

Read 1 Chronicles 1

Pathrus, Casluh, from which the Philistines came, and Caphtor. 1 Chron 1:12 Spies are a terrible blow to the morale of any enemy. When the culprit is someone that was planted by another government, it is certainly disturbing to those who have been infiltrated. But, when the spy is someone from your own country who turned, the feeling is outrage. I remember spies that were caught during the Cold War selling secrets to the Soviet Union. These were Americans who for varied reasons, mostly money, chose to sell out their own country to the enemy. These spies became enemies from within.

Here as 1 Chronicles begins, we see an early genealogy starting with Adam. We see Noah's three sons Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Two sons of Ham, grandsons of Noah, were Casluh and Canaan. These two bring about some of the toughest enemies that Israel would face in its future. Casluh was father to the arch enemy Philistines, while Canaan's descendants populated the land of Israel, and were destroyed by Israel as God's judgment against their evil practices. These young men knew their grandfather, but they were not influenced enough that their descendants were close followers of the God that brought Noah and their father through the flood. **Are you leading your children to help make a solid chain of faith years down the road in your family? Do you see tendencies now that may turn into tragedies later? Ask God to lead you as you lead your family, and if you have not entered this season of life, take the time to get prepared now. Your convictions will help shape the convictions of your future family.**

Read 1 Chronicles 2

The son of Carmi was Achar , the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban. 1 Chron 2:7 When I think of my great-grandfather, I think of bootlegger. I never knew him, but I've heard my grandma and mom talk about his harsh life. Often hiding from the sheriff and moving around some, the family was never able to live a normal life amongst so much illegal activity. My great-grandmother would sometimes share some fond memories, but grandma never did. And no matter what they said, all I heard was "bootlegger". How do you want to be remembered? How will family later down the line describe you?

Here in 1 Chronicles 2 we have more genealogy laid out for Israel, and we come across Achar. Achar is another spelling of Achan, the man who violated the ban when he took things from the defeated town of Jericho. Even though he was stoned for his transgression, all these years later the writer of Chronicles takes a few extra pen-strokes to label Achan "the troubler of Israel". **My prayer is that when my children and grand-children look back at my name, they will have a good testimony to bear. My wife and I come from broken homes, and we hope to start a chain of faith right here in our marriage. I pray that grandchildren and great-grandchildren will look back one day and that the testimony of our marriage will be an example of Christ to them. So what conversations will your testimony bring?**

Read 1 Chronicles 3

All these were the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister. 1 Chron 3:9 I have to admit that I have gotten caught up watching a couple seasons of Donald Trump's show, The Apprentice. People try to win a game show where they essentially become Trump's newest pet employee. One episode in particular, the contestants were called to Trump's apartment. It was a lavish and beautifully decorated place at the top of a skyscraper. Trump came out with his adult son and daughter, and his very young wife and their baby. One contestant said he wanted to have it all, just like Mr. Trump. Despite their best efforts, I didn't get the feeling that the two adult children felt particularly blessed. To have what Mr. Trump has, means to also have the broken pieces of his family scattered about.

Despite all the good that David did, he had a flaw when it came to his family. This account here shows all the children David had while in Hebron for six years, before officially taking the throne in Jerusalem. The fact that the "sons of the concubines" is just thrown in without even giving names, indicates that David wasn't the most invested father to ever live. As a result David's hands off approach alienated his children from him, and from each other. **If you are a young person still living at home, you need to make every effort to honor your parents, even if they seem hands off to you. You might say, "they're not worthy of my honor." Neither are you. Only perfect children can demand perfect parents. Since you are not perfect, honor them by obeying them. If you are a parent of children, don't throw all the rules out in an effort to be liked by your children. You need to be an invested parent of kids who can say, "My mom/dad cares about what happens to me."**

Read 1 Chronicles 4

Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested. 1 Chron 4:10 There are many cartoons and shows for kids today that attempt some level of interaction. The children are asked to shout, clap, or give an answer, which my youngest daughter has always been happy to do. I mean, when Mickey Mouse says he needs your help, how can you just sit there? In my day, our only interactive option was Sesame Street. They had the segment called "One of these things in not like the other". There would be 4 objects, and one of them was not like the rest, and you had to guess which one. It usually wasn't very hard. There might be three different kinds of shoes and then a car. It just stood out amongst the other items and was pretty easy to spot.

