



1 CHRONICLES DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

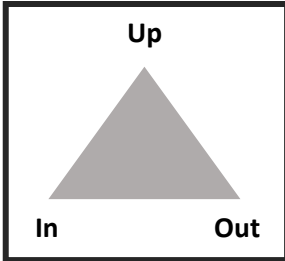
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CHRONICLES

I love this book written by one who has become known as “The Chronicler”. There has been much speculation as to who the writer was, but that is all it is, mere speculation. Jewish tradition says Ezra could have written 1 and 2 Chronicles. Whoever the author was, he was a pretty interesting character who discerned what to add and what not to add, directed, obviously, by the Holy Spirit. Chronicles was most likely written during the time of Ezra or Nehemiah while many of the Jews were dispersed throughout Persia and some had returned to Israel.

You will most definitely notice the extensive space devoted to genealogies, nine chapters to be precise. If you are like me and tend to speed read the lists of ‘begats’ in the Bible, try not to do so here. These lists demonstrate the power of a person’s or family’s claim to a particular role or rank. They will tell you of families, priests, Levites, armies, temple officials, and other leaders of various ministries.

The history of Israel is told through a priestly perspective in Chronicles. The Chronicler devoted significant attention to the proper worship of Yahweh and adherence to the regulations of His law. The author included David’s decisions on the proper manner to move the ark of the covenant (chapters 13 and 15). We will read the story of how David purchased the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which he then designated as the future site of the temple (chapter 21). Though David desired to build the temple, God revealed to him that his son Solomon would have that honour (chapter 17). David’s prayer in chapter 29 is a beautiful highlight which summarises the themes the Chronicler wished to communicate – glory to God, gratitude for gifting David’s family with leadership of the nation, and the desire that David’s descendants continue to devote themselves to God.

I have been so enriched and blessed in this study and I know you will be too. So, let’s get going. Bible, pencil, journal, and a fresh brew at hand.

Love and prayers.

Phil

Read

1 Chronicles 1

Live

Oh my word, fifty-four verses of ‘begats’ (the term used in original KJV). I used to skim read chapters like this and one day felt the Spirit’s whisper. He simply said, ‘They’re there for a purpose, Philip.’ I get called ‘Phil’ mostly now, so when someone uses my full name, I know they have either known me for a long time or they really want my attention. This time, both were true. He had my attention. What I feel He was telling me was that while nations are important to God, so are individuals. The opening verse of the books of Chronicles indicates something from its focus. Adam and Eve had three sons who are named (Genesis 4:1-2, 4:25), plus many other unnamed sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). Yet in this first verse we read nothing of Cain or Abel, only of Seth. This indicates that the Chronicler was inspired by God to make a selective genealogy for a specific purpose. Meyer comments: *“This is an ancient graveyard. The names of past generations who were born and died, who loved and suffered, who stormed and fought through the world, are engraven on these solid slabs. But there is no inscription to record their worth or demerit. Just names, and nothing more.”*

The steady repetition of names may seem an irrelevant blur to the modern reader, but they have an important place in God’s plan of the ages. If nothing else, they demonstrate the reality of prior generations and our connection to both them and God’s broader plan. My weekly walk through our local graveyard often speaks the same things to me. May God rescue us the very second our minds fail us and we no longer consider the glory to be revealed in us to be greater than the difficulty of our present sufferings in this world. May we all continually thank God for the people who have gone before us in this journey of life, people who fought a good fight and kept the faith.

Pray

Father, when I read passages like this, I am reminded of Paul’s words to the saints at Corinth, *“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”*. The peace and joy I have pondering my eternal future with You is beyond measure and without comparison. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

There were twelve sons of Israel and thirteen tribes from those twelve sons. Yet the tribe of Judah received first attention from the Chronicler. The description of Judah's tribe occupies the next two and a half chapters. I think it's beautiful that the writer shifts all focus to this amazing tribe from which would stem David and, more importantly, Jesus Himself, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Makes me wonder where my focus is at times. Let's shift it onto Him and lift our eyes to Him.

Interesting little mention of this guy called Er. One wonders why he is even here, but I think God is reminding us of what He notices and what we shall be remembered by. I wonder if God was to summarise my life up to now, what He would say. Achar is mentioned in verse 7; we know him as Achan who stole from the plunder that was meant for God alone and brought defeat and death upon God's people at Ai after the great victory over Jericho.

In verse 12, we have Boaz who became the husband of Ruth. Then David is mentioned in verse 15. Have you ever wondered what it was about David that brought him such favour and why God delighted in him so much? We are reminded in 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22 that he was a man after God's own heart. It would also seem by reading Scripture that God sought for him. I love that. God was looking for someone like this, preparing and shaping the boy in the field, the underdog. Even the prophet Samuel would have missed him had it not been for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

So many names! Caleb is mentioned in verse 18. He was one of the famous twelve spies sent to scout out the new land, ten of whom returned with a defeatist mindset, but not this boy. I love him so much I named my youngest son Daniel Caleb! I'm so glad to be part of the eternal purposes of God alongside these incredible saints.

Pray

Father, free me from comparing myself with others by intensifying my awe of the beauty and magnificence of Jesus. May Jesus increasingly become my treasure, my delight, my grace, and my sufficiency. In His strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 3

Live

David seemed to have a lot of wives; seven are listed here and that's not taking into consideration his concubines. Through this multitude of largely unknown names, the Chronicler points out that God's election purposes were still at work despite the wanderings in Judah's history. Passages like this remind me that David was a mere man with all his warts, bumps, and weaknesses; yet God used him mightily. If God took the time to record all these unknowns don't you think He knows you and me? You can read Abigail's story in 1 Samuel 25 and 26. She was a pretty powerful and extremely wise woman. Absalom is mentioned in verse 2 and you can read all about his sad and tragic story in 2 Samuel 13-18.

