

Pastor Steven J. Cole  
Flagstaff Christian Fellowship  
123 S. Beaver St.  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001  
[www.fcfonline.org](http://www.fcfonline.org)

## HOW GOD'S WORK GETS DONE

2 Chronicles 24:4-14

By

Steven J. Cole

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Kings of Judah Lesson 6

## How God's Work Gets Done 2 Chronicles 24:4-14

Last week Mike Hendricks, who led our worship time, said that after the first service someone told him that he should have people stand during the choruses, since it's hard to worship while sitting down. So, in the second service he had us stand, only to have someone tell him that it's too hard to stand that long; he should have us sit down!

I share that story because no doubt there will be some who will hear my message today and think, "Not again! He's beating that subject to death!" But there will be others who will think, "Why hasn't this been communicated more often? We should have heard more about this!"

As I preached on the rest of chapter 24 last week, I debated whether I should preach on verses 4-14, which are easy to relate to our current need to pay off and fix up the building next door, or skip them and move on. I brought it up at our elders and deacons meeting last Sunday afternoon, and the consensus was that since I preached the message in which I encouraged us to get on with this project last summer, when many were gone, and since we have many who have started coming to FCF since that time, that it probably needed to be addressed again. I pointed out that I even wrote about it in our last newsletter, but the raised eyebrows around the room said, "You don't expect people actually to *read* that, do you?"

I read a book earlier this year by Hans Finzel, executive director of CBInternational called *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Victor Books), one of which is the failure to communicate adequately. He says, "Never assume that anyone knows anything.... We can never communicate enough in our organizations" (p. 115, emphasis his). He tells of one new employee who complained about the lack of information by saying, "I feel like a part of a mushroom farm--I'm left completely in the dark and fed more manure from

time to time" (p. 117). So today I want to bring everyone out of the dark, and I hope no one thinks I'm feeding manure!

In my July message, I set forth a purpose or vision statement for our church which I hope we all will keep at the forefront:

Flagstaff Christian Fellowship exists to show how great God is by helping each person grow in all-out love for God, for one another, and for the lost, both locally and globally, through the careful teaching and practice of God's Word of Truth. In particular, in light of our location, we seek to be a lighthouse to the nearby university community, especially to the international students.

I also pointed out that a bottleneck in our ministry is the current lack of facilities. We actually own enough space, but we can't use the two houses we own due to the need to rent them to pay the mortgage on the house next door. So I encouraged us to move as quickly as possible to pay off the remaining \$37,000 on the mortgage, plus give enough extra to do necessary modifications and repairs to use the properties for ministry. I suggested that if 150 families or individuals would give \$300, we would meet that goal. And, I set a target date of October 2nd (next Sunday).

Some may wonder, "Why that date?" It's somewhat arbitrary, but there were several factors behind that date. It was ten weeks away from when I gave the original challenge, which left enough time to pray about what God would have each one give and to see the money get raised if people didn't have it. Also, our renter was moving out in early August, and we needed to know whether we should find new renters (and thus go for a number of months more without the use of that building) or get it paid off. So I picked a date that didn't leave us up in the air for too long. As you may know, we're already using the building for the new young married's class. And I believe the Boy's Brigade is using it as well. Our junior high Sunday School class last week had 22 students, too many to squeeze into the library. Clearly, we need the space for ministry!

As of last Sunday, about one-third of the needed amount had come in. I'm hoping and praying that most of you, like myself, have not yet given what you're planning to give toward this project, but are waiting until next Sunday. That means that about \$30,000

above and beyond our normal budget needs to be given next Sunday. I believe that God *can* do it, although I don't know if He *will* do it. If that amount does not come in, then we'll need to evaluate where we're at and how to proceed. My main concern is that each of you would go before the Lord and wait obediently on Him for what He would have you to do. That way, you'll be blessed and God will be honored.

With that as a backdrop, I'd like us to study these verses which tell us how King Joash restored the Temple after it had fallen into disrepair under the godless Athaliah. We're going to conclude our service with a time of corporate prayer. These verses show us how God gets His work done, namely,

God's work gets done by strong leaders,  
cheerful givers, and faithful workers.

Joash (24:4) and Jehoiada (24:6) were the leaders who got the work started, moved along, and completed; the people rejoiced at the opportunity to give toward this project (24:10); and, the workers were faithful to make the needed repairs (24:12-13); the result was that burnt offerings were offered continually all the days of Jehoiada (24:14).

1. God's work gets done by strong leaders.

In my younger, more idealistic days, which included my first years in pastoral ministry, I downplayed the need for strong leadership in the church. Perhaps I was swayed in part by a reaction against some of the leadership abuses I saw both in the church and in our society (this was the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate era!). Also, I was influenced by a number of Plymouth Brethren writers who were reacting against churches in which the pastor did everything, while the so-called "laity" was passive. These writers rightly emphasized the functioning of the entire body. But due to their fault or my own, I'm not sure which, I missed in their writings a proper biblical emphasis on how God uses strong leaders to accomplish His purposes. As a result, I was very laid back and non-directive in my leadership style.

