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CHAPTER 7

Overcoming Distractions

Polygamy, Palaces, and Philistines

Shaken by Uzzah's death, King David delayed bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. He occupied himself with multiple wives, building projects, and fighting Philistines.¹ Angry and afraid, David pursued alternate activities, which distracted him from accomplishing his primary mission. Replacing the presence of the Lord with wives, work, and warfare did not however, extinguish David's passion for God—or God's passion for David. When sin (literally, missing the mark) abounds, God's grace abounds much more.²

Israel was on the verge of an unprecedented breakthrough. Before Philistine forces captured the Ark, it radiated God's glory from the inner chamber of Moses' Tabernacle.³ Initially sheltered across the wilderness, then at Gilgal, then Shiloh (400 yrs.), then Mount Gibeon (70 yrs.), then posing at Ebenezer as a battlefield good luck charm, then Ashdod (7 mos.), then Kirjath-jearim (20 yrs.), and finally six miles outside Jerusalem at the house of Obed-Edom (3 mos.). While devoted priests offered sacrifices at Moses' Tabernacle on Mount Gibeon, David chose to relocate the Ark atop Mount Zion under an innovative shelter.

David was about to activate a radical initiative with prophetic implications beyond Jesus' resurrection. He envisioned a venue with around the clock praise that would facilitate continual access to God's presence. David was about to change the spiritual atmosphere for generations to come, not only for Israel, but for all people everywhere. After Jesus ascended into heaven, God activated His promise to personally restore David's Tabernacle. Quoting from Amos 9, James summed up God's intention during the council of Jerusalem.

¹ 1 Chronicles 13:11-3, 14:1-3, 15:1-2

² Romans 5:20

³ 1 Chronicles 21:29

The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: “‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’—things known from long ago. (Acts 15:15-18 NIV)

No wonder spiritual forces assaulted David with gigantic opposition. The leverage exerted by multiple marriages attempted to pry David’s heart away from his first love. They assaulted the eternal purpose stamped on his heart. Polygamy, like adultery and pornography, exert immense pressure on the human mind, will, and emotions. They spike the blood with potent hormones designed to evoke a passionate response between one man and one woman. Copious partners suppressed David’s resolve, precisely when an audacious connecting point was about to emerge. Substitute relationships temporarily clouded David’s focus. Providing housing for their welfare syphoned his attention from the pending season change.

With God’s presence delayed at the house of Obed-Edom, David turned his attention elsewhere. Consumed by attractive queens, appealing personalities, and royal allies whom he had wed, David prevented esteemed men from marrying admired women. He deprived premier brides from enjoying a one-man, one-woman blessing. In so doing, David altered Israel’s gene pool and set a detrimental precedent for future kings. His son King Solomon married 700 wives of royal heritage and acquired 300 concubines; they caused him to eventually turn from God and follow pagan deities.⁴

Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father established strict standards for strong marriages. He said,

“at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Mark 10:6-9 NIV)

David took women he did not need and married those whom God did not offer. Distracted by relational substitutes, he sacrificed family integrity and compromised his mission.

Five centuries before Samuel anointed Israel’s first king, God prohibited royal polygamy. He decreed in the Law of Moses that Israel’s king *“shall not multiply*

⁴ | Kings 11:3-4

wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away”.⁵ David corrupted God’s gift of marriage by dividing his heart among multiple affections. Rather than abiding by God’s ideal of one man united with one woman, David staggered under the weight of matrimony; he splurged on conjugal unions.⁶ David had married Michal, Saul’s daughter, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, Abigail the widow of Nabal, Maacah daughter of Talmal King of Gesher, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah.⁷ In Jerusalem, David married additional wives and acquired surplus concubines. Dominated by imperial libido, lust eventually caused David to overdose on adultery—He took Uriah’s wife Bathsheba and arranged for his death in battle.

Failing to appreciate the value of an exclusive union, David grabbed for the wind and gave birth to a genealogical whirlwind. Excess unions diluted his pedigree and destabilized his progeny. Multiple wives complicated his affairs and confounded his priorities. Rotating from wife to wife and concubine to concubine established a culture of moral instability and emotional insecurity. Competing affections corrupted the fidelity of future kings with social compromise, pagan mixture, and domestic dysfunction.

War Captivated David’s Attention

David lived much of his adult life under the threat of violent enemies. While he pursued family affairs, the Philistines intensified their search to kill him. They mounted a militant assault to destroy Israel’s leader who was forever changing the spiritual dynamics. At stake was access to the glory of God radiating from the Ark of the Covenant—set on the Mercy Seat between two Cherubim.

As the “*Master of Breakthroughs*”, God defended David by strengthening Israel’s ability to fight effectively.⁸ Divine power broke through his enemies like a “*breakthrough of waters*”.⁹ This military victory saved David but failed to satisfy his desire to connect others with God’s magnificent presence. Entertaining wives, erecting palaces, and evicting enemies proved to be an inferior substitute for David’s ambition.

David, “swore to the LORD And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, ‘Surely I will not enter my house, Nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes Or

⁵ Deuteronomy 17:17 NAS

⁶ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31

⁷ 1 Chronicles 14:3; 2 Samuel 3:3-5; 2 Samuel 5:13

⁸ 2 Samuel 5:20 and 1 Chronicles 14:11 NAS

⁹ 2 Samuel 5:20 and 1 Chronicles 14:11 NAS

slumber to my eyelids, Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” (Psalms 132:2-5 NAS)

In haste to bring the Ark into his city, David had previously neglected a practical consideration. After attending to himself, his wives, estates, and security, he finally established Mount Zion as the place to accommodate massive praise gatherings. David refocused his ruling passion and *“prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it.”*¹⁰

Extravagant Reverence (2 Samuel 6:12-23 and 1 Chronicles 15)

After a three month of diversion, David arranged for consecrated priests to transfer the Ark from Obed-Edom’s house to Mount Zion. With God’s help, unnamed priests shared the weight of the Ark while an all-inclusive entourage venerated God with the reverence He deserves. Consistent with David’s fame as *“the sweet psalmist of Israel”*, they generated glorious praise and offered extravagant sacrifices.¹¹

*And so it was, when **God helped the Levites** who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.... Thus **all Israel** brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and harps. (1 Chronicles 15:26, 28 NIV)*

Given a second chance, David abandoned short cuts for connecting with God. Rather than using oxen to carry the Ark, he sacrificed an ox, along with a fatling every six paces. This tempo demonstrates extreme respect for the presence of the Lord, the process, and the people. It allowed all Israel to participate in bringing the Ark into their community. With joyful shouting, and musical celebration they completed their mission together.

Instead of flaunting elite privilege associated with royal nobility, David stripped down to the status of a humble priest. Arrayed with the beauty of holiness, David escorted God’s presence to Mount Zion. Rejoicing, dancing, leaping, and exuberant whirling propelled David as he joined the house of Israel in celebrating their long-awaited connection with God’s presence.

¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 15:1 NAS

¹¹ 2 Samuel 23:1; Psalm 66:2

*And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he **sacrificed an ox and a fatling**. And David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod [garment of a priest]. So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet. (2 Samuel 6:13-15 NAS)*

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