

JULY 2017

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

Psalm 145:4

THE GOD OF YOUR HISTORY: 1 Chronicles

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

Part of the Story



Technology makes it easier for the average person to discover his or her past. We now have almost instantaneous access to historical records

that previously required hours in the library or travel to remote locations. DNA testing, available through the mail, allows us to learn about our precise ethnic mix.

Studying our family's past can reveal a bit more about who we are and from where we come. But we may also find some surprises. People might be excited to discover their family tree includes a respected physician or one of the original colonists, but they might also be dismayed to learn their great-great uncle was the town drunkard.

In the book of Chronicles, the subject of this month's study, we see a listing of the history of God's people. In the opening chapters, you will see some familiar names (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Esau) but also the names of less well-known individuals (Seir, Anah, Zaavan, and Hadad). Some were shining successes, while others we might dismiss as failures.

Originally written as one volume, the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles trace the

history of God's people from Adam to Solomon. The Hebrew name for the book is translated as "The Words [also Events or Matters] of the Days," taken from 1 Chronicles 27:24. The great fifth-century biblical scholar Jerome gave it the name *Chronicles*. But many of us might wonder why Scripture includes chapter after chapter that seems to be nothing more than a list of names?

As you read the record of Chronicles, two things should be abundantly clear. First, God notices us as individuals—every single one of us. This genealogy contains hundreds of individual names, generation after generation. It reminds us that we are significant in God's eyes.

Second, God's plan is larger than any single one of us. It is easy to get caught up in our limited earthly perspective. Sometimes we focus on our individual failures and missteps. This list reminds us that we are a part of a much bigger story. God worked not just through one person, but through generation after generation, weaving us together into His perfect divine plan. The story of your individual life is part of His larger narrative.

Friend, you are not left out. You are valued by God, and an integral part of His story. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

The Son of David, Son of Abraham

Matthew opens his Gospel by calling Jesus “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). This is a statement about Jesus’ human lineage. This genealogy links Jesus to two of the foundational promises of the Old Testament: first, God’s promise to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham’s offspring (Gen. 22:17–18); second, His promise to give one of David’s descendants an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12).

Matthew uses “son of David” as a title that identifies Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. Matthew 9:27 describes how two blind men followed Jesus, calling to Him “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” On another occasion, when Jesus healed a demon possessed man who was blind and mute, the astonished crowd asked, “Could this be the Son of David?” (Matt. 12:22–23). At the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, which inaugurated Jesus’ final week, the welcoming crowd shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt. 21:9). Even a Canaanite woman who lived in the region of Tyre and Sidon recognized that this title belonged to Jesus (Matt. 15:22).

Son of David was a messianic title. Those who used it to refer to Jesus were identifying Him as David’s promised descendant. When David set

out to build a temple for the Lord, the Lord promised: “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Sam. 7:12). The fact that this was to take place after David’s death indicates that someone other than Solomon was in view.

As the Son of Abraham, Jesus brings the blessing of eternal life to all nations. Anyone who trusts in Him will be forgiven. As the Son of David, Jesus is Israel’s promised Messiah and King. He will one day sit on David’s throne and reign in Jerusalem. His rule will extend throughout the entire earth and will never end (Isa. 9:7; Rev. 11:15).

The juxtaposition of these two designations in Matthew’s Gospel reminds us that God keeps His promises. All that God has said He will do will come to pass. Just as the past is a record of God’s faithfulness, the future offers the prospect of faithfulness yet to be experienced. The God of Abraham and David does not make idle promises. He always keeps His word! ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more about God’s promises to David, read *First & Second Chronicles* by John Sailhamer (Moody Publishers).

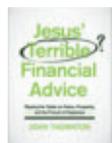
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Looking for a Good Book This Summer?

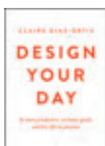
Here are a few favorites from Moody Publishers, ranging from practical life issues to fiction, to add to your summer reading list. Order from your local bookstore or call (800)-678-8812 or online at moodypublishers.org.

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VOLUME 30 • ISSUE 7

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

The God of Your History: 1 Chronicles

Laurence Overmire—author, poet, genealogist, and descendant of several *Mayflower* passengers—dedicated two decades to tracing his family's history. In his book, *One Immigrant's Legacy*, he writes: "History remembers only the celebrated, genealogy remembers them all."

After their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people had their genealogies preserved: All the tribes and families and all the names were recorded in the book of 1 Chronicles. As we study this Old Testament book this month, we'll see that these mostly obscure names helped the Jewish people preserve their history and know who they are as the people of God. They will also help us trace the earthly pedigree of our Lord Jesus Christ—to David, Judah, Abraham, and Adam—in fulfillment of what the prophets said about the coming Messiah.

This month we will also follow the ups and downs in the life of one person—the famous King David. We'll learn about his victories and failures, his love for God and desire to worship the Lord with all his heart, soul, and strength. We'll marvel at the way God used David to change history. You may not feel as important and mighty as King David, but the same God who guided the king's life, guides yours. He is the God of history, and your life is interwoven in His story. ■

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*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

Psalms 145:4

Ancestry and God

Because of people’s growing interest in tracing their family history, Ancestry.com has become the largest for-profit genealogy company in the world. Subscribers can use the Internet to access billions of historical records and submit DNA samples to learn about their roots.

This month we will take a deep dive into God’s genealogical database as we study the book of 1 Chronicles. Although genealogical lists play an important role in 1 Chronicles, it is also a book of history that focuses primarily on the dynasty of David. The first chapter describes David’s lineage, beginning with Adam and Abraham’s descendants.

The list is impressive. There are 200 proper names in the first chapter alone! With so many unfamiliar names and so little narrative, we may be tempted to give up and turn to a more

familiar passage. We should remember that each name listed in this book represents someone’s story. We will learn some of the details along the way, but only God can know the whole story. We should also take heart because these lists of names show us that the God who made us is also the God who knows us. He knows us by name and is familiar with every detail of our lives. The God whose actions are described along with the names listed in this book is the God of their history and of ours.

This is especially true of Jesus Christ, who “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3). As we begin this study, let’s ask God for the patience to persevere in our reading. Our circumstances may not be identical with theirs, but if we know Jesus Christ as Savior, we have become part of this story.

APPLY THE WORD

This list of names in Chronicles is more than a genealogy. It is a kind of faith history. Why not get things started by doing some research into your own family’s faith history? Ask family members about their journey of faith. How does it compare to your own? Look for an opportunity to share your faith story with your family members as well.

PRAY WITH US

Summer is the season of training and development for the staff of the Student Life department. Please support Tim Arens, vice president and dean of Student Life, and his team in prayer as they get ready for the new academic year.

Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.”

Revelation 5:5

SUNDAY
JULY
2

Judah and His Offspring

One of the main characters in the popular *Chronicles of Narnia* series is the lion, Aslan. In this series of fantasy stories, Aslan represents Jesus Christ. Perhaps author C. S. Lewis got the idea for Aslan from the title ascribed to Jesus in Revelation 5:5.

The genealogy in today’s passage narrows the focus to the line of Judah. This reflects the author’s interest in David and his kingdom. David’s ancestor Jacob had predicted: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (Gen. 49:10). Jacob’s prophecy describes the future preeminence of the tribe of Judah as well as the advent of the Messiah.

One interesting feature of this list is the theme of redemption, which is evident in the backstory of some of

those mentioned. The line of Judah is traced through Perez, a child who was conceived through trickery (Genesis 38). Hezron and Ram were ancestors of Boaz, who married Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 4:18–22). Bezalel was the craftsman who was empowered by the Holy Spirit to build the tabernacle (Ex. 31:2–5). God had “filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills” in artistic craftsmanship (Ex. 35:31).

This history of redemption would have been especially significant for the original audience of this book. Chronicles was probably written during the second or third generation after the return from exile in Babylon. Still coping with the consequences of divine discipline and struggling with disappointment over the new normal, no doubt some still wished they could return to an earlier golden age (see Hag. 2:3).

APPLY THE WORD

God can redeem our failures and mistakes. Be encouraged today by the reminder of God’s promise. Review this verse to focus your heart on God’s faithfulness: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer. 29:11).

