

**Women's Bible Study – Fall 2009**

## **What's in the Heart?**

**October 28, 2009**

***A Heart of Worship***

**2 Samuel 6**

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This morning/evening I thought I would give you a glimpse into the inner workings of the Women's Bible Study Leadership Team. This year we began the planning process for the fall semester during the summer. First, Gretchen created a draft of proposed topics and then we met and reviewed them. We combined some and eliminated others until we felt we had a good mix of lessons that would provide a meaningful glimpse into the life and heart of David.

Next, we began the work of assigning particular topics to particular teachers. Some topics were assigned simply as a matter of scheduling. Others clearly fit a teacher's special expertise and passion. Some topics were a little more shall we say *delicate*. For example, Gretchen cautioned that the upcoming lecture entitled "A Heart of Lust and Murder" should be taught by someone who had no hesitancy discussing sexual intimacy in a bold manner in front of several hundred women. We decided Gretchen would be a good fit for that lecture. The remaining topics were simply assigned.

One of the remaining topics assigned to me was our study for today, "A Heart of Worship". Back in the summer I didn't give the topic too much thought. It wasn't one of my strengths, but I have taught a lot of topics over the years that were not my strengths.

However, as the summer drew to a close, I realized that Autumn Ridge Senior Pastor, John Steer, would be teaching a six week series on worship in the fall. He just concluded that on Sunday. That was a little intimidating. Then early in the fall the worship booklet to accompany the sermon series was published. It was written by our own Jacqui Stahl and Gretchen Steer. That was followed by the introduction of our new morning worship leader for WBS, Karlee Nichols. When Karlee came on board she gave an excellent overview on worship and continues to teach us about worship each week. Talk about intimidating, not only was worship not one of my topical teaching strengths, but clearly I was the least knowledgeable on the team.

I met and recounted all this to Gretchen, adding that Michelle Harris had overseen our worship area in Women's Bible Study for years. In summary, I said, "Gretchen, I think someone else more qualified should teach the lecture on worship. How about you (Gretchen), or Michelle, or Jacqui"? And she gave me a compassionate, sympathetic look and said, "No, you teach it, you'll bring a fresh perspective".

So, with that disclaimer, let us open our Bibles together and discover what we can learn about A Heart of Worship from the life of David. By the way, as you are turning in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 6, all of those worship materials I mentioned are excellent resources and are available through a link on the WBS website or you can inquire about them at the welcome table.

## **Scripture Passage: 2 Samuel 6:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup> Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup> And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale (Ba<sup>7</sup>-ă-le<sup>7</sup>) Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the Lord of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. <sup>3</sup> So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio (Ă-hi<sup>7</sup>-o<sup>7</sup>), the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. <sup>4</sup> And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. <sup>5</sup> Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals.**

## **Background Context**

Let's stop there and review what has happened up to this point and see if we can understand a bit more about the context of these events. David has gathered 30,000 choice men of Israel for a huge national procession. The purpose for their gathering is to bring the ark of God from a place called Baale (Ba<sup>7</sup>-ă-le<sup>7</sup>) also referred to as Kiriath-Jearim (Kir'-jăth-je<sup>7</sup>-ă-rim) to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> (Show Map)

The Ark of the Covenant was one of the most sacred worship objects in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was their place for worship, the temple has yet to be built. God had given specific design instructions to Moses.<sup>2</sup> The ark was crafted from acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold inside and out. There were rings of gold on the corners through which poles were to be inserted to carry the ark. Inside the ark was Aaron's rod that had budded, a golden jar of manna, and the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. A mercy seat of gold with two winged cherubim of gold was placed on top of the ark (Overheads 23, 21, 20).<sup>3</sup> The ark was the earthly symbol of God's presence and His covenant with Israel. It was located in the holy of holies of the tabernacle and could only be approached by the High Priest once a year, and only then in a prescribed way.

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville. 1993. Page 96.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 25

<sup>3</sup> The Tabernacle of God in the Wilderness. By Paul Kiene. The Zondervan Corporation. Grand Rapids, MI. 1984.

