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Introduction

MSG 1 Chronicles 28:9-10 *"And you, Solomon my son, get to know well your father's God; serve him with a whole heart and eager mind, for GOD examines every heart and sees through every motive. If you seek him, he'll make sure you find him, but if you abandon him, he'll leave you for good. Look sharp now! GOD has chosen you to build his holy house. Be brave, determined! And do it!"*

King David was someone who was completely captivated by his God. He desired to build God a magnificent temple in which people could come and worship.

God told Him that because David had been involved in too many wars and bloodshed during his life it was not for him to build the temple, instead, David's son, Solomon, would have this honour.

So David got everything ready for the temple to be built, all the people and materials that were needed, and then charges Solomon with the task God had chosen him for.

Something we've been chatting about quite a lot is that idea that God has created us for a specific purpose. Somewhere, somehow, whatever our circumstances and situation may be, God has a plan and a purpose for us right there, right now.

The title of this message is "Planning for Success" because success doesn't just happen. Success is something that happens because a plan is decided upon and acted upon. Success is the result of action.

In this passage, David gives Solomon the recipe for succeeding in this plan from God. Whether or not we know the details of the plan God has for us there are things we can put into place in our lives that will lead towards the fulfilment of God's purposes in our lives.

These keys are things that can be put into place in the board room, the play centre, the workshop, the office, in the cow shed, wherever you are.

Relationship

The very first thing David tells Solomon to do, the number one priority in this set of instructions is to get to know God.

Some Bibles use the word “acknowledge”, others use the word “know”. The Hebrew word which is translated as such is the word יָדָע (yada) and means literally to know.

However, it’s usage in various contexts can also mean:

- i. Acquainted
- ii. Discern
- iii. Have relations
- iv. Intimate friends
- v. Know for certain

This instruction is for Solomon not only to know *about* God, or to grasp the concept of God. It is about getting to know God personally, developing a relationship with God. Relationships involve communication, talking and listening to one another, knowing things about each other, spending time focused on one another.

The first priority for success is to build our relationship with God.

Again, it doesn’t matter whether or not we have a clear understanding of what God is calling us to do – this is the first step towards being the kind of person through whom God will do amazing things. If we desire God to use us, we need to decide to make our relationship with Him our first priority.

This means spending time reading His Word (the Bible), time talking with Him (praying), time spent listening out for Him and asking Him to speak, time spent worshipping Him.

Success starts with a relationship with God.

Service

It develops through service.

David’s next instruction to Solomon is to:

“serve [God] with a whole heart and eager mind”

The Living Bible says:

“Worship and serve him with your whole heart and with a willing mind”

The word used here and translated “serve” is a word used to describe both worship and slavery. The concept we need to understand is not that God is a slave master, but that in the same way that slaves exist to serve their master, so to do followers of Jesus recognise that we were created to serve and worship God.

In fact, serving and worship are synonymous – for what greater expression of worship can exist than acts of obedience to God, demonstrating our love and our faith through our actions?

We can serve God by obeying Him in reading His Word, by expressing the characteristics of God through our lives to those around us. We can serve God simply by being His representative in the situations and circumstances in which He has placed us.

Service, for most people, doesn’t mean a missionary trip to the Amazon, or quitting work and volunteering at the City Mission.

Serving God is something we can do right where we are, right at this time.

David goes beyond this, though, in his instruction to Solomon for his success; this worship, or service, is to be something that consumes Solomon – from his heart – meaning his emotions or desires, and his mind – meaning his thoughts.

If we desire to be successful in God’s Kingdom we too need to embrace worship with all we have. To truly worship something it needs to become our focus, it needs to consume our desires and our thoughts, even our imagination.

Worshipping God, serving Him fully, is allowing His desires to become our desires, His thoughts to become our thoughts, His plans to become our plans, His dreams to become our own.

We cannot serve God with our whole heart if there are other things we value more highly. Remember, we can very easily determine where our priorities lie by analysing our thoughts – what are we thinking about the most? – that is the thing we worship.

Putting God in that pole position is both a conscious choice and a transformation that occurs inside us.

This happens as we spend time with God. It's a well known fact that we become like the people we hang around with. We absorb fashion, language, thought patterns, attitudes, and behaviour.

Our goal as Christians is to be like Jesus; by spending time with Him and focusing on Him we allow our lives to absorb His ways and begin to be like Him.

Don't be discouraged if you can't see a change. I'm sure we've all been accused of "copying" someone else – "you're just saying that because so and so said it" or, "you only dress like that because so and so does".

The thing is, most often we don't see the change in ourselves, it's become a part of us naturally through osmosis. But you can be assured, if you spend time with God you will change.

So here's an idea: when you notice positive change in others in the Church – encourage them! Tell them how you've seen them grow, build them up.

Pursue

The next key David gives his son, Solomon, to ensure his success in the things of God is to seek God.

The passage reads:

MSG 1 Chronicles 28:9b *"If you seek him, he'll make sure you find him"*

There are two key words there: "seek" and "find."

The Hebrew words are דָּרַשׁ (daw-rash') and מָצָא (maw-tsaw') and the meanings of these words really open up the whole passage. As with most Hebrew words in the Bible, there are many possible meanings for the words, all related, but each revealing another angle or subtlety in the text.

The best way to really get a sense of the fullness of this phrase is to list the words and match them up.

