

Building the House (Part 1)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello, friend. I have something to share with you, which, interestingly enough, is a subject that can get more people upset almost than anything else you would want to talk about. In fact, there are a couple of things that, if you talk about them, you can get people's hackles up. One, if you talk about their kids, about raising kids. Some people just, well, they don't exactly adhere to biblical standards or biblical instructions when it comes to raising kids. Sometimes, especially if you look in the book of Proverbs, some of the things you need to do when you have a disobedient child, some people say, "Well, that just can't be right. It flies in the face of modern psychology." Well, you know what? When the Bible says one thing and modern psychology says something else, guess which one is wrong? Yeah, it's not the Bible. The second thing that sometimes gets people upset is what we're going to talk about today, and it has to do with giving. But listen, there is going to be something in this message for each and every person who's listening. There is something that God wants to say to you in this, and it is so vital to our lives. The story we're going to look at comes from 1 Chronicles 29. David and all of Israel have assembled, and he's instructing and encouraging them about building God's house.

Now, I look at it in terms of a church building, a facility. Churches need a place to meet, whether they are renting a storefront or they have their own building. There are expenses to the gospel. I heard somebody say it this way once. He said, "My daughter, when she was born, I couldn't believe how expensive she was. I just didn't know how expensive diapers, laundry service, and clothing were." If you know anything about it. You have kids. They're wearing a little outfit that is this big, and they charge as much as they do for adult clothing. They use one-tenth of the material to make it, but they charge the same price. Some people are willing to pay that. Baby food can be expensive. He said, "Then when she got older, oh my gosh! She had to have the latest sneakers, tennis shoes, and had to have this and had to have that. It was so expensive. I couldn't believe it. So, we ended up putting her in a private school, and that was incredibly expensive. Then she meets a young man and gets married. I had to pay for the wedding. Oh, it was so expensive." He said, "But shortly after my daughter got married, there was a terrible accident, and unfortunately she was killed." He said, "The funeral was expensive." He said, "But since my daughter died and went to heaven, she's not cost us anything at all."

And the point is this. Churches that are alive and living, there is a cost to them. They can be expensive. But dead churches, "Hey, they don't cost anything." As long as a church is alive and growing, just like that man's daughter was alive and growing physically, emotionally, and in experience, there's an expense to it. The same thing is true of a church. Again, in our story in 1 Chronicles 29, all of Israel has gathered. David is encouraging them about building God's house, and there are four aspects of the story that I want to speak to you about. They are pertinent to every one of our lives, especially in connection with giving to God's work and giving to the gospel. Somebody says, "Well, the gospel is free." It's true. The gospel is free, but the pipeline to get it to the world can be expensive. So, here are the four aspects of the story. First, the purpose. Secondly, the heart. Thirdly, the invitation. And fourthly, the prayer. I want to read to you from verse 1, and this deals with the purpose. David is speaking. It says, (1 Chronicles 29:1 NKJV)

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¹ Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: “My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God.”

God's house is the temple they are building. He says, “The work is great, but it's not for man, it's for the Lord God.” Now, men would serve there. Men would worship there. Men would hear the Word preached there. Men would fellowship there. But ultimately, it was being built for God's glory, for God's name, and for God's purpose. So it is for every church. Men and women serve there. Men and women worship there. People hear the Word there. People fellowship there. But ultimately, it's being built, and they are built for the name of Jesus so that it can be glorified and magnified. We're not doing what we do to make a name for ourselves. When we build a church building, or when we rent a facility to hold services in and to teach people God's Word, or when we send an evangelist or missionaries out, we're creating instruments for God's purposes to be carried out. A church is to be a place of refuge for the weary. A place from which the glorious light of the gospel can shine to the nations of the earth. Now, David said the work is great because it's for God. It's great in scope. It's great in beauty. It's great in quality. David was not giving his leftovers, and the people were not giving their leftovers to God because the work was great, and it was for God.

I had a friend. He's in heaven now, but he pastored a great church in Europe. I preached there many times myself. It was not a super opulent building. It was a nice building, and it seated a couple of thousand people, and they filled it. It was a church that was alive and impacting that region with a gospel like few other churches actually had ever done in the history of that country before. In the foyer, it wasn't a large foyer, but there was a chandelier hanging in the foyer, and it was nice. You could see that when you went in. There were other things, some couches and benches for people to hang out. Then, from there, you would go into the auditorium and get your seat where you could hear the Word preached. My friend was telling me that a prominent family in the church invited him over to their home for dinner one night. Now, it's been said, “Preacher, beware, there is no such thing as a free lunch or a free dinner. People want to get something off their chest, or they want something from you.” Well, I know that's not always true because there are people who just want to bless their pastor and bless their minister. And it's not about trying to sway him to do this or that or because they want something changed or they want something personal from the minister. But in this case, well, they had a bit of an agenda.

