength from our faith? What spiritual disciplines do you find the most helpful in preparing you for the warfare of the Christian life?
5. In your own life and that of others you have observed, in what ways does Satan attempt to tempt you to not worship God alone and obey him? Do these ways often seem appealing?

## Understanding and Living

Jerry Johnson

### *Real Temptation*

Matthew related that Jesus was baptized by John and then led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Some commentators have taken note that for us, His followers, heavy temptations often enter life immediately after some sort of spiritual victory. No Christian can ever take for granted that they are free from struggle, because even their Savior was not exempt. Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

There is a theological difficulty here that needs further exploration. Jesus’ temptation was real; yet He was the divine Son of God and thus did not sin. James 1:14-15 tells us that we sin when we are drawn away by our own desires and lured and enticed to sin. How could Jesus have been sinless and still faced authentic temptation. This question has puzzled theologians through the centuries. In the *Reformation Study Bible*, R.C. Sproul offered a possible suggestion, known as the doctrine of Christ’s “impeccability”:

If Jesus was tempted as we are tempted it would seem to suggest that He had sinful desires. Yet this is precisely

the point of the qualifier ‘yet without sin’ in the book of Hebrews. Jesus had desires. But he had no sinful desires. When He was tempted by Satan the temptation came from the outside. It was external temptation....Jesus was committed to obeying the will of the Father. He had no desire to sin (p.2203).

Aligning the aspects of Jesus’ humanity and deity is a difficult endeavor. Whatever your conclusion on this matter, know that Jesus’ sinlessness made Him qualified to be that perfect “propitiation” for our sins.

### *The Purpose of Temptation*

Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights. The Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus endured: Moses stayed on Sinai for forty days; Elijah stayed in the wilderness for forty days; and Israel spent forty years wandering in the wilderness. Craig Blomberg, in *The New American Commentary* on Matthew, helpfully added a note about the nature of the temptation:

An important interplay between the work of the Spirit and that of the devil appears here. The same Spirit who has anointed Jesus in 3:16 now leads him to the place of temptation but does not himself cause the temptation, which is attributed instead to

the devil. By this phrasing, Matthew warns against two common errors—blaming God for temptation and crediting the devil with power to act independently of God (p. 83).

In Matthew, the three temptations were to turn stones into bread; to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple; and to receive the kingdoms of this world in exchange for worshiping the devil. Luke reversed the order of the second and third temptations. In *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, F. F. Bruce offered a lengthy explanation of the questions at hand and concluded that there is no way to prove which author was chronologically correct, although he personally preferred Matthew:

Each of the authors sees a different aspect of this true meaning. Matthew focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and thus Jesus as the true Son that Israel failed to be. Luke focuses on Jesus moving toward Jerusalem as the Son of God invading Satan's kingdom and bringing God's salvation in history to those whom Satan has bound. Each orders the testings of Jesus and mentions details to bring out their picture (p.456).

Matthew called the devil the "tempter" (v.3). Charles Swindoll, in *The Greatest Life of All: Jesus*, noted, "The Greek

verb rendered 'tempt' means 'to try to learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive testing'. In other words, Jesus went into the desert to confront his enemy and throw down the gauntlet" (p.64-65).

### ***Areas of Temptation***

Jesus' temptations encompassed three areas common to all humans: physical needs, pride, and accumulating earthly possessions. The first centered on Jesus' physical need for food. Satan asked Him to take care of this by commanding the stones to become bread. Jesus quoted part of Deuteronomy 8:3: "Understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." In *The Works and Words of Jesus Christ*, J. Dwight Pentecost offered a wonderful insight into the conflict taking place:

This temptation was an attempt to pervert Jesus Christ from perfect obedience to the will of God. He was in the desert in the will of God, and therefore all that He endured while in the desert was part of God's will for Him. (p.101).

Next Matthew recorded Satan twisting Psalm 91:11-12 in challenging Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. R.C. Sproul asserted in



the *Reformation Study Bible*: “Ps. 91 is an exhortation to trust in God; Satan attempts to replace trust with a test, casting doubt on God’s faithfulness. Presumption is not a mark of great faith but evidence of no faith at all” (p.1676). Jesus refuted this false premise with Deuteronomy 6:16: “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test,” a reference to how Israel rebelled against God in Exodus 17:1-7.

Finally, the devil would take Jesus to a very high mountain and show Him all of the world’s kingdoms, with their glory. He offered all of these in exchange for worshiping Satan instead of God. In *Experiencing God Day by Day*, Henry and Richard Blackaby amplified the significance: “In compromising, Jesus could gain a powerful ally and achieve His mission without suffering the cross. Jesus knew that only God was to be worshiped, and to worship Satan would not bring instant success, as Satan promised, but devastating failure” (p.362).

Jesus again referenced Deuteronomy in His response, this time 6:13: “You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.” Do we choose to honor God above all of our earthly pursuits, or do we give in to the temptation to pursue our own desires above His?