PRAY WITH US

Would you pray for our Customer Service Center staff as they answer hundreds of phone calls every day on Moody’s Chicago campus? Ask the Lord to give them grace, patience, and kindness to welcome everyone who calls (800) DL MOODY.

*These are the words of him who is holy and true,
who holds the key of David.*

Revelation 3:7

The Family of David

Situation comedies from the 1950s and 60s such as *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* idealized family life. Today's shows often depict far-from-perfect families.

David's family was certainly not ideal. Few of his offspring matched his success or equaled his faith. Many of David's descendants forsook the Lord. In this section the author of Chronicles traces the line of David down to his own day, ending with the children of Zerubbabel and their descendants. The names Zerubbabel gave to some of his children express his faith in God's goodness. Hananiah meant "God has been gracious." Hasadiah meant "Jehovah has been kind." Jushab-Hesed meant "May kindness be returned." The name Shelomith may mean "at peace" and has been found in Jerusalem on an ancient seal dating back to postexilic times and may refer to Zerubbabel's daughter.

The fact that the author of Chronicles does not highlight the dysfunction of David's descendants is not an attempt to hide a tragic family history. Their story would have been familiar to his audience from other biblical histories. In a way, they were living with the consequences of that failure. Instead, the Chronicler's treatment of history throughout this book reflects a theological purpose. One aim is to draw attention to God's faithfulness to the promises made to David generations earlier. The capstone of these promises is found in Jesus Christ, who is heir to David's throne. When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Christ, he promised: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32–33). In Revelation 3:7 Jesus holds "the key of David," a symbol of the Messiah's authority and power.

APPLY THE WORD

We claim the promises made to David when we place our trust in Jesus Christ. We have the confidence that we too can share in the blessing of forgiveness (see Psalm 32). This is the blessing of Christ's righteousness credited to us by faith (Rom. 4:6–8). You too can claim it by taking God at His word. Trust in Jesus today!

PRAY WITH US

Janet Stiven, VP and general counsel, requests your prayers for the Lord's protection and blessing in all legal matters at Moody. Also please pray for her team at the Legal department: Amber Adames, Cassandra Blakely, Emmy Koh, and Ryan June.

Pray continually.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

The Prayer of Jabez

A few years ago the small book *The Prayer of Jabez* became a runaway hit. It sold nine million copies and made the *New York Times* bestseller list. The book also sparked criticism from some who accused its author of promoting a kind of prosperity gospel.

Jabez and his prayer are included in today's genealogy. A careful reading indicates that the point of this prayer is not to provide a formula for guaranteed success or prosperity but to give testimony to the redeeming power of God's grace. At his birth, Jabez's mother gave him an unfortunate name, apparently a kind of pun based on a similar sounding Hebrew word for pain (v. 9). It might have reflected her experience with a difficult birth. The statement in the text that Jabez was "more honorable than his brothers" could, however, point to an additional reason for her pain. Apparently Jabez's brothers brought shame to the family.

Perhaps she expected this child to do the same.

Rather than lead a life of dishonor and pain that his name seemed to predict, Jabez asked for God's hand of blessing. He framed his request in two parts. First, he asked God to enlarge his territory. This is not stated as a demand but as a plea that reflected God's promise to give Israel the land. Second, he asked God to keep him from harm so that he would be "free from pain" (v. 10). The language could refer to physical pain or emotional sorrow, and probably both are in view.

The secret to the success of this prayer is not found in some magic formula of wording but in the God to whom it is addressed. Its tone is one of faith, which recognizes that the answer is dependent upon God's power and His will.

APPLY THE WORD

Perhaps an obvious application of this story is not to give your child a name that they will later regret! But the ultimate application is to trust God enough to share your deepest fears and desires. Don't be afraid to ask for His blessing and His protection. Be as specific as you like in your requests and leave the outcome to Him.

PRAY WITH US

Thank the Lord for the freedom we have to broadcast God's Word over the airwaves. Specifically, pray for the ministry of Moody Radio's WMBW, serving eastern Tennessee, and its staff: Jason McKay, Meredith Sexton, Paul Martin, and Brent Manion.

WEDNESDAY
JULY
5

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Belief and Unbelief

In 1 Chronicles 5, the Chronicler focuses on those who settled on the other side of the Jordan: the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. According to Numbers 32, the tribes of Gad and Reuben asked Moses if they could settle there when they saw that the land was good for raising flocks. Moses initially objected because he thought the proposal showed an unwillingness to go into the land God had promised to Israel. Moses was also afraid that granting their request would dissuade the other tribes from obeying God's command to possess the land. Half of the tribe of Manasseh decided to join them.

The genealogy begins on a note of shame by mentioning Reuben, who "defiled his father's marriage bed" (v. 1; Gen. 35:22; 48:16–22). As a result, Jacob reassigned the rights of the firstborn to Joseph's sons. The record that follows is a mixed one. On the

one hand, there are deeds of faith mentioned. In verse 18 to 22 we learn about a military campaign against the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab, who were Arab and Ishmaelite tribes. The Chronicler ascribes the victory of the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh to prayer.

On the other hand, in verses 24 to 26 the Chronicler reminds his readers that the half-tribe of Manasseh was carried into exile by the Assyrians because "they were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them" (v. 25). This is the writer's reminder that position and power are not the most critical factors for success in God's eyes. Instead, faith and obedience make all the difference. When these tribes relied upon God and acted in faith, they succeeded. When they forgot God, they failed.

APPLY THE WORD

We don't get credit today for past acts of faith. Every new day brings its own trials that demand our reliance on God. His mercies are "new every morning" (Lam. 3:22–23). Why not celebrate this today by singing or listening to the song "The Steadfast Love of the Lord Never Ceases." You can find video with the lyrics on YouTube.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Bible Institute, welcomes your prayers for the Undergraduate School faculty and staff on our Chicago and Spokane campuses. May they be refreshed for the upcoming new semester at Moody.

*Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God—this is your true
and proper worship.*

Romans 12:1

THURSDAY
JULY
6

Priestly Duties

In many religious traditions, priests are not only a spiritual vocation but also a separate social caste. For instance, the Hindu Brahmins are both at the highest level in the social hierarchy and also the priests responsible for administering religious rites in the temples and studying the sacred texts. Monks in the Jain religion do not run the temples or social society, but they are set apart for a life of poverty and self-denial.

Israel's priesthood was drawn from the tribe of Levi, descended from the third son of the patriarch Jacob. Those who served as high priest (vv. 4–15) were descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses. The priestly clans were descended from Gershom (sometimes referred to as Gershon), Kohath, and Merari, who were the three sons of Levi.

The priests “presented offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of

incense in connection with all that was done in the Most Holy Place, making atonement for Israel, in accordance with all that Moses the servant of God had commanded” (v. 49). In David's time a priestly order of musicians was also formed to aid in worship. Some of the psalms are attributed to Asaph, Heman, and Ethan (Psalms 50; 73–83; 88–89), who are mentioned in verses 33 and 39.

The fact that Heman is connected with Samuel the prophet in verse 33 is a reminder that the role of music in Old Testament worship was both instructive and prophetic. Its purpose was not to create atmosphere but to proclaim God's word.

Music should serve the same purpose in the church's worship. Through singing we both make music “to the Lord” and teach one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

APPLY THE WORD

Through Jesus our High Priest, all believers have been granted direct access into the Father's presence, offering their lives as a living sacrifice in gratitude for God's gift. This does not earn your salvation; it is simply your way of saying thank you for what Christ has done. What will you do today to offer your life in thanksgiving to God?

PRAY WITH US

Please support Moody Bible Institute's Pastoral Studies faculty in prayer. Ask the Father to provide professors Winfred Neely, Michael Boyle, and Pamela MacRae with patience and insight as they train the next generation of church leaders.

FRIDAY
JULY

7

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.

1 Peter 2:9

A Kingdom of Priests

Some churches give lavish compensation packages to their pastors, complete with multimillion-dollar mansions, private jets, and a budget for luxury clothes. Other churches insist that the pastor receive no financial compensation at all, even if it is a full-time vocation. Some are bound by denominational guidelines for ministerial salaries; others try to make sure their pastor can earn a median income for the area in which the church is located.