Bathsheba, mentioned in verse 5, can be read about in 2 Samuel 11 and 12 – how David lusted after her even though she was another man's wife, how he got her pregnant and then brought home the husband, Uriah, to cover his tracks. David asked Uriah for a report of the battlefield then sent him home to sleep with his wife, Bathsheba. Problem was, Uriah refused to sleep with his wife while his friends were in battle. Plan B, get Uriah drunk and then send him home again. Another problem, Uriah was more honourable drunk than David was sober and refused to go home. Plan C, send him back to the battlefield with a letter for Commander Joab. What Uriah didn't realise was that this was his own death warrant. It read, *"Put Uriah on the front line and when the battle starts, pull back and leave him on his own."* When Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin, he penned Psalm 51. *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."* Let's remind ourselves that God knows us so well. He knows and records our names, so, instead of indulging the ways of our flesh, let's surrender to the work of the Spirit in this moment.

Pray

Father, in You are found all the blessings of life and eternity. I repent of not repenting sooner and thank You for Your forgiveness. Jesus, You are my righteousness, peace, and joy. In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

More names, more clans, more blessed assurance that God knows us intimately and fully. What about this guy, Jabez? Verse 9 records him as being more honourable than his brothers. We read nothing more about him other than he was a man of honour and that he prayed a prayer that God responded favourably to. Here are a few simple lessons based on his prayer...

When you pray, begin by acknowledging who God is! Jabez not only recognises God as the only true God, he also acknowledges that blessings come from God alone. Many think that Jabez is referring to physical land when asking for territory. However, if we look at his lineage, we can see that he is not merely speaking in terms of wealth and prosperity but in terms of impacting the kingdom of God. He wanted his spiritual territory to increase. Jabez wanted God to be in every moment of his day. He understood the power of God's hand to protect and to lead in the right direction.

The name Jabez literally means 'born with pain'. His mother named him this because of the pain she endured in childbirth. When Jabez prays, he speaks against the testimony of his name and he lets go of the shame it covered him in. When we learn to submit our will to God and pray like Jabez, we will begin to see God move in mighty ways!

Just in case you are getting weary of all the genealogies, let me quote Adam Clarke's commentary, *"How barren to us is this register, both of incident and interest! And yet, as barren rocks and sandy deserts make integral and necessary parts of the globe; so do these genealogical tables make necessary parts of the history of providence and grace in the maintenance of truth, and the establishment of the church of Christ. Therefore, no one that fears God will either despise or lightly esteem them."* The lesson being, every single person ever conceived has great value in the eyes of God!

Pray

Father, *"Oh, that You would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain."* Lord, may Your response be like that to Jabez's prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 5

Live

Note to self: there are always consequences to sin. In this passage, we may ask, if Reuben was the first-born son, why is he not listed first? The first verse answers the question. Sin disqualified Reuben from being first among the sons of Israel. His sin is not recorded here to smear his name but rather to show the ramifications of sin. As the oldest son in the family, he was due to inherit a double portion of his father's estate and leadership of all Abraham's descendants. But the truth is that sin demoralises and strips rights away in its merciless backlash. It would be a great lesson for all of us today to make sure we look well at the disastrous consequences of sin before we delve in. I often tell our church family that even forgiven sin has consequences. Ask the person who thought one drink wouldn't hurt, or the person who thought one peep at something pornographic wouldn't do any harm, or the man/woman who thought the little fling would never be found out and never grow into a full-blown affair that would wreck two families, even into following generations.

Sin is a scourge, spawned in the corridors of hell itself with principalities and powers seeking to destroy every child of God. The Bible reminds me that if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. The actual rendering is "look sympathetically on sin". My challenge to my own heart, as I challenge yours today, is to ask, is there anything God is enlightening? Am I justifying things that I know create a blockage spiritually? It would be a good idea to unblock the drains. May God help us to confess our failings and faults to Him and not try to fool Him or ourselves. Let's shake off slights and sins more quickly and try to be more comfortable with the unresolved, unhealed parts of our story. I love 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

Pray

Father, when it comes to the failures of others, I want a longer fuse and a shorter memory. I want Your Spirit to empower me to love in the messy places of life. I want to serve You in purity of soul and to love You above all others. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 6

Live

The entire tribe of Levi had a special place in Israel, given over to the service of God. Within the tribe of Levi was a priestly family descended from Aaron; therefore, all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. I find verse 15 worthy of note: *“When the LORD led Judah and Jerusalem into captivity by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar...”* The inspired historian saw the hand of God even in the great tragedy that still afflicted Judah at the time of writing Chronicles. It was not the Babylonian Empire that carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity, it was the Lord. It’s amazing what God has to do at times to get the attention of His people.

I love verse 31 where we see the musicians come to rest in the presence of the Lord. We know that when Jesus ascended to His Father, He sat down at the right hand of His Father. This is a very powerful statement because an Old Testament priest never sat down. There were no seats in the temple because the new had not yet come. Jesus rests in His own finished work on the cross and His people also find their rest in that finished work. After they had rest, the musicians ministered in song, waiting on the presence and power of God in their lives (verse 32).

I love that all through Scripture we find people ministering unto the Lord, all in different ways. I imagine the people passing through the wilderness with the tabernacle, those who spent whole years taking care of pins, curtains, boards, bars, pillars, sockets and gates, yet saw it as an honour to serve. For you, it might mean to preach the Word, teach in a school, raise a family, tell others about Jesus on the factory floor. Whatever the call, God wants us to delight in Him as He delights in us. He can take away our stony heart and give us a new heart, having written His law upon our heart and placed His Spirit there.

Pray

Father, the battle for my heart does not stop and this war will continue until the day You perfect Your salvation in me. What encourages me the most is Your relentless pursuit for more of my heart. This is truly astonishing and truly true. I love You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 7

Live

I never noticed this before but there is no account here for either Zebulun or Dan. We can assign no reason as to why they should be omitted, but it is worth remembering the disgrace of the tribe of Dan – idolatry began in that colony (Judges 18) and one of the golden calves was set up there by Jeroboam. I notice also that Dan is omitted in Revelation 7 and wonder could it be that men become abominable when they forsake the worship of the true God for any other created object?

