

6.19.05 “Free To Pursue God’s Purposes” 1 Chronicles 29:9-18

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The concluding chapters of the Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles are highly dramatic as King David, who is near death, tells his son Solomon and all the leaders of the people of Israel that Solomon will take his place as king. David gives his son clear instructions on two crucially important matters. In 1 Chronicles 28:9 David instructs his son with these personal words about serving and seeking God:

“And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever.”

God wants us to serve and seek the Lord single mindedly and with a willingly heart. God doesn’t play hard to get. God wants to be found. Sadly, Solomon did not follow his father’s advice, his eyes and his mind wandered and it cost him, and the people he was to lead, dearly.

The second important matter that David spoke to Solomon and all the people about was the final plans for building the house of the Lord, the temple. David shared how the work was going to be done and overseen by the priests, the Levites, all the volunteers who had skills for any kind of service, the officers, and all the people (1 Chronicles 28:20-21).

Like a good father, David wants to do all he can to help his child be successful. He realizes Solomon is young and inexperienced and the responsibility of building the house of the Lord is substantial. So David advises Solomon personally to serve and seek the Lord, David has provided the plans and the people for the construction, and the last thing David can do is make sure that his son will have the material resources needed to do the job.

So David makes an impassioned speech to all the people in one of the most detailed descriptions of fundraising in the Bible. In his speech, David describes Seven Steps in Giving which enable the people to build the house of the Lord so they can be free to pursue God’s purposes for them – to be

worshiping, sharing, giving, people whose hearts and minds are set on loving and serving the Lord.

While David's words are a call for a freewill offering to fund the building of the temple, they also speak to us about our hearts as we seek to live out God's purposes in our lives.

Step #1 is Remember for whom we are building. David says (1 Chronicles 29:1),

"The work is great; for the temple will not be for mortals but for the Lord God."

When we set out to enlarge our church building, we tried to make it clear we were doing it so we could serve God and God's people more effectively. We built this building for God and not for ourselves. The first step on the path to success is staying focused on God. This is true whether we are trying to build a life, a marriage, a building or a church. We are building for God. In life we want to be seeking and discerning the Lord's will and acting on it because we want God to be glorified through us and for God's purposes to be served.

Step #2 is Give a gift your self before asking others to give.

In verse 2 David says, *"I have provided to the house of my God, so far as I was able."*

David as the leader sets an example in giving. Unfortunately, I don't have the same amount of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and precious stones as David did. If I did, I could have paid for the building myself! The biblical principle is you don't ask anyone else to give sacrificially until you do. Again this is true in life, not just in capital campaigns. David went "as far as [he] was able" in giving. Life is far more rewarding when we give all that we're able to give – our effort, our energy, our love, our time – when we give what we're able to give to God and to others – we will be amazed at what can happen. Greatness is rarely if ever achieved by half-hearted effort or by giving 50% of what we're capable of giving – whether we're talking about love or energy or anything else. To do something significant whether as a parent, in our work, as a student, as a Christian, requires giving of ourselves as far as we are able to give. A teacher, parent, or coach

who is giving all he or she is able to give can much easier demand a similar level of commitment from students, children, or players.

Step #3 is Give With Devotion. 1 Chronicles 29:3 reads, ***“I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God.”*** Devotion is *“ardent love or affection.”* Each of us has “a treasure of our own” that includes our time, talents, and material resources. Our treasure may not be as vast materially as David’s, but each of us has gifts we can share. David also experienced the protection and provision of God throughout his life and his heart and his emotions were moved by all the Lord had done for him. From triumphs over Goliath-size obstacles through life’s ups and downs from moments of shame to moments of glory, God was with David and gave to him in countless ways. The same is true for us.