Interestingly, New Testament teaching about providing for the church's pastors is rooted in the Old Testament rules for taking care of the Levitical priesthood: "Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:13–14).

One way that God provided for those who served His people under the Law of Moses was to assign the priests cities in which to live. Scattered throughout Israel, these Levitical cities salted the land with those who provided biblical instruction and spiritual care to God's people. Six of these cities also served as cities of refuge where those who had unintentionally killed someone could be safe from retribution until the case was adjudicated.

Unlike the rest of the tribes who received land as its inheritance, Israel's priests had the promise that God Himself would be their inheritance and would provide for them. He provided for their daily needs by allowing them to eat food from the sacrifices and to share in the tithes that God's people brought to the tabernacle and temple (cf. Num. 18:20–21). This kind of provision was not charity but was due for their service.

APPLY THE WORD

How does your church fulfill this biblical responsibility? Are the provisions adequate? Is there more that might be done? Check your church's annual report or ask one of the church's leaders to get a better understanding of this aspect of your congregational responsibility.

PRAY WITH US

Again, join us in thanking the Lord for the godly character and dedication of the Undergraduate School Pastoral Studies faculty: Laurie Norris, Kirk Baker, John Koessler, and Craig Hendrickson. Pray that the Lord would provide for all their needs.

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.

Psalm 33:16

SATURDAY
JULY

8

God's Mighty Army

A children's Bible song sung for years in Sunday school and Vacation Bible School goes: "I may never march in the infantry / Ride in the cavalry / Shoot the artillery / I may never fly o'er the enemy / But I'm in the Lord's army! Yes Sir!"

In this section, the Chronicler records the genealogy of the tribes of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher. The author emphasizes the military strength for several of the tribes. There's no specific timeframe given here, and some of the numbers seem to date from the time of David. In the genealogy of Ephraim he mentions another notable military leader, Joshua the son of Nun and Moses' successor (v. 27). Notable women are also mentioned, including the daughters of Zelophehad, who were one of the first to request inheritance rights for women, and Sheerah, "who built Lower and Upper Beth Horon as well as Uzzan Sheerah" (vv. 15, 24).

The first recipients of this book could not have helped noticing the difference in their circumstances compared to these earlier days. They had no military might. The scope of the land they inhabited was significantly reduced. Those who had returned to Jerusalem must have felt like aliens in their own land. "By anyone's standards, the fifth century was hardly a golden age for the people of God," Old Testament scholar John Sailhamer explains. "Their future as a kingdom and a distinct people of God, in fact, seemed bleaker at that moment than perhaps ever before."

The author's purpose was not to discourage them by pointing to a glorious but unrecoverable past but to remind them of the power and glory of God. And though their circumstances were different, their mighty God remained the same. He had raised up mighty warriors before and He could do it again.

APPLY THE WORD

This view of the past served as a reminder that they were still the same people of God and heirs of the same promises. Are you facing a difficult change in circumstances today? Remember the God of your past is also the God of your present and your future. Jesus promised: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

PRAY WITH US

As you pray today, please join Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer at Moody, asking God for wisdom in money management and budgeting matters as Moody endeavors to be a good steward of all the resources entrusted to us, for the growth of God's kingdom.

SUNDAY
JULY

9

There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them, there the great throng of Judah's princes, and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.

Psalms 68:27

A Short History of the Tribe of Benjamin

Karl Vaters, church pastor and author of *The Grasshopper Myth*, calls small churches “the next big thing.” Vaters believes “small churches are uniquely poised to meet the needs of Millennials and perhaps turn the tide on the trend of the unchurched.”

Today’s passage focuses on the tribe of Benjamin, described as “little” in Psalm 68. This tribe was descended from Jacob’s youngest son. At the time of the first census it numbered 35,400 and by the second census had grown to 45,600 (Num. 1:37; 26:41). When Saul was chosen to be Israel’s first king, he noted that Benjamin was “the smallest tribe of Israel” and he was from least significant clan in that tribe (1 Sam. 9:21). Benjamin distinguished itself by siding with David when the Northern tribes revolted against him.

In chapter 8, the author mentions several locations within Benjamin,

placing special emphasis on Gibeon and Jerusalem. Jerusalem shared a border with Judah and Benjamin. The chapter concludes with the family of Saul, setting the stage for the narratives that follow which describe the rise of David and the establishment of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

The story of Benjamin is mixed. It includes tales of victory as cities were built and giants defeated, but there is an underlying note of warning. The original audience would have known that Saul’s reign began with promise but ended in tragedy.

An old hymn asks, “Does the place you’re called to labor seem too small and little known? / It is great if God is in it, And He’ll not forget His own.” God is not daunted by small size or limited resources. As the refrain of this song declares, “Little is much if God is in it.”

APPLY THE WORD

Little is much if God is in it—but He must be in the method as well as the motive. As the stories of Saul and David demonstrate, small size is no obstacle, but our failure in the areas of faith and obedience will be. Ask God where and how He wants you to exercise your faith today. The sphere may be small, but the effect will be great.

PRAY WITH US

Today, we invite you to pray for Moody Aviation’s director, James Conrad, and his administrative assistant, Jan Seiersen, as they plan programs for the upcoming school year and prepare to welcome the students back to Moody’s Spokane campus.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

No Outsiders

Most people who do genealogical research are hoping to learn interesting details about their family background. They may hope to find a link to some famous person or event in the past. Others want to know more about themselves. A few may be looking for their parents or long-lost siblings.

For those descended from the tribe of Levi, genealogy was critical because this family tie was a prerequisite to serving in the temple. Genealogy was also important for the rest of those who returned to Jerusalem; accurate records were necessary in order to claim family property. Some who returned were unable to show that they were truly descended from Israel (Ezra 2:59).

Some of the returnees who were descended from Levi could not locate their family records and were excluded from the priesthood. This prevented them from serving in the reconstructed

temple and prohibited them from taking part in the shares of the offerings that were due the priest until the legitimacy of their claim could be proven (Ezra 2:61–63). Nehemiah shared this concern. He was prompted by God to assemble the returnees for the purpose of validating their genealogical record (Neh. 7:4–5). The list in 1 Chronicles 9 includes priests, Levites, gatekeepers, temple servants, and musicians.

An important change that has come with the advent of the gospel: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28–29). Our demographic distinctions don’t disappear, but they do not limit or define the scope of the gospel, which is available to all regardless of genealogy.

APPLY THE WORD

The promises of the gospel are not limited to a particular family, caste, tribe, nation, or gender. Its offer of grace extends to everyone. This also holds true of the privileges of the gospel. It provides equal access to God for everyone who belongs to Christ. Whatever your family background, you can serve Christ with boldness and effectiveness.

PRAY WITH US

Our students are busy with short-term mission trips, summer jobs, and local church work. Remember them in your prayers and ask that God would give them a time of refreshment and renewal this summer before they immerse themselves in study.

TUESDAY
JULY

11

I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.

1 Samuel 15:11

Death of a King

Britain's King Edward VIII shocked the world when he gave up the throne in order to marry his lover Wallis Simpson. In his abdication speech, the king declared, "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love." Israel's first king lost his throne under even more shocking circumstances: Saul was stripped of his divine authority and was eventually slain because of his unfaithfulness to the Lord (10:13).

The tragic events described in today's passage were the culmination of a spiritual decline that began shortly after Saul was anointed king. Although his reign began with admirable humility, Saul's subsequent behavior demonstrated an inability to trust God, combined with a reckless disregard for His word (1 Sam. 13:6–14). The Chronicler does not review these

events in detail but instead focuses on the tragic final collapse of Saul's kingdom. The author is clear about what brought Saul's end. It was not the military failures Saul suffered that were his ultimate undoing but his refusal to rely upon God: "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse" (10:13–14).

Viewed through the lens of faith, Saul's story actually ends on a positive note. When Israel's first king proved unworthy, the Lord provided another. Israel had initially demanded a king like all the other nations had. When that king failed, the Lord replaced him with a better one, who was "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).