I find it really interesting that when the Chronicler comes to Ephraim, he adds some details to the names. I like the diversion from list upon list of just names. In verses 20,21 we have Shuthelah who was head of the first of the four Ephraim clans. Ezer and Elead were killed by the men of Gath who had come down to take their cattle. They “*came down*” seems to suggest that the descent was made upon Philistia from the hill country of Ephraim in the early days of the settlement of the tribe in Canaan.

After Ezer and Elead were killed and mourned by their father, Ephraim, he had another son called Beriah. This name is derived from the root word ‘bara’ and means ‘gift’. You’ve got to love the detail that the Holy Spirit reveals to us in these pages. I suppose it makes us wonder, if God were to tell our story in years to come, what would He say?

My prayer today for us all is that by the power of the Holy Spirit, He would take us further up and further in, that He would take us deeper and deeper into the wonders of His incredible love. There is a fathomless ocean of God’s grace, a vastness of wonder and delight that only eternity will reveal and even then, we will probably never be able to span its size and power.

Pray

Father, free me from the heart-dulling limitations of my doubts and disbelief. Forgive me for ever looking or hoping for some horizontal relationship that could possibly give me what I can only find in You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 8

Live

Here is a longer list of Benjamin's tribe. Many details in these genealogies seem perplexing to us, yet they were plain to understand at the time they were written and fully answered the intention for which they were published. Many mighty nations and powerful people were upon earth in those days whose names are now forgotten. But the names of the Israel of God are here, kept in everlasting remembrance. The memory of the just is blessed. I love the fact that God never forgets a name, neither theirs nor ours!

Benjamin was the thirteenth child of Jacob who had twelve sons and one daughter. He was the second son of Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife. Rachel's sister Leah was given in marriage to Jacob before her even though Rachel was the one Jacob loved. To add insult to injury, Leah was very fertile while poor Rachel not so. Then Joseph was born to her and after a while, Benjamin came along. It was a tragically difficult birth which led to the death of Rachel. In her final moments, after realising she had given birth to a son, she named him Benoni meaning 'son of my sorrow'. It would seem that poor Rachel was summing up her whole life in the naming of her new boy. However, Jacob stepped in and said, "No, call him Benjamin," meaning 'son of my right hand'. I remember years ago reading this story in Genesis 35 and thinking 'Wow, what a name! Who was he? What did he become?' But I could find little that would warrant such a powerful name. Then one day I was reading in the New Testament epistles and came on a great verse in Philippians 3:5 that answered my long-awaited ponderings. *"I Paul ... circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin..."*

I thank God today for the calling and privilege of worshipping a Father who never forgets a name. Even better, He records every single one, never to be forgotten. Is yours in the Lamb's book of life?

Pray

Father, feed my mind with Your Word, fill my heart with Your grace, empower my worship by Your Spirit. May I not be a selfish consumer, looking to be pleased, but a true worshipper, longing to be consumed with Your glory and grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 9

Live

I find this little statement amazing: *“The people of Judah were carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.”* In one sentence, the Chronicler reminds us that it was not a clash of empires or intrigues of the political scene that doomed the Kingdom of Judah; it was their unfaithfulness to God. If they had remained faithful, God would have protected them amid the rise and fall of a hundred powerful empires.

I love how the Chronicler, between verses 1 and 2, skips over the 70 years of captivity. It would seem his interest is not only in the past (demonstrated by the previous eight chapters of genealogies) but also in the present and in the future. The Israelites were back in the land and this chapter records the genealogies of Israel when they returned from Babylon. God's people may be scattered and downtrodden and degraded in strange lands, but He has His eye on each, and their names are in the book of life. Not one will be missing when the Lord gathers His own into that land of endless day.

We read how the servants of God each had their work apportioned. Some had charge of the pans, some numbered the vessels, some carried them in and out. Some were porters at the door of the house of God, some were porters at the king's gate, and some had the more exalted office of rulers of the house of God. The reward will be given not according to the dignity of the post, but according to the *faithfulness* of the servant. There is one service in this list worthy of note – the Levites who were singers. They were free from other service because they were in the chambers of the house of God and their work was to praise day and night (verse 33). I am reminded of the words of Psalm 34, *“I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”*

Pray

Father, it's Your love that makes faithfulness achievable, so I beseech You, please pour fresh amounts of Your love into the hearts of those who are tired and weary, spent and used up, vulnerable and easy targets for the lies of the enemy. By Your Holy Spirit, give them a supernatural sense of Your hand and heart at work. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The Philistines were a seafaring people who traded with distant lands. They imported newer and better military technology from the Greeks and thus became a powerful enemy of the people of Israel. Archaeologists tell us two things about the Philistines: they were hard drinkers, and they were the first in the region to effectively use iron.

I think this is such a sad chapter. *“So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.”* Such was the tragic end of this first king of Israel who started with great promise but ended his reign in disaster for himself, his sons, and his kingdom. It is a stark reminder that our disobedience and sin DOES NOT only affect us. They were fighting against the Philistines near Mount Gilboa when Saul was hit with an arrow from an archer. He realised that he wasn't going to make it, so pleaded with his armour bearer to finish him off but his armour bearer feared to do it, so Saul fell upon his own spear. When his armour bearer saw that Saul was dead, he did likewise. Jonathan and his other brothers were slain as well. The next day, when the Philistines were stripping the bodies, they found the body of Saul, cut off his head, and set it up in the land of the Philistines that they might rejoice over the fact that they had killed Saul, the king of Israel. Saul's body they put in the temple of Dagon in Bethshemesh.

Saul died for his transgression. He was a man who had tremendous potential when God chose him. He was humble, came from a good family, seemed to be a natural leader, and was courageous. Yet, when God failed to answer him, he went to the witch at Endor to enquire of her. What a sad story. It could have been so different. Let's be on guard!