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Explore the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.
2. Aspire to reflect the same single-minded obedience to God that Jesus demonstrated.
3. Develop spiritual habits that can strengthen them in times of temptation.

### *Teaching Activity*

Help participants compile a list of real-life tests and temptations that adults face in the areas of: life choices, vocation, leadership, moral choices, allegiance, etc. Discern how temptations obstruct our ability to fully worship God. Explore spiritual habits that serve to strengthen people in times of temptation.

### **Looking Forward**

Through our study of the temptation of Jesus, we considered strategies for resisting temptation. Next, we will be warned from Jesus’ teaching in the Beatitudes against doing the right things for the wrong reasons.

# 11. Piety That Honors God

Matthew 6:1-8

## Daily Bible Meditations

Lisa Moore

### Sunday

### Ecclesiastes 5:1-6

This passage reminded me of Psalm 100:4: “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.” Is this the way we come to the house of God? Are we as diligent to be on time for church as we are for work or school? Do we come with an attitude of being thankful or do we allow ourselves to be frustrated, upset, or tired? Are we slow to speak and quick to listen? Are our words seasoned with salt or hot peppers? We make God angry when we do these things—what a sobering thought. His mercy gives us the opportunity to get it right. Hallelujah!

### Monday

### Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

There was a time when the prevailing thought was that it was somehow “righteous” for parents to scrimp and save, denying themselves in order to give their children a good education and an inheritance. Nowadays, many parents are subscribing to the philosophy in this passage and enjoying the fruit of their labor. No need to feel guilty—God has empowered us to enjoy life. As long as it does not keep you from fulfilling your responsibilities or being generous to God’s work and others, rejoice in your labor—if you have worked hard, you can view it as a gift from God!

### Tuesday

### Isaiah 1:11-17

Have you ever been frustrated with those you love? It is not a good feeling, is it? You expect those you love to act appropriately, especially when you have given clear instructions. Now picture God’s frustration with the Israelites. They thought they could continue with the status quo...offer some burnt offerings, say some prayers, observe the feasts and all would be well while they continued to do evil by not seeking justice, reprovng the ruthless, defending the orphan, and pleading for the widow. This passage is a wakeup call for us! It is not enough to “do” church. We have got to be the church and make a difference in this world.

### Wednesday

### 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Is it any wonder that David was called a man after God’s own heart? In spite of the many times he had sinned, he truly loved God. That much is clear in all of his Psalms. It is clear in the numerous

times in this prayer when he blessed God and declared him blessed. David had a genuine relationship with God and witnessed His power and might first-hand. David did not need to be prodded and provoked to worship and thank God. He only had to think about how good God had been to him and the praises would flow. May our prayers flow from our experiences with the goodness of God through our Savior!

### **Thursday**

### **Matthew 18:21-35**

For too many of us, forgiveness has become a dirty word. Sadly, it has no place in the lives of some believers. Some people go to their graves holding grudges, even though they claimed to be born again. Jesus made it clear—forgiveness is not optional and it has no limitations. *Forgive*, plain and simple. Why? Because we were forgiven of the sin debt that we could never pay. Just as we were forgiven, we must extend forgiveness to others. If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. Jesus has no fellowship with those who live in unforgiveness. Dear brethren, if you have unforgiveness in your heart, release it now before it is too late.

### **Friday**

### **Matthew 6:16-21**

What is the dearest item you possess? A relationship? Your house? Car? Pictures? Money? Clothes/shoes? Your title? Some type of collection? Your pride? How would you feel if it were destroyed? Jesus warned about pride—wanting to show off that you fast so that people will think you are so holy—and treasuring earthly objects excessively. When we are too attached to these things, our priorities become distorted. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33, KJV). This is the only treasure worthy of our attention.

### **Sabbath**

### **Matthew 6:1-8**

If there were awards given for Best Portrayal of a Christian, there would not be enough awards to go around. Many Christians know how to *appear* holy and righteous, how to pray “intelligently”, and how to make sure others know when they are “doing something for God,” as if they are vying for worldly trophies. While many are busy “acting” like Christians, prayers are not answered and the poor are not ministered to from hearts of love. Could this be a reason why many churches are not growing spiritually and numerically? This passage assures us that a reward is coming. What type of reward will you receive?

**Study** Matthew 6:1-8

**Background** Ecclesiastes 5:1-6; Matthew 6:1-8

**Devotional** Luke 11:1-13

## Key Verse

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1).

## Heart of the Lesson

Eager to be well thought of, people are pulled in a multitude of contradictory directions. How can we be true to the highest principles that we have been taught? In Matthew 6, Jesus warned the disciples against practicing their piety in order to be praised by others.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. Are you tempted to seek praise and attention for your gifts, talents, and achievements? What are the inherent dangers in doing so? Do you believe today’s information age and social media makes this temptation even greater?
2. What did Jesus mean by “practicing your righteousness” (v.1)? What two specific examples did He give in this passage? What other kinds of things would be included? Was Jesus warning that we should never do these things publicly? If not, what was His warning here?
3. How did Jesus use the word “hypocrites” (v.2, 5)? What is the difference between a hypocrite and a genuine worshipper? What is the most effective strategy for you personally to overcome hypocritical tendencies?
4. What general principles for giving and prayer can be found in this passage? What guidelines would you give in helping someone apply these principles to giving and prayer today?
5. Jesus promised that “your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (v.4, 6). What kind of reward was He talking about? Is it wrong to expect a reward for obedience? How is that different than seeking praise and attention?
6. What are the practical benefits of living a simple, humble, quiet life of piety instead of feeling the pressure to constantly compare yourself to others in living out your faith?

