

Lesson 10 | August 6, 2023

Building the Temple

Study Text: 1 Kings 5:1–18; 6:11–13; 2 Chronicles 3:1 through 5:14

Central Truth: Meticulous instructions from God require meticulous acts of obedience.

Key Verse: 1 Kings 6:11–12

The word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father (KJV).

The Lord gave this message to Solomon: “Concerning this Temple you are building, if you keep all my decrees and regulations and obey all my commands, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father, David” (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will explore the wisdom Solomon displayed.
- Students will discover new ways to offer their talents to God.
- Students will seek God’s presence, asking Him to draw them closer to himself.

Introducing the Study

Say: In our busy lives, it is easy to get so caught up in the big stuff that we ignore the little things or even cut corners. Sometimes that decision can come back to haunt us.

Opening Activity—The Small Things

Ask. Have you ever made the mistake of overlooking small details only to suffer big consequences? Explain. Invite students to share personal examples, which might include neglecting an inexpensive car or home repair only to suffer severe damage later.

Say: Ignoring the details or not taking the small stuff seriously can be costly. For the Christian, it can even lead to spiritual problems. What begins as a little compromise or neglect can end up causing us to cut corners on bigger and bigger issues. Today’s lesson examines this concept from a practical perspective. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Luke 16:10–13, Jesus teaches about faithfulness in things that might be regarded as “small” or unworthy of much attention. As we look at the preceding parable (verses 1–9), we see He has more than spiritual matters in view. Indeed, one’s faithfulness in “spiritual” details is often borne out in practical, day-to-day faithfulness regarding tangible things—in this case, money.

Centuries before Jesus' instruction on this matter, Solomon paid close attention to the countless details involved in building the temple. In today's lesson, we will note how the king was careful to follow God's instructions to the letter. Such an example can speak to us today as we set out to be faithful to Him in all we do—whether obeying His commands or displaying integrity as we interact with friends and neighbors.

Part 1—Wise Preparations for Building

Aid from a Friend

1 Kings 5:1–12

Say: The wise way is not necessarily the difficult way. This passage from 1 Kings 5 describes Solomon receiving aid from a family friend. He didn't refuse this aid because the friend was a Gentile or because Solomon was set on doing this project on his own. Instead, he wisely accepted this invaluable aid. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Interestingly, Scripture begins the account of building the temple with the mention of David's friendship with a neighboring king. It is an important part of the story. The friendship between David and King Hiram of Tyre is first mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:11 when Hiram sent cedar timber, carpenters, and stonemasons to help build David's palace.

Tyre was an important city in David and Solomon's time. With a population of around forty thousand, it occupied the Mediterranean coast of what is now Lebanon, as well as an island just offshore. The island held two harbors, and the mainland portion was protected by a 150-foot wall. The city was also surrounded by fertile and well-watered soil. Thus, it was a strategic city for both military and economic reasons, and it was known for being well-fortified (see Joshua 19:29). During King Hiram's reign, Tyre controlled much of the surrounding area, perhaps reaching as far north as Gebal, a city seventy miles away. Tyre was influential and prosperous.

It was a wise decision for Solomon to maintain friendship with King Hiram. Israel was in a strategic position as well, forming a land bridge between the desert to the east and the sea to the west. The nation accommodated trade between the empires of the north and south, adding to the prosperity of Israel's fertile lands.

All of this creates the backstory for verses 3–6. The cedars of Lebanon were greatly prized in building, and the craftsmen of Tyre (the "Sidonians" in verse 6) were known throughout the ancient world for their exceptional talents. Further, God had blessed Solomon and Israel with peace among their neighboring kingdoms. A friendly alliance between Israel and Tyre would benefit both and provide the means to "build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God" (verse 5, NLT). Note that Solomon seeks to honor

the reputation and fame of the Lord rather than his own—a good principle for us to keep in mind as we seek God’s wisdom.

The king of Tyre welcomed Solomon’s request, promising to supply all that was needed in exchange for a plentiful amount of two of Israel’s greatest commodities: wheat and olive oil. The two formed an alliance of peace that would serve Solomon well as he and the nation prospered.

We can learn a great deal from Solomon’s wisdom in his dealings with Hiram, specifically as we consider how to best interact with the world around us. While James 4:4 warns us against “friendship with the world” (NLT), we are reminded in the full context of verses 1–10 that the phrase the world is often used in Scripture to identify the ungodly systems within the world. As we go about our lives, we are wise to cultivate good relationships with those around us, whether we share a neighborhood or a business connection.

Discuss

? What are some benefits and blessings that can come from good, godly relationships with unbelieving neighbors, friends, and business contacts?

? How can we ensure that our relationships with unbelievers are proper and godly?

