

ASSESSING YOUR LEIFEWORR

2 Samuel 5:9-12; 7:1-5, 8-11, 18-21

Purpose: Find criteria for assessing whether our lives and work are aligned with God's purposes and to evaluate the extent we are living and working in line with those purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we find ourselves asking a question something like this: "Is what I am doing now, what God intends for me to do?" In other words, "Is THIS (whatever "this" is) God's will for my life?" For those who are fairly young and are looking to choose a career path, the tendency is to focus on the future and try to make an assessment of what they might be doing later on in their lives. Those who are middle age and are in the midst of job or career, they may take a more present-day view point. Some of us who are past retirement age may be thinking that it is too late to ask that question unless you are looking in the rearview mirror.

When you think about it, regardless of your age or where you are in life's journey, we need to look at such a question in all three perspectives - past, present, and future. All three age groups can look at the past to find what has happened in our lives that has prepared and brought us to the present situation we are in. Why look back? That assessment may give us some insight that could help us determine if we are now doing what we have been prepared to do. We can also look at the present situation and ask what is happening to us now that is preparing us for the future and how we might change what is happening now if it appears that the probable future outcome is not in keeping with what we understand is God's purpose for our lives. (Of course, this implies that we know what God's purpose is for our lives - to be conformed to the image of His Son.)

At this point, let's just hold these thoughts with the intention of revisiting it a little later to look at it from a different perspective.

GAINING INSIGHT FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

We would like to gain some insight into making an assessment of our lifework by looking at the life of David when he was in the early part of his reign as king. The passages from 2 Samuel Chapters 5 and 7 look at events related to David's acceptance to be king over all Israel and up to the point where he was exploring the possibility of building a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant.

There are several themes that can be seen in these chapters:

1. Unification of the nation following the death of Ish-bosheth.
2. The centralization of both government and worship in Jerusalem.
3. Remembrance of the Lord's presence with David that enabled success on the battlefield.
4. The priority David put on seeking the Lord's direction before he took action.
5. David's desire to build a house for the Lord that was better than his palace.
6. Prophecy regarding the Lord's intent to perpetuate David's dynasty or lineage.

Throughout all these themes, we can see the background of God's active leadership in David's life on behalf of His people Israel. David had moved to Hebron and was anointed as king of Judah when he was 30 years old. The age is significant in that age 30 is when priests (of the tribe of Levi) were thought to be old enough to assume office. It is also the age at which Jesus began His earthly ministry. David reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years, at which time, the leaders of the other tribes came to him and requested that he be king over all of Israel. This was God's intent when

Samuel anointed David nearly a quarter of a century earlier. David showed remarkable patience in waiting upon the Lord to bring about His will and purpose for the nation of Israel.

David was anointed three times in his life and each time represented a significant change. The first time was when God chose him to be king of Israel. The significant thing that happened was that the Spirit of the Lord took control of David. The second anointing was when the tribe of Judah recognized David as king. David showed grace in his dealing with people as seen when he sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead to acknowledge their kindness to Saul and that graciousness helped to secure their loyalty. The third anointing was by the other tribes of Israel when he was accepted to be their king. At that point, David responded by entering into a covenant with them and he moved the capital to Jerusalem which was more centrally located.

Before Jerusalem could be used as the capital (center) for the nation, it had to be set free from the control of the Jebusites. These people were Canaanites who had not been eliminated during the initial conquest of the land by Joshua. Both Judah and Benjamin had attacked Jerusalem and had some initial success (Judges 1:8) but in Judges 1:21 we see

²¹But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

As is the case, when pagan elements are not eliminated, they take over and by the time of David, the entire city was under the control of the Jebusites and they had no interest in coming under the rule of David as the king of Israel. So David finished was **not done** when the Children of Israel first occupied the Promised Land.

Do we see any parallels to our lives, in what was needed with regard to Jerusalem?

