

2. Seeking the Lord

May 10, 2012

Seeking the Lord's guidance can be quite a task for any Christian. How do we seek the Lord's will? Do we hope that the Lord sends an email or text message or leave a voice mail? How can we be sure that the answer we have is from the Lord? Is there any guarantee? In the majority of cases, God's answers are so clear that we have to be total dim-wits not to know because we find His answers throughout the Bible. All we have to do is seek the Word of God.

But some are not so easy. We cannot find any particular formula which we can use to be sure what we have is from the Lord. Many Bible teachers and Christian authors have attempted to write about it in their books. But I believe that none of them can come up with any solid 100% proof-positive way to be sure.

This evening we are going to learn the importance of seeking our God's will and His ways in our lives through the life of king David who was about to become king over all Israel at this time of the Jewish history.

Before we get there, chapter 11 and 12 talk about the mighty men of David who started as a band of rag tag guys in the wilderness while they were chased by king Saul.

A. TRANSPORTING THE ARK OF COVENANT

1 Chronicles 13:1-3 Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. 2 And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if it is of the Lord our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere who are left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites who are in their cities and their common-lands, that they may gather together to us; 3 and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul."

Please note what it says in v1:

Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.

He consulted with the leaders and the captains of his army, but not with the Lord. It was a good intention with a not-so-good-choice-of-method of transporting the Ark of covenant which was made more than 400 years before David's time. The materials that were used are pure gold plate laid on the box of acacia wood. The dimension was 3 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet 3 inches wide and 2 feet 3 inches high. In it were the tablets of the law that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that miraculously budded as a confirmation of his leadership.

The ark of our God had come back from the land of the Philistines some 70 years before according to 1 Samuel 7:1. In those years it sat at the house of Abinadab, but now David and the people wanted to bring it back to the center of the national consciousness.

B. DOING A GODLY THING IN A WRONG WAY

1 Chronicles 13:7-14 So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. 8 Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on

stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets. 9 And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. 10 Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. 11 And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza to this day. 12 David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?" 13 So David would not move the ark with him into the City of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. 14 The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.

According to God's commandments from Exodus 25, the Ark was only to be carried by Levites of the family of Koath by the gold plate laid acacia wooden poles on their shoulders, not by any other means.

Yes, when the Philistines transported the ark on a cart in 1 Samuel 6:10-11, they got away with it because they were Philistines, but God expected more from His people. Israel was to take their example from God's Word, not from the way of the Philistines.

Instead of seeking God's will and His way through His commandments, David and his people simply took a cue from their heathen neighbors and prepared the cart. This is doing a godly thing in a wrong way.

The whole account reinforces the principle that God is interested in the process as well as in the result. It would never do for David or Israel to have the attitude, "As long as we get the ark to Jerusalem, it doesn't matter how we do it." How they did it really did matter, and how we do things today – especially in serving God – also matters.

When our church was told by David Lyon of Sahuarita Christian Academy about the modular building, we were excited because it was a great price. The elder board prayed about it and we felt that it was the Lord who provided it for us. So we purchased it.

Then, I was advised that we should have a good general contractor to oversee the entire process. We thought we found the right contractor. Actually he knew what he was doing when it came to regular construction, but not modular building. Now we found out that the process was wrong, it is going to cost us a lot more than we anticipated.

Though we sought the Lord for this building project; now I don't believe that we sought the Lord for the right contractor just like David and his people didn't think about the method of transportation. We hope and pray that the Lord extends His everlasting mercy to us again for the building project to finish this soon. So let's seek the Lord together for this.

C. WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE TWICE

1 Chronicles 14:8-17 Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went out against them. 9 Then the Philistines went and made a raid on the Valley of Rephaim. 10 And David inquired of God,

saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand." 11 So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, "God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water." Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim. 12 And when they left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire. 13 Then the Philistines once again made a raid on the valley. 14 Therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. 15 And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines." 16 So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer. 17 Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.

We have to admire David's heart. It is no wonder why the Lord called him "a man after My own heart". His heart was so tender to obey and eager to please the Lord by seeking Him. He was not about to make the same mistake twice.

David asked the Lord about the upcoming battle with the Philistines. The Lord answered Him and he followed. Naturally, they won. For the second battle, it would be easy for us to think that we can whip the same Philistines again, but not David. He sought the Lord again. This time, the Lord provided him a different strategy to attack the enemy.

Zechariah 4:6b "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the Lord of hosts.

I like what George Müller, a Christian evangelist and orphanage director of the 19th Century, said. He took care of over 10,000 orphans during his lifetime. He said, "I will seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them."

If we want to know the will of God, our attitude needs to be right. Here are some guidelines as to how we can play our part in arriving at right decisions:

1) We must be willing to think.

God made us thinking beings, and He guides our minds as we think things out in His presence.

2) We must be willing to think ahead and weigh the long-term consequences of alternative courses of action.

Often we can only see what is wise and right, and what is foolish and wrong, as we think through the long-term issues.

3) We must be willing to take godly advice.

There are always people who know the Bible, human nature, and our own gifts and limitations better than we do. To say, "No" to godly advice is saying, "Yes" to the unnecessary consequences that follows.

4) We must be willing to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves.

We must ask ourselves why we feel a particular course of action will be right and make ourselves give reasons.

5) We must be willing to wait on the Lord.

“Wait on the Lord” is a constant refrain in the Psalms and it is a necessary word, because the Lord often keeps us waiting. While we wait on the Lord, we get to know His heart and His will; and we get to grow in godly character. When in doubt, do nothing, but continue to wait on God.

It’s important that we seek God’s will for each undertaking so that we don’t depend on past victories as we plan for the future. How easy is it for Christian ministries to dig their way into administrative fixes that eventually become graves, simply because the leadership fails to discern whether God wants to do something new for them. When we’re through changing, we’re through. Improvements and changes within the boundary of God’s Word are a part of life.

D. DOING A GODLY THING IN A RIGHT WAY

1 Chronicles 15:1-2 David built houses for himself in the City of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it. 2 Then David said, “No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.”

1 Chronicles 15:12-15 He said to them, “You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. 13 For because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.” 14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. 15 And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord.

This demonstrates David’s commitment to bringing the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem in the right way. He had learned the lesson that the process also matters to God, not only the result.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) It is far better to seek the Lord and obey what He tells us from the beginning than going through misery after we do the things (even godly things) in our own ways.

2) End result doesn’t justify the method we employ.