Gathering Materials

1 Kings 5:13–18

Say: How do you prepare for a big project God has called you to do? Solomon provides us with some insight in 1 Kings 5:13–18. He didn’t simply sit still and say, “God will work all of this out.” Instead, he applied himself and his God-given wisdom to properly complete the serious task before him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

One can clearly see the orderliness and organization Solomon displayed on this project as he sent thirty thousand Israelite men to Lebanon in rotating, one-month shifts. This allowed each man to be home for two months before returning to work in Lebanon (1 Kings 5:13–14). The seventy thousand “common laborers” (verse 15, NLT) carried supplies, and they were joined by eighty thousand stonecutters. Such a project required thirty-six hundred supervisors as the stone was cut and shaped. This was an extremely complex operation for its time, considering the fact Jerusalem and Tyre were separated by well over one hundred miles. Verse 18 (NLT) also mentions “men from the city of Gebal” (some translations use the alternate city name “Byblos”), who helped prepare timber and stone for the temple before it was sent south to Jerusalem. This mention of a city in northern Lebanon is another reminder of the outside assistance and expertise that was employed in the temple construction process.

First Kings 5 details the diverse talents and roles—and above all, wisdom— required to bring such a large project into reality. This principle is especially true in the spiritual realm. We are called to use the gifts and talents God has given us and utilize the

wisdom He has made available to anyone who asks. Wise leaders take stock of not only their own God-given abilities but also those of fellow believers. Some roles are more prominent, like the supervisors and stonecutters in 1 Kings 5:15–16. Others work behind the scenes. Yet God has established each of our roles so we can function together as the Church. May we never fail to appreciate, respect, and mobilize not only the gifts God has given us but also those He has given others.

Resource Packet Item 1: The Church as a Body

Distribute the worksheet and discuss it briefly as a class. Because this is a wide-ranging worksheet, encourage students to complete it and ponder its questions during the week. Time permitting, discuss the results next week.

Discuss

? How has your life been blessed by the talents and gifts of other Christians?

? What talents and gifts has God given to you, and how can you use these to bless those around you?

Part 2—The Temple Built A Magnificent Structure

2 Chronicles 3:1 through 4:22

Say: As we read about the construction of the temple, the beautiful and ornate features remind us that it was no ordinary building. It would be the place God dwelt with His people. Still today, God is worthy of our best. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Resource Packet Item 2: A Floor Plan of the Temple

Distribute the information sheet to each student. Briefly discuss its content as time permits, then refer to it as appropriate throughout the lesson. [Note: This information sheet may prove valuable in coming lessons as well.].

The first mention of building a temple appears in Deuteronomy 12:11, and the following verses describe it as a central feature of life in the Promised Land. Centuries later, the temple was about to become a reality under Solomon’s leadership. The location on Mount Moriah connected the temple with God’s substitutionary sacrifice, since this was the place Abraham had been prepared to sacrifice Isaac until God provided a ram (Genesis 22:1–14). From Abraham’s time on, Mount Moriah was called “the mountain of the Lord” (verse 14, NLT).

Temple construction began in Solomon’s fourth year as king and continued for seven years. Among the many details throughout 2 Chronicles 3–4, several are worthy of special note. There is repeated emphasis on precious metals, particularly gold, which increases in grade as one moves toward the Most Holy Place: “pure gold” in 3:4; “fine

gold” in verse 5; and gold from “Parvaim” (likely located in Arabia) in verse 6. The emphasis here is that the finest gold available was used in the temple. The amount of gold used is staggering: Verse 8 mentions six hundred talents (KJV) or approximately forty-two thousand pounds—and that was just for the Most Holy Place.

Chapter 4 goes on to describe the immensity of the building and the grandeur of its contents. At thirty to thirty-five feet square and more than fifteen feet high, the bronze altar offered a dramatic visual aid as one entered the temple (verses 1–3). This place of sacrifice reminded worshipers that God could only be approached after atonement had been made. The bronze “Sea” (verse 4, NLT) was used by the priests for ceremonial washing, and it measured fifteen to seventeen feet across and more than seven feet high (see also 1 Kings 7:26, noting that it held about eleven thousand gallons of water).

Much of the remainder of 2 Chronicles 4 lists the vast number of utensils produced, especially those finished by Hiram-abi, the exceptionally skilled craftsman provided by King Hiram of Tyre (see 2:13, NLT, noting that Hiram-abi means “Hiram is my father” and likely refers to the king’s immense respect for Hiram rather than any family relationship). The temple was made of the finest materials crafted by the most skilled artisans. Although the amount of gold used in construction was recorded, the amount of bronze seems to have been so immense that it could not be calculated (4:18).

Discuss

? What does the immense size and value of the temple teach us about who God is and how we ought to approach Him? (Emphasize that approaching God reverently is not related to any financial or numerical value but is determined by our regard and respect for Him. Approaching God is wholly different from approaching anyone or anything else.)

Walk, Obey, and Keep

1 Kings 6:11–13

Say: First Kings 6:11–13 records God’s words to Solomon while temple construction was underway. Although this message was given to an Old Testament king, its words speak powerfully to us today. God’s fundamental desire is to dwell in the midst of His people.

(Share your highlights from the following text.)