[Jerusalem is representative of the center of control for the nation. It was an ancient city and was referred to as Salem during the time of Abraham. The king of the city during Abraham's time was Melchizedek. He was priest of The Most High God and is a type of Christ (or a Christ figure in the Old Testament). We can imply from this that Jerusalem had always been on God's agenda to be the seat of government for His chosen people.]

So, what is the "seat of government" for us Christians as God's people? It is the heart. If we are to bring the center under the control of God's King and establish God's government in our heart, then we must first eradicate the sinful inhabitants (elements) of the land (heart). Just as was the case with David moving into Jerusalem where he had to fight a physical battle to get rid of the sinful inhabitants, we will have spiritual battles in which we engage in order to get rid of the sinful things in our lives.

⁹So David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. 2 Samuel 5:9 (NASB95)

The Millo was the artificial terraces that surrounded the stronghold fortress area. There was at least one wall that had fill dirt behind it. So David started building up the city starting at this wall and worked inward from there. It may be a stretch, but (from a spiritual standpoint) we can think of the wall as the "law" and if we are to grow spiritually, then we must start with the law and then go on from there. As Christians, we must see the law as the starting point and not the ultimate goal. If we are not following at least the "letter" of the law, then we are outside the wall of the city and are not protected from attack by the enemy. We can also logically argue that if we are not keeping the letter of the law, then we are certainly not going to be keeping the spirit of the law. Abiding by the spirit of the law is to move beyond the position of the Pharisees and see that if we are to grow in Christ that we must be motivated by love for God and love for our fellow man. This is the area in which we are to concentrate as we are being built up after the King takes residence in our heart.

¹⁰David became greater and greater, for the LORD God of hosts was with him. 2 Samuel 5:10 (NASB95)

This verse literally says that David took bigger steps (to have more influence) **and** the Lord was with him. I wanted to try to make the verse say, **because** the Lord was with him. Some translations do use the word “because.” The difference in the two words gives some subtle change in the conclusions one might draw from the verse. The use of the word “and” would cause us to conclude that David took initiative and the Lord was there to support him in that initiative. If we use the word “because” we might conclude that David acted because of the coaxing or prodding from the Lord. The first is active the second is passive. Regardless of the two, I think it is factual to conclude that David did take initiative and that initiative was successful because God was with him.

The circumstances of being accepted as king of all of Israel and the move to Jerusalem was part of the reason David was able to have more influence. It would appear that David was doing some assessment of his circumstances and the realization that he had good opportunities open to him. He then acted so that he could take advantage of these opportunities.

¹¹Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar trees and carpenters and stonemasons; and they built a house for David. 2 Samuel 5:11 (NASB95)

Apparently, these greater strides and the success that David had was known beyond the borders of Israel. People want to be aligned with those who are successful. Hiram saw an opportunity to create some relationship with the nation of Israel that was obviously growing in strength and influence. Perhaps it was known that Israel was somewhat lacking in craftsmen since they had concentration so much in the immediate past on building up their economy while fighting to keep the Philistines from afflicting the people of Israel. Tyre (part of what we know as Lebanon) had good natural resources with their cedar trees.

We can see some parallels with the way governments and businesses used to deal with the church. Years ago (in our country), both governments and businesses befriended the church perhaps in hope they would be able to participate in the blessings God was giving to the church. Sad to say, we don't see a lot of this happening today. Why? The world no longer sees the church as a powerful entity that is enjoying the blessings of God. In other words, they do not see that there would be any benefit to themselves for befriending the church. So, what has changed in the church that would cause government and business to reach such a conclusion? Do you think it is because many churches have drifted so far away from God's purpose that they are not being blessed as they were in the past?

¹²And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel. 2 Samuel 5:12 (NASB95)

As David was able to assess the situation he was in, he **first** of all realized that his success was because of what the Lord had done in his life. The **second** realization was that his success **and** the success of his kingdom was not just for his benefit but was for a larger purpose. David's success was to benefit God's people Israel.