Up to this point in our studies in 2 Samuel we have heard very little about the ark. In fact, the last time its visual presence was mentioned was in 1 Samuel 7. Before that the ark had been captured by the Philistines. You can read all about the subsequent events in 1 Samuel chapters 5 and 6, but the bottom line was that after the Philistines captured the ark, they soon began to suffer all kinds of terrible consequences. The first of which was the bothersome problem that when they placed the ark of God in the temple of their god every morning their idol was found broken and on its face before the ark. After a few days of this annoyance the Philistines in that town were struck with tumors and decided to get the ark out of their village. So they sent it to first one village and then to another with similar consequences (See Map).

The Philistines knew that they had offended the God of Israel, and they were well acquainted with His reputation. It had been centuries since the Exodus and yet they still remembered what had happened to the Egyptians and their Pharaoh who had hardened their hearts and suffered as a result. They determined not to make the same mistake and so they make plans to return the ark to Israel. They place the ark on a cart, drawn by cows, and place trespass offerings in a chest by its side. Then they send it in the direction of Israel.

The ark comes into Beth Shemesh, a town in northwest Judah near the Philistine border (MAP). The reapers are harvesting wheat, see the cart coming and rejoice at its cargo. The Levites among them take down the ark of the LORD, and split the wood of the cart and offer the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. The men of Beth Shemesh; however, make a grave error and look into the ark of the LORD and that day God struck many of them dead. Translators seem to disagree a bit here, some say 70 and some have the number much higher.

The destruction was so great the people called for the men of Kirjath Jearim (Kīr'-jāth-jē-ä-rīm) to come and take the ark. It is brought to the house of Abinadab, and his son Eleazar was consecrated to care for the ark. The ark remained there a long time, out of the spotlight of the nation probably close to 100 years<sup>4</sup>.

## Procession to Jerusalem

So now almost a century later, we have this great moment of national celebration, with 30,000 gathered to accompany the ark, to Jerusalem. A variety of musicians have been assembled. The ark will now move to the capital city and return to a place of public worship. All has been readied. The ark is placed on a new cart and Abinadab's sons accompany it.

## Storm Clouds in the Distance

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 7:2 says the ark remained there 20 years, but that appears to be the marking of time until Samuel called the Israelites together at Mizpah. The time the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim is calculated by looking at the date the Ark was taken captive by the Philistines at the battle of Aphek, the fact that Samuel had a lengthy reign as judge, Saul reigned 40 years, and David is several years into his reign. Also see: Nelson Study Bible, page 462, New Defenders Study Bible page 448, and Annals of the World by Ussher, pages 57-60.

Do you see the storm clouds rising in the distance? You have to be a pretty detailed reader of Old Testament history to recognize them, but a significant storm is about to hit this national procession. You see our God is a God of order. He had not only provided the exact dimensions and materials to be used in the construction of the ark, but he had prescribed very specific details regarding the handling of all of the articles of worship. In Numbers 4 we read:

<sup>4</sup>"This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things: <sup>5</sup>When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. <sup>6</sup> Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles. . . . <sup>15</sup> And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; <sup>b</sup>but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

The ark was to be carried; it was not to be put on a cart, new or otherwise. And now here we have 30,000 Israelites, prominent men, nobles, priests assembled under the leadership of King David, accompanied by musicians, about to begin the procession with the ark on a new cart. Now, that we know the context, we realize that this is a clear violation of God's law, one for which he had even told them the punishment and we cringe to see what will happen next.

### **Scripture Passage Continued: 2 Samuel 6:6**

**<sup>6</sup>And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup>Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. <sup>9</sup>David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" <sup>10</sup>So David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.**

The procession has turned from a festive parade to somber tragedy. The ark will not be going to Jerusalem, at least not today. Uzzah is dead. David is angry. David is afraid. We are at first puzzled, why does God respond in such a fierce and destructive way? Doesn't he realize that this is a joyous celebration, a worship service?