APPLY THE WORD

David was not perfect, but he did differ from Saul in both character and practice. Many leadership books today focus on skills and strategies. As important as these may be, they are no substitute for godly character. Take time to pray for your church's leaders today. Ask God to help them be people of faith who hold God's word in high regard.

PRAY WITH US

Please join Greg Thornton, senior VP of Media, asking God to bless Moody's media ministries, Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. May the Lord use these ministries for His glory across the globe!

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5

WEDNESDAY
JULY

12

How to Build a Better Leader

Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic suggested when it comes to leadership success, self-confidence is overrated. Low self-confidence is better because it causes the leader to be more self-critical, can be a motivation to work harder, and suppresses natural arrogance.

But in our passage today, we discover the key factor that made David a better leader than Saul. It wasn't primarily a matter of skill or level of confidence. David's success was a result of his reliance on God. The Chronicler shines a spotlight on two major events in David's career: when Israel accepted him as their leader, and when he established his capital in Jerusalem. Neither of these events was a result of David's personal brilliance or natural leadership ability. According to verses 1 through 3, all Israel came together to acknowledge David as their king because of what the Lord had said.

Similarly, the military success that enabled David to capture the Jebusite fortress that would eventually be known as the City of David was "because the LORD Almighty was with him" (v. 9).

Experience, skill, and opportunity can contribute to effective leadership. But none of these can substitute for God. Without sensitivity to God's guidance, our experience and natural ability may lead to a false sense of confidence. We might think we are leading well, when in reality we are drifting away from God's purposes. The secret to David's success was his dependency on God. David was responsive to God's word and dependent upon God's power.

David was a better leader than Saul, but not a perfect one. He sinned, too. The difference was that Saul covered his sin and tried to save face. David submitted to God's evaluation of his behavior and repented.

APPLY THE WORD

Rather than focusing on your self-confidence, ask the Holy Spirit to examine your level of reliance on the Lord. Where do you need to submit to God today? Write these verses on a notecard: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5–6).

PRAY WITH US

Larry Beach operates the Copy Center on Moody's Chicago campus. Please thank God in prayer for his faithful service as he helps Moody's ministries with high-quality brochures, flyers, invitations, and other printed materials.

THURSDAY
JULY

13

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Ephesians 6:10

God's Heroes

In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell contends that the form of hero stories in many cultures is the same no matter where it is told. This basic story line is found in fantasy epics and many novels.

Today's passage describes the accomplishments of "the chiefs of David's mighty warriors" (v. 10). Jashobeam raised his spear against 300 opponents (v. 11). Eleazar stood his ground and defended a plot of ground against the Philistines when the rest of the army fled from the enemy (vv. 12–14). Three men broke through the Philistine lines to bring water to David. (vv. 15–19). Abishai became as renowned as the three men who did this and had the honor of acting as their commander (vv. 20–21). Benaiah is credited with several feats (vv. 22–25). The remainder of chapter 11 lists the names and background of David's "mighty warriors."

The accounts in this section all share two characteristics. First, they had bold faith. Each of those mentioned acted bravely despite overwhelming odds. Courage is not the absence of fear but the determination to act in the midst of fear. Faith is the expectation that God will accomplish His will through our action (and sometimes in spite of it). David's mighty warriors not only acted heroically, they showed that they possessed a heroic faith.

Second, these accounts reflect the mutual devotion that was felt by David and his men. David's warriors were devoted to their king, willing to risk their lives on his behalf. David in turn was devoted to his men. He did not take their sacrifice for granted. Instead of seeing it as a tribute to his own leadership, David viewed their courageous acts as something that should be offered to God.

APPLY THE WORD

Most often our battles are "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). In order to live courageously for God, we require time in prayer in His Word. Commit to living boldly for the Lord!

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, appreciates your prayers for the upcoming academic year. Petition the Lord for a year that will challenge, inspire, and equip Moody's student body in their training for ministry.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:3

Unity and Leadership

Some Christians speak of community as if it were the company of the believers in rose-tinted hues with the sound of violins swelling in the background. But often our experience in the church reflects a different reality. When Ephesians 4:3 commands the church to guard the unity of the Spirit, we should be warned that conflict is a common experience in the church.

Support for David's leadership grew over time and came from a variety of sources. Some followed him immediately after he was banished from Saul's presence. These capable warriors could fight with both bow and sling and were from Saul's own tribe. They joined him at Ziklag, a town located in the Negev region of Judah.

Another group from the land of Gad joined David prior to his sojourn at Ziklag. When David was hiding from Saul in the wilderness, this group of fierce

warriors went to great lengths to join him there, fording the Jordan when it was at its highest. Others from Benjamin (Saul's tribe) and Judah (David's tribe) also joined him there. David accepted them with a word of warning that prompted one of his mighty men to speak prophetically (v. 18). Amasai not only pledged full loyalty to David but also predicted that he would be successful because of God's help. There were also latecomers who defected to David late in Saul's reign. These men from the tribe of Manasseh probably came because they saw the handwriting on the wall. Saul's time was running out. They threw in their lot with David once they realized his kingship was inevitable.

This chapter closes by describing David's coronation in Hebron in idyllic terms. People came from far and wide to celebrate. Food and joy were in full supply. God's people were united behind their new king.

APPLY THE WORD

Even with God's help, the path to unity was not easy for David. The same is true for us. Is there a conflict in your life today that threatens the unity of the church? What steps do you need to take to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3)? It may be as simple as a note or phone call.

PRAY WITH US

Would you uphold in prayer Moody's board of trustees today? Ask God to encourage them by His Word and strengthen them by His Spirit as they serve Moody with their experience, time, and resources.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies and *Open Line* Host

Q The Scriptures teach that the Messiah will be the Prince of Peace, but Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). **How can Jesus be called the Prince of Peace and promise that His coming will result in war?**

A There are several elements to understanding this unexpected passage. To begin, the Lord Jesus knew that His words would be viewed as controversial. Second, the word *sword* is figurative, not literal. The Lord was not saying He would bring war; rather, He would bring division. Third, the context is about family relations, not different nations. Faith in Jesus as the Messiah would bring division to families: “For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother” (Matt. 10:35).

Finally, this passage is predictive, not prescriptive. It foresees that faith in Jesus will divide families but does not demand that it do so. For example, my own faith in Jesus caused my father to disown me despite my desire to maintain our relationship. But I could not restore a relationship with him without giving up my faith in Jesus. Jesus called me to love Him even more than my own father (Matt. 10:37).

Q Why did Jesus curse a fig tree for not having fruit when it was not even the season for figs (Mark 11:12–25)? This seems selfish and vindictive.

A The answer to this surprising action is found in the horticultural background of fig trees in the land of Israel. Typically, the fruit on a fig tree precedes the leaves. The passage says that the tree was in leaf, so it would have been natural to find unripe fruit on it. These figs would not be as flavorful as ripe figs but they were still edible. By having leaves with no fruit, the tree demonstrated that it was barren. So it was entirely appropriate for it to wither at Jesus’ command since it would never bear fruit.

But there was an additional purpose to be derived from this cursing of the fig tree. Immediately after the Lord Jesus cursed the fig tree, He went to the temple and cast out the money changers for their hypocrisy. The fig tree represented the danger of religious hypocrisy. To show off great religiosity (to be in leaf) without the genuine fruit of faith will lead to condemnation. It was not selfish and vindictive to curse the fig tree. The Lord Jesus was removing a barren, worthless tree and giving a valuable lesson to His followers about religious hypocrisy at the same time.

Jesus the Messiah would respond to humble faith from anyone, Jewish or Gentile.

Q **Wasn't the Lord Jesus supposed to be the perfect model of love? Why did He call the Canaanite woman a dog (Matt. 15:21–28)?**

A At first glance, it does seem rude to compare this woman to a dog. But Jesus' words actually are gentle. He used the word *kunarium*, which means "puppy, house pet," not the word *kuon* for "wild, pack dogs." Moreover, Jesus was expressing God's divine priority, not bigotry. As the Messiah of Israel, He needed to minister to the Jewish people first. Finally, the woman did not take offense but rather accepted God's divine priority. In the end, the Lord Jesus commended her faith and healed her daughter, showing that the Messiah would respond to humble faith from anyone, Jewish or Gentile.