Step 4 is Give willingly as an act of consecration and discipleship. After describing the fortune that he was giving to build the temple, then David asks everyone else, *“Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the Lord?”* We are invited to give to God willingly, not grudgingly nor out of guilt, duty, or obligation but out of our love and affection for God. David encourages people to give as an act of consecration. Consecration means *“to devote to a purpose with deep dedication,”* or *“to be dedicated to a sacred purpose.”* We give to God as a reflection of our dedication to God’s purpose in the world, which is to give abundant, eternal, joyful life to as many people as possible through a relationship with Jesus. Whether we have a lot or a little to give, the important thing is to give willingly as an expression of our consecrating ourselves to God. Someone (R.G. Le Tourneau) said many years ago,
“It’s not what you’d do with a million
if riches should e’er be your lot.
But what you’re doing at present
With the dollar and a quarter you’ve got.”

Peter and the disciples were able to say to Jesus (Matthew 19:27), *“Look, we have left everything and followed you.”* We also want to be able to say we have given of ourselves willingly.

Step 5 is Give Freely. 1 Chronicles 29:9 says, *“The people rejoiced because the leaders had **given willingly**, for **with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord.**”*

Throughout the years of our capital campaigns and the building project, I have been extremely proud of the leadership so many people have demonstrated in our congregation. King David set the example in giving and then the leaders respond to his invitation by giving willing and freely to the Lord. It is important to note that the passage doesn't say the people rejoiced because of the AMOUNT the leaders gave, although it was very generous. The people rejoiced because of the ATTITUDE with which they gave. They gave freely, willingly, and gladly. There is a world of difference between someone giving to us freely or conditionally or grudgingly. God wants us to give freely and not under compulsion so that we feel good about our giving.

Step 6 is Give because everything is God's anyway.

This is such an important truth to understand that it is mentioned three times in verses 11, 14, and 16. *“For all that is in the heavens and on earth is yours; all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. All this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.”*

The Bible teaches us to live with open hands, not grasping onto money or things too tightly because everything we have is on loan to us from God and one day will belong to someone else or at the transfer station. As the saying goes,

“Money can buy a bed, but not rest

food, but not satisfaction

luxury, but not contentment

stock, but not security

a house, but not a home

a church, but not a mission.

But what money cannot buy, God offers as a free gift.”

Christians are to live as stewards or managers rather than as owners. Some people make their living as money managers or financial planners. They carefully look after someone else’s money and try to manage it as well as possible. However, they always know it is not their money. As Christians, we are all money managers we are looking after what belongs to God.

Step 7 is Give Freely and Joyously. David says to God in verse 17, *“I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, **offering freely and joyously to you.**”* When I was growing up I didn’t come to Cape Cod like some many of you because my family had a cottage in Ocean Park, Maine. When I was a boy one of my favorite things to do at the beach was to find sand dollars, which as you probably know, are smooth and pretty and come in different colors when they are dead. I would search diligently for them every day. Once or twice a summer my sister Suzanne and I would walk the beach at sunrise and find dozens and dozens of sand dollars. Some would be gray, others, white, speckled or sand-colored. The most exciting part was the joy of finding the sand dollar. Spotting the sliding circular shape in the wash of a wave, detecting a gray bit of shell just breaking the surface of the sand, identifying a side edging out into the open. The joy was in the discovery.

It wasn’t long before our cottage was filled with sand dollars. The best ones adorned the mantle over the fireplace. We had an apple bushel basket full of them. One can only accumulate so many sand dollars for one’s self, how many do you really need?

How much is more than enough?

So as I got older I began doing something different. When I found sand dollars, I would look for someone beach combing, preferably a child. Then I would walk in front of them and discreetly and carefully leave the sand dollar for them to discover, I could have just handed them out to people, but that would deprive people of the joy of discovery and a sense of accomplishment. The look of delight on a child’s face, the squeal of excitement, is more valuable and enjoyable than having a basket of sand dollars gathering dust at home. I get

more joy watching someone else find the sand dollar I left, than finding it myself. In the same way, the only thing greater than being found by Jesus is leading someone else to Christ.

