

Heading For Home

Capital Campaign Series

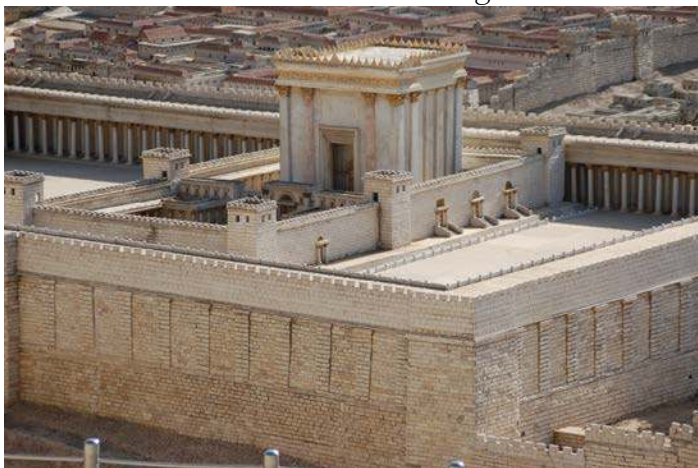
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At pivotal junctures in biblical history, God challenged team Israel to construct a worship center to provide the proper and perfect setting for team players to worship and learn about him, where they could secure forgiveness of sin (Leviticus 1-7), as well as secure monies to help the temple impact the culture. Around 1444 B.C. God, the team owner, challenged his people to take the blueprints he provided to Moses and construct a portable, and highly temporal, worship structure called the Tabernacle. It served Israel's purposes for the next 486 years. Don't you know they had a large capital expenditure line to keep it in proper repair for all those years?

During King David's regal reign (1051-971 B.C.), the Lord gave him not only a desire to build a permanent and glorious Temple, He provided, as he did with Moses, the detailed plans of what it should look like in order to reflect the ultimate Temple in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 40; Numbers 8:4; 1 Chronicles 28: 19; Hebrews 8:5). Even though David was a great worshipper of the living God, having written seventy-three of the Psalms used Israel's worship (seventy-five if you count to unnamed Psalms mentioned in the New Testament as being of Davidic origin, viz., Psalm 2-Acts 4:25 and Psalm 95-Hebrews 4:7), God forbid him from actually building the temple because he had been, based on God's gifting, a courageous military leader who had historically led Israel's armed forces into countless battles against their ruthless enemies (1 Chronicles 28:3).



David embraced God's boundary and instead of becoming bitter, angry, and resentful, he did two amazing things: One, he challenged his son, Solomon, to build the Temple of God, and two, he worked hard during the last years of his life to position his son and the nation to fulfill God's desire. Solomon became king in 971 B.C., and by 960 B.C., the magnificent, jaw-dropping Solomonic Temple stood upon the threshing floor of Araunah atop Mount Moriah . . . presumably in the same

location where Abraham had attempted to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22; 2 Chronicles 3:1-2). Solomon completed the monumental, massive project in 960 B.C., but his godly father never lived to see it. Yet that sobering fact never deterred David. With a much larger nation numerically speaking and much larger spiritual and social needs, David knew at this pivotal point in the nation's rich spiritual history, a new building program was in order so he led to that end in a profound, memorable, and instructive fashion.

The Apostle Paul tells believers in 1 Corinthians 10:6 that Old Testament stories, like this one, are incorporated into the inspired Word of God to inspire us to learn from the positive and negative examples of these ancient saints. David's example is most certainly worthy of our analysis as we face a pivotal time in our earthly journey as a church, for we, too, have been providentially blessed and positioned to accomplish so much more for the living God in our own Mount Moriah journey. We are no longer the small group of people who faithfully and sacrificially launched out forty-three years ago to start this church. No, based on God's goodness and leadership, coupled with the forward vision and prayer of those foundational believers, we are now thousands of saints. Our divine obligation is clear: He who has sent us the growth, he who has enabled us to touch countless lives for eternity, and He who has used us to impact this and other cultures for Him, He now challenges us to build a new worship structure to impact countless more lives for Him both in the near and long-term of time itself.