IF WE...	THEN ...
Ask	(God will) Be enough
Consult	(we will) Meet (God)
Inquire	(we will) Find (God)
Look	(God will) Come
Search	(we will) Encounter (God)
Study	(we will) Discover (God)
Resort to	(God will) Deliver
Require	(God will) Secure (us)

This instruction isn't about seeking God and 'bumping into Him' on our way. This encounter with God is a life-altering and life-consuming experience.

Success is about inviting, seeking, and pursuing God in all areas of our lives and the promise here is that God will be whatever is needed in whatever situation we face.

If we desire to be successful in the plans and purposes God has created us for then we need to grasp hold of this concept of bringing God into everything and involving God in everything.

God isn't something to be *added* to our schedules; He, Whom to know is life itself, *is* our lives, not a part, not an extension of, but becoming our very being.

The Bible teaches that God's Spirit is in us, He is a part of us; no, we're not little gods, no, we will not one day become gods, but the mark of the maker is in is and through us.

If we allow Him to strip back the years of paint, to gently sand back and remove the fillers, to rub some oil into the grain then in His hands, the hands of the Maker, we will begin to reveal His marks.

This process, this journey into God is one of restoration and allowing all the nuances and characteristics of the Maker to be revealed. Underneath the weathered exterior is a masterpiece that reveals the Makers genius and love and heart.

It occurs as we both approach Him in everything and then allow Him to express himself through us.

Do the Work

The final instruction that David gives Solomon is this.

MSG 1 Chronicles 28:10 *"Look sharp now! GOD has chosen you to build his holy house. Be brave, determined! And do it!"*

The NIV says *"Be strong and do the work."*

This point to be strong, or brave is significant. Further on in the chapter David repeats himself:

NIV 1 Chronicles 28:20 *David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.*

In 1 Kings an almost identical charge is given:

NIV 1 Kings 2:2-3 *"I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go..."*

I love that phrase: *"Be strong, show yourself a man."*

Interesting that being a real man here has nothing to do with Lion Red (beer), rugby, trucks, hairy chests, or grunting.

How was Solomon to show himself to be a real man? By obeying God, by following God.

Let's think about this for a moment, why would David emphasise the his son to "be strong"?

Is there a need to be strong and courageous if things are easy?

Is there a need to be brave when there's no danger?

Is there a need to be determined if there's no opposition?

The Hebrew phrase here also means "made obstinate."

Make yourself obstinate, it's a phrase we've heard several times recently. It means stubborn, pig-headed, inflexible and persistent.

Success comes at a price. That price sometimes means pressing through difficulties; difficult people, difficult situations; difficult problems.

The end of the matter, though, is that success in the things of God comes because God's people receive the commission from God and become strong, persistent, pig-headed, obstinate, brave, and bold and keep pressing at it.

There's no other way around it – success is expensive and it's an effort to achieve – but for followers of Jesus, what other option do we have?

NLT Romans 8:37 *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

Some Encouragement

There are two stand-out things in this passage that are there to give us hope and from which we can draw strength and build our faith.

MSG 1 Chronicles 28:9b *“...for GOD examines every heart and sees through every motive...”*

Now, that doesn't sound very encouraging does it?

Let's look at another Bible version:

NAV 1 Chronicles 28:9b *“...for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts...”*

Again, there is a lot of depth in looking at the language used. The word translated as “understands” also means “considers” or “takes heed of.”

I think this is so encouraging!

As long as we get our hearts right, and as long as our desire is to please God and we're making every effort to obey Him, then even when we do mess up, even when we fall flat on our faces, even when things don't work out how we'd intended – God looks beyond that and sees a heart that pleases Him and thoughts that desire to honour and obey Him and He's stoked!

God isn't there to correct every mistake we make, He lift us up and desires that we grow in our knowledge and experience of Him.

The second stand-out feature is found in verse ten.

NLT 1 Chronicles 28:10a *“So take this seriously. The LORD has chosen you...”*

The Lord has chosen you!

This plan, this purpose, this whatever is for you to do. It's something only you can do, it's something that can become brilliant with your input, with your involvement, with your passion.

God has chosen you for this time, this plan, this purpose, in this situation and that means you can do it.

In the same way that those first followers of Jesus heard His call and understood that His call meant He accepted them and believed they could do the task ahead, so to Has God called you – even created you, to do things that will have eternal value in His Kingdom.

Challenge

Maybe it's not building a temple, maybe it's not working among the poor in India, but whatever it is, wherever you are – God's purposes that He desires to accomplish through you are of eternal significance.

One word in the right place, one act of kindness at the right moment, one humble attitude, one compassionate hug, one sympathetic ear, one righteous response...who knows what God is accomplishing through you in the hearts and minds of those around you when the things of God are in your heart?

Relationship with God, serving and worshipping God, pursuing God in every area of our lives – these are the keys to success.

We're not here to fill time, we're not in whatever situation we're in by chance. Maybe the situation isn't ideal, maybe we're there because of some wrong choices, maybe we're there because of things others have done, but God has a purpose for us – wherever we are.

To be successful in that plan and that purpose means prioritising our relationship with God, it means worshipping Him in everything we do, it means inviting Him to be a part of every facet of our lives.

When we do this, we can be assured that God smiles at that attitude, at that heart. We can also draw strength from the knowledge that this has been given to us by God and therefore there's a means by which we can accomplish it and we have everything in us that's required for the task ahead.

So be strong, be courageous, show yourself a woman of God, a man of God, stand with me and let's commit our ways to the Lord.