THE BOOK OF 1 CHRONICLES

# The King Who Knows Your Name

*1 Chronicles, Unfiltered*

*For teens who think they've heard it all*

**BILL McLEOD**

*Papa Bill Books*

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR TEENS

The King Who Knows Your Name: The Book of 1 Chronicles, Unfiltered

Part of The Old Testament for Teens series.

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In the author's own text, pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence. Scripture quotations follow the WEB Protestant Edition exactly, including its capitalization.

**AI Disclosure.** This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

# Before You Start

You know the saying by now: “If you want to get something done, hire a teenager while they still know it all.” If you’ve read 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, you might open 1 Chronicles and think, wait, didn’t I just read this? And then you hit nine chapters of names, and you start to wonder whether anyone has ever actually read them.

Here’s the secret that makes Chronicles make sense. It isn’t a rerun. Samuel and Kings were written to explain how God’s people lost everything. Chronicles was written later, after the exile in Babylon was over, for people who had come home to a ruined city and a tiny, struggling community. They were asking two huge questions: Do we still belong to God? Are His promises still alive?

1 Chronicles answers yes. It tells the story of David again, but from a different angle, focusing on what God was building through him: a family line that would last forever and a place where God’s people could worship Him. It was written to give hope to discouraged people. It still does.

Let’s go.

## How This Book Works

This book walks through 1 Chronicles in seven chapters: the family tree from Adam to the return from exile (1 Chronicles 1–9), Saul’s fall and David uniting all Israel (10–12), bringing the ark to Jerusalem (13–15), David’s song of thanks and the singers and

gatekeepers (16, 23–27), God's covenant with David (17–20), the census and the threshing floor (21), and David passing the baton to Solomon (22, 28–29).

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains what kind of book 1 Chronicles is, when it was written, and why it tells the story differently from Samuel and Kings. Read it first. It's the key to the whole book.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain modern translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (Scripture is quoted exactly as the WEB prints it; in the rest of the book, pronouns for God are capitalized out of reverence); Real Talk questions to think through alone or argue about with friends; and a Try This challenge.

On questions where sincere Christians disagree, such as how to understand the prayer of Jabez, and how to put together 1 Chronicles 21, which says Satan moved David to take a census, with 2 Samuel 24, which says the LORD did, I'll lay out the main views fairly and leave the decision to you, your family, and your church. This book quotes 1 Chronicles in places and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

# A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. It's the thirteenth book in The Old Testament for Teens, a companion to the New Testament for Teens series, written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, with some humor, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

1 Chronicles is one of the least-read books of the Bible, partly because it opens with nine chapters of genealogies and partly because so much of it overlaps with Samuel and Kings. This book explains from the start that Chronicles was written after the exile to encourage a struggling community, and it reads every part of the book through that lens. Rather than listing names, the first chapter explains why the genealogies mattered to their first readers and highlights some surprising people in them, including women and foreigners.

A balanced box on the prayer of Jabez (4:9–10) affirms that it is a good thing to ask God for blessing while cautioning against treating the prayer as a formula for prosperity. The book explains fairly why Chronicles leaves out David's sin with Bathsheba and Absalom's rebellion, and it briefly presents the main views on how 1 Chronicles 21:1 relates to 2 Samuel 24:1. Real Talk boxes address belonging, worship, quiet faithfulness, courage, and generosity.

The closing section, Where This Points, shows how the New Testament sees the promised Son of David and the temple fulfilled in Jesus, while acknowledging that Jewish readers treasure Chronicles in their own rich ways; in the Hebrew Bible, it is the very last book. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, in the chapters and in the Key Verses, the wording is from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain translation.

The Real Talk questions are designed for discussion. They work well for a youth group, a small group, a family dinner table, or a car ride. Don't rush to the right answer. Let them wrestle. Faith that has been thought through tends to last.

My prayer is that every reader will finish 1 Chronicles knowing that God remembers their name and that His promises are still alive.

*Grace and peace,*

**Bill McLeod**

*Papa Bill Books*

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

# Setting the Scene

## Not a Rerun

Chronicles covers some of the same history as Samuel and Kings, and sometimes it copies them almost word for word. But it was written for a different audience with a different purpose. Samuel and Kings were finished during the exile and answer the question, why did we lose everything? Chronicles was written after the exile and answers the question, now that we're back, who are we, and does God still care about us? Think of it like two documentaries about the same events: one investigates what went wrong, and the other reminds a discouraged team who they are and what they're playing for.

## When It Was Written

In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried most of the people of Judah into exile. About fifty years later, in 539 BC, Cyrus king of Persia conquered Babylon and allowed the exiles to go home and rebuild the temple. Many stayed in Babylon, but some returned. What they found was discouraging: ruined walls, a much smaller and plainer temple, no king from David's family on the throne, and powerful empires all around them. Chronicles was probably written sometime in the 400s or 300s BC, for these returning exiles and their children.

## Who Wrote It?

The book doesn't name its author. Jewish tradition says Ezra the priest wrote it, and the end of 2 Chronicles is almost identical to the beginning of the book of Ezra. Many scholars today speak more generally of the Chronicler, a writer, probably a Levite or priest, who cared deeply about the temple and its worship. He used Samuel and Kings as sources and mentions many others, including the records of prophets. Christians with different views agree that it is God's Word.

## What the Chronicler Cares About

Three themes run through the whole book. First, all Israel: the Chronicler keeps reminding readers that all twelve tribes belong to God's people, even after the northern kingdom was scattered. Second, David's family: God's promise to David of a forever King is still alive, even though no king sits on the throne. Third, the temple and worship: the heart of Israel's life is not its army or its politics but its worship of God, with singers, musicians, priests, and gatekeepers all playing their part.

## Last in Line

In English Bibles, 1 and 2 Chronicles come right after Kings. In the Hebrew Bible, the books are arranged differently, and Chronicles comes last of all. That means the Hebrew Scriptures begin with Adam in Genesis and end with Cyrus's decree in 2 Chronicles, inviting God's people to go up and rebuild. It's an ending that looks forward, waiting for something more.

## The Map

Chapter 1 (1 Chronicles 1–9): The family tree.

Chapter 2 (1 Chronicles 10–12): All Israel.

Chapter 3 (1 Chronicles 13–15): The ark comes home.

Chapter 4 (1 Chronicles 16, 23–27): Singers and gatekeepers.

Chapter 5 (1 Chronicles 17–20): A house forever.

Chapter 6 (1 Chronicles 21): The threshing floor.

Chapter 7 (1 Chronicles 22, 28–29): Passing the baton.