Q **What year was Jesus born? According to Matthew, Jesus was born before Herod the Great died (4 B.C., cf. Matt. 2:1–23) and according to Luke, He was born when Quirinius was governor of Syria, a position Quirinius took up around A.D. 6–7 (see Luke 2:2).**

A Matthew makes it clear that the Lord Jesus was born while Herod ruled. He died in 4 B.C., so most Bible students surmise that

the Lord Jesus was born a year or two earlier, sometime between 6 B.C. and early 4 B.C. Matthew and Luke both place the birth of the Lord Jesus near the end of the reign of Herod. So the Lord Jesus was born somewhere between 6 and 4 B.C.

Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, records that Quirinius became governor after the Romans removed Herod's son, Archelaus, as king in A.D. 6, and he carried out a census (or registration) of his entire domain early in his governorship (see Luke 2:1–3). On the surface this appears to contradict Matthew's account. A good explanation is to translate Luke 2:2 in a slightly different way. The key word is *proton*, translated "first," as in "This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria." When this word is used adverbially, it can mean "before." That's the way it was used in John 15:18, when the Lord Jesus said that the world "hated me first." Luke's point was that the Lord Jesus was born during a census, requiring Joseph and Mary to travel to their familial town; but this census is not to be confused with the more well known census conducted ten years later by Quirinius. Luke's desire to be precise (see Luke 1:3–4) caused him to differentiate the census at the birth of Jesus from the later one.

SATURDAY
JULY

15

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:31

Holy Is the Lord

Sixty years ago people often dressed for church in their “Sunday best.” Men wore a jacket and tie or a suit. Women wore a dress and sometimes gloves and a hat. Today in most churches casual dress is the norm. Does this say anything about our view of what it means to come into the presence of God?

David learned a hard lesson about God’s holiness when he determined to move the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem. David’s initial attempt to move the ark ended in tragedy when Uzzah was struck down for touching it. The judgment may seem harsh, but those who transported the ark failed to obey the regulations outlined in Scripture (Ex. 25:12–15; Num. 4:5–15). Because the ark represented God’s presence, it had to be treated as a sacred object.

“The fate of Uzzah is a fearful warning against over-familiarity with God,”

commentator Michael Wilcock says. “His attitude toward the thing should have been as reverent as his attitude toward the person.” Reverence for God is important—it is the focus of the first petition in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:9). God can be our friend, but He is not a buddy.

Uzzah’s tragic death was intended to make an important point. God’s holiness is not to be trifled with. Similar to other instances of divine judgment, like the destruction of Achan’s household or the death of Ananias and Sapphira, it drove home a forceful truth to the whole community (see Joshua 7; Acts 5:1–11). God’s aim was not to drive His people away. This is evident from the subsequent blessing that came upon Obed-Edom the Gittite when the ark remained with him for the next three months. If Uzzah’s death was a warning, Obed-Edom’s blessing was an invitation.

APPLY THE WORD

True holiness is not a matter of wearing a suit or a tie but of being “clothed” with righteousness. This is only possible if we clothe ourselves with the righteousness of Christ. Hebrews 10:19 tells us that we can come into God’s presence with confidence if we draw near “by the blood of Jesus.” Have you drawn near? You can do so now by faith.

PRAY WITH US

Pray for Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, and his teams in the Operations division on Moody’s Chicago campus. Please also pray for the Lord’s guidance and wisdom in Steven’s numerous leadership responsibilities.

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Matthew 6:33

SUNDAY
JULY

16

Success and the Will of God

One challenge facing the American colonies after they declared independence from England was establishing the commercial viability of the fledgling nation. John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and second president of the United States, went to Amsterdam to obtain a loan so the new country could pay its war debts. He found that the bankers were reluctant to grant the loan until the Dutch parliament formally recognized the United States as a country.

In 1 Chronicles 14, the author highlights three indicators of David's success. First, David received support from Hiram, the king of Tyre. This Phoenician port city was an important center for shipping. By supplying cedar logs and craftsmen to build David's palace, Hiram was doing more than engaging in a business transaction. He was acknowledging the legitimacy of David's rule.

Second, the expansion of David's family was evidence of David's growing prosperity. Even the opposition of the Philistines gave David a kind of legitimacy, since it meant that they viewed him as a viable threat. The fact that the Lord answered when David inquired of Him is the third proof that God was behind his rise to power. David's predecessor Saul knew that God had removed His hand of blessing from him when he inquired of God "but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets" (1 Sam. 28:6).

The mode of David's victory in verses 13 through 16 was proof of divine support as much as the victory itself. The advance of David's men was masked by the sound of wind in the tops of the Balsam trees. Not only did God give David the plan, He enlisted the support of creation itself in David's cause.

APPLY THE WORD

Most people believe the secret to success is a combination of optimism and persistence mixed with a dash of luck. Surely anyone can succeed if they try hard enough! But God was the key to David's success. Are you hoping for success today? Then seek God first. He will show you what true success looks like.

PRAY WITH US

Our Donor Resource Management staff process donor receipts and provide research and analysis of our friends' financial support of Moody's ministries. Thank you for praying today for DRM's Amelia Mendez, David Kocourek, Kyella Gilliam, and Patricia Fletcher.

MONDAY
JULY

17

Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the LORD's house.

Isaiah 52:11

Sacred and Profane

Arvo Pärt is a modern composer whose choral works include “I Am the True Vine” and “The Woman with the Alabaster Box.” In a review in *The Guardian*, Tom Service said the success of Pärt’s work was due to more than style and the use of familiar chords: “Pärt told me that what he wants his music to express is ‘love for every note’, and in turn, communicate the spiritual power that he sees as music’s essential purpose. Pärt is too modest to say that he has achieved that, but for the listeners who love his music, it’s an irrefutable truth.” The success of Pärt’s work reflects a hunger for the sacred in a world that too often delights mostly in the profane.

David learned the difference between the sacred and the profane the hard way when his first attempt to move the ark to Jerusalem ended in tragedy (see

July 15). But David learned his lesson. On his second try David made certain that biblical guidelines for transporting the ark were followed (v. 2). No one but the Levites would be permitted to touch the ark. David also explained why their first effort had failed so badly: “It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way” (v. 13).

The church’s worship is not subject to the same restrictions associated with the ark of the covenant. But this does not mean that we should ignore the difference between sacred and secular. In our case this difference is reflected in lifestyle. Those who belong to Christ should stand out because their lives are marked by holiness.

APPLY THE WORD

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, the apostle Paul urges us to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” Ask the Lord to examine you and convict you where your life is profane and encourage you where it is sacred and bringing glory to Him.

PRAY WITH US

Please add to your prayer list the rest of the Donor Research Management team: Ruth Velaer-Wheeler, Samuel Slennett, Sean Wiedenfeld, and Sharon Cluff. Thank God in prayer for their hard work, diligence, and team spirit.

Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

1 Corinthians 14:40

TUESDAY
JULY

18

Organization and Worship

Styles of church worship often fall along a continuum between “high church,” which is formal and prescribed, and “low church,” which tends to be more free form. The terms describe differences in worship practice such as the use of liturgy or the kind of clothing worn by those who lead worship.

The style of worship described in today’s passage is closer to high-church worship, revolving around prescribed sacrifices, ceremonies, and festivals. It is not surprising that prior to bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David had to make arrangements for its placement. Its arrival in its new home was accompanied by burnt offerings and fellowship offerings (v. 2). Burnt offerings were offered by the priest alone and entirely consumed by fire on the altar. Fellowship offerings involved a shared meal between the offerer and the priest. Burnt offerings were a reminder of the worshiper’s need

to be cleansed from sin. Fellowship offerings (sometimes called a peace offerings) were a voluntary expression of thanksgiving that pointed to the need for a restored relationship with God.