In the same way, Jabez was a lot like a car amongst the shoes. We have a list of family descendants from Judah. There is nothing spectacular to even warrant any real information about several generations. Then suddenly we meet Jabez, who was a man of honor and of prayer. He sought for his life to be magnified through his obedience to the Lord, an uncommon trait in God's people in his day. It's hard not to realize that Jabez must have been a special person in the eyes of God. And what made him so? His

devotion and faith in the Lord. **Are you just a part of the faceless crowd of marginal believers in this country? Do you really attempt to live out loud for Jesus, or would you rather just be a name in the list? Let's live such lives for Jesus, even today, that we stand out because of our sincere faith and trust in Him.**

Read 1 Chronicles 5

They were helped against them, and the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hand; for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him. 1 Chron 5:20 I've been reading Stephen Ambrose's book "D-Day". It is probably the most detailed account of the Allied invasion of Normandy that's ever been written. One account stood out to me regarding an American unit that came upon a houseful of Germans. The German squad was wiped out, and the American's came in to search the bodies and find out what unit they were in. One of the German belt buckles had the message inscribed, "Gott Mit Uns" or "God With Us". I don't feel comfortable quoting Lt. Carl Cartledge on his response to that, but essentially he said "Think again buddy."

In war, both sides find themselves diligently praying for victory and to make it through alive. We see descendants of Israel that were in a war that God had ordained for them, according to verse 22. Verse 20 says that the men of Israel cried out in battle to God. As a result they were helped against their enemies, instead of being overcome by them. It doesn't seem reasonable to believe that God is going to be in support of two polar opposite sides: Allied vs. Axis, Israel vs. Hagarites. **As you walk through your day, and you call on God, are you calling on Him at times He would want to answer? If you're calling on Him to keep a secret covered up, forget it. Asking Him to help you win the lottery isn't going to get you far either. Asking Him to help you stand against temptation is the kind of call that God is waiting and willing to answer. If you claim to be on the side of God, can He as easily claim to be on yours? Or is your life in opposition to the will and character of God?**

Read 1 Chronicles 6

and Jehozadak went along when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem away into exile by Nebuchadnezzar. 1 Chron 6:15 Have you ever blamed someone for many of the problems in your life? I'm around a lot of high school graduates this time of year, and they're all itching for their freedom. These young people believe now they will be able to call the shots and live exciting lives and accomplish anything they want. The detail they miss is that they already had the most responsibility for the course of their lives. Parents try to direct, but ultimately the teenager makes the choice. And yet, somehow the parents are blamed for many of the bad or difficult situations in that young person's life.

As Judah was being carried off by Babylon, it would have been easy for them to blame the Babylonians for their problems. However, here we see that God carried them away. There are two actions of God in this statement. The first is an action of judgment. Judah was fully responsible for the actions they had taken against the Lord, and they were now

paying the price. The other action is a call for repentance. We'll see later in Nehemiah that the prophet tells God that he is aware of God's willingness to bring the people back to Jerusalem if they would repent. So in one event, God was bringing about judgment and repentance: judgment because of what Judah had done, and repentance because of who God is. **Who are you blaming for certain circumstances in your life? Do you realize that no other human has more influence on your life than you do? Can you see God trying to get your attention in the current difficulty? If so, what do you think He wants you to do about it?**

Read 1 Chronicles 7

Then he went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and he named him Beriah, because misfortune had come upon his house. 1 Chron 7:23 I always wanted to have a son and name him Tyler. I just thought it was a cool name, and as someone who doesn't have a cool name, it was my personal dream. My wife liked the name as well, so the name was given without much more thought. Only later did I look at a book of baby names, when we were looking at other names for our daughters. I noticed that Tyler means "someone who lays tile". Just because his name means that, doesn't mean that I expect him to give me a great kitchen floor one day (though it would be appreciated). He is more than just what his name says about him.

In Jewish custom, a name meant a lot. In this case we see a man who lost several sons who were murdered by thieves. Soon after his wife conceives and they name the child misfortune. It's not just that Beriah can mean misfortune, but it is the word for misfortune. It's like naming a child "letdown" in our day and time. That name would be a tough thing for someone to overcome. A name can mean a lot, and it is our responsibility to have a good name. Not just for our sake, but for the sake of our Lord who saved us. I don't expect Tyler to really lay tile someday. He can be more than his name suggests. **Maybe you have a family name that isn't worth much where you live. Perhaps your family has had many failures and difficulties, and people think of your name as a symbol of failure. You can change that. You can choose to honor the Lord, and He in turn will honor you. Don't be concerned about what men think of when they say your name, but be concerned with what God thinks of when He calls your name.**

Read 1 Chronicles 8

Mikloth became the father of Shimeah . And they also lived with their relatives in Jerusalem opposite their other relatives . 1 Chron 8:32 I remember meeting my step-brothers and sisters for the first time. Our parents decided to set it up on a camping trip, and it was pretty uncomfortable. They showed up after us, and clearly we're not real excited about the whole thing. My sister and I sat on one side of the fire and talked, and my step-siblings sat on the other side. We knew that we were going to become a family, but that didn't really lead us to any quick family ties.