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CHAPTER 1

# The Family Tree

*1 Chronicles 1–9*

Most people who try to read the Bible from cover to cover hit 1 Chronicles and stall. The book opens like this: "Adam, Seth, Enosh," and keeps going. Nine chapters. Hundreds of names. Some of them appear nowhere else in the Bible. It's tempting to skip straight to chapter 10.

But imagine you're one of the first people to read this book. Your grandparents were dragged to Babylon as prisoners. You grew up hearing stories about Jerusalem, the temple, and the kings of David's family, but all of that was gone. Now you're back in the land, living in a small, poor community among the ruins. The temple you've rebuilt is a shadow of Solomon's. There's no king. Powerful empires rule over you. And you can't help wondering: Are we still God's people? Did the exile cancel everything? Do we still belong?

Then someone hands you a scroll, and it starts with Adam.

> BACKGROUND CHECK **Why Genealogies Mattered**
>
> In the ancient world, a genealogy wasn't a boring list. It was your identity. It told you who you were, where you came from, what land your family owned, and what role you could play in the community. After the exile, this was very practical. The book of Ezra says some returning families who couldn't find their names in the family records weren't allowed to serve as priests. Genealogies were also a way of saying that the story hadn't been broken. The

> line ran unbroken from the very first human being all the way to the people reading the scroll. The message was clear: you are connected to everything God has been doing since the beginning.

The family tree begins with the whole human race. Adam, then the generations to Noah, then the sons of Noah and the nations that came from them, including Israel's neighbors and enemies. Then it narrows down to Abraham: "The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael." Then to Isaac's sons, "Esau and Israel." Even Esau's descendants, the Edomites, get a long list.

Why include all those other nations? Because the Chronicler wants his readers to remember that Israel's story is part of a bigger story. God chose Abraham's family for the sake of the whole world. Israel doesn't exist just for itself.

Then the lists slow down and focus on the twelve sons of Israel, the tribes. Judah comes first and gets the most space, because Judah is the tribe of David, and David's line is the heart of the book. Chapter 3 lists David's sons, then the kings of Judah, generation by generation, right up through the exile. And then it keeps going past the exile: "The sons of Jeconiah, the captive: Shealtiel his son," and on to Zerubbabel, who led the first exiles home, and his descendants after him.

That's a quiet but powerful message. The royal family of David survived the exile. The lamp was still burning. For readers with no king on the throne, this list said: God hasn't forgotten His promise.

After Judah come the other tribes, including the tribes of the northern kingdom that had been scattered by Assyria. The Chronicler includes them all. Chapter 6 lists the Levites and priests in detail, including "they whom David set over the service of song in

the LORD's house." Chapter 9 lists the people who returned and settled in Jerusalem after the exile. "So all Israel were listed by genealogies." Then it says honestly why they had to come back in the first place: "Judah was carried away captive to Babylon for their disobedience."

From Adam to the returned exiles, the whole story is there. The Chronicler is telling his readers: you're not an afterthought. You're the next line in the list.

> **REAL TALK** **Do I Belong?**
>
> Lots of people wonder whether they really belong. Maybe you've felt like an outsider at school, in your family, at church, or with your friends. Maybe you've wondered whether God really knows who you are. The genealogies of Chronicles are one long answer to that question. God remembers names. Hundreds of them, people most of us have never heard of, people who did nothing famous. Every one of them mattered enough to be written down. If you're in Christ, you're part of a family that God has been building since the beginning, and He knows your name. And if you're struggling with feeling alone or like you don't matter, please talk to a trusted adult. You matter more than you know.

If you read the lists slowly, you'll find surprising people tucked in among the names, including women and outsiders. Tamar, the Canaanite woman who was wronged by Judah, is named as the mother of Perez, an ancestor of David. Judah's first wife is called "Shua's daughter the Canaanitess." David's sisters, Zeruiah and Abigail, are listed, and Abigail's husband is "Jether the Ishmaelite." A man named Sheshan has no sons, only daughters, so he gives his daughter in marriage to "Jarha," his Egyptian servant, and their son continues the family line. In the tribe of Ephraim, there's a woman named Sheerah, "who built Beth Horon the lower and the upper."

She was a builder of cities. And David's wife Bathsheba appears too, as the mother of Solomon.

These names show that God's family was never as neat as people might think. It included Canaanites, Ishmaelites, Egyptians, and women whose stories mattered. Matthew does the same thing in his genealogy of Jesus, naming Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and "her who had been Uriah's wife."

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Spotting the Stories**
>
> The genealogies sometimes pause for a short story. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, lost his birthright because of his sin, and it went to Joseph's sons, though leadership came through Judah. Er, Judah's firstborn, "was wicked in the LORD's sight." The tribes east of the Jordan won a battle "for they cried to God in the battle, and he answered them because they put their trust in him." These little notes are like highlights in a textbook. They show readers what the Chronicler cares about: faithfulness to God brings blessing, unfaithfulness brings loss, and God answers those who call on Him.

The most famous story in the genealogies is just two verses long. In the middle of the tribe of Judah, there's a man named Jabez. "Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him with sorrow.'" In Hebrew, the name Jabez sounds like the word for pain. Imagine being named Pain. Every time someone called you, they'd be reminding you that your birth hurt your mother.

But Jabez didn't let his name define him. "Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my border! May your hand be with me, and may you keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!' God granted him that which he requested."

Jabez asks for four things: blessing, more territory, God's presence, and protection from harm, so that he won't cause pain or experience it. The man whose name meant pain asked God to give him a different story, and God did.

**REAL TALK** **The Prayer of Jabez**

About twenty-five years ago, a small book about Jabez's prayer became a huge bestseller, and many people started praying it every day. Lots of Christians were encouraged by it. The prayer is in the Bible, and it's a good thing to ask God boldly to bless you, to give you opportunities, to be with you, and to protect you. Jesus taught us to ask. But other Christians have raised fair concerns about the way the prayer is sometimes used. It's not a magic formula. Repeating the right words doesn't force God to give you what you want, and the Bible never promises that God will make every believer rich or successful. Jesus said, "But seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness," and His followers often faced poverty and suffering. The best way to read Jabez is probably in context: a man with a painful start in life who honestly asked God for help, and whose story the Chronicler included to encourage struggling people that God hears those who call on Him. You can pray boldly like Jabez. Just remember you're talking to a Father, not operating a vending machine.

The prayer of Jabez fits perfectly with the purpose of Chronicles. Its first readers had a painful past. Their history included exile and loss. Jabez's story told them that a painful beginning doesn't have to be the end of the story. If they called on the God of Israel, He would hear them.

Chapter 9 ends by repeating Saul's family tree, which sets up the story that comes next. And it quietly mentions the gatekeepers, the Levites who stood guard at the doors of God's house, "in an office of trust," whose job was "to open it morning by morning." Hold on to that detail. It comes back later.