This installation ceremony also included a psalm of thanksgiving led by Asaph, a composite drawn from Psalms 105, 96, and 106 (vv. 8–36). Once the ark was in place, David made arrangements for its regular ministry. He assigned this responsibility to Asaph, Obed-Edom, and their associates (vv. 37–38).

The specifics of the church’s worship are not as prescribed as the worship we read about in the Law of Moses. Yet congregational worship, whether it is high church or low church, does require organization. In 1 Corinthians 14:40 the apostle Paul directs that when God’s people come together as church “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

APPLY THE WORD

What does your church do to see that its worship is carried out in a fitting and orderly way? The next time your church meets for worship, take note of all the elements that require planning and organization. Consider asking your pastor or worship leader how you might use your gifts in worship, whether through assisting, praying, or contributing.

PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers vice president Anthony Turner and his team at Student Enrollment Services. Ask the Lord to help them in all the detail-oriented work they do reviewing and analyzing applications, and thank Him for bringing godly students to Moody.

WEDNESDAY
JULY

19

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

The Promise Keeper

In “The Puppy Song” Harry Nilson sings, “Dreams are nothing more than wishes / And a wish is just a dream / You wish to come true.” Some people view the promises found in the Bible this way—merely something that they hope will happen. Perhaps they feel that God’s promises have failed them, or they have mistaken their own wish for God’s promise.

God’s prophet Nathan initially mistook David’s personal desire for the will of God. The king wanted to honor God by building a temple. Nathan made a snap judgment, based perhaps on David’s past track record of success. Why shouldn’t God be with him in this initiative? The Lord had other plans and corrected the prophet’s thinking that night. The Lord had not asked anyone to build Him a temple (vv. 4–6).

Instead, God promised that He would build a house for David. The details of

this promise reveal that this was not a literal house or building but a dynasty. Moreover, the Lord promised further to establish the kingdom of one of David’s sons: “He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever” (v. 12). While Solomon was the one who built the temple David had envisioned, God’s promise went far beyond anything David imagined. The eternal nature of the kingdom described in these verses indicates that this is a messianic promise, which would be ultimately fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Instead of being embittered by the fact that God had changed his plans, David responded with humility and gratefulness. He closed his prayer of thanksgiving with an affirmation of God’s promise (vv. 23–27). The word *Amen* means “so be it.” David essentially concluded his prayer with a long Amen!

APPLY THE WORD

How can we trust a promise? It depends upon who makes the promise. If the promise comes from God, then it is more than a wish and stronger than a hope. If the promise comes from God, it is a certainty. You can explore God’s promises by reading a book such as *199 Promises of God* (Barbour), available to order online or from your local bookstore.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for Mollie Bond and Amyra Rodriguez in Foundations and Corporate Relations who reach out to various organizations and ministries through grant proposals. May the Lord’s hand be on everything they say and write on behalf of Moody.

*The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but
victory rests with the LORD.*

Proverbs 21:31

THURSDAY
JULY

20

Victory Belongs to the Lord

The God of the Bible is a God of peace. One of the nation of Israel's promised blessings was the promise of peace—not an emotional state but a political circumstance (Lev. 26:6). This meant it was necessary to defeat Israel's enemies (cf. Ex. 23:27).

David's military success was partial fulfillment of God's promise of peace. Victory was a necessary corollary to the promise to settle Israel in the land. This reflected God's sovereign authority. Not only do all nations on earth ultimately derive their origin from Adam, but God also "marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" (Acts 17:26).

But Israel's promise of peace was not automatic. By failing to listen to God and refusing to keep His covenant, Israel forfeited the peace that had been promised to them. In that event the Lord

warned: "I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you" (Lev. 26:17). God was not offering to act as Israel's secret weapon. Their promise of victory was not an unconditional promise—obedience was also required.

Jesus also came with a promise of peace. He is the promised Messiah sent to "guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:79). At His first coming He reconciled us to God "by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20). At His second coming His peace will extend even further. Jesus will come again as the one who is called Faithful and True: "With justice he judges and wages war" (Rev. 19:11). In God's war against sin and injustice Jesus will be the ultimate victor.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you want to experience the peace of God? The only way to find it is through Jesus Christ: "My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. . . . In me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 14:27; 16:33).

PRAY WITH US

Good stewardship of our resources, time, money, even our lives, is a calling of every Christian. Our Stewardship department headed by vice president Jim Elliott exemplifies this calling at Moody. It's our privilege to pray today for Jim and his team.

FRIDAY
JULY

21

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Matthew 5:11

Adding Injury to Insult

American frontiersman and congressman Davy Crockett was attending an exhibition in Washington. Pointing to one of the monkeys on display, he noted that it resembled a particular member of Congress. When he turned around, Crockett realized that the man he had just described had been standing behind him. “I suppose I ought to apologize,” Crockett said, “but I don’t know whether to apologize to you or the monkey.”

In today’s passage Hanun’s insult amounted to an act of war. Since Hanun’s father Nahash had supported David, he sent a delegation to express sympathy when he learned of Nahash’s death. The presence of David’s envoys amounted to a request to continue the peaceful relationship he had enjoyed when Nahash ruled. Instead, Hanun’s nobles accused David’s emissaries of being spies. They seized David’s men and sent them back in shame (v. 4). By

treating David’s men in this way Hanun and his nobles also insulted David.

The same is true for us when we are insulted because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus told His disciples: “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). As a result, Jesus also tells us to rejoice when we are insulted and slandered because we belong to Christ (Matt. 5:11–12). We are blessed when we are insulted for Jesus’ sake.

We should also note the reason for rejoicing. It is not because we enjoy insult and rejection. Who does? Rather, we rejoice because of what it implies about us. As 1 Peter 4:14 explains: “If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” Insult and rejection because of Jesus means there is evidence of Christ in our lives.

APPLY THE WORD

Jesus’ command to rejoice does not give us license to be callous when someone says something unpleasant about us. Some criticism is deserved! Have you received criticism from someone? Ask God to help you discern where the grain of truth lies in the complaint. Then ask for His grace to deal with it.

PRAY WITH US

As our chief marketing officer, Samuel Choy brings experience, passion, and energy to heading Moody’s marketing initiatives. He will appreciate your prayers today for his teams’ efforts to expand the outreach of Moody Global Ministries.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

Victory in the Midst of Defeat

Oliver Cromwell once told a painter commissioned to do his portrait: “I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts and everything as you see me, otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it.” Similarly, the Bible does not airbrush its heroes but rather depicts them “warts and all.”

With this in mind, notice what the Chronicler does not mention in today’s chapter. The opening statement of verse 1 will be familiar to anyone who knows the story of David, as it surely would have been to the writer’s original audience: “In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, Joab led out the armed forces.” This is how 2 Samuel 11 begins the account of David’s sin with Bathsheba. But instead of describing David’s fall, the Chronicles account

speaks of Joab’s victories over the Ammonites and Philistines. The reason has to do with the writer’s purpose in this section. The fact that the next chapter describes David’s “great sin” of numbering the people is proof that the author is not trying to whitewash David’s record. The focus of this section is on David’s military victories.

The fact that David experienced so much military success at what was arguably the lowest point in his spiritual life should sober us. Success and prosperity are not proof of God’s acceptance or of our spiritual health. Success can make us arrogant. In our prosperity we can be less aware of our need for God. Is it possible that David misinterpreted God’s blessing? Did he come to believe that he could do no wrong?

APPLY THE WORD

David’s experience of victory in the midst of spiritual defeat should encourage us. God does not abandon us, even when we fail Him: “If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:20). Even at our lowest, God continues to care for us and provide for our needs.

PRAY WITH US

Please keep our Integrated Marketing Communications staff in your prayers as they help all our ministries create and print their marketing materials. Today, please pray for Julia Baad, Katherine Madonna, Kevin Mungons, Larry Bohlin, and Linda Piepenbrink.

SUNDAY
JULY

23

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

Pride Goes Before Destruction

Many banks and investment companies have a feature on their websites that provide a 360-degree snapshot of all your assets and liabilities. Subtract your liabilities from your assets and the resulting figure is your net worth.