The question in light of where we stand in divine history is simple, "What can we learn from King David's leadership at a similar juncture in the leadership of God's people?" We can learn much by studying how he led the team, as it were, by reflecting on how the chronicler recorded his activity toward the end of his life. To put it in our vernacular we can couch the question in a fashion tied to our baseball analogy:

How Did David, The Coach, Lead The Israelite Nationals To Score Big For God? (1 Chronicles 28-29)

Before we study how Coach David guided the Israelite Nationals across the plate to win the game regarding building a worship complex for the living God, we must stop and make some pre-game analysis of the playbook called First Chronicles. Why do we need to do this? Because it will help us more fully understand how chapters 28 through 29 fit into the larger scheme of what God, the Team Owner, was attempting to do some three thousand years ago.

Chronicles was written, by Ezra, probably between 450 to 430 B.C., some eighty-nine years after the decree of the king of Persia, Cyrus, for the Jews to return back to Israel after he defeated the Babylonians. The book, therefore, is not *pre* but *post*-exilic. This must be kept in mind as we consider the texts before us because it leads to a logical question. Why did Ezra, some 601 years after the reign of King David include the content he chose in his priestly book? Looking at Israel's current complex cultural and spiritual situation after they returned back to Israel, the wise priest focused on David's royal line in chapter 1 through 9 and on David's reign in chapters 10 through 29 to accomplish several spiritual purposes:

- To demonstrate through the intricate Davidic genealogies, he provides in chapters 1 through 9 that God is providentially at work to fulfill His promise

- to work in and through Israel to bring his Davidic kingdom to earth (1 Chronicles 7:11-14; 2 Samuel 7).
- To demonstrate through the deep spiritual commitment, integrity, and bravery of King David that the people's chief end was to worship God in the temple God prescribed for the ancient Israelites. This information, by nature, was designed to encourage the people to rebuild the Temple of Solomon the Babylonians has formerly destroyed. It also served to excite them to build the worship center based on David's excitement.
 - To remind this new generation of Jews that, above all else, worship of the true, living, and holy God is more paramount than anything in life . . . more important than politics, education, sports, investing, leisure, and, well . . . you fill in the proverbial blank. As you can guess, not much has changed since these ancient times. God is still to be the focus of our worship, and buildings help provide the tangible place to accomplish that mandate to a certain degree.

With this much needed background information in mind, we are properly suited to study the playbook to see how David led Israel across home plate when it came to building the Temple of God in Jerusalem. From my analysis of the inspired text, and looking at it from a former baseball player's perspective, I see three strategic moves David made as the coach of the Israelite Nationals.

The Coach Challenged Himself (1 Chronicles 22; 28)

First Chronicles is not entirely in chronological order, so one needs to bounce around to the appropriate texts to determine just exactly how David challenged himself with this new building program. Hence, we need to splice two key passages together to get of snapshot of how David approached the building of the Temple he would never see.

² So David gave orders to gather the foreigners who were in the land of Israel, and he set stonemasons to hew out stones to build the house of God. ³ David prepared large quantities of iron to make the nails for the doors of the gates and for the clamps, and more bronze than could be weighed; ⁴ and timbers of cedar logs beyond number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought large quantities of cedar timber to David. ⁵ David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands. Therefore, now **I will make preparation for it.**" So **David made ample preparations before his death.** ⁶ Then he called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build a house for the LORD God of Israel. ⁷ David said to Solomon, "My son, I had intended to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. ⁸ "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me. ⁹ 'Behold, a son will be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. ¹⁰ 'He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.' ¹¹ "Now, my son, the LORD be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of

the LORD your God just as He has spoken concerning you. ¹² “Only the LORD give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God. ¹³ “Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed. ¹⁴ “**Now behold, with great pains I have prepared for the house of the LORD 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weight, for they are in great quantity; also timber and stone I have prepared, and you may add to them.** ¹⁵ “Moreover, there are many workmen with you, stonecutters and masons of stone and carpenters, and all men who are skillful in every kind of work. ¹⁶ “Of the gold, the silver and the bronze and the iron there is no limit. Arise and work, and may the LORD be with you (1 Chronicles 22).

Skipping from this informative text, we see David’s giving recorded in chapter 29:

³ “Moreover, in my delight in the house of my God, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple, ⁴ namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings; . . . (1 Chronicles 29).

What a coach. He not only coached his current team well, he purposefully positioned Israel’s future coach, Solomon, to accomplish God’s directive to build the Temple and thereby build perpetual worship into the fabric of the nation itself. Regard of where you are the leadership ladder of our team, there is a principle to learn here: *Great saints financially give to God’s causes in the here and now so God’s causes are positioned for advancement well beyond their lifetimes.* Is that how you are thinking? Is that how you are giving? It is the activity of saints who are maturing in their walk with God.