**KEY VERSE**

*Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my border! May your hand be with me, and may you keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" God granted him that which he requested.*

**1 Chronicles 4:10 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. If you were one of the first readers of Chronicles, how do you think these genealogies would have made you feel?
2. Why do you think the Chronicler included women, foreigners, and outsiders in Israel's family tree?
3. What's the difference between praying boldly and treating prayer like a magic formula?
4. Is there something painful in your past that you'd like God to give you a new story about?

**TRY THIS** *Ask an older relative about your family history. Then write a short prayer, like Jabez, asking God to write a good story through your life.*

CHAPTER 2

# All Israel

*1 Chronicles 10–12*

After nine chapters of names, the story finally begins. And it begins with a death.

Chapter 10 tells the story of Saul's last battle in just fourteen verses. The Philistines defeat Israel on Mount Gilboa. Saul's sons, including Jonathan, are killed. Saul is badly wounded, and he ends his own life. The Chronicler doesn't give us all the background that 1 Samuel does. He skips Saul's early years, his anointing, his jealousy of David, and his long pursuit of David in the wilderness. Instead, he goes straight to the end and tells us why it happened.

"So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the LORD's word, which he didn't keep, and also because he asked counsel of one who had a familiar spirit, to inquire, and didn't inquire of the LORD. Therefore he killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."

Notice the key word: inquire, or seek. Saul sought help from a medium instead of seeking God. The Chronicler uses this word, to seek God, again and again throughout his book. It's one of his favorite ideas. People who seek God find Him. People who don't, like Saul, lose everything.

**REAL TALK** **Where Do You Go for Answers?**

Saul's biggest failure, according to Chronicles, wasn't losing a battle. It was where he turned when he was desperate. When God seemed silent, he went to a medium instead of waiting on God. When we're anxious or scared, it's tempting to look for answers anywhere: horoscopes, online quizzes, influencers, whatever promises quick certainty. There's nothing wrong with getting good advice from wise people, doctors, and counselors. In fact, that's often how God helps us. But the Chronicler's point is that the first place to go is to God Himself. Seek Him first.

**SAFETY NOTE** **When Life Feels Hopeless**

Saul died by suicide after a crushing defeat. If you have ever felt so hopeless that you thought about ending your life, please know you are not alone and there is help. Talk to a trusted adult today. In the United States, you can call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time, day or night. In an emergency, call 911. Your life matters, and dark moments can pass.

The Chronicler's version of Saul's story is short, and that's part of the point. Saul was Israel's first king, tall, impressive, and chosen by God. He had every advantage. But the summary of his whole life comes down to one thing: he didn't seek the LORD. For the readers of Chronicles, that was a warning. They had seen kings rise and fall. They knew that what mattered most wasn't power, looks, or popularity. It was whether a person sought God. That's still true. A life can look impressive from the outside and still miss the one thing that matters most.

Then, in chapter 11, the scene shifts immediately. "Then all Israel gathered themselves to David to Hebron, saying, 'Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.'" They remind David that even when Saul was king, David was the one who led Israel in battle, and that God had said to him, you will be the shepherd of My people Israel. So

"They anointed David king over Israel, according to the LORD's word by Samuel."

If you've read 2 Samuel, you know that David's road to the throne was long and complicated. He reigned over Judah alone for seven years while Saul's son Ishbosheth ruled the other tribes, and there was a bitter civil war. Chronicles skips all that. Why? Not because the Chronicler wanted to hide it. His readers had the books of Samuel. He wanted to make a point: all Israel belongs together under the king God chose. For a community made up of the remnants of different tribes, that was an important message. You belong together.

Right away, David and "all Israel" go to Jerusalem, which was still a Canaanite fortress held by the Jebusites. The Jebusites taunt him, sure their city can't be taken. David announces that whoever leads the attack will become commander of the army. Joab goes up first and earns the job. David captures the city and makes it his capital, the City of David. And the writer sums it up: "David grew greater and greater, for the LORD of Armies was with him."

**BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Mighty Men**

1 Chronicles 11 includes a list of David's mighty men, his elite warriors, with short stories of their heroics. One killed three hundred men with his spear. One stood his ground in a barley field when everyone else ran. One went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. In one famous story, three of them broke through Philistine lines just to bring David a drink from the well at Bethlehem, his hometown, because he said he was thirsty for it. David was so moved by their loyalty that he refused to drink it and poured it out as an offering to the LORD, saying it was like the blood of the men who had risked their lives. This list also includes Uriah the Hittite, whose story Chronicles never tells but whose name it doesn't erase.

Think about how unusual this list is. Saul's own relatives from Benjamin, the tribe that had every reason to stay loyal to the old king, are among the first to switch sides. People came from the far north and from across the Jordan. Old rivalries between tribes, which had nearly torn Israel apart in the days of the judges, were set aside. The Chronicler wanted his readers to see that unity among God's people is possible, even after years of division. For a small community that included people whose families had been on opposite sides of old conflicts, that was a hopeful picture. It still is. Churches, families, and friend groups split over all kinds of things. Real unity doesn't mean everyone is the same. It means people with different stories choose to gather around the same King.

Chapter 12 goes back in time to show how people from every tribe came to David, even while Saul was still alive and David was a fugitive. Warriors from Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, who could shoot arrows and sling stones with either hand. Fierce fighters from Gad, "whose faces were like the faces of lions" and who were as fast as gazelles on the mountains. Men from Judah and Benjamin.

When some of them show up at David's stronghold, David isn't sure whether they've come as friends or as spies. Then "the Spirit came on Amasai," one of their leaders, and he says, "We are yours, David, and on your side, you son of Jesse. Peace, peace be to you, and peace be to your helpers; for your God helps you." It's a beautiful declaration of loyalty.

"For from day to day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army, like God's army." The list of tribes includes one fascinating group: "the children of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." They

weren't just strong. They were wise. They understood what was happening around them and knew what to do about it.

The section ends with a party. Thousands of soldiers from every tribe come to Hebron "with a perfect heart" to make David king over all Israel, and "all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king." For three days, they eat and drink together, and people from as far away as the northern tribes bring food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen: flour, figs, raisins, wine, oil, cattle, and sheep. "For there was joy in Israel," the chapter ends.

> **REAL TALK** **Understanding the Times**
>
> The men of Issachar "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." That's a great goal for anyone, especially a young person growing up in a fast-changing world. It means paying attention to what's going on around you, thinking carefully about it in the light of God's word, and figuring out how to live faithfully right now. It's not about being afraid of everything new, and it's not about going along with whatever is popular. It's about wisdom. Read widely, ask good questions, learn from wise people, and ask God to help you understand your world and your place in it.