## Understanding and Living

Jerry Johnson

### ***What is Your Motivation?***

The section of the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 6:1-18 deals with the contrast between true and hypocritical religious expression. Jesus transitioned from a multi-faceted illustration of the Law being put into practice in specific areas to a focus on the motivation for practicing righteousness. These eight verses offer a glimpse into two areas—giving to the poor and prayer. A third area, fasting, is addressed after the “Lord’s Prayer” in verses 16-18.

Jesus overarching principle was not to do good deeds simply to get noticed (v.1). I freely confess this is a difficult concept for me because of the nature of Army chaplaincy. I am called to live out two key distinctives: “Compassionate in Service” and “Courageous in Spirit,” while also embodying six unique “Sacred Values.” All of this speaks to a selfless nature, a desire to serve without being noticed.

Unfortunately, in order to achieve higher rank, chaplains have to “compete” against other chaplains for better evaluations, schooling opportunities, and assignments. Because I have, the past two years, been passed over for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, it would be easy to feel like I am unimportant because others seemingly have not

recognized my contributions. I could be tempted to over-compensate in my “service” to make sure I am noticed more by senior chaplains who influence whether or not I will make that next pay grade. But by doing so, I would have left behind the selfless nature of the office.

This passage is corrective because Jesus affirmed that a simple, humble, perhaps even anonymous spiritual walk is honored at least as much as one that intentionally aims to receive others’ acclaim. In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers offered a short but necessary thought on this section, “The primary thought in the area of religion is—keep your eyes on God, not on people” (September 16).

### ***Giving for the Right Reasons***

Jesus first taught about giving to the needy. In his commentary on Matthew, Alfred Plummer aptly stated:

Almsgiving was part of the service in the synagogue, and there we may believe that our Lord gave what He could out of His slender means. There is a veiled irony in the declaration, ‘They have their reward,’ and this adds to its impressive severity. They receive their pay then and there, and they receive it in full...God owes them nothing. They were not giving but buy-



ing. They wanted the praise of men, they paid for it, and they have got it. The transaction is ended and they can claim nothing more (p.91).

In the first century world, there was no so-called “safety net” from government programs to provide for those who had material needs, and thus all types of impoverished individuals would rely upon the Jewish religious community’s charity. In many ways, giving alms was a visible manifestation of the virtue of showing mercy that Jesus had commended in the Beatitudes back in 5:7.

The Pharisees had perverted the showing of mercy by using it to demonstrate their piety. They tried to impress men with their liberality. This was so prevalent that beggars sought to station themselves at the approaches to the temple so that they might receive the alms from the Pharisees as they entered (The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, p.182).

Scholars are not sure if the reference to the sounding of a trumpet in the synagogues and in the streets is literal or a metaphor that could perhaps be equated to the modern idea of “tooting one’s horn.” Perhaps when the money was deposited into the receptacles it made a similar, familiar sound. I have heard of churches where certain individuals or

families in effect “purchased” a row of seats with their contributions. How hypocritical it is to use financial resources that are a blessing from God in order to enhance one’s reputation!

### ***Praying for the Right Reasons***

In similar fashion, Jesus condemned the Pharisees’ practice of praying in a public place to be seen by men. Three things are important. First, the focus should be on God. Craig Blomberg, in the *New American Commentary*, asserted concerning Christians:

Public prayer is very appropriate when practiced with right motives. But public orations should represent the overflow of a vibrant personal prayer life. What is more, prayer ought not to be used to gain plaudits, summarize a sermon, or communicate information to an audience but should reflect genuine conversation with God (p.117).

Additionally, prayer should not become devoid of meaning based upon the words themselves. Some people like to impress God through style, which, in those days, included endlessly repeating the same things over and over again. Today this can happen when churches recite the “Lord’s Prayer” (subject of next week) every service without giving it any real thought; this can become like “vain repetitions.”

Finally, the need to receive public accolades should be mitigated by the fact that God knows our needs before we even pray for them. So why make it a big public display? As Henry and Richard Blackaby deftly noted, “Prayer is not designed for us to inform God of our needs, for He already knows them. Why, then, should we pray? Prayer enables us to experience God more intimately....Our heavenly Father knows exactly what we will face today and next week. He is eager for us to experience Him as He provides for us” (Experiencing God Day by Day, July 26, p. 217).