Now, onto those salient observations about David’s action’s as a coach on a mission to help his, and a future team, to head for home with the building project to end all building projects. Here are a couple of key thoughts from this pericope of Scripture.

- One, David made specific preparations for the Temple (“. . . now I will make preparation for it.” *So David made ample preparations before his death*, v. 5). David had temple stones cut years in advance of their use. They were cut and positioned to be used at the right time. Note, you have these kinds of leaders among you, leaders committed to working for years behind the scenes to make sure that things are in place when the proverbial first shovel is sunk into the soil. Our Master Planning Team and Elder Council, along with the hard work of Pastor Darren, Steffani, and Tansy certainly come to mind. Their decisions and actions, which are like the cutting of stones, are positioning us to build well when the time comes. Why, even the movement of the modular off our site by selling them to another church in need is, well, nothing short of cutting temple stones. What leaders we have among us..
- Two, David, as the leader, gave sacrificially (“*Now behold, with great pains I have prepared for the house of the LORD*,” v. 14). Boy, did he. His giving originated in two

distinct areas. He gave from governmental monies he controlled as the King, and from his own private resources. The gifts here are probably from the latter. When you think about how our government wastes so much of our country's wealth of worthless and selfish projects, David's actions are a breath of fresh air. He put his country's finances at Go's disposal. Sure, he lived in a theocracy, which is far different from a democracy; however, the principle putting the living God first is worth nothing for it transcends geo-political structure. Based on David's gifts, thinking minds want to know, who much is 100,000 talents of gold? If you calculate a talent at 75 pounds, this brings us to 7,500,000 pounds, or 3,750 tons of gold. This amount of gold, when converted to ounces, gives us 120,000,000 ounces of gold, which at roughly \$1,300 an ounce gives us a whopping \$156 billion dollars in today's currency. One million talents of silver comes in at \$20,400,000,000.00 Yes, that's a "b" for billion. I'm sure David, as a politician, could have come up with a lot of other areas to spend this money on, but since the living God was first in his life, providing a worship center for God was front and center in his political and spiritual thinking. David's personal giving is denoted from the passage in 1 Chronicles. He gave many things, among them an additional 3,000 talents of gold from his personal income, which today's currency represents \$4,680,000.00. The 7,000 talents of refined silver from his bank account comes in at a hefty \$142,800,000. Amazing, isn't it? At a time of his life when he had to save for retirement, David was emptying his massive portfolio in order to build God's temple so saints, for years to come, would be impacted by that God. The principle from is life is clear: *If the leader wants the people to give sacrificially, the leader must give sacrificially.* I can't give to the magnitude of David, but I, along with my wife, are doing our part to financially support the building endeavor God has placed before us as his people. Another principle which emerges from David's giving can't be missed: The best investments in life are in spiritual commodities, not in earthly commodities. Our Lord taught this principle in many places. One of those instructive passages is in His *Parable of the Talents*, or money loaned, at differing amounts, to his servants to be used until his return (Matthew 25:14-23). He will be looking, when He returns, for whether those servants, strategically and creatively used the monies and resources entrusted to them in the advancement of His eternal kingdom, above their temporal "kingdom." Are you being faithful?

What an amazing coach.

You know, when you think about David, he represents a man who understands the giving ladder we introduced several years ago in our **Get In The Game** series.

- **The Free Agent:** This team member knows what's going on at his church, and typically has a good grasp of what is offered and who is who. He has, however, not really given of himself, especially where his finances are concerned. But he is for the team because he likes what they offer.

- **The Designated Hitter:** He loves the team and steps up occasionally to hit financially when the need arises in the line-up. Typically, around six times a year he'll perform in a powerful, marked fashion before he heads back to the bench of giving obscurity.
- **The First Stringer:** This is a person is sold out so much to the Team Owner and the team, he isn't just plugged in all the time, he has a perpetual plan for giving to make sure the team isn't just solvent but positioned for maximum wins.
- **The Slugger:** His financial slugging percentage shows he has what it takes to get on base. He's the guy who gives a large proportion of the monies the Team Owner has entrusted to him to advance the team. Men of his nature are few but they are always a joy to watch play the game.
- **The Hall of Famer:** His legacy of giving to advance the team's impact is off the charts and will live beyond his life. He's truly a one of a kind giver. His financial goals for the Team Owner aren't just lofty dreams. No, he lives to realize them before his final retirement to eternity.