**KEY VERSE**

*David grew greater and greater, for the LORD of Armies was with him.*

**1 Chronicles 11:9 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. Chronicles says Saul died because he didn't seek the LORD. What does it mean to seek God?
2. Why do you think the Chronicler skipped over the civil war and went straight to all Israel uniting around David?
3. Amasai said, "We are yours, David, and on your side." What would it look like to say that to Jesus?
4. What would it look like for you to understand the times you live in?

**TRY THIS** *This week, before you look for answers anywhere else, take one thing you're anxious about to God in prayer first. Write down what happens.*

CHAPTER 3

# The Ark Comes Home

*1 Chronicles 13–15*

Right after becoming king, David does something that shows what kind of king he wants to be. He gathers the leaders of Israel and proposes bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem. "Also, let's bring the ark of our God back to us again, for we didn't seek it in the days of Saul."

There's that word again: seek. Under Saul, the ark had been neglected for decades, sitting in a house in the town of Kiriath Jearim. David wants God's presence at the center of the nation. Everyone agrees.

So they put the ark on a new cart and set off with a huge celebration. "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, even with songs, with harps, with stringed instruments, with tambourines, with cymbals, and with trumpets."

Then disaster. At a threshing floor along the way, the oxen stumble, and a man named Uzza reaches out to steady the ark. "The LORD's anger burned against Uzza, and he struck him because he put his hand on the ark; and he died there before God."

The party stops. David is angry and afraid. "How can I bring God's ark home to me?" he asks. He leaves the ark at the house of a man

named Obed-Edom, and for three months, "the LORD blessed Obed-Edom's house and all that he had."

> **REAL TALK** **Why Did Uzza Die?**
>
> This is one of the hardest stories in the Old Testament, and if you've read the 2 Samuel book in this series, you've seen a longer box on it there. Here's the short version. The law of Moses said the ark was never supposed to be carried on a cart. It had poles so the Levites could carry it on their shoulders, and no one was supposed to touch it, on pain of death. David had copied the Philistines, who once sent the ark back on a cart, instead of following God's instructions. Christians read Uzza's death in a few ways. Many see it as a sobering lesson that God is holy and that His presence is not something to handle casually, even with good intentions. Others focus on the leaders' responsibility for ignoring God's clear instructions, with Uzza caught in the consequences. Others honestly admit that the story still troubles them. Chronicles itself draws one lesson clearly, as David says in chapter 15: we didn't seek Him in the right way.

Chapter 14 shows God blessing David while the ark waits. King Hiram of Tyre sends cedar and workers to build David a palace. David's family grows. Twice, the Philistines attack, and twice David asks God what to do before he fights. The second time, God tells him to wait until he hears the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, a sign that God Himself is going out ahead of him. "The fame of David went out into all lands," the chapter ends.

In chapter 15, David tries again, and this time he does his homework. "Then David said, 'No one ought to carry God's ark but the Levites. For the LORD has chosen them to carry God's ark, and to minister to him forever.'"

He gathers the priests and Levites and tells them to purify themselves. He admits honestly what went wrong the first time: "For because you didn't carry it at first, the LORD our God broke out

in anger against us, because we didn't seek him according to the ordinance."

That's a mature thing for a king to say. He doesn't blame Uzza or the oxen. He takes responsibility. We messed up. We didn't do it God's way. Let's do it right.

> **REAL TALK** **Learning from Failure**
>
> David's first attempt ended in tragedy, and he was angry and afraid. He could have given up on the whole idea. He could have blamed God. Instead, he went back, figured out what went wrong, and tried again the right way. That's a skill every person needs. When something you try fails, whether it's a relationship, a project, a team, or a goal, it's worth asking honestly: what did I do wrong? What can I learn? Then try again, wiser. Failure isn't the end of the story unless you let it be.

So "the children of the Levites bore God's ark on their shoulders with its poles, as Moses commanded according to the LORD's word." And David doesn't just get the logistics right. He makes sure the music is right too. He tells the leaders of the Levites to appoint singers and musicians "with instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, sounding aloud and lifting up their voices with joy." Chapter 15 lists them by name. Some play bronze cymbals. Some play harps. A Levite named Chenaniah is put in charge of the singing "because he was skillful." There are even gatekeepers assigned to walk with the ark.

This time, the procession is a total success. "Thus all Israel brought the ark of the LORD's covenant up with shouting, with sound of the cornet, with trumpets, and with cymbals, sounding aloud with stringed instruments and harps." David wears a fine linen robe and dances. Doing things God's way didn't make the celebration less joyful. It made it more joyful.

It's worth noticing how much space the Chronicler gives to the music in this chapter. In 2 Samuel, the second trip with the ark takes just a few verses. In Chronicles, it takes a whole chapter, with name after name of singers, harp players, cymbal players, trumpeters, and gatekeepers. That tells us what mattered to him and to his readers. By their time, the temple singers and Levites were at the center of community life in Jerusalem. The Chronicler is showing them that their work went all the way back to David. Their songs weren't just tradition. They were part of God's plan from the beginning. When you sing in church, or listen to worship music in your room, you're joining a very old choir.

There's only one sour note. "Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart." Chronicles mentions her briefly, in a single verse. It's a quiet reminder that Saul's family had never sought the ark, and some of them still didn't understand why it mattered.

**BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Ark of the Covenant**

The ark was a wooden chest covered with gold, about four feet long, with two golden cherubim on its lid. Inside were the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The lid, sometimes called the mercy seat, was where God said He would meet with His people. The ark was the most sacred object in Israel, a sign of God's presence and His covenant. After the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 BC, the ark disappears from history. No one knows what happened to it. That means the first readers of Chronicles had never seen it. For them, reading about David's joy as the ark came home was a reminder of what mattered most: not the gold box itself, but the God whose presence it represented.

**KEY VERSE**

*The children of the Levites bore God's ark on their shoulders with its poles, as Moses commanded according to the LORD's word.*

**1 Chronicles 15:15 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. Why do you think David wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem so badly?
2. What did David do differently the second time? What does that teach about doing things God's way?
3. How do you usually respond when something you try fails?
4. Does doing things God's way make life less joyful or more joyful? Why?

**TRY THIS** *Think of something you tried that didn't go well. Ask yourself honestly what you can learn from it, and then try again this week, wiser.*

CHAPTER 4

# Singers and Gatekeepers

*1 Chronicles 16, 23–27*

Once the ark is safely inside the tent David has prepared for it, there are offerings, blessings, and a gift of food for every man and woman in Israel: a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then David does something new. "He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the LORD's ark, and to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel." Worship becomes a full-time job.