In the genealogy here we see that you had relatives or "brothers" as it can also be translated, living opposite each other in Jerusalem. The significance of that statement is

that they were living apart, despite having a common family tie. There is no country in the history of the world that can claim the kind of family heritage and sense of purpose that Israel can claim. Despite that, so many times they fought, even to the point of dividing the kingdom. **Do you have family members that you are living opposite of? You're not acting as a family member to them, and you're fine if they stay away also. Remember, that God has placed you in your family as a witness of Jesus. It's one of the hardest places to share your testimony, but it should be an area of great concern to you. If it's not, ask God to change your heart.**

Read 1 Chronicles 9

Phinehas the son of Eleazar was ruler over them previously, and the LORD was with him. 1 Chron 9:20 What does it mean for the Lord to be with you, and how do you know? This might sound a little vague, but if He's with you, you just know it. When you're walking closely with the Lord, you notice the differences in your life. You worry less, and trust Him more. You avoid sin instead of giving in to it. And when you look at someone's life from the outside, usually you can tell if the Lord is with them. What does the person's life look like? And what would people say from looking at your life?

God wasn't with Phinehas because he was a minister, but he was a minister because God was with him. This man was the leader of the priests of God, and if you're going to lead other ministers, you better be walking with the Lord. **Do you feel like the Lord is with you? I'm not asking if you think you're saved, because these are two different things. You can still be covered by the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and be far from him because of sinful choices that are dominating your life. If you feel separated from God, you need to ask Him to reveal what is causing the divide. I can assure you, the fault always lies with us.**

Read 1 Chronicles 10

So they stripped him and took his head and his armor and sent messengers around the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people. 1 Chron 10:9 I recently read of a minister who was arrested in an internet sting. He was 52 and was talking over the internet with a 13 year old girl, except the girl was actually an undercover police officer helping to find sexual predators on the internet. This minister drove 200 miles to go "meet" with this girl, when he was arrested. His church was shocked, as were many in the community. What stood out to me in the story was how many times they mentioned a description of the man's church. It was one of the larger churches in the area, and this minister served under a well-known pastor. It almost seemed that the story was reported with some glee.

When the church takes a hit because of sin, we cannot blame the world for how they report it. Just like the Philistines, we have to understand that the lost will flaunt every defeat that comes upon the people of God. We have to realize that our sin affects not just us, but others we know and some we don't. I don't want my conduct to give anyone an excuse to write off the gospel. We are all works in progress, but when we choose sin

(especially like this man who have several opportunities over a couple months to stop), we are giving the world an excuse to ignore the cross. **Does your life point people to Jesus or away from Him? If you were exposed before the world, would people see a work of redemption in your life, or a life that looks the same as a lost person?**

Read 1 Chronicles 11

Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 1 Chron 11:41 During the World War II D-Day invasion, several beaches were captured, but none tougher than Omaha beach. The first wave of Americans was practically annihilated, and the following forces didn't have much more success. Soon the invasion boats began circling off shore until they could figure out what to do. Then the U.S. warship Harding, began steaming for the beach soon looking like it might beach itself. Suddenly the ship turned parallel to the beach and began blazing away at the German positions. Americans in smaller boats between the beach and Harding said it looked like those massive naval guns were pointed right at their boats. Some men even reported seeing the shells travel over their heads, and pull their boats up out of the water. Trust was needed by the Harding crew who worried their captain would beach the boat, and by the American's who hoped those guns would miss them.

Trust is not so easily given in our society today. Many people turn on friends to get a leg up in business and life, and value only their own well being. Here in this list of David's mighty men, we find the name of Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was essentially a part of Israel's special forces. David had trusted him with his life on several occasions. But, Uriah could not trust David with his wife. Even during the time that David took this man's wife, Uriah was off fighting for David and his kingdom! Trust there was broken by David's selfish actions. **Do people find you trustworthy? Is there someone you have broken trust with? Perhaps you failed to do something you promised, or you shared information that was private between the two of you. You need to reconcile with that person, and live a life that allows people to trust you. If they can't trust you, how can they trust the Jesus that you tell them about?**

Read 1 Chronicles 12

All these, being men of war who could draw up in battle formation, came to Hebron with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one mind to make David king. 1 Chron 12:38 I really enjoyed the series "Band of Brothers", which follows a regiment of the 101st Airborne in the European theater of WWII. It is a true story, and much of the movie centers on an officer, Richard Winters. He was not a soldier until the war started, and quickly moved up the ranks from Lieutenant to Major during the course of a year. Much of this was due to his bravery in combat as well as leadership. This man was truly one of the great warriors of the 101st and almost despised his rise in rank because he missed fighting with his men. But, after making it through D-Day, Winters said he promised God that if he made it through the war, he would find a little corner of the world and live the rest of his life in peace. After WWII, he trained others, but never fought in another war himself.