David's census of Israel seems to have had a similar intent. This was probably David's attempt to calculate all the military resources at his disposal (v. 3). A census was not absolutely forbidden in Scripture. The Law of Moses prescribed that a ransom be paid to the Lord for each person counted (Ex. 30:12). The nature of David's sin in this instance is not entirely clear. Did he count the people without collecting the required ransom? Or was it something else?

Certainly spiritual forces were in play as well. According to verse 1, Satan was the one who incited David to take this action. Interestingly, the account of this incident in 2 Samuel 24:1 says that the

Lord was angry with Israel and "incited David against them." God and Satan had different agendas. Satan's intent was destruction. God's aim was divine discipline.

As a result of his rash action, David was asked to make a terrible choice, and his decision led to a plague in which seventy thousand men died (vv. 12–14). If it had not been for God's own merciful intervention, the plague would have destroyed Jerusalem.

The sight of the angel of the Lord positioned between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword extended over Jerusalem, prompted David to intercede for Israel and the plague was halted (v. 16). In a mysterious conjunction of judgment and mercy, the spot where the destroying angel ceased his terrible work also became the location of the temple David's son Solomon would build.

APPLY THE WORD

Having been forgiven through Christ we are "being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). You may be living with the consequences of your own sinful choices or those of someone else. Consecrate those circumstances to God. He will build upon the ruins.

PRAY WITH US

Please continue to give prayer support to the IMC staff: Cheyenne Lehto, Elena Mafter, Jamie Janosz, Anneliese Rider, and Rhonda AuYeung. May their service at Moody lead to their spiritual growth and may it be a blessing to Moody's donors.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it.

1 Corinthians 3:10

A Wise Builder

Novelist Rex Stout built a fourteen-room house in Danbury, Conn., and invited famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright to see it. After touring the house Wright said: “A superb spot. Someone should build a house here.”

In 1 Chronicles 22 the Chronicler describes the great lengths that David and his son Solomon went to in order to prepare for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. The planning began with David, who had originally envisioned the project. He made “extensive preparations before his death” (v. 5). First, he prepared his son Solomon for the task. This included communicating the vision for the project (vv. 6–10), praying for Solomon (vv. 11–12), and advising him (v. 13).

Second, he collected the needed funds, gathered materials, and mobilized those who would actually carry out this work

(vv. 14–19). The materials described in verses 14 through 16 are an indication of how large an undertaking this was. It was not enough, however, to have funds, materials, and skilled craftsmen. Their most important step was to prepare their hearts by devoting themselves to seeking the Lord.

If you have been joined to Christ, then you are part of an even greater building project. This too is a temple, but it is one made of “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5). As a part of God’s building project, we are being made into a dwelling place for God, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we also take part in construction. As each member of the body of Christ exercises spiritual gifts, the church is strengthened. Like David and Solomon we too must be careful how we build. We too must devote heart and soul to seeking the Lord our God.

APPLY THE WORD

Have you asked God to show you where you fit into His building project? One way to do this is to find where you experience the most joy in serving Christ. Ask God to help you discover what you were made for! If you already know, ask your pastor where your interests and abilities might fit in the church’s ministry.

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion to our prayers for the IMC team, please mention Lynn Gabalec, Rachel Hutcheson, and Nikita Cunigan, as well as Brian Regnerus and Ava Roller from Public Relations. Pray for good teamwork, creativity, and inspiration for their work.

TUESDAY
JULY

25

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Romans 12:6

One Mission, Many Ministers

In his book *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, Eugene Peterson recounts the story of the fourth-century church father Gregory of Nyssa whose brother Basil had arranged for him to be made bishop of Cappadocia. “Gregory objected,” Peterson writes. “He didn’t want to be stuck in such an out-of-the-way place. His brother told him he didn’t want Gregory to obtain distinction from his church but to confer distinction upon it.” Finding our place in God’s building project can be a challenge because we do not always share God’s view of what our assignment should be.

David’s concern as he neared the end of his reign involved much more than gathering materials for the construction of the temple. He also took steps to organize temple worship and hand the reigns of leadership over to his son. First Chronicles 23 focuses on the Levites who were organized by family. Although technically descended from

Levi, Aaron’s sons were distinguished from the rest of the Levites because of the nature of the ministry assigned to them (v. 13). The nature of Levitical ministry changed with the construction of the temple. Instead of having the responsibility for the transport of the tabernacle, they assisted the priests in their duties (v. 28).

These arrangements reflect both a division of labor and a difference in rank. The Levites role was to serve the priests. They could not do what the priests could do, and the priests relied upon the Levites to fulfill their important task. Many of the tasks assigned to the Levites must have seemed mundane: putting the showbread on the table; baking, mixing, and measuring for the grain offerings; and often standing in place. One of the duties of the Levites was to thank and praise the Lord morning and evening.

APPLY THE WORD

The church has a multitude of those who serve. Not all have the same gifts but each gift comes from the same source: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11). And all are engaged in the same mission. Serve the Lord with your gifts with joy!

PRAY WITH US

Our Library provides services our students need to make the most of their education at Moody. Its staff—April Nelson, Ashley Smith, Blake Walter, James Preston—welcome your prayers as they provide print and online resources for use in the classroom.

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.

1 Corinthians 7:17

WEDNESDAY
JULY

26

Accepting God's Assignment

O. Henry's short story "The Gift of the Magi" describes how Della Young sold her luxurious hair to buy her husband Jim a platinum watch fob, and Jim sold the golden watch he had inherited from his father and grandfather to buy Della a set of expensive tortoise shell combs. Each gave up what was dear to them in order to provide a gift for the other.

As we'll see, the Levites were to use their gifts to serve God and others. But first, notice how our chapter today reads a little like an organizational chart! The first nineteen verses describe the "divisions of the descendants of Aaron" (v. 1). The order in which they entered the temple of the Lord had been assigned by God through Aaron (v. 19). The priests did not decide this for themselves—they were to submit to God.

Verses 20 through 24 list the rest of the descendants of Levi. Note that in verses 5 and 31 when the Levites were

assigned their positions by lot, it is not implying that this was a matter of chance. The determination of the lot was considered an indication of God's will (see Prov. 16:33). Ultimately the Levites, like the priests, were assigned their position by God.

We too receive assignments from God. We do not get to pick and choose our spiritual gifts from a menu. God selects them for us. The diversity of gifts that we see in the church is the work of the Spirit, who chooses how He will distribute the gifts within the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:11).

Our call is to use our gifts—and our lives—sacrificially to serve God and others, even being willing to give up our treasures to bless others. We are called to "live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them" (1 Cor. 7:17).

APPLY THE WORD

Many aspects of our lives are beyond our control, and they are a context in which we must show ourselves to be followers of Jesus Christ. If you are struggling with how God has ordered your life today, express thanks to Him for His wisdom and sovereign power. Ask for strength to face your circumstances.

PRAY WITH US

Again, please pray for the Library staff on Moody's Chicago campus: Christine Cherney, Christopher Ullman, Joy Houser, Kimberly Padrick, and Nicole Tochalauski. We praise God for the knowledge, diligence, and professionalism this team brings to their service.

THURSDAY
JULY
27

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:19

What Kind of Music Does God Prefer?

The term *worship wars* described the conflict many churches experienced with worship style. It might be more accurate to describe these disagreements as *music wars*, since they mainly had to do with musical style. The worship wars may have died down, but our differences remain. Some people prefer a contemporary style featuring a band and the latest songs. Others favor traditional hymns accompanied by organ or piano. But does God prefer a particular style of music?

If He does have a preference, the Bible does not say which style it is. What is clear from Scripture is that music has an important place in the church's worship. This is reflected in today's text, which lists those assigned to be musicians in temple worship. One curious feature of this passage is its statement that David made these assignments with the help of "the commanders of the army" (v. 1).

This probably does not mean military commanders but chief officers among the Levites. If this is an army, it is an army of musicians!

Another interesting feature of this passage is the connection between this ministry of music and prophecy (v. 3). We often don't think of music as a mode of prophecy. When the church sings and makes music from the heart to the Lord, however, it is an expression of its life in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). As the church worships through music, it proclaims the word of Christ in a diversity of forms through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16).