### ***The Long View***

In both of these areas, giving and praying, we need to ask ourselves about our own motivation without worrying about what other people think. Just like we cannot avoid God’s lens of judgment when we sin, despite our best efforts to avoid others’ scrutiny, we receive a much greater, eternal reward when we allow our good deeds to be done in secret. And sometimes, just as consequences for sin do not seem to arrive at our doorstep, rewards for faithfulness may not happen either. Be like the saints in Hebrews 11:39, “having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised” in their lifetime but gave us an example to emulate for greater promises in Christ.

## **Hints for Teaching**

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Understand Jesus’ teachings about not practicing one’s piety in order to be noticed by others.
2. Repent of making a show of religiosity in order to receive praise from others.
3. Practice simplicity and humility in your devotional life.

### *Teaching Activity*

Invite participants to perform role plays to contrast false piety with an evangelistic fervor to share one’s faith. Examine the human need for approval and affirmation. How does it get in the way of our worship of God? Discuss the importance of simplicity and humility in the devotional life of the believer.

### **Looking Forward**

From Jesus’ teaching, we learned that doing the right thing is not as important as doing it for the right reason. Next, we will seek to appreciate from Jesus’ Model Prayer, the importance of allowing God’s Kingdom to make an impact in our lives.

# 12. The Prayer of Jesus

Matthew 6:9-15

## Daily Bible Meditations

Joan Small

### Sunday

**Isaiah 63:15-16; 64:8-9**

Jesus taught His disciples to acknowledge God as Father in their prayers just as Isaiah proclaimed, “You, O Lord, are our Father.” If we can see God as our Father, we are able to cast all our cares on Him because a Father takes care of His children. When we see God as our Father, we also learn to trust Him because He knows best. In Matthew 6:8, Jesus taught that “your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask” (NLT). Jesus wanted us to know God as Father and for us to have confidence in Him to love, secure, and establish us in this truth.

### Monday

**Psalm 24:3-5**

The Psalmist was inquiring who can come into the presence of God and as he prayed, he got the answer and declared that only those with clean hands and pure heart shall see the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts. We have to be able to see God for who He is and let our prayer address Him as the King of Glory and Lord of Hosts. As Lord of Hosts, He is leading the army to fight based on His leading and as the army fights, the King of Glory is seen. How do you see God? What might be a hindrance in your life to seeing God in all His splendor? Prayer is the key to helping you to have a better understanding of God. Pray and keep on praying.

### Tuesday

**Psalm 119:5-16**

As children, we were taught Scripture verses at home, at school, and at play and this was normal to us. Any adult could ask us what the Bible said about something and we had to give a ready answer. We had an understanding that only Gods Word could set us straight. David, in today’s Scripture, realized that the words of God could help change his ways, so he had a steadfast desire to keep the Word of God. Years ago, God’s Word set us straight as young children—today it can still set us straight as older children. Is there a part of your life that you need the Word of God to penetrate and change today?

### Wednesday

**Ephesians 1:17-23**

I believe the proverb, “Ignorance is Bliss,” is far removed from the truth. I would reword it to read, “Ignorance is bliss...until the truth is revealed.” Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the truth of

the spiritual blessings they had in Jesus Christ. He constantly prayed that God would reveal the spiritual wisdom of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, so that their hearts would be enlightened and they would come to understand and know the hope they had in Jesus Christ their Lord. When we get that understanding, we have the responsibility to use the resources given to us to live a successful Christian life.

### **Thursday**

### **Matthew 6:13-15**

Every kingdom has rules and regulations that are used to govern the people within its domain. Jesus taught His followers to pray to bring God's Kingdom within and around them. He wanted believers to start living their lives based on the principles of the Kingdom of God. This was and is for the earth to come to the awareness that believers are governed by a different kingdom than the world. When God's people live according to God's Kingdom rules, there is a distinction and a separation from the rest of the people around. When we walk as God's Kingdom people, we are putting God on display so the world can recognize His kingdom and want to become a part of it.

### **Friday**

### **John 16:13**

Our day to day struggles are as real. In spite of the assurance that God loves us and will never leave us or forsake us, we still have anxiety as we are stepping into new territory and new challenges. To successfully navigate the challenges and overcome the struggles, we need a tour guide. The Holy Spirit is that guide and He knows the way. John 16:13 states that the Spirit will show us things to come. His ministry is to get us safely to the destination that God has ordained for us. Challenges will come and the struggles are real, but the Holy Spirit will show us the safest way to reach our destination—if we let Him.

### **Sabbath**

### **Matthew 6:9-15**

In Jesus's model prayer, He first acknowledged God as our Father, showing care and concern for peoples' well-being. Second, He acknowledged God's authority and gave due respect and praise. Third, He established God's Kingdom and will to be done on earth. Fourth, He showed God to be the provider of daily bread. Fifth, He reminded that God is a forgiver/restorer. He showed God, sixth, as a director to lead people where it is safe. Seventh, He celebrated God as a deliverer taking people out of the traps of the evil one. Eighth, and last, He focused on God as the all-powerful one who owns everything and with whom we come in agreement with our amen.