It's an interesting dynamic to see men of war also be men of peace. We've seen David's mighty men and their deeds, and here we see all the men of Israel who are able-bodied to fight, coming together to make David king. However, they are coming with a perfect or peaceful heart. Their intention is not to make David king by force, but by simply obeying the leading of God for their nation. They were going about God's plans by peace and obedience, not by fighting and war. **How do you go about obeying the Lord? Do you attempt to make Him submit to you, or do you submit to Him? Too many people try to fight the Lord when He reveals His will to them. If you are fighting God, you have chosen the wrong battle. Choose peace, and allow God to show you how His will brings greater benefit than anything you could fight for.**

Read 1 Chronicles 13

They carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. 1 Chron 13:7 There are times that I'm more likely to follow instructions than others. When I'm putting together a toy for my kids, I usually attempt to put it together without looking at instructions. My thought is that I'm an adult, and this is a toy for a child, so I should be able to use my "adulthood" to conquer this toy. Usually I find myself running into a problem, and then I look at the instructions, only to find that I missed a step. However if I'm setting up a new cell phone or computer, I follow the instructions to the letter. Why is there a difference? I usually take more care with things of greater value.

In the case of moving the ark, there was definitely a right way to do it. When the ark was built, it was done specifically so it could be carried on poles by the priests as God commanded. When David has it moved, he doesn't find the instructions for how to do it, but tries to come up with his best idea. He gets a brand new cart, probably a very expensive one, and has the ark placed on it. After a while Uzza reaches out to stop the ark from falling off the cart, and he dies as he touches it. David is upset at God, but should only be upset at himself. **There was a right way, and there was his way, and he just assumed his was the best. Have you been ignoring instructions that God has given you? What does the Bible say about forgiveness and love? What about making disciples and giving cheerfully? Have you been following the Bible's instructions, or your own idea of what they mean?**

Read 1 Chronicles 14

They abandoned their gods there; so David gave the order and they were burned with fire. 1 Chron 14:12 When I was 8 or so, I heard of people keeping good luck charms. Maybe it was a lucky hat or even a rabbit's foot. I decided this would be really cool, so I began looking for my lucky charm. One day we were out playing kickball on the playground, and I looked down to find a penny on the ground. I thought this must be my lucky charm, especially since I had been looking for one. I was never really that great at kickball, so I thought this was my chance to prove my newfound luck. I held the penny in my hand, and tried to kick, but got out. The next time up, I tried putting it in my shoe

and saying “Come on lucky penny.” Again I had no success. Before I left the playground, I got rid of that penny, having determined it wasn’t so lucky.

The Philistines had a similar experience with David. They decided to come up against Israel’s new king and bring him down immediately. David had given their nation a set back several years ago when he killed Goliath, and the Philistines wanted to avoid a similar outcome. To help swing the battle in their favor, the Philistines brought their handmade gods and idols. Instead of helping, Israel totally routed them (the Bible uses that lovely Old Testament word “smote”, usually reserved for God’s fiercest judgments). The Philistines left these idols behind as they ran, and David had them all collected up and burned. **What are you trusting in for no good reason? Does your security come from financial investments? There are people from the 1930’s who would caution you about that. Have you built a business or home with your hands that you trust in? There are tornado victims across this country that would tell you to rethink your trust. Remember, our trust should be in the Lord alone. So much that we rely on or trust in can be gone in a moment. Trust God.**

Read 1 Chronicles 15

It happened when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and celebrating; and she despised him in her heart. 1 Chron 15:29 I recall a church service I went to at a black church in Birmingham, Alabama. There were several youth with me for a mission trip, and the local churches hosted us on Sunday. I walked in with these 10 white kids, and the church just bent over backwards to make us feel welcomed. An associate pastor’s wife was sitting next to us, and she leaned over to me and said, “I don’t know how you do it where you come from, but if you want to shout for joy or raise your hands here, you do it.” That wasn’t normally my style, but after watching the people of that congregation rejoice in worship for an hour, I was just overwhelmed with joy and excitement for the Lord. I’ve never sang so loud and felt so free to worship the Lord in all my life. The kids next to me that I brought moved their lips and nothing else.

