

The offering...the example of King David (J. Peterson)

1. Study I Chronicles 17 and 29. Who's the author? What is happening historically here? What do you know of King David?

We really don't know who the author of Chronicles is, but Jewish tradition has indicated that it was probably Ezra and written around the time that a remnant of the Israelites was returning to their land after their exile in Babylon. They were rebuilding the city and the temple, and they needed to be reminded of their great spiritual heritage, and of the promises of God. This book is a historical account with evidence that the author had access to official documents. It starts with Adam but centers mostly around King David, the person God said was a man after His own heart.

We should understand that the reigns of David and Solomon were truly significant on the world scene. Other nations were in eclipse, or were in subjugation to Israel at the time. God had promised much blessing if Israel would obey and serve Him, and this had happened. Israel was wealthy and powerful, and it was obvious that God's hand was upon this previously small and unimportant people.

David was a powerful warrior, a charismatic and visionary leader, a man who inspired other strong and capable men to join with him. He was also a prolific poet, a musician, and a man of creativity and aesthetic sensitivities. He was a man who loved deeply and passionately.

Most importantly, David was a man who sought to love God with all his heart. Now, that doesn't mean that he was sinless or perfect, of course. We can read about some tragic imperfections in II Samuel. But in Chronicles, we read only about the good things, because the intent of the author is to emphasize what happens when a man and a people follow God with all their hearts.

David knew God, and he knew that Israel's only hope was to obey and serve God consistently. One of David's deepest ambitions was to build a temple, or a "palace" as it says in I Chronicles – a royal dwelling place – for God. Of course, David didn't think that God needed a physical place to live in. But God had put it on his heart that something needed to be built to house the Ark of the Covenant, to accommodate the burnt offerings of the Law, and to be a testimony to the nations. It should be "exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout the land," (I Chron. 22:5).

It had to be one of David's greatest disappointments, initially, to receive word from God that he would not be the one to build this Temple. You can read about it in I Chronicles 17. David could have been resentful about it. After all he had done, after all the perils he had faced, and the hardships, and the opposition he had conquered, God was not going to give him the right to build the Temple, which was so clearly his heart's desire. But that was not his response. His response in I Chronicles 17:16ff is so beautiful: "You are God, and who am I?" And because he submitted his heart's desire to God's will, God rewarded him greatly. Here are four things God did for him:

1. God promised David that he and his line would be "king forever." We know that even though David died, like all men die, that through his line, Jesus Christ will establish an eternal kingdom.

2. God said that David's son Solomon would reign and build the Temple. This is one of the great joys of parenthood – to see your children succeed and excel. If there's one thing in life better than having a great achievement of your own, it's seeing your child achieve it! I have an idea that for David, there was greater satisfaction in seeing Solomon build the Temple, than in doing it himself.

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3. God entrusted David with a detailed plan for the Temple. You can read about it in I Chronicles 28:19. David said, in effect, that God **inspired** him to write down all the details of the plan. The Temple was designed by God, in somewhat the same way that Scripture was written by God. Even though David didn't get to build it, he was in on all the details!

4. God provided the nation and David with an immense amount of wealth to use in building the Temple. The quantities of gold, silver, bronze, iron, timber and stone are almost unbelievable, as they are listed in I Chronicles 22. But when you consider all the surrounding nations that David had victory over, and his access to plunder and tribute, and when you consider God's hand of blessing on David, then it doesn't seem impossible. Along with the materials, God provided David all the craftsmen and leaders that would be necessary, along with international peace so that resources would not be drained away.

2. What were Israelis expected to give? What was the Old Testament concept of tithing? Refer to Leviticus 27:30-32, Numbers 18:21-32, and Deuteronomy 26:12-13.

In the Old Testament, tithing is referred to approximately 9 times. It was a custom of giving a tenth of one's income or property as an offering to God. This practice was done well before it was codified in the Mosaic Laws. Old Testament tithing was for the purpose of providing for the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. It was given in gratitude of God's provision and acknowledged that all belonged to God.

3. What was David's personal offering? How was it used? How much was it worth in today's dollar? See 1 Chronicles 29.

In I Chronicles 29:1-2, David had already set aside materials "without limit" for the Temple. These were state treasures, in his stewardship, which, instead of spending on himself and his own glory, he had already committed to the Temple construction.

Now look at vs. 3, and underline the important word "**moreover**" or "**besides**." What David gives now is IN ADDITION to what he has already given. This reflects a pattern throughout Scripture – the pattern of "above and beyond" giving. It is reflected in the phrase "**tithes and offerings**." The "**tithe**" is the 10% that God expected the Israelites to give to His work. The "**offering**" is IN ADDITION to the tithe, and reflected what the giver had to give as a sin offering, or what the giver freely wanted to give in worship.