Note the threefold instruction in 1 Kings 6:11–13, placed within a detailed description of the building. These verses are inseparable from the larger project of temple building. God would dwell among them and never abandon them “if . . .” (verse 12). Sadly, God’s people often forgot this important qualifier. His presence was assured as long as they held to Him as their God. They were to “keep all my decrees and regulations and obey all my commands” (verse 12, NLT). This example of Hebrew poetic parallelism reinforces a key truth by repeating it in similar poetic wording and style. If they obeyed His commands, God would live among them and never abandon them (verse 13).

Verses 12–13 echo God’s words to His people in the Law, specifically Leviticus 26:1–13. There, God expanded on the nature of His blessings and mentioned specific commands representing the larger body of commands God gave His people throughout the Law. Like in 1 Kings, the key focus was following God and obeying His instructions, both in deed and motive.

Believers today can be tempted to overlook 1 Kings 6 and Leviticus 26, because they represent the Old Testament Law and we follow Christ. However, keep these two facts in mind: (1) Jesus said anyone who claims to love Him will keep His commands (John 14:15) and (2) Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). He continues in Matthew by defining righteousness in terms of the true meaning of the Law (verses 21–48), elevating the moral teachings of the Law by highlighting a person’s inner motives and desires. These commands are not the means to salvation. Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God were accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection and are received by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:9–10). These commands are not meant to enslave us but to free us to pursue abundant life in Christ (see Matthew 11:28–30; John 10:10).

Discuss

? What is the difference between living rightly to obey and honor God and living under religious legalism?

? Why do you think God has always linked obedience to a good and healthy relationship with Him, both in the Old and New Testaments?

Part 3—God’s Presence Fills the Temple

The Holy Utensils Brought to the House

2 Chronicles 5:1–6

Say: The completion of the temple is recorded in 2 Chronicles 5. At last, it was ready for its purpose of ministry and worship in the name of the Lord. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Solomon’s first order of business was to have the tabernacle and all its utensils brought to the temple (2 Chronicles 5:5). The mention of David in verse 1 provides continuity between the two great kings, reinforcing the fact that God was working within the covenant He had made with His people.

This continuity expanded when all the leaders of the tribes of Israel were summoned (verse 2). The Levites and priests were tasked with bringing the tabernacle items and the ark from the tent David had pitched for it in Zion (verses 3–5; note that not every person from the tribe of Levi was a priest, though every priest was a Levite.)

Then the entire nation offered sacrifices to God “before the ark” (verse 6). Obviously, the huge mass of people would cover a large area of ground. Yet Scripture is careful to describe Israel’s act of devotion in terms of perfect unity. The sacrifices they offered were so numerous that they could not be counted.

The emphasis on unity is key. God desires His people to be of one heart and mind. This is not uniformity, because there is diversity among God’s people. Rather, God desires that we come to Him as one Body—unified in faith and devotion—to serve Him in humble worship. This is what Jesus prayed in John 17:20–24: that the disciples and the generations that followed them would be perfectly unified for His glory.

Discuss

? What does it mean for God’s people to be unified?

? Name some things that damage our unity. How can these things be avoided?

The Glory of the Lord Filled the House

2 Chronicles 5:7–14

Say: This passage is familiar to many Christians, powerfully describing God’s presence among His people. It is our joyous reminder that God desires to be present with us as we surrender to Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Once the ark had been brought into the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies (2 Chronicles 5:7–10), the priests returned to the outer area of the temple and began offering praises to the Lord. Amid their praise, a cloud filled the temple (verse 13). Reminiscent of a similar scene in Exodus 40:34–35, the cloud communicated God’s awesome presence and unapproachable glory. It also conveyed His immense power and command over the entire natural world (see Psalm 29:3–9; 97:2; 104:3). It is not surprising that the priests were unable to continue ministering. God’s presence will bring His people to their knees, either literally or in heart and mind. There in His presence, we are reminded of our status before Him and how desperately we need Him to sustain all aspects of our lives.

Resource Packet Item 3: A Dwelling of the Holy Spirit

Distribute the worksheet, inviting students to complete it in small groups or individually. Then, discuss their responses.

Discuss

? What are some ways we might respond to God’s presence among us?

? Describe a time when you were powerfully moved by God’s presence. What was your reaction?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: The description of God preparing a place to dwell among His people and then filling that place with His presence is both glorious and sobering. We long for the presence of God, to know Him more deeply, but His presence will always move us to a place of humble worship and self-examination.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Seek out Christian friends who have blessed you in some way through the use of their talents, and thank them for what they have done.
- Ask God to show you new ways you might be of service in the kingdom of God.
- Pray that you will more fully appreciate the glory and greatness of God, and express that appreciation with worship and obedience to Him.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Adam and Eve's Disobedience.
Genesis 3:1–7

Tuesday:

Noah's Obedience.
Genesis 6:11–22

Wednesday:

Abram's Obedience.
Genesis 12:1–5

Thursday:

Jesus' Obedience to His Parents.
Luke 2:41–52

Friday:

Jesus' Obedience through Suffering.
Hebrews 5:7–10

Saturday:

Keep Christ's Commands.
1 John 2:3–8