That day, David gives Asaph and his relatives a song of thanks to sing. It's a medley of parts of three psalms that we now know as Psalms 105, 96, and 106. It begins, "Oh give thanks to the LORD. Call on his name. Make what he has done known among the peoples. Sing to him. Sing praises to him. Tell of all his marvelous works."

BACKGROUND CHECK **An Old Song for a New Day**

David's song in chapter 16 is made up of parts of three psalms, and the parts the Chronicler includes seem carefully chosen for his readers. The first part, from Psalm 105, reminds them that God remembers His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that He protected their ancestors when they were "few in number" and wandering from nation to nation, which is exactly how the returning exiles felt. The middle part, from Psalm 96, calls all the nations to worship the LORD as King. And the end, from Psalm 106, includes a prayer: "Save us, God of our salvation! Gather us together and deliver us from

the nations." For people who had just come back from exile, that prayer must have felt very personal.

The song is full of instructions about what to do with God: thank Him, call on Him, sing to Him, tell others about Him, remember what He has done, and "Seek the LORD and his strength. Seek his face forever more." It looks back at God's faithfulness to Israel's ancestors. Then it widens to the whole world. "Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Display his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations." It mocks the idols of the nations: "For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens." And it calls on all creation to celebrate: "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! Let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!'"

Then comes a line that became one of the most repeated refrains in the whole Bible: "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever." The Hebrew word translated loving kindness is hesed, God's loyal, faithful, covenant love, the kind of love that doesn't quit. For people who had survived exile, that was the deepest truth they knew. They had been through disaster, and God's love was still there.

David appoints Asaph and his relatives "to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required." Worship isn't a one-time event. It's an everyday rhythm.

**REAL TALK** **Thankfulness in Hard Times**

David's song was written for a day of celebration, but the Chronicler included it for people living through hard times. That's when thankfulness matters most. It's easy to thank God when everything is going well. It's harder, and more powerful, when life is difficult. Gratitude doesn't mean pretending things are fine. It means remembering that God's love hasn't stopped, even

when circumstances are hard. Some people find it helpful to write down three things they're thankful for every day. Over time, it changes the way you see your life. And if you're in a season where you're struggling to feel anything at all, that's okay to admit too. Talk to God honestly, and talk to a trusted adult.

Later in the book, in chapters 23 through 27, David organizes the whole system of temple worship in detail, preparing for the day Solomon will build the temple. These chapters are mostly lists, and like the genealogies, they're easy to skip. But they're worth a look.

David counts the Levites and assigns them jobs. Some help the priests with sacrifices. Some are officials and judges. Four thousand are gatekeepers. And four thousand are musicians who praise the LORD with instruments David himself designed. Their job description is beautiful: "to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise in the evening." Every morning and every evening, for generations, there would be music in God's house.

The musicians come from three families: the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, "who were to prophesy with harps, with stringed instruments, and with cymbals." Their music was a way of speaking God's truth. Many of the psalms in your Bible are credited to these musicians, especially Asaph and the sons of Korah, a family of Levites. The skilled musicians numbered two hundred eighty-eight. And here's a detail I love: "They cast lots for their offices, all alike, the small as well as the great, the teacher as well as the student." There was no special treatment. Everyone took their turn.

**REAL TALK** **Using Your Gifts**

The musicians were chosen because they were skillful, and they had trained hard. That's a reminder that serving God isn't only about sincerity. It's also about developing the gifts He's given you and offering them back to Him with excellence. Maybe your gift is music. Maybe it's art, writing, sports, building

things, organizing, listening, or making people feel welcome. Paul wrote, "And whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." Whatever your gift is, practice it, grow in it, and look for ways to use it for God and for other people.

Then there are the gatekeepers. Chapter 26 lists their divisions, family by family, and assigns them to the east, west, north, and south gates of the temple, along with the storehouses. Back in chapter 9, we learned that their work was "an office of trust." They guarded the doors, protected the treasures, and opened God's house "morning by morning."

It wasn't a glamorous job. Nobody wrote songs about the gatekeepers. They didn't stand in front of the crowd. They stood at the doors, day after day, making sure God's house was open, safe, and ready for worship. And yet the Chronicler lists them by name. Some of them, like Obed-Edom, whose house was blessed when the ark stayed there, are described as strong and capable men. One gatekeeper named Zechariah is called "a wise counselor." Even the people at the door mattered.

**REAL TALK** **Quiet Faithfulness**

Most of the work that keeps a church, a family, a team, or a community running isn't seen by anyone. Someone unlocks the doors. Someone sets up the chairs. Someone runs the sound board, cleans up afterward, welcomes newcomers, prays for people, or shows up every week without being asked. The Chronicler made sure the gatekeepers were remembered by name, because God sees quiet faithfulness. One psalm, written by the sons of Korah, who served as gatekeepers, says it would be better to be a doorkeeper in God's house than to live in the tents of the wicked. If you serve in ways no one notices, God notices. And if you're tempted to want only the spotlight jobs, remember that some of the most important work in God's kingdom happens at the door.

Chapter 27 finishes with lists of army divisions, tribal leaders, and officials who managed David's farms, vineyards, olive groves, herds, and flocks. It's the Bible's version of an organization chart. The point is that David's kingdom wasn't just a man with a crown. It was a community where many people, from generals to shepherds, had a role to play.

**KEY VERSE**

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever.*

**1 Chronicles 16:34 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. Why do you think David made worship a full-time, everyday job instead of a once-a-year event?
2. What does God's loving kindness, His hesed, mean to you?
3. What gifts do you have that you could develop and offer to God?
4. Who are the gatekeepers in your life, the people who serve quietly without being noticed? How could you thank them?

**TRY THIS** *For one week, write down three things you're thankful for every morning or every evening. At the end of the week, write a thank-you note to someone who serves quietly.*

CHAPTER 5

# A House Forever

*1 Chronicles 17–20*

David is settled in his new palace in Jerusalem, and something bothers him. He says to the prophet Nathan, "Behold, I live in a cedar house, but the ark of the LORD's covenant is in a tent." It doesn't seem right for the king to live in luxury while God's ark sits in a tent. David wants to build God a house, a temple.

Nathan thinks it's a great idea. "Do all that is in your heart; for God is with you."

But that night, God speaks to Nathan with a different message. Go tell David, "You shall not build me a house to dwell in." God reminds David that He has never asked for a house. He has moved with His people from tent to tent since the days of the exodus. Then God reminds David where he came from: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people. I have been with you wherever you went. I will make your name great.

Then comes a wordplay that changes everything. David wanted to build God a house. Instead, God says, "the LORD will build you a house." Not a building, but a family, a dynasty.

God promises that after David dies, He will raise up one of his sons. "He will build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I

will be his father, and he will be my son. I will not take my loving kindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you; but I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever. His throne will be established forever."