I'm sure you can guess which kind of giver David was. In case you need a little help, he was a Hall of Famer in his giving, a player who knew how to give to support the team in the here and now, and how to give to position to team to have a godly legacy in the future, well beyond his life. What kind of giver are you? We'll probe into that further as we dig more into these inspired texts from Ezra.

No wonder Israel more than headed for home in this particular giving project. They had a leader who led by example. This reality, of course, logically leads to the second inspirational giving premise recorded upon the parchment of this old playbook.

The Coach Challenged His Assistant Coaches (1 Chronicles 28:1; 1 Chronicles 29:6-7)

Giving to a program of this magnitude was every bit a team affair. God could have dropped the monies and materials out of heaven for them to build the building, but He chose to bless the leaders and the people with financial and numerical growth to determine if they would rise to the occasion and live by faith by giving sacrificially. Such are the ways of God. David and his leadership did not let God down either, as we shall see from the text before us.

¹ Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men.

Once assembled, what did King David do with those leaders? For one, he informed them that while he desired to build the Temple of God, God had showed him that vision would be carried out by his son, Solomon (vv. 2-8). He charged Solomon to put God first in his life, and thereby enjoy God's blessings (v. 9), he informed Solomon that he would build the Temple (v. 10), he gave his son the plans for the temple (talk about being organized, vv. 11-

19), and he told his son not to be afraid to build because God would be with him (v. 20). Interestingly enough, the wording used here in this unique command was the same one God had given the Abraham (Genesis 15:1), Isaac (Genesis 26:4), Jacob (Genesis 46:3), Moses (Numbers 2:34), and Joshua (Joshua 8:1). God is with His people in a powerful fashion when they are fulfilling His mission. Solomon, an unproven leader at this juncture, needed to remember this salient truth. No matter how big the call of God, God stands with His people to protect and provide for them as they move forward.

Now, what is most interesting in all of this is the leaders stood there listening to it all. They heard the coach's passion and vision, and they heard about the level of giving the coach had already evidenced in this major building project for God. Why were they standing there? David had them there so they would be inspired to give. Did they? Absolutely. Read on.

In chapter 29, David tells them specifically about his level of giving, again.

² Now with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance. ³ Moreover, in my delight in the house of my God, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple, ⁴ namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings; ⁵ of gold for the things of gold and of silver for the things of silver, that is, for all the work done by the craftsmen.

Once he finished talking about his level of giving, he then asked THE question of all questions:

Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?

Translated, "Who is willing to put God first in their life by giving wholeheartedly and sacrificially to this worthy building campaign?" His coaches heard him, didn't they?

⁶ Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered willingly; ⁷ and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron (1 Chronicles 29).

David's generosity inspired their generosity. It's that simple. Generosity is a catchy thing, isn't it? These leaders reached into their personal reserves and divested themselves of monies they had been storing up for themselves and they collectively, and joyously, gave them to God. And don't you know their gifts were well beyond the 10% range. As I said in our series last year, 10% is not mandated in the New Testament for tithing, while proportional giving is (2 Corinthians 8-9). What this means, pragmatically, is 10% is merely the floor, not the ceiling of giving to God. These ancient saints understood this concept and gave way beyond what they typically gave to God.

This is, of course, how Israel built the magnificent Temple: *Leadership gave above and beyond their normal giving to accomplish an abnormal goal for the advancement of the kingdom of the living God.*

Folks. We have leaders among us who know how to give and to give sacrificially. We, historically, have been blessed with leaders who know what it means to be **The Sluggers** or the **Hall of Famers** when it comes to giving. These are people who know what it means to give proportionately to God, which means they can move anywhere on that giving spectrum based on His blessing. Sometimes they'll be giving at 12%, and other times they'll step up to the plate and give 50%. With leaders like this it is no wonder we are financially debt free and have raised what we've raised in this current building project. Yet for use to cross home plate, as it were, it will take our leaders to be financially committed to this endeavor as never before. I know they are and that's why I'm excited to be part of this team at this moment in history. What better thing could one do with their life than build buildings which will touch lives for eternity, while also impacting our city, our culture, and our world . . . literally?

You see the progression, don't you? The Israelite Nationals crossed home plate with a big financial win for God's kingdom program, first because their leader knew how to give, and second, because their leaders also know how to give. Logically, all of this giving enthusiasm spilled over into the team at large.