What it was—they were sitting at dinner. They finish dinner. They are having a cup of coffee afterward, and then they finally get to it. They said, “Pastor, we want to talk to you.” He said, “What about?” They said, “That chandelier in the church foyer, we think it's terrible that you would spend so much of people's tithe and their offerings coming to put a chandelier in the church. That money could have been used for other things. We just think it's so wrong to incur that expense. We didn't need a chandelier in the church.” The pastor said, “I looked up and over their dining room table; where we were sitting was a beautiful chandelier.” You would kind of have to know my friend to understand this. He was just a very blunt man. You didn't have to worry about what he was thinking, ever. He says, “Okay, it's good enough for you, but it's too good for God?” He said, “God's house ought to have the best. God's house is great. You would invest in this for yourself, but you take exception when we do something like this for God's house?” They didn't have a word to say. Now, the purpose is for God's house. I personally think that God's house should have the best. I don't think we need to go over the top. Obviously, you can take anything to a ridiculous extreme, but we shouldn't balk at giving to our churches. The church that you go to, you shouldn't balk and hesitate. Saying, “Well, I just don't think the church should have this or have that. This is just too nice for the church.” Wait a minute. Men serve there. Men worship there. Men and women will fellowship there. Ultimately, we do what we do

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for the name of Christ. I believe that God deserves our best, not our leftovers. I don't think we honor God when we bring Him something that costs us nothing. We move on from there, and we come to the heart. First, there is the purpose. It is for the Lord God. The work is great. Secondly, it's the heart. I want to read to you from verse two and verse three. David is speaking. He says, 1 Chronicles 29:2 NKJV

² “Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.”

Now, notice he talks about all these things. But what I want you to get there, he said, “I prepared with all my might.” That's significant. In verse three, he says,

³ “Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver.”

Now, when David talks about giving to God's house and preparing for God's house, he says, “I've done it with all my might, and I have gone over and above.” Why would he do that? Why would he use such language? Remember, he is encouraging the people. He is telling the people what he has done. He said, “This is why I have done it: because I have set my affection on the house of my God. Because that is where my affection is, I have done this with all of my might. I've gone over and above. Colossians 3:2, in the New Testament, the King James Version says,

² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

In other words, set your affection on things with a heavenly origin, things that are issued from the heart of God, things that have an eternal consequence. In David's case, it was building God's house. Listen to this in Psalm 26:8a NKJV, David said,

⁸ Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house.

In Psalm 84:10b NKJV, David said,

¹⁰ I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

In Psalm 122:1 NKJV, he said,

¹ I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

Because his affection was there, he gave his own special treasure. It's interesting the word special there when David said, “Hey, my affections are there, so I've given over and above of my own special treasure.” It's a very, very rare Hebrew word that is only used a few times in Scripture; almost exclusively, it's used by God to describe His people as His own special treasure. It means something of high personal value, something costly, something worth sacrificing to have. That's what David gave. David did not give some valueless items that he would never miss. David didn't give his leftovers, but he gave his special treasure. Why? Because his affection was there. The Message Bible puts it this way, “Because my heart is in this.” A great truth of life is that our hearts and our treasures are connected. Your heart

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and your treasure are connected. They are inseparably tied together, and you can't pull them apart. Jesus said this in Matthew 6:21 NKJV,

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What we love, we invest in. If you were to walk into my garage, there are a few things you'd notice. One, I have a rack set up, and there are several spear guns on the rack, and there are some wetsuits hanging from the rack. Now, they're not all mine. Some of them are my grandson's. Some of the wetsuits are my grandson's because I've taught my grandsons to free dive and spearfish just like their grandpa does. We go out in the ocean, and we get dinner for the table. Whenever they're around, we do it pretty regularly. In fact, they are staying with us right now for most of this month. In the last few weeks, I've taken them out three times to go spearfishing. It's a lot of fun to get out with them. But you know what? I love it. So, I invest in it. I invest in it for my grandsons and for myself. As well, I have one wall that is filled with fishing rods, but they're not all mine because I have four grandsons. There are fishing rods for all four grandsons there. Listen, each of them has more than one rod. They have a freshwater rod there. They have a saltwater rod there. Then, I have a few as well. Somebody would walk in and say, "Look, this is over the top. Why would anybody need so many fishing poles?" Well, the truth is, if you fish, you know that certain rods work for certain kinds of fishing. If I'm out on the ocean and I'm fishing for tuna, I need a certain kind of fishing rod. If I'm out fishing for rockfish, I need a certain kind of fishing rod for that. If I'm doing freshwater fishing, if I'm fishing for largemouth bass, or if I'm fly fishing for trout, there is a certain rod you use for that. The point is this: to some people, they would think it's extravagant. To me, it's not. My heart is there, so I invest in it.