I remember eating dinner at a conference in 1982 with Gene Getz, who has done a lot of thinking and has extensive experience

with the subject of biblical church government through the Fellowship Bible Churches he has planted. He was arguing that even though there should be a plurality of elders in a local church, the pastor needs to be the one in charge in the sense that the buck stops there. I countered that such responsibility could be shared mutually and that only Christ needed to be in charge. But over the years, I've come around to his point-of-view. In both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in church history, you can see how God uses strong, godly leaders to accomplish His purpose.

I could cite numerous examples from all over the Bible, but for the sake of time, I'll limit myself to a few observations on Joash and Jehoiada from this chapter. Jehoiada was the godly old priest, uncle of Joash, who had rescued him as an infant from Athaliah's sword. He had raised him in the temple precincts and he courageously deposed Athaliah and installed Joash as king when the boy was only seven. To depose a wicked tyrant like Athaliah (who also happened to be his mother-in-law!) took some strong leadership on Jehoiada's part (see chap. 23). No doubt Jehoiada served as the regent over Joash until he grew old enough to reign. But by virtue of his age and position, Jehoiada must have served as chief counselor to the king until his death.

As we saw last week, Joash followed the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, but was seduced to turn to idolatry after the godly old man died (24:2, 17). But in the verses we are considering, Joash was following the Lord. His actions reveal three marks of the kind of leadership God uses to get His work done:

A. Strong leaders are men of vision.

Strong leaders have a clear picture of what God wants to accomplish with His people and they communicate it. Joash realized that the temple needed to be restored (24:4), so he gathered the priests and Levites and directed them to scatter through the cities of Judah and collect the money to do the necessary repairs (24:5). Joash found out what many leaders have discovered, namely that telling your vision to people is one thing; having them accept and act on it with proper zeal is another! So Joash had to reprove Jehoiada (who was about 120 by this time, which may explain why things weren't moving quickly) and change his plan. But Joash diligently kept at it until the project got done.

Although I'm not naive enough to think that there are more than a dozen people (if that!) who could articulate our vision here at FCF, I keep plugging away at trying to keep it in front of us. I stated it when I candidated here. I put it in writing in our philosophy of ministry, which I use in the New Member's Class. I preach on it every so often, when it fits in with a text. I write about it occasionally in the newsletter. I've recently had Patti put it on the bulletin board in several places around the building. I tried to make sure everyone had a copy of it in print from the sermon on it last July.

Once more: Flagstaff Christian Fellowship exists to show how great God is by helping each person grow in fervent love for God, for one another, and for the lost, both locally and globally, through the careful teaching and practice of God's Word of Truth. In particular, in light of our location, we seek to be a lighthouse to the nearby university community, especially to the international students.

Buildings or facilities are not our goal. Glorifying God through ministry to people based on His Word is our goal. But, at least in our culture at this point in history, adequate facilities are useful in helping to accomplish our goal. As you know if you've peeked inside the house next door, we're not talking about some extravagant cathedral! We just need room for some classes to meet in!

B. Strong leaders are men of scriptural authority.

Strong, godly leaders always get their vision from God's Word. Joash knew the importance of the temple and of worship from the Law of Moses. He appeals to that law as the basis for the collection (24:6, 9). In other words, the people needed to know that what they were doing was in obedience to God and His Word, not just something to make the king happy.

On our particular project of paying off the house next door, we have sought to take an approach where each person does what God wants him to do, not what I or the elders want. My desire is for each person prayerfully to consider what the Lord would have you do and to do it to please Him. There are many Scriptures which show that God wants us as His people to be generous givers

out of love for Him and gratitude for His great gift to us. I'll mention some in a moment, as I did in the earlier sermon. I want this offering to be a heartfelt, obedient response based on the authority of God's Word.

C. Strong leaders are men of diligence.

The third factor of strong leadership seen here is diligence. Joash's first attempt at getting the priests and Levites to collect the money failed. But he didn't quit; he tried another approach (the collection chest; 24:8) and kept at it until the project got done. There may have been some critics who thought he was ramrodding the project through. But the fact is, you can't lead if you aren't focused enough and persistent enough to keep trying to move God's people toward what He wants.

I realize that there is a fine line between being diligent and being stubborn. Even godly leaders may sometimes err on the side of stubbornness. But if you err on the side of giving up or backing off when something doesn't happen right away, you won't be a strong leader. Strong leadership is one thing God uses to get His work done.

2. God's work gets done by cheerful givers.

I don't know for sure why the people didn't give when the priests and Levites went into their cities. A comparison with the account in 2 Kings 12 seems to indicate that the money wasn't actually going toward the intended project, but was being spent on the priests themselves. But when Joash came up with a method (the chest at the door of the temple) for the money to go to the workers, everyone rejoiced and gave generously until the project was completed (24:10). There was even enough left over to make the utensils for the burnt offerings (24:14).