**Study** Matthew 6:9-15

**Background** Matthew 6:9-15

**Devotional** Psalm 40:1-10, 16-17

## Key Verse

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven’ (Matthew 6:9-10).

## Heart of the Lesson

We are often discouraged in the face of negative circumstances over which we seem to have no control. How can we experience the positive transformations we long for? Jesus taught the disciples to pray for God’s Kingdom to be manifested in their lives and in all creation.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. What is your response to negative circumstances—especially those over which you have little to no control? What emotions does being out of control evoke in you? What strategies do you use to try to turn those negative situations into positive results?
2. Look through the prayer in this passage and identify the different elements of prayer. How can these serve as a model of prayer for us? Based on other prayers in the Bible, are there other elements you think should be included in our prayers (cite Scripture references)?
3. Does your church congregation recite the Lord’s Prayer as part of worship frequently? Has it lost any of its meaning over time because it seems like “vain repetition” and too formal? What is God’s part and our part in making this prayer a reality in your individual life and the life of your church?
4. Compare and contrast the prayer Jesus taught here with the Prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:10? How does each focus on and describe the Kingdom of God? Do these prayers complement each other in any way?
5. How can praying a prayer like Jesus taught help bring about the positive transformations we are looking for? When you look at the different aspects of this model prayer, which are most applicable to your personal, day-to-day life and how could you use it as part of your personal time with God?



## Understanding and Living

Jerry Johnson

After speaking about the importance of praying with proper perspective and motivation, Jesus told His disciples, “Pray, then like this.” While this passage is often called, “The Lord’s Prayer,” some commentators have noted that might be a better title for Jesus’ prayer in John 17, while this one might be better termed the “Model Prayer” or “Disciple’s Prayer.” Craig Blomberg offered an excellent overview of the prayer in his *New American Commentary: Matthew*:

Verses 9b-13 illustrate key components and attitudes that Jesus’ disciples should incorporate into their prayer lives. We may choose to pray these exact words thoughtfully and reflectively or to put into our own words similar concerns (p.118-19).

### ***The Address***

Though Jesus used this prayer to teach His first disciples how to pray, it contains several vital elements for Christians of all generations. First, prayer should be addressed to “Our Father who is in heaven” (v.9). In his book *Does Prayer Change Things*, R.C. Sproul noted:

Jesus was the first person on record to take prayer and make it a personal discourse with God. Jesus, who spoke Aramaic, used the Aramaic

word, Abba, best translated ‘Dad’ or ‘Papa.’ We can almost hear the cry of alarm from the disciples and see the looks of astonishment on their faces: ‘You don’t mean it, Jesus. You can’t be serious! We’re not even allowed to speak the name of God aloud. We don’t even call him Father, much less Dad!’ (p.24).

Next, “Hallowed be Your name” (v.9) emphasizes our reverence for God’s holy character. The Greek word used here—*hagios*—means “holy.” Henry and Richard Blackaby amplified this identity in the August 16 devotion in *Experiencing God Day by Day*:

Sometimes we are too concerned with protecting the reputation of people but too little concerned with protecting the holy name of God. When the Israelites profaned God’s name before the nations by the way they lived, God ‘hallowed’ His name: He made His name holy by punishing them (Ezekiel 36:22) (p.239).

### ***Petitions***

After this, there is a petition: “Your kingdom come.” John the Baptist had a ministry marked by the admonition, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” referring to the promised

Messiah. Jesus' appearance, in His person and work, was identified as the inauguration of God's Kingdom. Sproul offered a very simple application saying, "Christians are to pray for the manifestation of the reign of Christ and the emergence of His kingdom. If that is our prayer, it is our responsibility to show our allegiance to the King. People won't have to guess about whom we are exalting" (p.34-35).

The prayer continues with, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (v.10). Once again, the Blackaby's provided excellent application: "Jesus instructed us to pray that God would accomplish His will in our world in the same way [as in heaven, where 'God's will is the only priority']. This means that God's purposes would be preeminent in our homes, our businesses, our schools, our churches, and our government" (August 17, p.240). Jesus modeled this attitude in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest and crucifixion when He prayed, "yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

### ***Requests***

The prayer transitions towards practical needs with, "Give us this day our daily bread" (v.11). It is completely appropriate for God's people to ask Him to provide for their needs. The wording here likely offered the disciples an allusion to the

provision of manna God gave to Israel during their forty years in the wilderness. We can read how the people stopped thanking God, then stopped asking for it, and ultimately grumbled about it to the point that the majority longed for the days in Egypt (Numbers 11:18-20). Jesus used the Greek adjective "epiourios," which could mean "bread for tomorrow." Thus, Blomberg argued, "Christians therefore should pray daily for the next day's provision of life's essentials as they recognize that all sustenance for one's life comes from God and that [H]e makes no long-term future guarantees" (p.119). This matches the teaching of James 4:13-17.

After this, Jesus instructed us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v.12). Later on, Jesus drove the point home through the story of the two men who owed money. The man who owed the large sum had his debt forgiven but did not return the favor towards another who owed him a very small amount in comparison. Jesus told Peter to forgive "Seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22) or infinitely. When we think of our impossible debt that has been paid by our Savior, should we not willingly forgive others? Admittedly, this can be a difficult process, so we must pray for extra grace.