In fact, what David does now is to give his own personal treasure to God.

Look at the words: "In my delight (or devotion) in the house of my God..." Here is David's motivation for his over and above giving. It is not out of **obligation**; it is not out of other people's **expectations**; it is not out of **guilt**. It is out of delight. It was his **desire** to give; it was his **pleasure** to give; it was his **joy** to give. In other words, David gives because of the state of his heart.

What, exactly, did he give? In vs. 4, it says 3000 talents of gold of Ophir. Ophir is mentioned, not only to indicate the source of the gold, but also to let us know that it was the finest quality and purity available. A talent is a unit of weight. We aren't quite sure how much a talent was. A Babylonian heavy talent was 132 lbs. A light talent was 66 lbs. It seems best, however, to recognize that a talent was 3000 shekels, and we have a better idea of how much shekels weighed. This would make a Jewish talent about 75 lbs.

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Summarizing the weight of precious metals to dollar value

The Tithe (1 Chron 22:14)

| | Talents | Pounds (75 lb / talent) | Troy Ounces (12 troy oz / lb) | Dollar value |
|--------|-----------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gold | 100,000 | 7,500,000 | 90,000,000 | \$27,900 million (\$310 per oz) |
| Silver | 1,000,000 | 75,000,000 | 900,000,000 | \$4,356 million (\$4.84 per oz) |
| | | | | Total: \$32,256 million |

David's Offering (1 Chron 29:4)

| | Talents | Pounds (75 lb / talent) | Troy Ounces (12 troy oz / lb) | Dollar value |
|--------|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Gold | 3000 | 224,000 | 2,700,000 | \$837 million (\$310 per oz) |
| Silver | 7000 | 525,000 | 6,300,000 | \$30.5 million (\$4.84 per oz) |
| | | | | Total: \$867.5 million |

David gave all of his personal treasure. That didn't mean that he was reduced to begging on the street. He was a king, after all. It did mean that he sacrificed, though. He gave away everything that he might otherwise have hoarded or spent on himself.

We need to be clear about this. The reason David gave such an amazing gift is not because he had so much money, and felt that he could therefore spare some for this project. The reason he gave was because of his **heart**. You see, God didn't look on David's gift as being any more special than that of the widow in Mark 12:42. This poor woman gave two copper coins, worth about one penny. In both cases, the gift was all their treasure. In both cases, they gave because of the condition of their hearts. And we can be certain in both cases God blessed them mightily and took care of all their needs.

David's gift was a designated gift! You might wonder, after all that had already been given, what more gold and silver could be used for. David tells us – it was for the “overlying” of the walls of the buildings. We would assume that the precious metals would be pounded out into thin sheets and pressed onto the walls. It would have nothing to do with the essential structure of the building. Then it says, in vs. 5, that it's for the work done by the craftsmen. I gather that this is for decorative elements. So here we have 112 TONS of gold, and 262.5 TONS of silver, just for decorative things! Not for essential structural or functional purposes – but for appearance, for aesthetics, for beauty.

Why would David be so extravagant? Why is he doing this? The answer is simple: because of his “delight in the house of my God.” His delight is not in his own wealth, his own house, his own entertainment, and his own pleasure. His delight is in the house of his God!

This can **only** be the case if the most important person in David's life is his God, and the most important activity in David's life is obeying his God, and the most persistent thoughts in David's mind center around God's word. How else could he **delight** in giving away his fortune, simply for the decoration of the Temple?

4. What exactly is David's exhortation to Israel (1 Chronicles 29:5)? Examine the original Hebrew. What does this reveal?

David asks the whole assembly, “Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?” Obviously, David is asking, “Who then is willing to join me in giving away their fortune?”

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But David says this in the most unforgettable way. He says, literally in Hebrew, “Who is willing to **fill his hand** to the LORD – to Yahweh – this day?” It’s a word picture – an image we are to form in our minds. The image is of **filling your hand** with things to sacrifice to God, and then holding it up to Him. Imagine this, instead of holding up an **empty** cup to God, asking Him to **fill** it for **our** benefit, David is holding up a **full** hand to God, asking Him to **take** it, for **His** benefit.

Again, we need to make an important distinction. If you are a person who isn’t saved, it’s imperative that you come to God **empty-handed**. You can’t give anything to God that will cause Him to save you or look favorably upon you. You can’t put any amount of money, good behavior, good works, good intentions, in your hand and hold it up to God, and expect Him to be impressed. You can’t even put a check for \$868,000,000 dollars in your hand (the value of King David’s offering), and hold it up to Him, and gain anything in return!! All God wants is for you to admit your sins, and trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who took the penalty of death for your sin, and who can provide you with eternal life forever with Him.