Maybe we are asking the wrong questions. Why in the world did the nation under the leadership of King David choose to transport the ark in a way that clearly violated scripture? Why didn't God kill all 30,000 men or at least the leaders who were responsible? Why doesn't God kill David who clearly must have known the requirements of moving the ark? Commentator, Matthew says, "I wonder how so wise

and good a man as David was, that conversed so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight. We will charitably hope that it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.<sup>5</sup>

## **Lessons to Learn**

### **Relationship and Reverence**

Let's hit the pause button here in the life of David and contemplate some of the implications for our own worship that we can learn from this event. The first is that of Relationship and Reverence. When we approach God we are dealing with an important dichotomy, that of relationship and reverence. The Christian religion is the only one that focuses on human beings being in a personal intimate relationship with God. We can talk with Him (through prayer). He communicates to us (through his Word, the Bible). He comforts us, guides us, and gives us insight (through His Holy Spirit). We can have a personal intimate relationship with God.

David knew God in a very intimate way. He prayed to Him. He sought His advice at many key points in His life. He was sensitive to God's approach to him through others. He poured out his heart to God through songs and poetry. David had a very close personal relationship with God.

We can have that kind of relationship too. However, we must never forget that no matter how intimate or familiar our relationship with God; it is not a relationship among equals. God is the Holy Sovereign of the Universe. He makes decisions for His Glory and His Honor. He is not bound by time or space. By the word of His Mouth He spoke the universe into being and by His mere words He can destroy His enemies. He is to be revered, respected, and even feared.

The Ark was the symbol of His Earthly presence, the place where God dwelt. The people could not treat it casually because it represented God himself. We don't know from the passage, but perhaps David and the people thought they knew a more expedient progressive way to transport the ark, but God had not given them that prerogative. He had given clear explicit instructions for the treatment of the ark. They had violated those. God had followed through with the clear punishment he had promised.

The passage says after Uzzah was struck dead, David was angry, and then he was afraid. He seems to take a step back in his relationship with God. He is hurt and suffering, and trying to understand what God is doing and why. We often do that too when we are hurt, afraid, and suffering.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry. Commentary on the Whole Bible: 2 Samuel 6. On-line version accessed through crosswalk.com.

However, and I think this was one of the key aspects in David's relationship with God, he refused to walk away from God in the difficult times. In times of sin and sadness, he chose to stay in relationship with God even when it hurt.

After a time of reflection and contemplation David figures out the problem with his worship. He neglected to follow God's instructions regarding moving the ark. Now with that piece of information integrated into the procession, and certainly a fresh understanding of the holiness of God, he begins again.

### **Scripture Passage Continued: 2 Samuel 6:11-19**

**<sup>11</sup>The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. <sup>12</sup>Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. <sup>13</sup>And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep.**

**<sup>14</sup>Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup>So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. <sup>16</sup>Now as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. <sup>17</sup>So they brought the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. <sup>18</sup>And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. <sup>19</sup>Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.**

### **Worldly Words and Attitudes**

It had indeed been a great day of celebration. The ark has been brought to the city of Jerusalem. The kingdom is united under King David and the center piece of worship has been restored to a place of honor and reverence by the nation. Unfortunately, David's storm clouds are not behind him, a very big one is waiting for him at home.

**<sup>20</sup>Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"**

Don't you just cringe at the thoughtlessness of her words. I do because sometimes I have failed to be a blessing to my husband because of thoughtless words I have uttered that were destructive to his spirit. I realize that Michal has been through a lot. She was the daughter of King Saul, isn't it interesting that the passage identifies her that way, as opposed to describing her as the wife of David. Saul had even brought him up from their home in his bed to kill him. David had to flee and Michal was given to another man in marriage.

King David picked up a few extra wives in the intervening years, but eventually he demanded her return with her husband walked behind wailing. So, yes, she has had a difficult life. However, she is now at home, married to the King of the Israel. David has just experienced one of the spiritual highlights of his life. He returns to his home, to his wife, to bless his household and what a greeting he received.

No matter what difficulties you have faced in your life, at some point you are going to have to choose whether to align yourself with God and his people or reject Him and them. Michal chose to reject God and his people. Her responses to worship reveal her heart.