The Coach Challenged His Team (1 Chronicles 29:1-5; 8-9)

Rest your eyes on a key clause in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 1, "Furthermore, King David said to all the assembly . . ." Hold it right there. David sold the vision to everyone, didn't he? "The assembly" was just a code word for the people at large. They listened to the same vision and giving stats, and they had to have seen all the items being collected for the temple, correct? Who hadn't heard stone masons chiseling for hours on massive stones sitting around here and there? Who hadn't seen all the massive cedar timbers piling up around town? Who hadn't seen massive stockpiles of iron on the surrounding hills and not wondered, "What going on?" Don't you know there was an air of excitement? Don't you know the people watched as the leaders gave vast amounts of their monies to God's cause? I don't know where they collected all that is mentioned in texts like 1 Chronicles 29, verses 2 through 7, but I'm sure the people couldn't believe their eyes as man after man drove up with a donkey-driven cart of costly items and deposited them for God's work. Don't you know they heard the clank, clank, clank or all those heavy gifts?

As I said earlier, generosity is highly motivational. We see it on a small scale when we give to help people in Houston, or Florida, or in Puerto Rico. The method is clear: There is a need and people see others give and so they gave magnanimously. We see it when a wealthy Christian donor says he'll match giving to a seminary up to \$50,000, which occurred at Dallas Seminary recently. I saw it in my first church when a retired businessman started out our giving project with seed money of \$90,000. I saw it in my last church as a retired widow came into my office and said she would singlehandedly like to pay off our remaining building need of \$25,000.

Israel saw the obedience of their leadership and they, too, ran for home as they gave:

⁸ Whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the LORD with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly (1 Chronicles 29).

“Whoever” means, just that, whoever . . . it points to the people. They gave God the best they had, viz., precious, costly stones. They didn’t give God their leftovers. No, they gave God that which was priceless by the world’s standards. And how did they give? Joyously and willingly. And how did they get to this point? They were inspired, as we see in the texts before us, by the sacrifice of their leaders. In addition, like the saints in Moses’ day they were inspired by the vision of what God wanted to them to build so His worship could be displayed before the world.

Now it is our turn. We are on second base. A ball has been hit between the right and center fielder. It’s time to run fast and hard toward home plate as a team. You dig your cleats in the fresh dirt and then take off with all you’ve got. As you approach that coveted plate, one thing should be on your mind, “God what are the costly stones I can offer you so your name and your Word go out from this place during and beyond my lifetime?” We challenge you this week to be in prayer about what God would have you give as, together, we seek to raise the final \$1.4 million to launch this worthy building endeavor to His glory.

And since giving is, well, catchy, I close with a timely story about a little girl who knew how to play spiritual ball:

A wonderful story about what happens when we give our very best for God’s holy work comes from the city of Philadelphia. In 1886 a little girl named Hattie May Wiatt was sitting outside Grace Baptist Church on Broad Street. She was crying because the church was already filled to capacity; there was no way for her to get in. The preaching of the pastor—Dr. Russell H. Conwell—was so renowned that the little church was packed every week.

When Dr. Conwell arrived at the church that morning, he recognized Hattie May’s problem, lifted her up onto his shoulders, carried her inside, put her down on the platform, and told her she could sit there during the service. That day Dr. Conwell told his congregation that he hoped someday they could build a new church. Hattie May took him seriously and began saving her pennies. Sadly, in the providence of God, she became ill and died just a few months later. After the little girl’s funeral, her parents came to Dr. Conwell, handed him fifty-seven pennies, and told him they were for the new church. It was the first contribution to the building fund.

At the time there were no serious plans for a new building; it was simply a possibility for the future. But when Dr. Conwell told the church’s trustees what had happened, they decided it was time to buy some property. They found a lot on Broad Street and began to negotiate. The owner was not a Christian, but when he heard about Hattie May Wiatt, he agreed to take her fifty-seven cents as the down payment and to let the balance stand on a 5 percent mortgage. It was a generous offer, but the congregation did the trustees one better. When they heard about Hattie May and her pennies, they raised the full amount for the land and presented it to their pastor as a gift. Within a few years Philadelphia’s famous Baptist Temple was built.¹

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 803–811.

No man can ever begin to understand what the living God can do with a mere 57 pennies of a little girl full of faith. No man can ever begin to understand what the living God wants to do with your 57 pennies. Give them and watch God work in your life and in the lives of others.