Pray

Father, I understand why You tell me not to be overcome by evil. As I read this passage, I see how easy it is to begin to slip away from Your presence. Sometimes I feel like a mess and I'm glad You love messes. Help me to learn from the tragic story of King Saul and to keep my eyes fixed on You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

At the beginning of David's rule, only one of the tribes of Israel recognised him as king. It is sad that the tribes only turned to David when their previous choice (Ishbosheth, a son of Saul) was taken away. On the same principle, it's sad when people today only recognise Jesus as King when other choices crumble. We should choose Jesus outright, not just when all other options fail. A huge force of people from all the tribes gathered to David. Hundreds of thousands actually gathered in Hebron. The twofold commission of God to David was: 'You shall feed My people,' and 'You shall be ruler over them.' David was called a man after God's own heart because he had the heart of a shepherd. The secret behind David's greatness was the Lord of hosts was with him.

Today we read a list of David's mighty men. The first one listed is Jashobeam, chief of the captains (verse 11). It's interesting that in the other records, nothing is spoken of this guy, and yet he was pretty powerful. In one battle, he lifted up his spear against three hundred men. Three hundred to his credit in one battle! He was not one to be messed with. After Jashobeam come the three mighties, fierce in battle and absolutely dedicated to their king.

There is much in David to be admired. There's also much in him to identify with because he was a man and was subject to the same problems and temptations we have. He wasn't a perfect man by any means; in fact, because of some of the things he did, he was rejected from building the temple unto God, even though it was in his heart to do so. Yet, he had admirable traits. He didn't leave the fighting just to his warriors. In this chapter, we read of a time when the Philistines were attacking. Everybody fled, but David and Eleazar stood their ground in the barley field and wiped out the Philistine attackers. What a list of men and exploits!

Pray

Father, it's by Your name that I'm fully forgiven and declared righteous, being healed of every disease, and being freed from every bondage. And it's at Your name, Jesus, that one day I will gladly bow my knees with everyone – in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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What am I going to do about it?

Live

During David's time in Ziklag, certain mighty warriors came and expressed their allegiance to David and his cause. This was remarkable because they were of the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's brethren, and therefore had much to gain from Saul's continued reign. They chose David over Saul because they knew that God was with David. Over and over we read of brave people. The Authorised Version uses the phrase "*of a perfect heart*" to describe the people of Zebulun (verse 33). These were men of a single or whole heart in their devotion to make David king. This is reflected in several other translations: "*They were not of double heart*" (KJV). "*To help David with undivided loyalty*" (NIV). "*Helped David with an undivided heart*" (NASB). "*Completely loyal to David*" (NLT). How's your heart towards your King today? There are days, even longer seasons, when people gain much more power over our heart than they deserve, or in some cases, even want. When this happens, any of a number of broken relational styles results.

We have three lists of men all preferring the exile and reproach of David to the honour of the court of Saul (the first list up to verse 15, the second to verse 22, the third to verse 40). They gave up everything for him. The children of Benjamin joining his standard must have been a real string to David's bow as these were the kindred of Saul and probably included many of his relatives. They had obviously joined David's group under the influence of the Spirit of God, perceiving the withdrawal of God's favour from Saul. It was a public announcement by those who knew David well. They had witnessed the excellence of his character and the grievous wrong done to him by Saul. David was suspicious of these Benjamites joining him. This is probably why they asked the children of Judah to accompany them (verse 16), helping to remove David's suspicion of them being traitors from the house of Saul.

Pray

Father, today I pledge my allegiance to You. I want to follow You with all my heart. Thank You that there's grace for every season of life and for every expression of the fear of man. Grant me freedom that I might love well, especially in loving You with ALL my heart. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is one of the most interesting chapters in the Bible. As I've studied it over the years, I cannot pass the mistake David made, noted in the first verse, a mistake I've made a thousand times: "*David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.*" The text does not say that David consulted with the Lord. A group of godly men with good intention would soon slip up because they took counsel only with each other, not with the Lord. I think this is most significant. As you read the chapter, it will allow you to question your own heart. It is good to have friends and good counsel but, ultimately, we must listen to the Lord.

Much service for the Lord is like this: a new cart, a big production with strength leading out front, without enquiring of God or looking to His will. We have all done it numerous times, but with less gruelling outcomes. Poor Uzzah loses his life because his leader was weak in his relationship with his God. Surely David prayed for God's blessing on this big production. But he didn't enquire of God regarding the production itself. This was a good thing done the wrong way.

I am truly thankful that God doesn't roll His eyes when we're less than conquerors and get it wrong. Rather, He gives us tons of grace. His forbearance is remarkable, His patience is inexhaustible, and His kindness is incalculable. Another interesting detail to note in this chapter is how the ark had been in Kiriath-jearim for a long time, years actually, showing how much Israel had neglected the presence of God. David's motive of re-centring his people around the presence was certainly commendable. We need to continue learning that worship is much more than a religious exercise; it is an attitude towards God. The presence was to be carried above all on the shoulders of the Levites and never to be touched.

Pray

Father, when I'm flat-out tired, exhausted from working too hard, help me make the changes in my schedule that need to, and can, be made. Grant me the gifts of relaxation, play, and a night's good sleep. Help me to continually and daily lift my eyes to You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This great chapter is summed up in verse 2 with the little phrase *“So David knew...”* David knew two things that made his reign great. Every godly leader should know them well. David knew that God called him and established him over Israel. David knew that God wanted to use him as a channel to bless His people. It was not for David’s sake that he was lifted up, but for the sake of God’s people. Just when it’s going good, we read, *“David took more wives”*, which was in direct disobedience to Deuteronomy 17:17. It was a moral disaster for David. It’s strange, but often true, that the seeds of our future trouble are sown in times of success and prosperity. In some ways, David handled trials better than success.