What we love, we invest in. With some people, it's golf. They have the most expensive golf clubs on the planet. They have eight pairs of golf shoes. They have several golf bags. They have travel golf bags. They have tons of golf clothes. You go into their closet, and there are two dozen golf shirts. They have jackets for golfing in the rain. They love it. So, they invest in it. For other people, it's automobiles, and they invest in cars, or they invest in their motorcycles. For some people, it's shoes. For some people, it's art. For some people, it's this or that. But the truth is, what we love, we invest in. All of those things can be legitimate. With me going out, I don't look at it really as a luxury. I look at going out on the water as a necessity for me. I'm not out there all the time, certainly not, but it's a stress reliever for me. It's something that I love to do. I can go out. I cannot be reached on a mobile phone. I get tons of exercise while I'm out there. I can fellowship with God. I'm usually with a few close friends where I can let my hair down, so to speak. We can just talk about anything in the world. The bonus for me is I come back and I have dinner for us and for all of the neighbors as well. A lot of times, I bring it to the church and give it to the other pastors that we have on the team. It's legitimate, but it's all temporal and earthly. As much as I love fishing, I realize it's temporal. It's going to pass away. It is earthly.

By contrast, there is the eternal or that which, though temporary in itself, has eternal consequences. The house that David was building was temporal but had eternal consequences. The church you go to, the building is temporal. The parking lot where the cars have to go, the baptismal feature that you have in your church, whatever, those things are temporal. We understand that, but it has an eternal consequence. People can hear the Word of God there. They can be saved. They can have their marriages restored. They can be delivered by the truth of God's Word. Jesus said, "You will know the truth. If you abide in My Word, you will be my disciples indeed. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." One of the primary places we come to hear the Word preached through anointed vessels is in God's house in the church. So much of what we do in the church and from the church, we invest in temporal things.

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Right now, I'm talking to some cameras. If I could come into your home and sit down with you at the kitchen table and enjoy a cup of tea. And by the way, I have a beautiful cup of tea right here. If I could enjoy a cup of tea with you and talk about the Bible, maybe you have some issues going on with your kids. Maybe you have questions about things. I may not have all the answers, but you know what? I know how to pray. If we could take hands and pray at your table, I'd like to do it. This is sort of the next best thing. But all the equipment we have here, there is a cost to it. Then, we get it dubbed into many languages. You may be listening right now in Farsi. You may be listening in Arabic. You may be listening in Spanish. You may be listening in French. You may be listening in a number of Indian dialects that we dub this into. You may be listening to me in German. You may be listening to me in Russian. We dub and subtitle into all those languages and quite a few more. We send it out to the nations of the world, more than 100 countries. Listen, there is a tremendous expense in doing it, but it is worth it because we're reaching eternal souls.

The truth is, all of the expense that we incur, if it just reaches you and brings you into a relationship with Christ, from heaven's perspective, it's worth it. Jesus said, “? What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” According to Jesus, one soul is worth more than the whole physical world. That's how valuable a person is. So, yes, there is an expense even in doing what we're doing now, but it has an eternal consequence. Maybe it's had an impact in your life. Listen, I just want to tell you unashamedly that we get so many responses from so many different language groups around the world continually that are impacted by the broadcast. It makes all this worthwhile. There is a personal cost to me to come down and to take the time to do this, to prepare these messages, and to prepare my heart. There is a factor in time. I'm away from my wife. My grandsons are with us right now. I'm away from them. My son and daughter-in-law are staying with us right now. This is time I could be spending with them. But hey, it's worth it in the cost of time. It's worth it in the cost of finances. And by the way, just if you're watching this and you're one of our partners who helps us, I didn't plan on saying any of this part at all, but I just want to thank you.