In 1997 we began planning for this space which we are all enjoying, a place where people may come to know God's love and have the joy of discovering Jesus. Our goal is for BBC to be a place where people who are seeking God, searching for community, longing for hope, or pursuing a meaningful way to invest their one and only life, can have the thrill of finding in Jesus a Savior, Leader, Teacher, and Friend. This vision has become a reality because we have given freely and joyously.

Proverbs 11:24 says, *"Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want."*

An old Jewish story of a time long ago tells of two brothers who shared a field and a mill, each night dividing nearly evenly the grain they ground together during the day.

One brother lived alone; the other had a wife and a large family.

Now the single brother thought to himself one day, *"It isn't really fair that we divide the grain evenly. I have only myself to care for, but my brother has children to feed."*

So each night he secretly took some of the grain to his brother's granary to see that he always had enough.

But the married brother said to himself one day, *"It is isn't really fair that we divide the grain evenly, because I have children to provide for me in my old age, but my brother has no one. What will he do when he is old?"*

So every night he secretly took some of *his* grain to his brother's granary.

As a result, both always found their supply of grain mysteriously replenished each morning. Then one night they met each other halfway between their houses, suddenly realized what had been happening, and embraced each other in love.

The legend is that God witnessed their meeting and proclaimed,

“This is a holy place – a place of love - and here it is that my temple shall be built.”

And so the story says, the First Temple is said to have been constructed on that very site.

The holy place, where God is made known to people, **is the place where human beings discover each other in love.**

Jesus says, *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”*

In May of 1998 we had the first fundraising effort for this new building and it was amazingly successful. Today of the slightly more than \$2,500,000 we needed to construct the new building and to purchase the house we bought at 92 Harwich Road, we **now only need to raise \$51,000 to completely pay off the church’s remaining debt on both!** Over the last several years, some of us have generously supported one or more of the phases of our capital campaigns to make the new facility possible. Others may be newer to BBC and this is the last chance to be a part of the amazing work God has done regarding our building project. My prayer is that everyone would be able to feel they had a part in what the Lord has done. If we exceed our goal, the additional funds will be used for two major restoration projects that will cost in the vicinity of \$36,000 – replacing all the windows in the older part of the church and painting the outside of the original building. Both of these projects need to be done as soon as the funds are available. My hope is that we will be able to raise \$90,000 so we can take care of the older building and celebrate the new one.

This week if you are on our mailing list you will receive a letter with a special envelope inside. Please prayerfully consider what you may be able to give and use the that envelope to bring your gift to church this Sunday, June 26, 2005. We will also have those envelopes in the pew racks next Sunday. If you will be out of town on next week, please feel free to drop it in the mail.

1 Chronicles 29 after David’s prayer of farewell he invites everyone to bless the Lord and they bow down before God. Then the next day (1 Chronicles

29:22), they had a huge celebration and barbecue and *“they ate drank before the Lord on that day with great joy.”* I look forward to the church celebrating and having a party to “burn the mortgage” in the not to distant future. We will announce the results of our fundraising effort in worship on Sunday, July 3, so hopefully we can celebrate Independence Day “free” from debt!

I am truly grateful for everyone’s generous support for the Lord’s work at BBC, we have been truly and deeply blessed as a congregation in so many ways. We join with King David in praising God (1 Chronicles 29:12-13), *“Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.”*

1 Chronicles 29:9-18

“Then the people rejoiced because these **had given willingly**, for with single mind they had **offered freely to the Lord**; King David also rejoiced greatly.

Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said:

‘Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever.

Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty;

for **all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours**; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all.

In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, **we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name**.

“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? **For all things come from you**, and of your own have we given you.

For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.

O Lord our God, **all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own**.

I know, my God, **that you search the heart**, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart **I have freely offered all these things**, and **now I have seen your people**, who are present here, **offering freely and joyously to you**.

O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our ancestors, **keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you.**”