I love how David enquires of the Lord and heard a direct answer. When things shifted a little, he enquired of the Lord again (verse 14). When situations shift, it is important to enquire again. The second time, David got a new strategy from the Lord, a new direction to take, a new sound to listen for, and please notice, it was in the top of the trees; they had to look up for the supernatural sound of God calling them into battle. When they followed God’s new strategy, David struck the enemy down all the way to Gezer which was the lowlands from which they came. The Chronicler concludes the account of these victories with the words: *“The fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.”*

Let’s all be grateful for God’s daily mercies, eternal kindness, and measureless generosity. Not only has He given Jesus to us as our perfect righteousness, He provides us with everything else we need in life. May we all be ready to enquire from God again for fresh strategies to see heaven come to earth and His kingdom explode in power.

Pray

Father, help me with my own emotional triggers. Shame, fear, and anger are always lurking around the corner. Continue to reveal and heal the wounds of my heart that remain in need of Your grace, surgery, and rehab. Continue to expose old relational patterns I learned in response to abandonment, betrayal, and insecurity. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Now the ark returns in the proper fashion as God required. David didn't hold back in his expression of worship. He didn't dance out of obligation but out of heartfelt worship. He was glad to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem according to God's word. I love this expression of David's heart which showed that he had more than a spiritual connection to God; he had a genuine emotional link. There are two great errors in this area: making emotions the centre of our Christian life, and having an emotionally detached Christian life. In the Christian life emotions must not be manipulated and they must not be repressed. This is so important!

David had done what everyone should do, learn from their mistakes. People who cling to their mistakes and justify them are sure to come to heartache. But those who have the humility and heart to see that they are wrong, and who also have the courage to correct it, are sure to find themselves on the road to success. They may take a wrong turn or two, but they move in the right direction, and, like David and the ark, will reach Jerusalem.

There seems to have been no hesitancy on the part of the priests and Levites; they applied themselves with due zeal to do whatever they had neglected before. They sanctified themselves for the task and then executed it, doing all things *"as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord."* Like them, and like the prodigal of the parable in Luke 15 who said, *"I will arise and go to my Father, and he arose and went,"* we should do quickly what the Lord is saying and leading us to do. When we have taken time for understanding and know for certain God is directing, then we should, like the people about whom we read here, go!

Pray

Father, when I read passages like this and see how David got so emotionally attached to You, I just love it. May my worship of You be of that spirit. Thank You for sending Jesus to tear down walls, destroy hostilities, and make peace – between You and me, and between me and others. Help me to want relationship with You above all else. You alone are God. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love this. After many years, the ark that had been lost in battle is returned to the centre of Israel's national consciousness. The emblem of God's presence and glory was set in its proper place in Israel. At the end of this spectacular day of celebration, David established an enduring institution of worship and commemoration before the Ark of the Covenant. It wasn't to be a one-day high but an ongoing ministry unto God with loads of symbolism and offerings. From the thank offerings, David ordered certain portions to be given to every man and woman in Israel – a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins. Having done this, he set in order the service of the Levites to minister before the Lord. On that same day, David delivered a psalm to thank the Lord into the hands of Asaph and his associates. In doing this, David committed to Asaph the service of song, introducing ongoing worship. This beautiful psalm was doubtless composed by David himself to be sung in public worship. I'm not sure why, but the first half of the psalm (verses 8-22) are recorded in Psalm 105, the second half (verses 23-33) in Psalm 96, and the conclusion (verses 34-36) in Psalm 106.

The purpose of *praise* is to declare the attributes of God in the presence of others while *worship* is more personal and intimate. I am so thankful that this is our true, life-defining, and life-transforming identity. We are chosen by God, holy and dearly loved by Him. May God help us all today to, like David of old, return Him to His rightful position in our lives. May we have humility and gentleness, lest we default to our critical and rigid ways, and may we repent of quick and harsh reactions. Imagine telling someone how great a person whom you love is – that's praise. Now imagine telling that beloved person how wonderful they are – that's worship!

Pray

Father, You cannot love me more than You do in this moment, and You will never love me less. How can I possibly not choose to love others? Your love is compelling, and Your love is enough. Love in me and through me to Your glory. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I can imagine the scene ... David looking out of his beautiful palace and seeing the Ark of the Covenant, the presence of Almighty God, in a flimsy tent. He was troubled by the thought that he lived in a nicer house, and he wanted to build God a temple. God said, "Thanks, but no thanks. Let me build you a house instead." This was a greater prospect than David's idea because David's house would last longer and be more glorious than the temple he wanted to build. It is always interesting to note the reaction when you ask someone *not* to do something, rather than asking them to do something. That will bring out the true colours of any person. Try asking someone to *stop* doing something and you will find their level of maturity.

I love David's response: *"Then David went in and sat before the LORD and said, who am I and what is my family that You have brought me this far... And now, LORD, let the promise You have made concerning Your servant and his house be established forever."* No huffing, no pouting, no 'Why can't I do the job for you?' Just acceptance that God was right and was in control. David's prayer boldly asked God to do what He promised. This wasn't a *passive* prayer that said, "Well, God, do whatever You want to do. I don't really care one way or another." This wasn't an *arrogant* prayer that said, "Well, God, let me tell You what to do." This was a *bold* prayer that said, "God, here is Your promise, now I trust You to fulfil it and to be faithful to Your word."

What about praying some bold prayers today? When feeling discouraged, may we be reminded that our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Corinthians 4:17). All our pain, suffering, and troubles are not in vain. God is a great and gracious Redeemer, and though some troubles don't seem very "*light*" or "*momentary*" right now, before long, they definitely will!

Pray

Father, one day the weight of Your sovereignty and wisdom will tip the scales towards eternal praise. I will unhesitatingly proclaim, *"Our God has done all things well!"* Help me not to run to denial, but to You. Help me fix my gaze on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The Philistines had troubled Israel for centuries and often dominated them. Under the reign of David, Israel both attacked and subdued these troublesome enemies. We will see this more fully in the next three chapters. I love verse 6... *"The LORD gave David victory wherever he went."* This is a summary of this whole chapter. Every victory won and every enemy subdued was a testimony to the Lord's preserving power in the life and reign of David. This chapter of victory, blessing, and prosperity describes the national life of Israel during David's kingship. This is one reason why he is generally regarded as the greatest ruler Israel ever had. God wanted Saul to reign this way, but Saul resisted the Lord and rejected His Spirit. Because David allowed God to subdue him, the nations were subdued before David. When was the last time we allowed God to use us, in even a simple way?