In other words, worship is not merely mood music. It is a mode of instruction. By it we speak to God and to ourselves at the same time. If this is true, then the message of the music is as important as the style.

APPLY THE WORD

We're unlikely to resonate with every style the church employs in its worship—but we can benefit from the message expressed in song. Pray for your church musicians and worship leaders as they select music for congregational worship. And if you don't appreciate the music, ask God to grant you the patience to listen to its message!

PRAY WITH US

Please uphold Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, in your prayers today, asking God to grant Dr. Nyquist insight and wisdom for the decisions he faces every day as a leader. Pray also for his special assistant for community relations, Roy Patterson.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Psalms 84:10

FRIDAY
JULY

28

Doorkeepers for God

Many churches have greeters at the entrance to make visitors and regular attenders feel welcome. They try to make sure that everyone who comes through the church's doors is met with a smile and a handshake.

The focus in our reading today is on the divisions of the gatekeepers. Their presence was more than cosmetic. They ensured that the temple and its precincts were secure. This chapter also lists other Levites who were placed "in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries for the dedicated things" (v. 20).

"The point of the passage is that David organized a well-guarded Temple with twenty-four guard-posts manned day and night," commentator John Sailhamer explains. "That need for security at the Temple is understandable, not only in light of the Temple building itself, but also in light

of the treasures stored in its treasury (26:27–28)."

The New Testament describes the church as a temple (1 Cor. 3:16–17; cf. Eph. 2:22). But its treasures are not made of gold and silver; rather, they are a matter of God's grace. As each individual member carries out his or her ministry, we act "as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). Stewardship is the work of a servant. Like those who stood at the temple gate or tended to the treasury, it is not in itself glorious work. No doubt it was tedious at times.

Psalms 84:10 may have the gatekeepers in mind: "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked." This one waits patiently outside the temple, hoping to be near God. The psalmist reminds us of the privilege of God's presence.

APPLY THE WORD

When you know Jesus as your Savior, Scripture says you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:17). Instead of drawing near to Him at the temple, His presence has come to us in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Because God has drawn near to us, we can approach Him boldly in prayer, with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22).

PRAY WITH US

Ann Meyer in Health Services is there for our students and employees when they need medical advice or assistance. Today, please commit to prayer her service at Moody's Chicago campus, asking God for strength and health as she helps others.

SATURDAY
JULY

29

The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Romans 13:1

God and Civil Government

In a sermon preached at New Covenant Baptist Church in Chicago in 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. urged: “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”

Every functioning community requires administration. Our text today provides us with a list of many of the officials who assisted David. Some were legal functionaries whose responsibility was to judge cases from the Law of Moses and who probably served outside Jerusalem (26:28–29). Others were made responsible for “every matter pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king” (26:32). They might have been responsible for the collection of tithes and taxes.

David’s administrative structure included military commanders, tribal leaders, those who oversaw his properties and storehouses, as well as counselors. David’s leadership was a spiritual matter, but it also had a civil dimension. Part of his shepherding responsibility was to tend to the government of his people.

Scripture teaches that civil government is a reflection of common grace. Civil government serves the common good. One of its benefits is protection. But this kind of administration comes with a cost. This is why paying our taxes is a Christian obligation. For this reason Paul admonishes us: “Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor” (Rom. 13:7).

APPLY THE WORD

In addition to paying taxes, you should also pray for our leaders: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1–2). Remember them in your prayers today.

PRAY WITH US

In July our Facilities staff repair and prepare the Moody campuses for the upcoming school year. During this busy time, please pray for Facilities division manager in Chicago, Bill Bielawski, and his team: Erik Hultquist, Jim Miedema, and Ryan Kristofek.

Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

James 4:15

SUNDAY
JULY

30

When God Changes Your Plans

Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed, “We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans.” This was the lesson that David learned when he initially had it in mind to build a temple for God.

If you have been paying attention, you probably noticed that this is the third time this story has been told. The first was in 1 Chronicles 17, which described David’s experience. The second occurrence is 1 Chronicles 22, where David recounts these events to his son Solomon. In today’s passage, David tells the story to “all the officials of Israel . . . the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with

the palace officials, the warriors and all the brave fighting men” (v. 1).

Since this is a story about how David misread God’s intent, you might think that the author would want to keep it under wraps. Why let everyone know that David was wrong? But there is much more to this story than David’s mistaken idea. Ultimately it is a story about God’s faithfulness. The Lord set aside David’s plan because He had a better plan of His own.

The reason David’s story is repeated in 1 Chronicles is not to highlight the king’s mistake but to underscore God’s promise and Solomon’s responsibility. The Chronicler does this to remind the returned exiles of their obligation to God. The covenant made with David included a condition that Solomon did not meet (vv. 7–9). The return of God’s people to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple were evidence of God’s grace.

APPLY THE WORD

This account of David’s charge to his son Solomon was more than a glance back at a greater time. It was a reminder of God’s enabling power. Does your church look back to a golden age when things seemed to be better? Instead of seeing it as a record of what you have lost, try to view it as measure of what God can do today.

PRAY WITH US

Would you support in prayer the service of Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications, and his teams at Moody Publishers? Ask the Lord for discernment and foresight in all operational, financial, and editorial decisions.

MONDAY
JULY

31

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

2 Corinthians 8:11

Finishing Well

While competing in the Olympic marathon in Mexico City in 1968, Tanzanian runner John Stephen Akhwari suffered an injury and finished last. By the time he finally crossed the finish line, the sun had set and many of the spectators had already left the stadium. When asked why he had continued, Akhwari replied, “My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race.”

The closing chapter of 1 Chronicles includes David’s challenge to God’s people to support Solomon in the completion of the temple: “The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God” (v. 1). The response of the assembled leaders is reminiscent of the reaction of God’s people to Moses’ call to contribute for the construction of the tabernacle: “Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought

an offering to the LORD for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments” (Ex. 35:21). As the people consecrated themselves to God for the work, David dedicated the project and consecrated his son Solomon in prayer. David’s prayer is marked by humility and the recognition that success comes from the Lord (v. 12).

David correctly recognizes that success is a result of the grace of God. This project had begun with careful preparation and an impressive willingness to see it through, yet David also asked God to “keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you” (v. 18).

This is a fitting conclusion to our study of 1 Chronicles. We have seen that this book is more than a list of names. It is a record of God’s continuing faithfulness to His people.

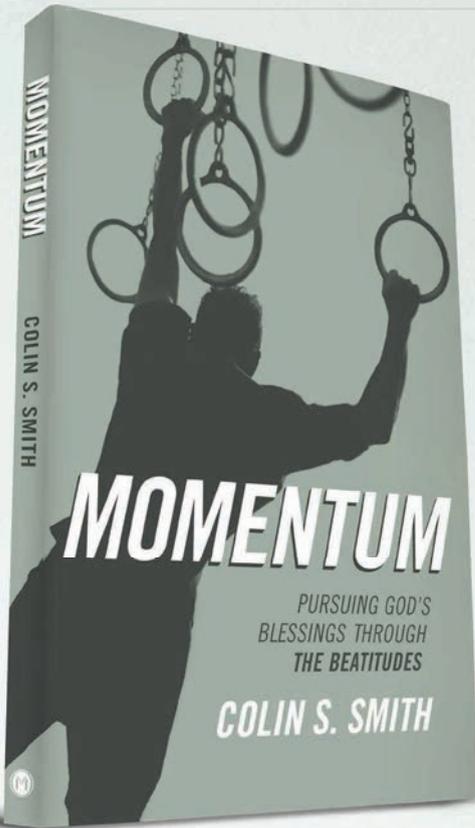
APPLY THE WORD

We make plans and expend effort but it is really God who accomplishes the work. How can you be sure that you will follow through in your commitment to Jesus Christ? The answer: You need to depend on God’s Spirit. The one who called you will also keep you. God will enable you to finish well.

PRAY WITH US

Concluding our studies of the book of 1 Chronicles, let’s take time to reflect on what God taught us about ancient Israel—and about us—this month. Let us thank Him in prayer for holding our lives in His hands and ordering our steps as we walk with Him.

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