### *The Conclusion*

Most modern translations conclude with “do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, F.F. Bruce asserted that the prayer does not mean that we are to ask God to deliver us from temptation, but to preserve us in temptation, interpreting it more in the sense of a test of our faith that can cause us to become overpowered:

We know our faith needs to be tested if it is to grow strong; indeed, the conditions of life in this world make it inevitable that our faith must be tested. But some tests are so severe that our faith could not stand up to the strain; therefore, we pray not to be brought into tests of such severity (p.367-368).

The King James Version and other older translations—relying upon manuscripts which differ from those in familiar popular translations (such as the NASB, ESV, and NIV)—add a doxology, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (v.13, KJV). This is a fitting and magnificent way to end any time of prayer, whether alone with God or in a corporate body of believers. May we give this model prayer much meaning in our lives.

### **Hints for Teaching**

#### *Lesson Goals*

1. Explore the place of the Lord’s Prayer in the life of the church.
2. Long for the kingdom the Lord’s Prayer describes to be manifested in our lives.
3. Pray the Lord’s Prayer with deeper appreciation for its meaning.

#### *Teaching Activity*

Invite participants to share the first time they remember hearing the Lord’s Prayer recited. What were their first impressions? What did they understand about its meaning? How has it become more meaningful to them as they have matured in their faith? Close the study by praying the Lord’s Prayer phrase by phrase, inviting the group to add prayers related to each phrase.

### **Looking Forward**

We have considered the positive life-change that can be effected by living out the Lord’s Prayer. Next, we will be challenged to persevere in our prayers when God’s answer seems delayed.

# 13. Perseverance in Prayer

Luke 11:5-13

## Daily Bible Meditations

Joan Small

### Sunday

### 1 Samuel 1:10-17

Hannah was desperate for a child and prayed earnestly and in agony. Her desire was great and her prayer was deep because she wanted a relief from the pain of being childless. Eli, seeing her mouth moving and not hearing any sound, assumed she was intoxicated and confronted her about her behavior. Hannah revealed her desperation in asking God for a favor and Eli came in agreement with her, asking God to let it be as she asked. The power of agreement strengthened Hannah. She rose with confidence, believing that her prayer had been answered. Like Hannah, it is when things seem to be hardest that we should continue to persevere.

### Monday

### Nehemiah 1:1-11

The news of the ruined state of Jerusalem was so heart-rending for Nehemiah that he poured out his grief to the Lord. He was determined to remedy the situation and his approach was to persevere in prayer. As you listen to the news of what is happening in our churches, do you feel the same great need for the spiritual wall of Christendom to be restored? Are you willing to get on your knees and pour out your soul like Nehemiah? The spiritual wall can be rebuilt, and the fire of God can be poured out upon His people if you have a burning desire to pray in earnest for a visitation from God.

### Tuesday

### Psalms 25:1-9

When the onslaught of the enemy comes, we have to be tougher than anything the devil throws at us. The flesh is not strong enough to withstand the assaults, but the Holy Spirit's power will help you to resist and stand strong. When the enemy attacked David, he lifted up his soul to God with the intention for God to take the pain away. Once God removed the pain, David asked Him to replace it with the direction he should take. He called on God's mercy and His love to sustain him and was able to move on to victory. Let your pain move you to depend on the Holy Spirit's power to get you moving again.

### Wednesday

### John 16:29-33

If you are knocked down, are you going to stay there? The main thing that determines who succeeds and who does not is attitude. There may be moments when your flesh will scream as the things

of life knock you down, but if you make the choice to submit yourself to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will fill you with new strength. Jesus encourages us to have a positive attitude as we face our difficult situations, because He has overcome difficult situations. So, make up your mind to enjoy success and get up after each knock down with a positive attitude. Be encouraged today that God is with you in the fight.

### **Thursday**

**Luke 11:1-4**

Luke shared that Jesus was praying and as He finished, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. Jesus started with a salutation to God as Father. It is important to note the idea of addressing God as Father. A father is responsible to provide basic needs for His children and sometimes the children can be specific in asking for needs to be met. Two of the needs Jesus addressed in this passage are for daily bread and forgiveness. The bread is for sustenance and the forgiveness is for restoration. When we ask God to supply our need, we are letting Him know that we are depending on Him to take care of us.

### **Friday**

**Luke 11:5-8**

In this parable, Jesus inquired of His disciples which of them would go to a friend to seek bread for another friend that came for help. Jesus also pointed out the inconvenience of the time of need. The friend that was disturbed out of his sleep might have been thinking that their friend was inconsiderate. He might not have wanted to get up and give the bread. But if the person keeps asking, he will rise and give what his friend has asked for. Jesus was teaching about consistency in asking and expectancy in receiving. How would you respond in the given situation? If you persevere in your asking and expect to receive, you will.