The Chronicler leaves out a load of stuff that was going on personally for David, things like his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and other family matters. I think the reason for this is not that those things didn't matter, but rather that the writer's focus is on the faithfulness of God to His promise to Israel and to David. For us, unless we keep blasting our hearts with the truth of God's Word, we default to the arrogant notion that God loves us because of something good in us, or the perilous notion that He will withdraw His love from us because of something bad in us. But this chapter, like the whole Bible, sabotages every self-centred notion about our salvation. We are God's chosen children just like King David of old. God didn't redeem us out of Egypt's slavery and Pharaoh's power, but from sin's slavery and the devil's dominion. We are free, yes, so very free. And we are loved, yes, so very loved. In all of this amazing truth we can have incredible hope, a hope that does not disappoint. I love this!

Pray

Father, because I live in Your permanent favour and under Your unrestrained affection, of course I love You, of course I want to obey You, of course I want to honour You with everything I have, am, and do. What else could I possibly desire? In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 19

Live

David was the dominant ruler of his region, but he was not a cruel tyrant. David wasn't chosen because he could dance or sing (he could do both those things); he was chosen because he could fight. And fight he did. In this chapter, we see him show sympathy towards a pagan king following the loss of his father. The king listens to wrong counsel and disgraces David's men. Verse 8 tells us that David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men, or, as some other versions call them, "*mighty men*". It's important to understand that David was nothing without his mighty men, and they were nothing without him. He was their leader, but a leader is nothing without followers. David had an army of mighty men to follow him.

I love how these men didn't necessarily start as mighty men. Many were among the distressed, indebted, discontented people who followed David (1 Samuel 22:1-2). It's so important to remember that courage and strength are not matters of feeling and circumstance; they are matters of choice, especially when God makes His strength available to us. We can be "*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,*" according to Ephesians 6:10. The word "*power*" in this verse is the Greek word 'kratos' which is the same word used for the power that raised Jesus from the dead. That is so amazing! The power Paul exhorts us to have is the very same power that has supernatural capabilities. So even when times are tough, like with David today, we can go forth in the might of the Lord of heaven's armies. After all, God knows us inside and out. He knows about our pain and distress. He understands the fears of our heart and He understands even when others closest to us don't.

The result of these boys playing fast and loose with God's elect was destructive, to say the least. The men behind 7,000 chariots and 40,000 foot soldiers paid with their lives. I'm reminded of Galatians 6:7, "*Be not deceived for God is not mocked.*"

Pray

Father, I lean on You. I draw my strength from Your endless love and live in Your limitless grace. One plus You is always a majority. I stand redeemed by the blood of Jesus and walk in the power of the Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

David should have been out at battle but he remained behind. In 1 Chronicles 19, Joab and the army of the mighty men were preserved against the Syrians and Ammonites but they did not win a decisive victory. The decisive victory came when David led the battle. Through custom, his calling, and experience, God told David, "You need to be at the battle." What happened when David remained at Jerusalem was so well known that the Chronicler didn't feel the need to record it. In his leisure, David saw a woman bathing, acted upon his feelings of lust, committed adultery with her making her pregnant, and then conspired with Joab to murder her husband to cover up his crime. F.B. Meyer gives this warning: *"Beware of moments and hours of ease. It is in these that we most easily fall into the power of Satan. The sultriest summer days are most laden with blight... If we cannot fill our days with our own matters, there is always plenty to be done for others... Watch and pray in days of vacation and ease, even more than at other times."*

The old saying 'Idle hands will always find mischief' is so true. Reading this chapter today reminds me just how much I need God's grace. I am sure you concur. Let's praise God that His grace appeared in our lives like the sun burning through the bleakest skyline. While we were dead in our sins, He brought His saving grace to us, for there's no other way we could have found it. Let's praise Him for the irresistible, inexhaustible grace He has poured out on us generously in Jesus. None is beyond the reach or the need of His matchless grace.

In this chapter, we see David beginning to prepare for the building of the temple. While he would not be allowed to do it because of the blood on his hands, Solomon, the next king and a man of peace, would be the builder. David starts to help with the provisions for it.

Pray

Father, keep burning the dross from my life. Keep rescuing me from unbelieving the gospel. Keep intensifying my love for holiness, beauty, and good works. Keep me, please, ever leaning on Your everlasting arms. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The commentator Campbell Morgan said of today's chapter: *"When we are moved to number the people, we may rest assured that the impulse is Divine or Satanic, and we may determine which by the motive. If the motive is service, it is God. If the motive is pride, it is Satanic."* 2 Samuel 24:5-9 indicates that it took almost 10 months to complete the census. David should have called off this foolish census during the ten months, but he didn't. The man after God's heart was not sinless, but he did have a heart sensitive to sin. This is what I admire in David the most; he kept short accounts with God.

God gave David three options (verses 11-12). David chose the three days of plague because in the other two options, Israel would be either at the mercy of their neighbours during the famine or attacked by enemies. I love David's answer; he knew that God is far more merciful and gracious than man is. David knew his God, even in the midst of his own shortcomings.

This is like a blockbuster movie! Verse 15, *"The LORD saw it and relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough! Withdraw your hand.'"* This justified David's wisdom in leaving himself in God's hands. He could never have trusted man to relent from destruction, but he leaned in on the mercy of God, and God, as always, comes through. David then builds an altar and insists on paying the full price for the land. I love that David says, 'I will not offer a sacrifice that costs me nothing.' What a magnificent lesson for us all today. Let's not give to God the least nor the shabby cast off. He deserves the best. The hymn writer got it right, 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands my heart, my life, my all.'