You may never meet all the people who are impacted, but when we get to heaven, I guarantee you there will be a multitude of people who will come up to you and say, “Thank you. You don't know who I am, but because of your giving to the broadcast from Cottonwood Church, when Bayless Conley was talking to the camera and came into my village in my heart language, and I heard about Jesus for the first time, and I was saved. Then, my children were saved. My wife was saved. We won a number of other people in our village, and a church was started, and this happened, and that happened.” Then, someone else is going to come up and say, “I was listening to the Word of God and my marriage was on the brink. I'd been unfaithful, and I just didn't know what God's love was all about. Jesus came into my life because I heard the gospel, and God turned my marriage around. He rescued it, and now, we have a solid family. God is using us to minister to other couples.” Then, someone else is going to come up with another story and another story. Yes, we are investing in some things that are temporal. But you know what? It has an eternal consequence. That is just so, so important. So that is the heart of it. We're talking about eternity. We're talking about eternal consequences. Then, we come next to the invitation, and that is found in verse five. I want to read it to you. David says, “I've prepared my special treasure over and above; with all of my might, I've gone after this thing. This house is for the Lord, and it needs to be great.” Then, David, at the end of 1 Chronicles 29:5b NKJV, said,

⁵ “Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?”

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“Who then is willing to consecrate himself to the Lord?” The word consecrate, the Hebrew word literally means “who will fill his hand to the Lord.” The Good News Translation puts it this way,

⁵ “Who else is willing to give a generous offering to the Lord?”

“Who's going to fill his hand like I have done with a generous offering?” When our hearts are full of affection for God's house and for the things of His Kingdom, it's not a hardship to fill our hands with support for His house or support for His Kingdom. Again, our hearts and our treasure are tied together. “Who then is going to fill his hand and give a willing, generous offering to the work of God?” David asked. An outstanding feature of their giving is that it was not compulsory. It was not pressured. It was willing. David said, “Who then is willing? Who is willing to do this?” In verse 17, we'll read it later. It says that David said, “I have willingly given.” So David willingly gave his own special treasure. In verse six, it says the leaders of the nation willingly gave. Then, in verse nine, it says that the people willingly gave. Everyone was happy about what they were doing. In the New Testament, Paul writes to the Corinthians. In fact, let me let me just quote this to you. I have it here in my Bible. Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He actually dedicated almost a whole couple of chapters about giving an offering. He used the Macedonian Christians there in Philippi who had given so generously and sacrificially to the work of God. They supported Paul's ministry as he went to other cities and shared the message of Christ in other places.

So, Paul uses them in 2 Corinthians, chapter eight, and chapter nine as an example to the Corinthians. He said, “I just want to tell you. You need to know about the generosity of the Macedonians.” He says, “It's this work of grace in their life, and I want to see God do the same work of grace in your life so that you can give generously as well.” In 2 Corinthians 9:6, Paul says this. He is specifically talking about giving finances into the gospel. It could be for building a church. It could be for sending a missionary. It could be for building a new children's wing onto the church. It could be for something in a building or a Bible school. It could be for sending out programs on television or doing things on social media to get the word of Christ out there and on and on and on. So Paul writes this to them in 2 Corinthians 9:6 NKJV. He said,

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Now, Paul talked about giving, and he likened it to sowing seeds, to planting. He says, “If you plant a little, if you give sparingly, or you don't give much, it'll come back to you the same way. But if you give bountifully with a generous heart, it comes back to you the same way.” He wrote to the Galatians and said, “Don't you know that God is not mocked. Don't be deceived. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” In Luke 6:38, Jesus said, “Give and it'll be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over men will give into your bosom.” Now, the context there is giving forgiveness and showing love. But it's applicable right across the board. When we give and how we give comes back to us. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing. The next verse here in 2 Corinthians 9:7 NKJV says,

⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

He said, “Don't give grudgingly. “Don't give out of necessity as if you're being forced to do it. God loves a cheerful giver.” Let me read this to you from the amplified classic version. This is beautiful.

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⁷ Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, “prompt to do it”) giver [whose heart is in his giving].

My friend, I just want to encourage you. If you have not been a supporter of the gospel, I want to encourage you to support your local church, give joyously, and give abundantly to the work of Christ there in the church that you attend. Again, for those of you who support us, I just want to say thank you. You have no idea how grateful we are. But truly, I think none of us understands the impact that we're having. We have been doing this for more than a quarter of a century in multiple languages around the world. There is really no way to measure—what we know is staggering—the impact that we've had. But there is really no way to know. We will not know until we get to heaven the true impact that the broadcast has had around the world in multiple languages. So, I'm just going to finish here by saying God bless you. Listen, God is real. He sees you. He knows your name. He sent His Son to redeem you. Jesus Christ loves you, and so do we.

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