**BACKGROUND CHECK** **Comparing the Two Versions**

The promise to David appears in both 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, and most of the wording is the same. But there are a few small, telling differences. In 2 Samuel, God says, "Your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever." In Chronicles, God says, "I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever." The kingdom isn't just David's. It's God's. Also, 2 Samuel includes a warning that when David's son does wrong, God will discipline him. Chronicles leaves that line out, keeping the focus on the promise itself. For readers who had seen David's kingdom destroyed, this was a reminder that the forever kingdom belonged to God, and God's promise couldn't be destroyed.

David's response is humble and amazed. "Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD; and he said, 'Who am I, LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?'" He knows he doesn't deserve any of this. A shepherd boy from Bethlehem, now king, and promised a family that will rule forever. "LORD, there is no one like you, neither is there any God besides you." He ends by saying, "for you, LORD, have blessed, and it is blessed forever."

**REAL TALK** **When God Says No**

David's desire to build God a temple was a good one. Nathan even approved it. And God still said no. Not because David's heart was wrong, but because God had a different plan, and a bigger gift in mind. Sometimes we have good desires, good plans, even godly dreams, and God closes the door. That can be confusing and painful. But David's story shows that God's no is sometimes the doorway to a better yes. David didn't get to build the temple, but he got a promise that pointed to Jesus. If you've had a dream that didn't work out, it's

> okay to grieve it. And it's worth asking God what He might be building instead.

This promise is the hinge of the whole book. Everything before it, including the family tree, the crowning of David, and the arrival of the ark, has been leading here. Everything after it, including the census, the threshing floor, and the preparations for the temple, flows from it. For the Chronicler's readers, it was the promise they clung to most. They had no king. They lived under Persian rule. Their temple was small. But God had said forever, and God doesn't lie. When they read these words, they were reading a promise that was still waiting to be fully kept. That's why later Jewish readers kept looking for a coming Son of David, an anointed one, the Messiah. And it's why the very first verse of the New Testament calls Jesus "the son of David."

Chapters 18 through 20 summarize David's military victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and Ammonites. The Chronicler moves through them quickly, and he says David "executed justice and righteousness for all his people." These chapters show that God was keeping His promise to give David rest from his enemies.

Now comes something important to notice. If you've read 2 Samuel, you know that in the middle of the war with the Ammonites, David stayed home from battle, took Bathsheba, and arranged the death of her husband, Uriah. That led to Nathan's confrontation, the death of a child, and years of family disaster: Amnon and Tamar, Absalom's murder of Amnon, Absalom's rebellion, and David running for his life.

1 Chronicles skips all of it. Chapter 20 begins, "At the time of the return of the year, at the time when kings go out," Joab led out the

army. "But David stayed at Jerusalem." That's the exact moment in 2 Samuel when the Bathsheba story starts. In Chronicles, the same verse goes straight on to tell us that Joab conquered the city, and the next verse says David took the enemy king's crown. The whole story is simply missing.

**BACKGROUND CHECK** **Why Does Chronicles Leave Out David's Sins?**

Some people have accused the Chronicler of a cover-up, of trying to make David look better than he was. But that doesn't fit the facts. First, the Chronicler's readers already had 2 Samuel. Everyone knew the story of Bathsheba. You can't hide something that's already in the Scriptures your readers are reading. Second, Chronicles doesn't hide all of David's failures. It tells the story of Uzza's death, which happened because David didn't follow God's instructions, and it tells the story of David's sinful census in chapter 21, which brought a plague on Israel. Third, Chronicles isn't trying to be a full biography of David. It's focused on two things: God's promise of a dynasty and the preparation for the temple. Bathsheba and Absalom are part of David's personal story, but the census leads directly to the location of the temple, so it stays in. Most Christians see Samuel and Chronicles as working together, like two camera angles on the same events. Samuel shows us David the man, flaws and all. Chronicles shows us David the founder of the dynasty and the temple. Both are true.

So why does it matter that the Chronicler tells the story this way? Because it says something about how God sees us. David's sins were real, and God dealt with them seriously in David's lifetime. But when God tells the story of what He was doing through David, the focus isn't on David's worst moments. It's on God's promise and God's purpose. That doesn't mean sin doesn't matter. It does. But for people who have confessed their sin and received God's forgiveness, their failures are not the main headline of their lives. God's grace is. If you've been forgiven, you don't have to keep defining yourself by the worst thing you've ever done.

Chapter 20 ends with brief accounts of battles against giants from Gath, descendants of the same people as Goliath. One of them has six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. Each one is defeated by one of David's men. Even the giants fall when God is with His people.

**KEY VERSE**

*He will build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.*

**1 Chronicles 17:12 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. David wanted to build God a house, and God said He would build David a house instead. What's the difference?
2. Why do you think David asked, "Who am I"? Have you ever felt that way about something God has done?
3. Have you ever had a good plan or dream that God seemed to say no to? What happened?
4. Why do you think Chronicles leaves out the story of Bathsheba and Absalom? Do you find the explanation convincing?

**TRY THIS** *Write a short "Who am I" prayer, like David's, thanking God for three ways He has brought you this far.*

CHAPTER 6

# The Threshing Floor

*1 Chronicles 21*

Chapter 21 begins with a startling sentence. "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to take a census of Israel."

David tells Joab and the leaders of the army to count all the fighting men from Beersheba in the south to Dan in the north. Joab, of all people, objects. "May the LORD make his people a hundred times as many as they are. But, my lord the king, aren't they all my lord's servants? Why does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"

Joab was a hard, violent man, and even he could see this was wrong. But David insists, and Joab reluctantly does it, though he refuses to count the tribes of Levi and Benjamin because he finds the king's order so disgusting.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Satan or the LORD?**

The same story in 2 Samuel 24 begins differently: "Again the LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he moved David against them, saying, 'Go, count Israel and Judah.'" So who moved David, the LORD or Satan? If you've read the 2 Samuel book in this series, you've seen a box on this question. Here's the short version. Many Christians believe both are true from different angles: God allowed Satan to tempt David, as He allowed Satan to test Job, so that God's purposes, including judgment on Israel's sin, would be carried out, while Satan's purpose was to destroy. Some note that the Hebrew word satan

can mean an adversary or accuser, and think the Chronicler may be describing a human or heavenly opponent rather than the devil himself. Others see a development in Israel's understanding over time, as later writers made clearer that God is never the source of evil. James later wrote, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God,' for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one." All agree that David was fully responsible for his choice.

Why was the census so wrong? The Bible doesn't spell it out. Counting people wasn't sinful in itself; God commanded censuses in the book of Numbers. Many think David's problem was pride. He wanted to know how powerful he was, to trust in the size of his army instead of in God. After all of God's promises, David was looking at numbers to feel secure.