Pray

Father, today I am reminded of David's prayer in Psalm 31... *"Praise the LORD! How wonderfully He showed His love for me when I was surrounded and attacked! I was afraid and thought that He had driven me out of His presence. But He heard my cry, when I called to Him for help. Love the LORD, all His faithful people. The LORD protects the faithful, but punishes the proud as they deserve. Be strong, be courageous, all you that hope in the LORD."* No better words today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I can picture the old David and the young Solomon poring together over plans for the temple with excitement. David knew that it was not his to build, but he had the right vision for what the temple should be and he passed that onto his son. The Chronicler emphasises David's legacy and Solomon's mission to build the temple. This would be Solomon's greatest accomplishment by far. I love how David says in verse 14 *"I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the LORD."* The investment from David was huge, to say the least. Talk about a leader leading the way!

The Bible tells us that Jesus, the greater Son of David, is also building a temple and He is the chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). David and Solomon could only build after security and treasure were won; just so, Jesus made peace and plundered the enemy at the cross. Jesus could also say David's words, *"I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the LORD."* He has prepared the building materials for the Church, His people, citizens and members of the household of God. This is pretty amazing stuff.

If there was a song of praise to sing right now, this old hymn sums it up: *"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace! Jesus! The name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease; 'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life, and health, and peace. He breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood availed for me. So now Thy blessed name I love, Thy will would e'er be mine. Had I a thousand hearts to give, My Lord, they all were Thine!"* Aren't you glad to be saved today? A member of God's great family, a child of the King of kings, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

Pray

Father, thank You a thousand times over for Jesus. He is our champion, our deliverer and our strong tower. The righteous can run there and be saved. So many other things clamour for my attention right now, but no one deserves it more than You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

David is now an old man and he calls together all the leaders. He gathers 38,000 qualified Levites and assigns to them different duties. I love this. 24,000 of them are to *“look after the work of the house of the LORD”*. The temple was a busy place constantly flowing with worshippers, sacrifices, and service unto God. It took many skilled people to take care of all the practical matters behind this activity. Officers and judges made up 6,000 of them as the Levites were also the civil servants for the kingdom of Israel. Governmental records, decisions, and administration were all in the hands of the Levites. David assigns 4,000 gatekeepers, giving them the responsibility for security, both in a practical and spiritual sense. They made sure that only those who were ready to serve and worship God could come to the temple.

And then, wait for this, 4,000 Levites were assigned to praise the Lord. They had the job of worshipping God with their voices and musical instruments. They did this both to honour God directly and also to encourage others to worship. David actively reshapes the worship of Israel and the rationale for all he does is found in verses 25,26: *“For David said, The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to His people, and He dwells in Jerusalem forever. And so, the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service.”* Remember that the chief role of the various clans of non-priestly Levites was their work in moving the tabernacle and all its holy things from site to site as Yahweh led His people. With the permanent establishment of the temple in Jerusalem, those duties were no longer required.

Pray

Father, I pray Paul’s prayer from Ephesians 3:16-19. I pray that, according to the riches of Your glory, You may grant that I may be strengthened in my inner being with power through Your Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith as I am being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that I may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

1 Chronicles 24

Live

When I read these chapters, I am taken by the order and structures that were put in place. There is a common feeling that structure dampens and kills spontaneity, but I'm beginning to see the opposite is true. Maybe it is good order and structure that allow the spontaneity of the Spirit to move. God judged Nadab and Abihu because they dared to bring "*strange fire*" before the Lord, blaspheming God's commandments for sacrifice which was well indoctrinated into the priesthood from Numbers 10:1-2.

David knew that because there were so many descendants of Aaron by this time, the priests should be divided so they could be fairly assigned the privileged service of the temple. In later Jewish practice, the number of twenty-four courses was based on a lunar calendar of forty-eight weeks, with each course serving for a week at a time and so twice in a year. I love the mixture of generations. There was a tactful mingling in the arrangement of older and younger men, so that in this highest and holiest national service, the experience of age and the enthusiasm of youth were mutually inspiring. Older person today, is there a younger person you could inspire? Younger person, is there an older person you could encourage?

I am reminded of this verse today, "*Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.*" Proverbs 27:9. I'm grateful for the unique sweetness that comes from walking together with a few close friends. And since both oil and perfume are produced only by pressure and crushing, it shouldn't surprise us when our friendships become most precious to us during the most difficult seasons of life. And yet, many times when life gets hard, we retreat into a dark hole of isolation or into the illusion of self-sufficiency. We fulfil the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens, and that includes letting someone bear *our* burdens.

Pray

Father, one of the tactics of the devil is to alienate us from the very place where You meet us – in the cathedral of our brokenness, in the fellowship of mutually needy friends, and in the sanctuary of grace given and grace received. Help me to not let this tactic succeed. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Interestingly, the *commanders of the army* took part in the selection and organisation of musicians or ‘worship leaders’ for Israel. David sensed a connection between the security of the kingdom and the worship of God. Verse 6 reminds us that “*Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king.*” These enormously talented and Spirit-anointed men knew how to submit themselves under the leadership of David, their king. David relied on his mighty men, his three chief ministers of music, for help.

The term “*prophecy*” is not necessarily to be taken in a revelatory sense here, but rather in the sense of proclamation and exhortation through the lyrics of their music. Prophesying is not necessarily predicting the future or even speaking direct revelation. It is proclaiming truth. Music mixed with praise is a vehicle for such proclamations. David and the leaders selected those most capable of leading the people to worship God through their music. David, of all people, knew the value of worship with song. Maybe he would reflect back to his harp playing days in the field with nothing but a bunch of sheep around him. He would think, I’m sure, of the deep connection between his soul and God’s heart. The book of Psalms contains songs written to be sung, but they are also possibly some of the best prophecies in the Bible. It is important to note that not all ministry involves preaching. Songs, spiritual music, and praise are all part of prophecy as well.

As I ponder these mighty men leading people under the authority of David, it makes me wonder, how good am I with authority? With civil, church, job and family authority? This is such a massive issue in today’s society. I love that God is so dialled into our needs and so generous with His provision. Indeed, through Jesus, God gives us choice nourishment. There’s nothing ‘fast-food’ or ‘leftover’ at the table of His hospitality. And it’s all free. Free to us but at such a cost to heaven. It cost God the price of His well-beloved Son.