We have so much emphasis today on God blessing each one of us individually as an end unto itself and we don't usually make the connection that God blesses us so that those blessings will benefit His church. In David's time, God's purposes were being worked out through the nation of Israel. Now, His purposes are being worked out through His church. We must be careful not to interpret God's blessings on our lives as being for our benefit alone. The Lord blesses us to empower His work through us for the sake of the church. (See Introduction)

David sought to live in a way pleasing to God. He aligned what he did with God's purposes. To do that he knew he had to uphold and promote the law of the Lord. In order to keep the Lord at the center of his kingdom David was intent upon bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The significance of bringing the Ark to Jerusalem was critical to lead the people to a closer devotion to Jehovah. David set a good example for the people in that he participate in worship so that the people could observe what he did. David strengthened his people to live for and to worship the Lord by assessing his own life and work and by adjusting his actions to accommodate God's purposes in his life. Adjusting our actions to accommodate God's purposes in our lives is the most profound expression we can give to being under the Lordship of Christ. (Are those folks who observe us more motivated to draw closer to God?)

¹Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, ²that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you." 2 Samuel 7:1-3 (NASB95)

There are times of intense activity and times of rest in our lives. It is during the times of rest that we can step back from the day-to-day routines and take an objective view of what's going on in our lives. In other words, we can assess where we are, where we have been and where we are going. The Lord had provided David a time of rest and David did some assessing of his situation. David was thankful for all God had done for him and he wanted to do something to express that gratitude in such a way that would be God honoring. He was living in a palace and the Ark of the Covenant was in a tent. That did not seem right to David.

To David's credit, he shared his idea with God's prophet. Here we see the priority David put on seeking the Lord's direction before he took action. Of course, Nathan thought that it was a good idea and encouraged David proceed with this great idea that had every intent of honoring God.

⁴But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, ⁵"Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?" ⁶"For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. ⁷"Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?' " ' 2 Samuel 7:4-7 (NASB95)

The obvious lesson here is that not every good thing regardless of the good intentions is in the will of God. Nathan's initial advice was in line with what Nathan thought was good. David's idea for building a house was what David thought was good. As it turned out, the **concept** of having a temple was part of what God wanted for the nation. So, we come back to the point that God's will involves more than what is to be done. Timing is important as well as who would be used by God to accomplish His will. David's vision for the temple was apparently an elaborate house of cedar. We know from what was eventually done that the temple Solomon built was far beyond what David could imagine.

When we focus on an intended outcome which is in perfect alignment with God's will and purpose, we must be careful to also seek God's wisdom and direction regarding how to accomplish the outcome. Using worldly ways to accomplish the goal will result in failure because God is not honored. This incident in David's life serves as a caution to us. How often do Christians go through life acting on good intentions (for the outcome) without considering when, how, and by whom?

⁸"Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture,

from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁹“I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. ¹⁰“I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. 2 Samuel 7:8-11 (NASB95)

Sometimes our vision of what has happened and what is happening is fairly limited. We look at what is happening to us now and what is going on immediately around us and we fail not only to see the big picture, but most of the time we don't even realize there is a big picture. I can remember the frustration people would have at work when they came up with a great idea only to have it rejected by upper management. The problem, in most cases, was that they did not have the perspective of the seeing the bigger picture. We see similar things going on in the local church body. When reasonable people do things that don't seem to make a lot of sense to many of us, it is likely that they have a different set of data than we do.

When it come to having the “big picture” God has the ultimate perspective on everything. In these verses, God was letting David have a glimpse of what was happening and how it was to fit in with what was going to happen.

Notice that God referred to David as “My servant.” Some may think that God was making a statement that was an attempt to let David know what the relationship was. (As in “I'm God and you a only a servant.) That is true; however, it was not a negative implication. There are very few people whom God called “My servant.” This title was also used for Moses and Job. That's pretty good company if you are looking for associations.