**<sup>21</sup> So David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor." <sup>23</sup> Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.**

David had learned a lot about worship in the past few months and he wasn't about to throw away those lessons lightly. He had learned to esteem the praise of God and His approval more than the approval of others, even his own wife. Either David refused to have a sexual relationship with Michal ever again or she was simply unable to have children; but either way the line of Saul came to an end while the Kingdom of David continued being established for eternity.

This brings us to a second important lesson we can learn from the passage. **As women we must be careful about the influence our words and attitudes can have on the worship expression of those close to us.** We have a special access to the hearts of those close to us; especially our husbands, our children, and our grandchildren. If we are not careful we can put ourselves in the position of worship critic, evaluating others' worship through the lens of our generation and our comfort level. We can really bring down those close to us when we apply the standard of personal opinion to another's worship. God is the one who evaluates worship and though it may at times be appropriate for us to give input to those close to us we need to be very careful in this role and responsibility. The Bible provides examples of many acceptable ways to worship.

## **Timeless Principles of Worship**

This brings us to logical question of, How can we know some of the timeless principles for worship that is pleasing to God?" Since David found out the hard way that God's instructions cannot be simply set aside even when the heart is sincere and eager to please him, we need to be very concerned that we do not violate God's instructions. What are some of those principles that if we violate them out of blatant disobedience or ignorance we place ourselves in great peril just as the one who reached out and touched the ark? As I said earlier, I am no expert on worship, but here are what seem to me to be Three Timeless Principles for Worship.

### **The Commandments**

By Commandments I mean the whole instructions contained in the Bible. However, as part of those instructions the actual 10 Commandments provide us with some the oldest of God's transmitted standards for worship.

The first Commandment, You shall have no other Gods before me, is a clear instruction for worship. We can never engage in worship that simply treats the God of the Bible as one among many. God is above everything. In this age of tolerance and an attitude that all religions are equal this commandment can take real focus to maintain in worship settings. God is not equal to, He is above all.

The second Commandment, You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. Sometimes, I think when we hear that commandment read we simply, at least in a literal sense, say well, at least we are not doing that. But be careful not to casually check this command off as completed. The Israelites for their entire existence in the Old Testament could never rid themselves of this temptation. It was the reason for their eventual destruction. We should be mindful of the temptation to create idols for ourselves, maybe in our culture we don't have idols of wood and stone, but we have plenty of other likely candidates.

We must follow God's commands, recorded in the Bible for worship. But . . . you may be saying, what about those commands for worship that don't fit our current society? For example, we don't have a tabernacle. Even that situation is addressed in the Bible. The Book of Hebrews explains this mystery in great detail, especially chapter 9 and I highly recommend you read it, perhaps even in your small group time. But the bottom line is that the Tabernacle and everything in it and associated with it was a symbol to teach and prepare us for the appearance of Christ and his sacrifice on the Cross. Once you have the reality you no longer celebrate the shadow of the reality.

## **The Christ**

A Second Timeless Principle for Worship is Christ. Jesus is the Christ. Our worship must always have Christ at the forefront. We cannot simply hide behind descriptors lauding Him as a good teacher, or a good moral person. We cannot enter into worship that simply recognizes a nameless "Higher Power" so that we can skirt around the issue of Jesus Christ. He is our Lord, he is the centerpiece of our salvation. Our worship must reflect that.

## **The Cross**

The final timeless principle for worship is the Cross. We can never set it aside or even place it in the background. We can help remove some of the offenses that people might find to the gospel. We can change our church name, we can enlarge our space, we can use drama, and music; but we can never remove the offense of the cross. <sup>1</sup> Corinthians 1: <sup>22</sup>**For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;** <sup>23</sup> **but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks Foolishness,** <sup>24</sup>**but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

I find this story in the life of David to be rather sobering. Someone died because they did not approach worship properly. That should make all of us pause. The account is sobering because we learn that God means what he says. That should motivate us to find out what he is saying. However, it may make us angry and afraid because He said, We have all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and The wages of sin is death . . . (Romans 6:23).

But it also should give us great hope because God has come to seek us out, to build a relationship with us, just like he built one with David. He came to give us the free gift of personally and completely paying for our sins on the Cross through the sacrifice of His only Son Jesus Christ. May we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.