

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for August 8: Focus on God's purpose

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In a time characterized as the Age of Information, not only is information readily available, but so is advice. Newspapers are filled with people offering advice for everything from politics to personal relationships. Television has everything from Oprah to Dr. Phil anxiously waiting to tell the audience how to live life. Bookstores are packed full with personal encouragements for action. Yet, in a time when so much advice is available, many people seem to be searching for direction. When David dreamed of building a house for God to inhabit, he learned a valuable lesson about seeking advice and direction from God.

Good intentions (2 Samuel 7:1-7)

David had achieved great success as a leader. His victories on the battlefield had earned Israel a period of relative peace. Given additional time, David no doubt began to look around at other things needing his attention.

He made an astute observation concerning the Ark of the Covenant. In a dialogue with Nathan the prophet, David points out, "I am living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent" (v. 2). Without consulting God, the prophet tells the king to do "whatever you have in mind ... for the Lord is with you" (v. 3). Nathan no doubt based his opinion on the successes God had given to David in days past. Anytime God's leaders base future successes on past experiences without consulting God for his direction, failure or difficult times cannot be far away.

Though not stated in this text but revealed in other passages of Scripture, David had purposed in his heart to build a temple for God's habitation. David's purpose was noble; it did not appear equitable for the king to live in a palace while the presence of God was relegated to a tent. David even went as far as to consult the prophet for his input and direction, and he received the prophet's blessing. David's mistake was his failure to consult God for direction.

Times change and people do not. Even today, many believers have ideas concerning what they can do for God. Like David, their intentions are good. It is not uncommon for a body of believers to strike out in a direction with noble intentions. Like Nathan, many spiritual leaders will bless and endorse good ideas and ministries, but good is the enemy of what is best. Any idea, no matter how good the intention, is less than ideal without the express blessing of God.

God's intentions (2 Samuel 7:11-16)

After having given David the green light to proceed, Nathan has an audience with God (v. 4). God reminds Nathan his earthly presence always had been in a tent, not in a temple (v. 6). God then reveals to Nathan his intentions concerning David's future and the prospects of building a temple for God's presence.

God's will for David was the building of a house through his lineage. The temple David was to build would be a monument to the indwelling presence of God in the hearts of his people (v. 11). The temple God chose to have David build was a spiritual dynasty through which God's greatest blessing, the Lord Jesus Christ, would come.

In addition, Nathan reveals to David his dream of a suitable place for God's presence to abide would come to pass through David's son (v. 13). Scripture reveals David's son Solomon as the builder of a temple for God

whose beauty and grandeur would never be surpassed.

The intentions and purposes of God take on his nature. God sees the entirety of his purposes for man. His will may have immediate gratification, or his will may have a long-term affect, even for eternity. Man only sees what can be accomplished in the immediate and must rely on the revelation of God to achieve God's long-term objectives.

Humble submission (2 Samuel 7:18-21)

It is in David's response to God's revelation that the central teaching of this lesson is realized. After hearing the prophet expound on God's direction, David immediately sought the Lord himself (v. 18). David could have come before the Lord with a multitude of different emotions ranging from anger to disappointment. Yet, he chose to come before the Lord with great humility. David sees himself in light of who he is (vv. 18-19). Any negative feelings he possessed seem to have been turned into thanksgiving.

The last portion of David's prayer to God reveals the proper response to be exhibited when a believer seeks God's will and discovers God's plan even when they run contrary to the believers ideas. David said, "For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant (v. 21).

What began with David's ideas of grandeur turns into a humble submission to the will of God. God's revelation was clear, and David's response was proper and right.

Conclusion

Someone once said, "Put four Baptists in a room, and they will emerge with five opinions." Many, if not most, active followers of the Lord have ideas concerning ways to serve and honor the Lord. Many of those ideas come from hearts and minds with good intentions. Some are even endorsed by

other believers. Yet, they will never rise to the level of success unless they are consistent with God's plan revealed through the indwelling of his Spirit.