### **Sabbath**

**Luke 11:9-13**

When we ask for something that we need and do not receive it, we might be tempted to allow feelings of disappointment and despair to overcome us. Jesus taught the persistence of praying for what we need until we receive it—assuring His disciples that the person who asks, seeks, and knocks will receive. He asked the disciples if any of them would give their children something that is worthless or something to harm them when they asked for something they needed. If the disciples, born with an evil nature, knew the best thing to give their children, God, as our Father, will give us only the best.



**Study** Luke 11:5-13

**Background** Luke 11:1-13

**Devotional** Psalm 13

## Key Verse

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9).

## Heart of the Lesson

It is hard to press on with a task or routine when doing so does not seem to produce any positive changes. How can we persevere in the absence of tangible progress? Jesus taught the disciples to continue to ask, seek, and knock, confident that God would graciously provide.

## Questions for Studying the Text

1. What is the most bold request you have ever made? Why did you feel comfortable making the request? When someone refuses to grant a request, how do you know whether to accept their answer or keep asking?
2. If you were the friend being woken up in the middle of the night in Jesus’ parable, how would you respond? What factors made this man not want to grant his friend’s request? What can you discover about Jewish hospitality from that time that might mitigate some of these factors? Was Jesus implying that we have to “wear God down” with our requests?
3. Read verse 8 in several different translations. What other words are used for “persistence”? Based on all the translations and the context, what characteristic was Jesus encouraging in our prayers?
4. What do you think Jesus meant by instructing us to “ask,” “seek,” and “knock?” On a practical level, how do we avoid the potential pitfall of using this passage and Matthew 6 to “name it and claim it?” What is the difference between confidence and arrogance in our prayers?
5. How can viewing God as your best friend help in your personal prayer life? Are there ways it might hinder instead? How do you hold onto God’s promises to answer prayer when He delays or seems distant?

## Understanding and Living

Jerry Johnson

### *An Audacious Request*

Luke 11 takes place after Jesus had given the disciples the lesson of the “Good Samaritan” and spent time with Martha and Mary. He was finished praying, and the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. His response in verses two through four are similar to the so-called “Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6 (the focus of last week’s study). The context is different, being in the form of an answer to their request instead of in a sermon. Jesus was serving as their rabbi, offering practical religious instruction on an essential spiritual discipline. Next, Jesus did what He customarily did—engaged the disciples through a parable in verses five through eight. According to the details of the story, a man went to his friend at midnight in order to procure three loaves of bread for a visitor who had arrived on a journey. J. Dwight Pentecost explained it this way in *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*:

The host recognized his responsibility to meet his visitor’s need but was unable to do so. In order to discharge his responsibility, he went to another friend whom he knew could meet his need. He petitioned the friend to lend him three loaves of bread so that he could meet his visi-

tor’s need. The host was then in the role of a mediator, a go-between one in need and the one who could meet the need (p.304).

What made the request difficult was that the friend was already in bed. In this time period, families slept together in a house that typically had only one room. So to wake up and take care of this need, the man would have to disturb everyone else. Thus, he was not inclined to meet the need, and stated as much through the closed door. Jesus then said that it was persistence (“impudence” (ESV); “shameless audacity” (NIV)) which caused the friend to “give him as much as he needs.” Without pressing the details of the story too far allegorically, we can see that Jesus was offering a practical concept they could relate to. As we read in the *Reformation Study Bible*:

Obviously the point is that although friendship is not enough to make the sleepy neighbor rise and provide for his friend’s unexpected guest, something else will motivate the neighbor, either the friend’s shamelessly making a spectacle of himself at midnight, or the sleeping neighbor’s desire to avoid the social stigma of denying his friend the wherewithal to

offer hospitality to the tardy traveler (p.1809).

### ***Keeping After It***

Jesus then pivoted to the real lesson of the story in relation to persistence in prayer. Keep in mind, first, that this lesson in persistence came after He shared the model of how to pray, indicating that prayer is not supposed to be a mundane and repetitious formula. He offered His disciples three verbs of exhortation: ask, seek, and knock—or literally in Greek, “keep asking,” “keep seeking,” and “keep knocking.” Implicit in this lesson is Jesus’ “how much more” argument, in which God is far readier to respond than the friend in this parable. Jesus offered an explicit promise as well: those who ask will receive; those who seek will find; those who knock will have the door opened for them.

The renowned devotional writer and missionary to China E.M. Bounds applied this to our everyday life in his July 20 entry in *The Power of Prayer*:

When the answer is not immediately given, the praying Christian must gather courage at each delay. He must urgently go forward until the answer comes. The answer is assured, if he has the faith to press his petition with vigorous faith. Negligence, impatience, and fear will be fatal to our prayers. The

Father’s heart, hand and infinite willingness to hear and to give to His children is waiting for the start of our perseverance.”