The highest accolade God can give anyone is to call him or her “His servant.” The phrase “my servant David” was a tremendous testimony to what God thought of him and how highly God thought of him. Besides David, Moses and Job were the other individuals who received this highest honor. The Hebrew phrase “my servant David” or “David my servant” occurs an astonishing 19 times (2 Sam 3:18, 7:5, 7:8, 1 Kings 11:32, 36, 11:38, 14:8, 2 Kings 19:34, 20:6, 1 Chron 17:7, Isa 37:35, Jer 33:21, 33:22, 33:26, Ezek 34:23, 34:24, 37:24, 37:25) in the Bible, a record for any “my servant” references. The two next highest “my servant” references were ascribed to Moses (Num 12:7, 8, Josh 1:2, 7, 2 Kings 21:8, Mal 4:4) and Job (Job 1:8, 2:3, 42:7-8), occurring six times each. (Sermon by Victor Yap, December, 2007.)

We see also in these verses that God is firmly in control. Notice how many times we see God taking the initiative.

I took you, I have been with you, I cut off your enemies, I will make your name great, I will appoint a place, I will plant them, I will give you rest, I will make a house for you.

David started out to make a house for God and discovered that God was making a house for David. David had in mind a physical building but God was looking to build a dynasty or lineage that would ultimately lead to the Messiah who would be of the house and lineage of David.

As we look at these verses, we can see the Lord's intent when he intervened to redirect David. God had chosen David during the crucial formative years of the monarchy in Israel when the federation of tribes would be melded together into a united kingdom. Historically, we see that military power, constant vigilance and adherence to the Law of the Lord were crucial to the success of what was happening in Israel. (Do you think that God intervene in ways to redirect us as we go through life? Most of the time, we may interpret what happened as something negative, however, in time, we can see how it worked out for the best.)

How do these things related to our participation in what God is doing today in His church? Instead of military power, we can see that skill and excellence in what we do in the church can lead to greater success. Also, we can realize that the battles we have to win are not against “flesh and blood” but are against spiritual powers. We are to fight these spiritual battles in the prayer closet. Constant vigilance is needed on the spiritual front so that we will know where and how to engage the enemy. It goes without saying that obedience to the word of God is always paramount to ensure that He is with us and will work through us to gain the victory.

This encounter with God through the words God had given to Nathan the prophet helped David in his assessment of what had already happened in his life, what was going on at that time, and what God would be doing with his descendant. All of that was rather overwhelming. It was most certainly humbling. When we realize all that God has done for us and what He can do in the future, it is never an occasion for pride but one of humility. This realization moved David to a time of prayer.

¹⁸Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far? ¹⁹“And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD. ²⁰“Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord GOD! ²¹“For the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know. 2 Samuel 7:18-21 (NASB95)

We see the humility of David (who am I, that You have brought me thus far?), the greatness of God (all that you have done for me was not difficult for you), the impact of what is happening now on the future events (you have spoken concerning the future), and the possibilities that are open to those who do life in such as way as to honor God.

The last part of verse 19 has been translated in various ways by a multitude of translators. Some render it as a question: “Is this the way you deal with all people?” Some render it as a statement: “This is the custom of man.” Obviously, God is in control of the future and the things we do now do have impact on the outcome of our lives and those we influence. We also see that not everyone is chosen by God to be the king of Israel. However, there is evidence for us to conclude that God does have a plan for our lives and that we (as David realized) have not done anything to make ourselves worthy of being chosen. What God has planned for us is something that He is perfectly able to carry out - it is not too difficult for Him. The outcome or future for us and our descendants will be impacted by the way we respond in obedience to what God is doing and where and how He is leading us.

Just as David realized that God was blessing him for a higher purpose than what was happened just then in his life, we too must get the bigger picture and see that God has given us opportunities that have helped to prepare us for where we are now and He is giving us opportunities to do things now that will prepare us for things and opportunities that will come our way. God was blessing David for the sake of His people Israel so that His purposes would be accomplished for mankind. God blesses us for the sake of His people, the Church, so that His purposes will be accomplished.