Too often we become concerned with the human eyes around us, instead of God’s constant eye that watches us. Here we see David decide to move the ark by God’s rules instead of his own. As a result, the people are bringing the ark back into Jerusalem, and David is just excited and celebrating. As he comes into town, he has lost or removed his outer tunic. For David, this would have been the expensive, kingly robe that distinguished him from the others around him. His wife, Michal, sees David and the Bible says she despised him. She had grown up in King Saul’s home, and she knew what a king was supposed to act like. This dancing and celebrating (literally “laughing” in the Hebrew), is in stark contrast to Michal’s sour attitude towards her husband David. **Do you worry what people around you think as you worship the Lord? Do you restrain yourself because others restrain themselves? Remember, when you are in a worship service, there might be 1000 people in the service, but it’s still a bunch of individuals worshipping their God. You worship for Him, not for the people around you. Ask**

God to help you worship Him, and to allow others to worship Him without worrying about those around them.

Read 1 Chronicles 16

Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. 1 Chron 16:8 Have you experienced times when saying “thanks” seemed inadequate? When we first moved to our church in Arkansas, we had no washer and dryer because we had been in an apartment. My wife said that one of the ladies in the church wanted to talk to me and when I went to see her, she gave us a check for \$500. She said it wouldn’t cover everything, but she hoped it would help. I had only been in the church for a few weeks, and we barely new each other. I didn’t know how to thank her, and she told me that she remembered what it was like starting out, and she wanted to do this for us. Even after leaving that church, she has remained a good friend.

While earthly gifts are nice, how can you thank the Lord for all the things He does for you? He not only brings salvation, but He keeps on forgiving us and helping us to move on and move past our failures. He loves us unconditionally at all times, and lays out a plan for our life if we’re willing to follow it. **How do you thank the Lord for that? In this passage it teaches us two big ways to thank God: tell Him thank you, and tell others of what He has done. When you tell God thank you, you are going to the source of your blessings and showing God your appreciation. And when you tell others, you are in fact giving a witness of how God has worked in your life. So are you really thanking God? Do you call upon his name, or just throw out a quick “thanks”? Do you tell others how God has saved and blessed you? That’s how God knows we are truly thankful.**

Read 1 Chronicles 17

"O LORD, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 1 Chron 17:20 I’m excited as the summer Olympics are growing closer. It doesn’t matter if it’s gymnastics or running, I watch all these events with a lot of interest. However, the medal system has always seemed a little weird to me. First, second and third are exchanged for gold, silver and bronze medals. The old adage “second place is just the first loser” always seems to apply at the Olympics. The first place winner is on the highest point of the podium by himself. The winner gets all the attention. Only the winner gets to hear his national anthem played. I’m sure I’d be happy to win a silver medal in an Olympic event, but I’m sure it’s nothing like winning the gold.

As we read here, David points out that God is the one and only. No one can stand in the place of God on the podium. No one can stand next to God on the podium. He is completely unique and irreplaceable. I’ve never seen a life changed like the life of the Christian. I’ve known people from other religions and certainly I saw something different about them. However I watched many of them simply trying to follow a list of rules to be different. We follow Jesus to be different. He is actually making the changes within us. **I**

live for Him not to fulfill a list, but to fulfill a relationship. Do you recognize that as a Christian you have a faith relationship that no other religion can understand? God is not someone to “try”, but to follow. You’ll find no one else to stand in His place or replace Him in your life. Do you hold Him up for others as first in your life and decision-making?

Read 1 Chronicles 18

So David reigned over all Israel; and he administered justice and righteousness for all his people. 1 Chron 18:14 During my time substitute teaching in the public schools, I began to notice some teachers who gravitated towards the popular kids. You would see an teachers who would be open to relating to all the students, but too many seemed to try to impress the “in crowd”. The worse part was when two kids might make similar mistakes, and the least popular of the two received a greater punishment. These teachers who were expected to be fair and caring showed themselves to be partial to particular students.

Who do you think of when you think of a great leader? David is often considered to have been a great leader, and here are three key ingredients. We read that David administered justice, or judgment. He was the decider of court cases and disputes, and that he was trusted to act in a judicious manner. David was also an administrator of righteousness. This means that David sought to lead the country to do what was godly, or right before God. And finally David did this for all the people. There were no favors for the wealthy or pandering to the poor. **David was the same leader for all the people. In your opportunities to lead at work, school or home, do you lead like David? Are your decisions fair, holy, and impartial? If not, you need to realize that the way you lead reflects on your relationship with Jesus and how others see Him.**

Read 1 Chronicles 19

So when the servants of Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and served him. Thus the Arameans were not willing to help the sons of Ammon anymore. 1 Chron 19:19 Disciplining our children is not very fun, but it’s a part of the role that I accepted in becoming a father. I have noticed that my children aren’t saddened by what they did wrong, but by the punishments attached. My son can sit through a talk about why he shouldn’t hit his sisters, and remain pretty calm. But, if he hears that he has lost a favorite toy or activity as a result, suddenly he breaks out into tears. Clearly he isn’t upset by what he has done, but by the consequences. I want to teach my children real repentance; that they would be broken over their sin, not just the consequences.