But if you are a **believer** already, you don’t have to come to God with an empty hand. In fact, He wants a full hand – He wants all of you – your hands, feet, body, time, possessions, thoughts, passions, money, everything!

There are two other little phrases here I want you to notice. David said, “Who then **is willing**...?” David is not looking to unduly influence anybody to give. He is emphasizing that this is a **totally voluntary** gift. It **has** to be, doesn’t it? The issue, after all, is the state of the heart. You can’t force that.

The other little phrase I don’t want you to miss is “this day.” It speaks to an important point. It’s not “this week,” or “tomorrow,” or “this year,” or “later,” or “sometime when I’m in better shape financially.” It’s “**this day**” – **today**. David is challenging their hearts, not their financial status. He wants to know **today** who is willing.

The leaders of Israel took up David’s challenge; they “**offered willingly**.” There is an emphasis here – there was no compulsion to give. It came freely, willingly, from the heart, and their offering was 190 tons of gold, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of brass, 3750 tons of iron, and precious stones. Recall that iron was much scarcer in these days than now.

5. What would you think the aftermath of this enormous offering would be? What does this reveal about Israel?

Was there an uneasy feeling of uncertainty, regret? That old “I wonder if I did the right thing?” Do you think that some of those leaders were saying to themselves, “Boy, they had better make good use of **my** money!”?

Vs. 9 is worth underlining. They **rejoiced!** It doesn’t say they rejoiced just because so much came in. They rejoiced because they had offered **so willingly**. They rejoiced because of what the amount of the offering told them about their hearts. They had made their offering to the LORD with a **whole heart**. (NKJV says **loyal** heart.) It is literally, “with a **fullness** of heart.”

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7, it says that God loves a cheerful giver. Do you know why God loves a cheerful giver? It's because a giver can't be cheerful unless his or her heart is full towards God. In 1 Chronicles 28, David speaks to Solomon and refers directly or indirectly to the heart.

vs. 7 – **resolutely** performs

v. 9 – serve Him with a **whole heart** and willing mind

vs. 20 – be strong and courageous and act, do not **fear**

vs. 21 – every **willing** man

1 Chronicles 29 vs. 2 – with **all** my ability

vs. 3 – in my **delight**

vs. 5 – who is **willing**

vs. 6 – offered **willingly**

vs. 9 – with a **whole** heart

vs. 17 – in the integrity of my **heart**

vs. 18 – the intentions of the **heart**

vs. 19 – a perfect **heart**

So, a passage that talks about one of the world's greatest offerings is really talking about the state of one's heart before God. Why is this?

There is an unbreakable connection between what you offer to God and the state of your heart. There's a direct but invisible string or cord that forms a straight line between your heart and your wallet or purse. Jesus said it very plainly in Matthew 6:21: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

If I'm stingy with my **money** before God, I'm saying something about what I really think in my **heart** about God. If I'm reluctant to give any **time** in service to God, I am saying something about what I really think in my **heart** about God's program on earth. If I am hesitant to make any **sacrifices**, I am saying something about how important God is to me down deep in my **heart**.

This direct connection between heart and wallet explains why we are so sensitive to money matters. It explains why there are so many kinds of jokes about money. It lies behind the challenge "put your money where your mouth is." Not that God needs our money!! But He wants our hearts.

Now consider the results of this great offering. The first result, already mentioned, is REJOICING. In vs. 9, the people rejoiced, and King David rejoiced. David says it again in vs. 17: "with **joy** I have seen Thy people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly." And then in vs. 22, "they ate and drank before the LORD that day with great **gladness**."

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If there's no joy in your giving, something is wrong somewhere with your heart attitude.

The second result is PRAISE. Verses 11-14 acknowledge the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty of God. They say that God is the owner of everything, and that riches and honor come from Him. And instead of gloating and taking pride over the size of their magnificent offering, David says in vs. 14, "but who am I and who are my people?" He goes on to say that we are only sojourners before Him, temporary stewards of that which comes from Him and belongs to Him.

If you are giving properly to God, you will be openly talking about His greatness and worthiness, and your unworthiness, and how He is the one really responsible for anything you have.

The third result is BLESSING. Instead of being impoverished after giving so much, the nation went on to enjoy some golden years. As you read through the rest of the chapter, you see that David died in a ripe old age, full of days, riches and honor.

If you are giving, as you should, you will be discovering that God's faithfulness and blessing are all over your life!

So when it comes to worship and your money, the really vital question is this: WHERE IS YOUR HEART?

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