"God was displeased with this thing; therefore he struck Israel." David's conscience catches up with him. "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now put away, I beg you, the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

**REAL TALK** **Counting What You Have**

David's census was about security. He wanted to count his soldiers so he could feel strong. We do the same thing in different ways. We count followers, likes, grades, money, achievements, or friends, hoping the numbers will tell us we're okay. There's nothing wrong with working hard or doing well. But when we start trusting the numbers instead of God, or feeling worthless when the numbers are low, something has gone wrong. Your worth isn't a number. You are loved by God apart from anything you can count.

The prophet Gad brings David a terrible choice of three judgments: three years of famine, three months of being defeated by his enemies, or three days of a plague from the LORD. David's answer is wise. "I am in distress. Let me fall, I pray, into the LORD's hand, for his mercies are very great. Don't let me fall into man's hand."

So the LORD sends a plague, and seventy thousand men of Israel die. It's a devastating consequence. Then God sends an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But "as he was about to destroy, the LORD saw, and he relented of the disaster, and said to the destroying angel, 'It is enough. Now withdraw your hand.'" The angel stops at the threshing floor of a man named Ornan the Jebusite.

David looks up and sees the angel "standing between earth and the sky, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." David and the elders, dressed in sackcloth, fall on their faces. And David prays one of the most selfless prayers in his life. "Isn't it I who commanded the people to be counted? It is even I who have sinned and done very wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house; but not against your people."

> **REAL TALK** **Taking Responsibility**
>
> David finally does what a real shepherd does. He stops thinking about himself and starts protecting his sheep. He says, this is my fault, not theirs. Punish me instead. That's the opposite of what most of us do when we've messed up. We make excuses, shift blame, or hope no one notices. Taking responsibility is hard, especially when your choices have hurt others. But it's the beginning of healing. And when you've hurt someone, the most important words are often the simplest: I was wrong. It was my fault. I'm sorry.

The angel tells the prophet Gad to tell David to build an altar on Ornan's threshing floor. A threshing floor was a flat, hard area, usually on a hilltop where the wind blew, where farmers separated grain from straw. Ornan is threshing wheat when he sees the angel, and his four sons hide. Then he sees King David coming and bows to the ground.

David asks to buy the threshing floor for the full price. Ornan, who is probably terrified, offers to give it to him for free, along with oxen for the sacrifice, threshing sledges for firewood, and wheat for the grain offering. "I give it all," he says.

David refuses. "No, but I will most certainly buy it for the full price. For I will not take that which is yours for the LORD, nor offer a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

So David pays Ornan six hundred shekels of gold for the place. He builds an altar and offers sacrifices, and he calls on the LORD. And God "answered him from the sky by fire on the altar of burnt offering." Then the LORD tells the angel to put his sword back in its sheath.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Fifty Shekels or Six Hundred?**
>
> 2 Samuel says David paid fifty shekels of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen. Chronicles says he paid six hundred shekels of gold for "the place." Many scholars think there's no contradiction: 2 Samuel describes the price of the threshing floor itself and the oxen, while Chronicles describes the price of the whole site, the larger area around it where the temple would later be built. Others think the different numbers reflect the different focus of each writer. Either way, both agree that David insisted on paying, because a gift to God should cost something.

The chapter ends with David still afraid of the angel's sword, and then in chapter 22 he makes an announcement that explains why this whole story matters: "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel." The threshing floor of Ornan will be the place where the temple is built.

2 Chronicles makes it even clearer. "Then Solomon began to build the LORD's house at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD

appeared to David his father, which he prepared in the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite."

Mount Moriah. That's where Abraham went, almost a thousand years earlier, to offer his son Isaac. God stopped him and provided a ram instead, and Abraham called the place "The LORD Will Provide." Now, on the same mountain, God stops the angel of death and accepts a sacrifice. The place where God's people would worship for centuries was a place of mercy, where judgment was stopped and sin was covered.

**KEY VERSE**

*King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will most certainly buy it for the full price. For I will not take that which is yours for the LORD, nor offer a burnt offering that costs me nothing."*

**1 Chronicles 21:24 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. Why do you think the census was such a serious sin?
2. What things are you tempted to count to feel secure or valuable?
3. David said, "these sheep, what have they done?" Why is it so hard to take full responsibility when we've done wrong?
4. Why did David refuse to accept the threshing floor as a gift? What would it look like to give God something that costs you?

**TRY THIS** *Give something that costs you this week: your time, money, or something you'd rather keep. Do it for God, without telling anyone.*

CHAPTER 7

# Passing the Baton

*1 Chronicles 22, 28–29*

David can't build the temple. God told him so. But David decides that if he can't build it, he can make sure his son has everything he needs to build it.

"David said, 'Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. I will therefore make preparation for it.' So David prepared abundantly before his death."

He gathers stonecutters to shape stones. He collects iron for nails, more bronze than anyone can weigh, and cedar logs from Tyre and Sidon. Then he calls Solomon and explains why he isn't building it himself. God told him, "You have shed blood abundantly and have made great wars. You shall not build a house to my name." But God promised that Solomon would be "a man of peace." Solomon's name sounds like the Hebrew word shalom, which means peace. The house of God would be built by a man of peace.

**REAL TALK** **Preparing for Someone Else's Success**

David spent the last years of his life gathering materials for a building he would never see. He wasn't going to get credit for it. It would be called Solomon's temple. And he did it anyway, with joy. That takes real humility. Most people want to be the one who finishes the project and gets the applause. But some of the most important work in the world is preparing the

> way for others: parents who sacrifice for their kids, teachers who invest in students, older believers who mentor younger ones. You can do that too. Encourage a younger sibling or friend. Help a teammate succeed. Celebrate someone else's win. The kingdom of God moves forward when people are willing to build for someone else.

David gives Solomon a charge. "Now, my son, may the LORD be with you and prosper you, and build the house of the LORD your God." He tells him the secret of success: obey the laws God gave Moses. "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid and don't be dismayed." Those words echo what God said to Joshua as he took over from Moses: "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." The baton is being passed again.

Then David shows Solomon the supplies he has prepared "in my affliction," or in some translations, with great effort: a staggering amount of gold, silver, bronze, iron, timber, and stone. "And you may add to them," he says. He calls on all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon. "Now set your heart and your soul to follow the LORD your God. Arise therefore, and build."

After the chapters about the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, the story picks up again in chapter 28. David, now old, gathers all the leaders of Israel. He stands up and tells them the story: it was in his heart to build a house for God, but God chose Solomon instead. Then he speaks directly to his son, in front of everyone.

"You, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

There's that word one more time: seek. If you seek Him, you will find Him. It's the message of the whole book.