In this case we see the Arameans suddenly decide to make peace. They weren’t a part of the conflict between David and Ammon, but when asked to take sides, they take sides against Israel. They don’t attempt to make peace with David, who they know has been a successful king. Instead they fight all out, until it becomes clear they cannot win. Only then do they decide to make peace. They didn’t do so because they thought it was the best

thing, but they saw only consequences on the horizon as the losing party. **Are you broken over your sin or just getting caught? Remembering the consequences can be a good deterrent to keep us from sin. I love my wife and have no problem remaining married to her until death. However, I have seen the consequences of divorce, and I also know I want no part of that destruction to come upon my family. Ask God to lead you to make the right choices to be more like Jesus, and not just to avoid punishment for your sin.**

Read 1 Chronicles 20

David took the crown of their king from his head, and he found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there was a precious stone in it; and it was placed on David's head. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount. 1 Chron 20:2 Soon after D-Day, certain military units were given Presidential Unit Citations. While some men were awarded individually, certain units that accomplished their tasks on that difficult day were recognized as a group. After the initial days of the fighting, replacement soldiers came in to take the place of those who were wounded or killed. Since they were part of the unit, they were given the citation badge to place on their uniforms. However, some of the original soldiers took exception to this policy. They felt these soldiers were being rewarded for something they didn't do, and they had a valid point.

Here in 1 Chronicles 20 we come across the incident of David's affair with Bathsheba. All that this account says is that the army went to war and David stayed in Jerusalem. But in this case, we see that as soon as the fighting is over, David shows up to take the crown from the king of Ammon and place it on his own head. As king he certainly had a right to that crown, but he hadn't really done anything. David was a great warrior, but not in this battle. **Have you ever taken credit for something that you really didn't deserve? Maybe someone else actually did the work, but you were given credit and you accepted it. When we take something we don't deserve, even if others mistakenly give it to us, we are being deceitful. I must be quick to work diligently, and even quicker to deflect the credit.**

Read 1 Chronicles 21

And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 1 Chron 21:15 During my time as a substitute teacher, I quickly realized that I had to lay down the law quickly or I might lose control of my entire class. I often told a class that I would write up everyone if the class started to lose control. One class of 5th graders was particularly disrespectful upon my arrival. They would get up and walk around while I was talking and talk to their neighbors. I had to threaten them with all of them being reported to their teacher. After the threat, and their getting to know me better, they were a lot better the rest of the day. Towards the end I had a talk with them about treating substitutes and teachers, and I

removed the note about their earlier disobedience because they had made a change for the better.

There were many problems with David's census. David was doing this for his own pride as he established his fighting force during a time of peace. Also there was a call from the Lord that an offering was to be given by every person if a census was taken, probably to keep the focus on the Lord and not man (Exodus 30:12). We find that the Lord declares judgment on Jerusalem and 70,000 Israelites die. As an angel is coming to destroy Jerusalem, God relents and the Scripture actually says God was sorry over the destruction. However, the destruction was the fault of David, and not of God. The Lord didn't change His mind, but David and others were still voicing their repentance. They didn't just hear the judgment and stand back and take it. They continued to let the Lord know they admitted their fault and their willingness to turn from it. The Lord would have continued the destruction if David had not chosen continued repentance. **Are you facing consequences from your sin? Have you ceased to repent because the discipline has already started? Continue to voice to the Lord your willingness to turn away, making it sure not only before Him, but in your own heart as well. You must decide to turn away, otherwise once His discipline is done, you may allow yourself back into the sin that caused you the problem in the first place. You would not be the first to go back to sin once the previous punishment was over.**

Read 1 Chronicles 22

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. 1 Chron 22:5 Preparing for your untimely death is not the most enjoyable experience, but something that has to be considered. When I was 25 I realized that I needed some security for my wife and children in the event that I died. So I took out a life insurance policy on myself to provide for them if anything ever happened to me. I have to admit, it was slightly unsettling. Someone once told me that life insurance is just a gamble; "You are betting that you might die prematurely, and the life insurance company is betting that you won't." While this was my least favorite responsibility as a father and husband, it was probably the most necessary to provide security for my family.

In the same way, David was also making preparations. God had told David that he would not build God's temple, but that Solomon would. Since Solomon had no experience with such a task, David prepared things so that the work would go easier for his son. And notice that David made "ample" preparations. I didn't buy a small \$10,000 life insurance policy, because it wouldn't provide for my family's long-term needs. In the same way, David put in motion all long-term items that Solomon would need to be successful for the Lord. **Do you invest ample time in your service for the Lord? If you're involved in some ministry in church, do you find that you are often unprepared for the task? Have you made ample preparations for your death? I don't just mean taking care of family that is left behind, but are you prepared to stand before God? If you are not**

saved, then you've missed the most important preparation that you have to make before death. A person who dies without a relationship with Jesus will find that he or she has not made ample preparations before their death.