Pray

Father, help me to appreciate those whom You have ordained to lead in both my nation and local church. Help me to come under authority and to revere those for the responsibility You have placed on them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Here we have space devoted to the divisions of the gatekeepers. I love this section so much. These people had the responsibility for security both in a practical and spiritual sense. The porters were the keepers of the entrance to the temple. David is preparing all of this for his son, Solomon. Solomon was probably quite young, so David was helping him. All of these plans would be set in place ahead of time, so there would be no trouble in deciding who would do different duties. All of the gatekeepers are Levites and they are in the service of the Lord as keepers of the entrance to the temple. They made sure that only those who were ready to serve and worship God could come to the temple. Their work had to be organised and ordained just as much as the work of the priests who officiated at the sacrifices. Though some may see their work as humble, it was actually a great privilege. Remember the envy of the psalmist: *"I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."* Psalm 84:10. I cut my teeth in local church as a boy who put the heat on for services. I cleaned the toilets for years in my local church. I have done this duty my whole life and count it nothing short of an honour.

The last descendant mentioned in verse 25 from the lineage of Eliezer, the younger son of Moses, is Shelomoth. His descendants became the ones who were *"over all the treasures of the dedicated things"*. David had dedicated billions of pounds worth of gold and silver, and so much bronze it was too much to weigh. No expense was spared.

Pray

Father, what an honour to serve You in whatever capacity that may be – welcoming people to church from the car park, making tea and toasting bread for my church family, coming in for an hour on Saturday to check the toilets and mop a floor. I am reminded of Matthew 25:40 *"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.'"* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love how this chapter opens, *“This is the list of the Israelites—heads of families, commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and their officers, who served the king.”* Under David, and most other kings of Israel or Judah, Israel never relied on mercenary soldiers. Israelites themselves served the king in every military matter. David’s army was divided into units of twelve with one group on alert each month of the year. This was an effective way to keep active troops at hand and inactive troops regularly trained. All these men were prepared, disciplined, and ready at a call without the smallest expense to the state or the king. These were the militia of the Israeli kingdom. 24,000 men per month, a total of 288,000 men who were trained fighting machines. This was some army, ready for any foe and any defiance that came against their king.

David’s skill on the battlefield was incredibly powerful. Yet, the greatness of David as a king was manifested in his acts of peaceful administration as surely as in his victories on the fields of battle: the tilling of the ground and its careful cultivation, the rearing of cattle. All things pertaining to the welfare of his people were attended to under duly qualified and appointed oversight. What a great leader this man was. It makes us realise like never before that all things are important in serving God. I love Ephesians 2:10 which says, *“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* So, the question is, what are you and I called to do? We could have no better quest than searching for what God has prepared in advance for us to do! When you find that and you’re in your sweet spot, you will do what you’re called to do and you will never become jealous of what anyone else is doing.

Pray

Father, help me to do what I do well. I want to be the best in my field in honour to You, my King. That’s my cry today. After all, You did Your very best for me. The richest of heaven, Your only well-beloved Son Jesus sent as a ransom for my sin. How could I not do my best? In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This was David's public 'passing of the torch' to Solomon, the emphasis being on the responsibility to build the temple. This was a significant event because there had never been a hereditary monarchy in Israel. Saul, the previous king of Israel, was not succeeded by any son of his. God promised that if the royal descendants of David remained obedient, the Lord would protect their throne and there would always be a descendant of David reigning over Israel. In verse 9, David's exhortation to Solomon begins with the most important aspect – a genuine commitment to a real relationship with the living God. David essentially told Solomon, "The secret of my success has been my relationship with God. You need to pursue the same relationship." What incredible advice that we would do well to heed.

At Mount Sinai the Lord gave Moses specific instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and the conduct of worship in it. God spelled out every detail from the dimensions of the tent to the hanging of the curtain inside, from the type of utensils to the amount and type of sacrifices. The carrying of the ark in those nomadic days of early Israel was appointed to the priests alone, and in a specific manner, upon their shoulders. The breach of this law caused the death of at least one man when David tried to bring the ark into Jerusalem without due order (1 Chronicles 13). David later corrected this error and brought the ark up into the city in the prescribed manner (1 Chronicles 15). Being told that he would not be the one to build a house for God in Jerusalem in Israel's post-nomadic era, David set in order the *"pattern of all that he had by the Spirit"* (verse 12) for his son to build the temple. I love verse 19 where we see that every item of furniture, its material and its weight, the Lord made known to David *"in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."*

Pray

Father, I don't just want to defend the gospel, I want to delight in it. I want to be filled with Your Spirit, joy, and praise – in my corporate worship, in my personal relationship with You, and as I live, work, and play in my community. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

One reason David did so much to prepare for the building of the temple was because he knew that the work was great and required great resources – more than a young and inexperienced king like Solomon could be expected to gather on his own. When we consider all that David did to provide security, land, money, materials, supervisory staff, workers, plans, and an organised team to run the temple, it is evident that David gave this work of preparation *all* of his resources. David gave because he loved the house of God. So here he is, David, standing amongst the people of God, encouraging them to be generous. Remember, David is going to give all of the plunder that he has collected from all of the wars that he has fought. He's going to give this vast fortune that he has accumulated to the Lord for the building of the temple. He turns to the people of God and he says, 'I want you to give, but I don't want you to give because you feel coerced. I only want you to give willingly. If you don't want to give willingly, please don't give. But it is my desire that you would want to give to the building of the temple.'

The people give, and they give lavishly rejoicing in their giving! In verse 9, they're rejoicing in their willing giving, and this lavish generosity on the part of the people of God to the building of the temple deeply moves David, who then prays a prayer that we are going to pray in our 'Pray' section. We naturally support and give to that which we love. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21). Where is your heart fixed today?

Pray

Father, I want to pray with sincerity King David's prayer: *"Praise be to You, LORD, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honour come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise Your glorious name."* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