> **REAL TALK** **Knowing God for Yourself**
>
> Notice what David tells Solomon to do first. Not build the temple. Not be a great king. "Know the God of your father." David couldn't hand his faith to Solomon like a set of building plans. Solomon had to know God for himself. That's true for you too. Maybe you've grown up hearing about God from your parents, grandparents, or church. That's a gift. But at some point, the question becomes personal. Do you know Him? David's promise is that if you seek Him, you will find Him. He isn't hiding from you.

David gives Solomon the plans for the temple, which he says came to him from the Spirit and from the hand of the LORD in writing. They include every detail: the porch, the rooms, the treasuries, the divisions of priests and Levites, the weight of gold and silver for every lampstand and table, even the golden cherubim over the ark.

Then David gives Solomon the words that would carry him through the whole project. "Be strong and courageous, and do it. Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you, until all the work for the service of the LORD's house is finished."

> **REAL TALK** **Be Strong and Do It**
>
> Solomon was young, and the job in front of him was enormous. He probably felt overwhelmed. David's advice wasn't, you've got this, you're amazing. It was, God is with you, and He won't quit on you, so be strong and do it. Courage isn't the absence of fear. It's doing the right thing while you're afraid, because you trust that God is with you. Maybe there's something in front of you that feels too big: a new school, a hard conversation, a tryout, a decision, a responsibility. You don't have to feel ready. God's promise is that He'll be with you until the work is finished.

In chapter 29, David turns to the whole assembly. He tells them that Solomon is young and the work is great, "for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God." Then he tells them that beyond everything he has prepared as king, he is giving his own personal treasure of gold and silver to the house of God, "because I have set my affection on the house of my God." Then he asks a question: "Who then offers willingly to consecrate himself today to the LORD?"

The response is overwhelming. The leaders of the families, the tribes, and the army give gold, silver, bronze, iron, and precious stones. "Then the people rejoiced, because they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

Then David prays one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible. "You are blessed, LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty! For all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, LORD, and you are exalted as head above all." (If that sounds familiar, it's because some versions of the Lord's Prayer end with words that echo it: for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.)

He continues: "Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all!" And then he says something that changes how we think about giving. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from you, and we have given you of your own."

That's the secret of generosity. Everything we have came from God in the first place. When we give, we're just giving Him back what was already His. "For we are strangers before you and foreigners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are as a shadow." Life is

short. Our stuff won't last. What matters is what we give back to God.

> **REAL TALK** **Cheerful Giving**
>
> David and the people gave enormous amounts, and the result wasn't misery. It was joy. They "rejoiced, because they offered willingly." That's how generosity works. Paul later wrote, "Let each man give according as he has determined in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Giving isn't just about money. You can be generous with your time, your attention, your talents, your encouragement, and your stuff. And when you remember that everything you have came from God, it becomes easier to open your hands. Try it and see if it doesn't make you happier.

The next day, the people offer thousands of sacrifices and celebrate with a feast "before the LORD on that day with great gladness." They make Solomon king a second time, publicly, and anoint him. Solomon sits on "the throne of the LORD" as king in place of his father David, and all Israel obeys him.

The book ends with David's death. "He died at a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his place." The baton has been passed. The temple is ready to be built. And the promise of a forever King from David's family is still alive.

**KEY VERSE**

*David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do it. Don't be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you, until all the work for the service of the LORD's house is finished.*

**1 Chronicles 28:20 (WEB)**

## REAL TALK

1. Why do you think David worked so hard to prepare for a temple he would never see?
2. David told Solomon to "know the God of your father." What's the difference between knowing about God and knowing Him?
3. What's something in your life right now that requires you to be strong and courageous?
4. David said, "we have given you of your own." How does that idea change the way you think about giving?

**TRY THIS** *Read David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10–14 out loud. Then give something away this week, cheerfully, remembering that it came from God in the first place.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

# Where This Points

1 Chronicles ends with David giving everything he has for a temple he will never see, and with a young king, Solomon, ready to build it. But for the first readers of Chronicles, that temple had been burned, and no son of David sat on a throne. They were left holding on to promises: a King from David's line whose throne would last forever, and a house where God would live among His people.

Jewish readers treasure Chronicles as the closing book of the Hebrew Scriptures, a book that calls God's people to seek Him, to worship Him, and to hope. The New Testament writers, who were Jewish themselves, believed both promises came true in Jesus. Matthew opens his Gospel with a genealogy, just like Chronicles: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Luke traces Jesus' family all the way back to "the son of Adam, the son of God," which is exactly where Chronicles begins. Jesus said, "one greater than the temple is here," and He spoke of His own body as the temple that would be destroyed and raised in three days. And Paul tells believers from every nation that they are "no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." In Jesus, God's family tree has room for you.

Here's what the Bible says about where that story leads, as plainly as I can put it.

### 1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He knows your name. He keeps His promises, even after His people have failed.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (WEB)**

### 2 We've all sinned.

Chronicles was written to people who knew where sin had led: exile. The Bible says all of us have sinned and gone our own way.

> *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;* **Romans 3:23 (WEB)**

### 3 Sin has a real cost.

God is good, so He doesn't shrug off evil. Even David's sin brought death on his people. The Bible says its result is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (WEB)**

### 4 Jesus is the promised King.

Jesus, the Son of David, died on the cross for our sins and rose again. He is the King whose throne lasts forever and the place where God meets us.

> *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* **1 John 4:10 (WEB)**

### 5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

David said everything he gave already came from God. Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*
> **Ephesians 2:8–9 (WEB)**

### 6 Seek Him.

Turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life and a place in God's family.

> *that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (WEB)**

So what do you do with that? You don't need perfect words. You can talk to God honestly, right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

> *God, I've sinned against You, and I can't fix that myself. Thank You that You remember my name and that Your promises are still alive. Thank You that Jesus, the Son of David, gave His life for me, and that You raised Him from the dead. Forgive me, and make me part of Your family. Everything I have comes from You, so I give myself back to You. I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I want Him to be my King forever. In Jesus' name, amen.*

## If You Just Said Yes

**Tell someone.** A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

**Read the real thing.** Read 1 Chronicles 16, 17, and 29, then read Matthew 1, the family tree that leads to Jesus.

**Find your people.** Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught and Jesus is honored. Ask about being baptized.

**Find your part.** Like the singers and gatekeepers, every believer has a role. Ask a leader at your church where you could serve.

## Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Keep asking. Keep reading. Chronicles was written for people full of questions and doubts about whether God still cared. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if 1 Chronicles is right, the God who remembered every name in Israel's family tree remembers yours, and there is still room for you in His family.

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever.*

**1 Chronicles 16:34 (WEB)**