Read 1 Chronicles 23

and 4,000 were gatekeepers, and 4,000 were praising the LORD with the instruments which David made for giving praise. 1 Chron 23:5 My church in college decided they wanted to incorporate new elements into the worship service. Instead of just being led by piano and organ, we began including guitars, brass instruments, and I began playing the drums. At first we muffled the drums as much as possible, since it was clear that many people did not like them. After I had been playing for a while, I left for basic training and the drums were only played sporadically while I was gone. After I returned I began playing again, and had many people come up and say how much they had missed the drums in the service. Over time, we removed all the muffling materials and found that people really enjoyed the changes we made to the worship service.

David was huge on praising the Lord. He had even made instruments for 4,000 people to play as the people gave praise. Some Christians choose not to use instruments in their worship services, because they believe that it distracts from worshipping God. However, Old Testament Israel saw the benefits of instruments to be used in leading the people to praise God. The most important aspect of praising the Lord is not in how it is done, but that it is done. God deserves our praise, and there is no right or wrong way to do it. If some people choose to exclude instruments, they have the right to, but it should never become an issue of doctrine. Music is a great gift from the Lord whether the music is new or old and if it is played on instruments or acapella. **Do you have an issue with the worship in your church? Is the issue a biblical one (such as focusing more on man and performance than God) or simply an issue of personal taste? You have a responsibility to praise the Lord right where you are, regardless of whether a song or instrument is your favorite or not.**

Read 1 Chronicles 24

David, with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to their offices for their ministry. 1 Chron 24:3 What's the difference between a large church and a small church? Usually the army of staff that you find in a large church. There used to be pastors, music ministers, and youth ministers. Now we also have children's ministers, education ministers, outreach ministers, senior adult ministers, and basically any other position the church wants or needs to create. Some people feel that mega-churches operate more like a business with a huge staff that cannot be justified. But, if the church agrees that the staff is needed, there is no biblical problem with having a 40 member staff.

In this passage here, we see the first real mega-church. They took all these priests and divided them up according to different areas of ministry. When they were done, there were 24 different ministers each serving in a different area. Even though each of them

served in a different area of ministry, they were all Levites, so they were all qualified to be ministers in God's house. There is a willingness in churches today to water down the qualifications for ministers and deacons. A big reason is that so many men have ruined their testimonies or disqualified themselves from ministry. As a result, some churches have made concessions in particular areas in order to round out their deacon or minister ranks. A church would be better off with fewer staff than to bend the rules. **Has your church softened God's standards for the offices of the church? "Requalifying" an unqualified person flies in the face of God's Word? Maybe you have entered into an office of the church and you know that you don't really belong there. You are better to admit and quit than to stay in disobedience to the Lord.**

Read 1 Chronicles 25

All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the direction of the king. 1 Chron 25:6 As a parent, I thought that children's church was the greatest invention. We attended a church where the children were in the worship service until the sermon, and then they were taken elsewhere so the parents could listen to the message. There came a point that our five-year-old son decided he didn't want to go back there anymore. Initially we were disappointed because our attention would be taken away from the sermon. But, it soon became clear that even though Tyler was coloring or playing, he was also listening. Many times we were surprised to learn what he had taken in during that time.

This scripture tells us that the fathers were responsible for leading their families into worship. The kids were there and mommy was there as were grandparents, aunts and uncles. But, the father had the ultimate responsibility. One day as a father, I will stand before God and have to be accountable for whether my children worshipped. If you are a woman, allow your husband to lead you into worship. You can help him, but turn those responsibilities over to dad. And if you are a man, remember that you are responsible for leading your entire family into worship. **And you can lead your family into worship when you're not in church. Have a short time of singing your favorite songs at home or read a verse together and discuss it for a few moments. If you have older children, allow them to give a short devotional. Men, lead your family before the throne of God. Women, assist your spouse in this task. Children, follow the lead of your parents.**

Read 1 Chronicles 26

The lot to the east fell to Shelemiah . Then they cast lots for his son Zechariah, a counselor with insight, and his lot came out to the north. 1 Chron 26:14 Have you ever heard of someone giving a "canned" response? When I was in high school I was on the illustrious dairy cattle judging team in FFA. As you might have guessed, this competition is between teams who evaluate dairy cattle, and then explain to a judge who previously ranked the animals, why you ranked them the way you did. A big no-no is to give canned answers where you're just filling in animal's number, but not really

discussing them in great detail. Judges can sniff those out pretty easily, because it doesn't indicate that you really evaluated the animals at all.