### ***A Generous Response***

Jesus pointed out that our Heavenly Father is far greater than earthly fathers, who despite their fallen, sinful nature still provide good things to their children, rather than things like serpents and scorpions. In Matthew 7:11, Jesus told His listeners that the Father would give “what is good” in a generic sense. Here in Luke, the promise is specifically that of the Holy Spirit. The difference is related to context, as well as the purpose of the authors. Matthew was focusing on Jesus’ extended sermon, which in chapter six was pertaining to true religious piety and God’s provision for them. Luke focused a great deal upon the work of the Holy Spirit in both his Gospel and the Book of Acts.

Two Old Testament prophecies speak to this specific promise: Joel 2:28-29 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. Late in His ministry, Jesus amplified the importance of the promise by describing for His disciples various ministries of the Holy Spirit: comforting/helping (John 14:16-17); teaching/instructing (John 14:25-26); witnessing (John 15:26-27); and convicting (John 16:7-11). Pentecost aptly noted: “However,

at the time the time Christ spoke the words of this paragraph, He was being rejected and so that promise could not then be fulfilled, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit could only follow the death and resurrection of Christ. The believers were not to give up hope that the promise would be fulfilled but were to persist in praying for what God had promised (p.305).

I have struggled with the meaning of this passage, because as believers in Christ we already have the promise of the Holy Spirit realized. We have been sealed by Him as a pledge of our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14); we are baptized into the body of Christ and drink of the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13); and we have the privileges of adopted children through the Spirit so that we can cry “Abba, Father” to our Heavenly Father (Romans 8:14-17). But what about the times when we do not sense the presence of the Holy Spirit and that closeness with our Father (and Savior, to make it a Trinity)? Oswald Chambers said, “If all you see is a shadow on the face of the Father right now, hang on to the fact that He will ultimately give you clear understanding and will fully justify Himself in everything that he has allowed into your life” (My Utmost for His Highest, September 12).

## Hints for Teaching

### *Lesson Goals*

1. Explore the meaning of Jesus’ exhortation to ask, seek, and knock.
2. Long for God to give the Holy Spirit, the greatest possible gift.
3. Commit to make daily prayer a vital aspect of our lives.

### *Teaching Activity*

In what ways do people seek, ask, and knock? What response is hoped to be received? Discuss some practical examples where participants have experienced ultimate victory through persistent prayer. Brainstorm ways you could help a new believer understand the tension between accepting God’s will and continuing to pray persistently when their prayers are not answered immediately in the way they had hoped.

### **Looking Back**

We have explored what Jesus taught about honoring God through our spiritual practices and how those practices can equip us to resist temptation, do the right thing for the right reason, pray Kingdom-minded prayers, and keep praying no matter what.

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

March - May 2020

# Justice and the Prophets

### Unit I – God Requires Justice

- |    |                            |                                 |          |
|----|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Called to Accountability   | <i>Amos 5:18-24</i>             | Feb. 29  |
| 2. | A Prayer for Justice       | <i>Habakkuk 1:1-4, 12-14</i>    | March 7  |
| 3. | Consequences for Injustice | <i>Habakkuk 2:6-14</i>          | March 14 |
| 4. | Corrupt Leaders            | <i>Micah 3:1-3, 9-12; 6:6-8</i> | March 21 |
| 5. | Leading Justly             | <i>Malachi 2:1-9; 3:5-6</i>     | March 28 |

### Unit II – God Promises a Just Kingdom

- |    |                            |  |          |
|----|----------------------------|--|----------|
| 6. | God's Just Servant         | <i>Isaiah 42:1-9</i>                             | April 4  |
| 7. | Resurrection Hope          | <i>1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45</i> | April 11 |
| 8. | Injustice Will Be Punished | <i>Esther 7:1-10</i>                             | April 18 |
| 9. | The Lord Loves Justice     | <i>Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4</i>                    | April 25 |

### Unit III – Called to God's Work of Justice

- |     |                            |   |        |
|-----|----------------------------|---|--------|
| 10. | A Vision of Restoration    | <i>Zephaniah 3:14-20</i>                | May 2  |
| 11. | Peace and Justice Reign    | <i>Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17</i>           | May 9  |
| 12. | Practice Justice           | <i>Jeremiah 21:8-14</i>                 | May 16 |
| 13. | Repent of Injustice        | <i>Jeremiah 22:1-10</i>                 | May 23 |
| 14. | Return to Love and Justice | <i>Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14</i> | May 30 |

## Statement

of the ownership, management, and circulation (required by the Act of Congress of August 12, 1970; Section 835, Title 39, United States Code) of THE HELPING HAND (Publ. no 239-780), published 4 times per year at Janesville, Wisconsin, for October 16, 2018.

Publisher: Seventh Day Baptist Christian Education Council, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.

Managing Editor: Stephen Osborn, 6710 Arapahoe Rd., Boulder, CO 80303.

Owner: Seventh Day Baptist Christian Education Council, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.

<b>Extent and nature of circulation</b>	<b>Average # copies last 12 months</b>	<b># copies for 10/2018</b>
Total number of copies (net press run)	1850	1850
Paid distribution by mail	1564	1484
Free distribution by mail	5	5
Total distribution	1594	1521
Copies not distributed (office use)	256	329
<b>Total</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1850</b>