Some people complain that the church is always after their money. But such complaints tip your hand! God makes no bones about it--He *is* after your money, because He knows that your money and your heart are inextricably bound together, and if your heart isn't given fully to Him, you'll keep a tight grip on your money, as if it were yours anyway! (See Matt. 6:19-21). But when you give your heart fully to God, you realize that your money is not yours, but His. You're just a steward of what He has entrusted to

you to invest in His kingdom. If you squander it on selfish pleasure, you aren't a faithful steward. So, yes, God is after your money because He's after your heart!

That's why motive is crucial in giving. God wants you to give cheerfully as you have purposed in your heart, overflowing with thanksgiving to Him for His indescribable gift to you in Christ (see 2 Cor. 9:7, 12, 15). Alexander Maclaren wrote (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker reprint] on 2 Chron. 24:4-14, pp. 195-196):

Love is a longing to give to the beloved, and whoever truly loves God will know no keener delight than surrender for His dear sake. Pecuniary contributions for religious purposes afford a rough but real test of the depth of a man's religion; but it is one available only for himself, since the motive, and not the amount, is the determining factor.

Whenever I think of giving cheerfully I remember the story I heard of a stingy Scot who accidentally threw a crown into the collection plate thinking it was a penny. When he saw his mistake he asked to have it back, but the deacon refused. The Scot grumbled, "A well, a well, I'll get credit for it in heaven." The deacon shot back, "Na, na, ye'll get credit for the penny." It's the heart motive that counts!

Andrew Fuller, a friend of the missionary great, William Carey, announced a collection for foreign missions. A good friend said to him, "Very well, Andrew, seeing it is you, I'll give \$500." Andrew replied, "No, I can't take the money since you give it seeing me." The friend saw his point and said, "You're right, Andrew. Here is \$1,000, seeing it's for the Lord Jesus." God has always used cheerful givers who give generously to His work because they love Him who gave everything for them.

But not only does God's work get done by strong leaders and cheerful givers. Also,

### 3. God's work gets done by faithful workers.

When Joash's chest at the temple got full, at least two men (not one!) would empty it, the money was given to contractors who hired workers to get the job done. The parallel account (2 Kings 12:15) states that they didn't even require an accounting from those who paid the workers, since they dealt faithfully.

I realize that there is a difference between these paid workers and those who serve the Lord faithfully without monetary wages. But the point still stands and is well-supported throughout the New Testament, that God's work is not accomplished just by the leaders and not just by the leaders along with those who give, but also by every part serving as the Head of the body directs (Eph. 4:16). We all have a vital function in serving the Lord. If you are not serving Him in some capacity, with your time and giftedness along with your giving, it's safe to say that you are too self-focused. Every Christian is in the ministry (= service), accountable to God for how you fulfill that ministry.

### Conclusion

What was the result of strong leadership, cheerful givers, and faithful workers in Joash's day? "They offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada" (24:14). The offerings were an act of worship, a sweet-smelling savor to God, just as our lives are to be offered continually to God as an act of worship because of His mercy toward us in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2).

The offerings also pointed to the need for atonement, for reconciliation to God through the shedding of blood. In our sin, we cannot approach God through our own good deeds, be it leading, giving, or serving Him. We can only approach God through a blood sacrifice. Jesus Christ gave Himself as that sacrifice to God on our behalf (Eph. 5:2), so that now we can draw near to God through Him. Any service we now render to God is a thank offering because Christ, our sacrifice has opened the way for us into God's holy presence.

The restored temple also provided a place for God's people to gather in worship and service to Him. The "house of the Lord" occurs nine times in these eleven verses (24:4, 5, 7, 8, 12 [2x], 13, 14 [2x]), plus the phrase, "the tent of the testimony" (24:6). The Lord's house is where He dwells, where His holy presence is manifested, where His glory shone forth. While church buildings are not the house of the Lord today (God's *people* are His house; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 10:21), and we may be forced to gather in secret in homes if persecution sets in, at least for now church buildings do

provide a place for God's house to meet for worship and instruction.

As we look to our goal of paying off the mortgage, Grant Kolkow, myself, and the non-staff elders are seeking to provide godly, strong leadership by providing a biblically-based vision and by being diligent in helping the body move toward it. We, along with every member of the body here, want to be cheerful givers to the Lord's work. We want to set the example so that we all will faithfully serve the Lord as He has gifted and enabled us. We invite you to join with us. In that way, God's work will get done.

### Discussion Questions

1. How do we maintain the biblical balance between strong leadership and every-member ministry?
2. An occasional church attender complains to you, "The church is always after my money." Your response?
3. Agree/disagree: A Christian who isn't serving the Lord in some capacity is too self-focused.

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