Here we see a short statement about Zechariah. He wasn't just a counselor, but a counselor with insight. He had wisdom and prudence, and he didn't make decisions based on a set of canned answers. To have insight means to understand the person you're talking to and the situation that they are in. When I am asked for advice, I always seek to listen more than I talk. The more I listen and allow the other person to expose the situation, the more likely I am to see the real issues and help with a solution. **Would people call you a counselor with insight? Would anyone come to you for advice? Do you choose wise counselors? Are your decisions affected by people with a spiritual understanding or the self-help worldly counsel that is readily available on tv, radio, newspapers and the best-seller list.**

Read 1 Chronicles 27

This Benaiah was the mighty man of the thirty, and had charge of thirty; and over his division was Ammizabad his son. 1 Chron 27:6 I served as an intern at my first church in seminary. My job was basically to handle presentation software for the service, update the website, and assist in the music ministry. Before I was voted on, our Minister of Music came to me and asked if I would be willing to lead the worship in his absence. The church was over 1,000 people, had three worship services, and I had no experience. He could tell I was hesitating and he said, "It will probably never happen, but the committee wants to know if you'll do it." So I said yes, thinking it would probably never happen. A month later, he had to be gone for a mission trip, so I was responsible for the whole show. I prayed like crazy every day, and when Sunday came, I had complete confidence in the Holy Spirit to lead me, and the services all went very well. But, I learned to be prepared to fulfill my obligation.

Israel has an impressive fighting force, and the army is divided into 12 divisions with a commander over each. Two of those divisions were led by a father, with a son as a second in command. This verse tells us that Benaiah was one of David's 30 mighty men, or the special forces of Israel. There would be times that Benaiah could be called away to fight with just these men, and in that event Ammizabad, his son, had to be ready to lead. While there was a chance that Benaiah would never be gone if a war broke out, Ammizabad always had to be ready to take command. Many people know that responsibility could fall on them at any moment, and they need to be ready. Whether it's a teenager moving out of the house or a couple having their first baby, people often find responsibility coming on them quicker than they could have imagined. **We need to be prepared at any moment for God to call us to new responsibilities. What would happen if God called away the pastor of your church? Would non-ministers in the church step up and take responsibility for Kingdom work? Are you ready to step into an area that you know someone is soon to leave? We need to be ready for whatever responsibilities the Lord chooses to put on us. Do not allow yourself to be unprepared, but pray that God will equip you for the tasks He calls you to.**

Read 1 Chronicles 28

As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind ; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. 1 Chron 28:9 My wife has mentioned that our six-year-old son has been coming up often and saying, “I love you Mommy.” He then follows it up asking his mom for something. Does Tyler really love his mom? I would say yes. But, he’s not really speaking to her out of love, but out of his own desire to have or do something. He didn’t realize that his Momma has seen this trick before, and that she knew full well what his intentions were.

Our motivations for doing something are as important as why we do it. David is telling Israel that Solomon will build the temple, and then David speaks to his son. David tells Solomon to serve with his whole heart and a willing mind. Then he tells his son that God searches our hearts and thoughts. During the process of building a temple, I’m sure that Solomon could become prideful about the work that he was accomplishing. David is telling his son to simply do the work as a servant of the Lord, and not for any personal credit. **Do you serve out of selfish or selfless motivations? Why are you on the praise team? Why do you serve on your committees? You don’t necessarily have to quit doing these things, but you need to quit accepting credit that belongs to the Lord. He knows the sin that you may never act on, but you certainly think about. Ask God to help your thoughts line up with your service.**

Read 1 Chronicles 29

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 Chron 29:9 Lt. Colonel Stuber was a bad dude. I’m sure that if he ever saw combat, he just stared the enemy to death with one of his hard looks. During basic training, Stuber was our commanding officer and often showed up to see how we were doing. When we were learning to use gas masks, we were actually put into a gas chamber to show us that the masks were effective. After a few moments, we had to remove our masks (to also prove their effectiveness!) and identify ourselves to be let out of the chamber. When the command was given to remove masks, Stuber yelled out his name, social security number, unit number and ended with our yell, “Bulldogs, Hooah!” Then he calmly walked out. Everyone else felt a little better that it could be done after watching him do it.

As King David is talking to his people about the building of the temple, David calls for those who will consecrate themselves to the work of the temple. The first to answer that call were the rulers, princes, and military commanders of Israel. They responded first and led the people by example, motivating others to give themselves to the work. A good leader is someone who will never ask others to do things that they aren’t willing to do themselves. **How do you lead at work or school? What about in your home? Do you direct your children or siblings to do something that you won’t do yourself? The way to win people is to be right there with them. That’s why Jesus made such an**

impact on people. He came down to where we were and walked and talked with us and showed us how to build the Kingdom by His own example. Are you living the example of Jesus?