



Cooperative Program Bible Study Series

Cooperating We Can Do More - Biblical Background -

2 CHRONICLES 24:4-14

All the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought [the tax], and put it in the chest until it was full. 2 Chronicles 24:10 HCSB

Historical Background

Most of us enjoy times of celebrations, be it holidays, birthdays, or other special events. The gathering of family and friends to celebrate a significant person or event in our lives sparks a psychological momentum that typically results in generosity. We give gifts, host parties, or make donations to charitable causes. In our passage today, the tiny kingdom of Judah was about to celebrate its one-hundredth birthday. It should have been a time to celebrate, but recent events had taken away the people's interest in being festive. Tragic events in Jerusalem had led to the murder of virtually every male in the family line of King David. Only one member of the royal family was still alive who could lay claim to the right to rule over the nation; his name was Joash. But Joash was only seven years old – hardly old enough to run a country.

However, God used this unlikely prospect to lead His chosen people. With the support of the wise priest,

Jehoiada, Joash would become the youngest king in the nation's history. And because of the guidance he received from Jehoiada throughout much of his career, Joash would be remembered as a good king who helped to turn his nation back to God.

This week's lesson focuses on the brightest point of Joash's career, the time in his early adulthood when he got his people to join in a common cause of giving to accomplish great things for God. Together, the gifts of God's people would bring about a renewal in the Jerusalem temple.

1. A giving plan was devised to do great things for God's kingdom. (2 Chronicles 24:4-8)

Joash wanted to renovate (literally, the Hebrew means "to make new") the temple. Because it had been neglected and desecrated, it needed to be "made new" again. God's work needed a fresh start, and God had placed it in Joash's heart to make it

happen in his day. Wisely, Joash did not try to do the work alone. He could not have done it all even if he had tried. The task was much too big for just one person, or even for a small group of elites. Joash understood that, and ordered the key religious figures of his day, “the priests and Levites” who lived in Jerusalem and worked at the temple, to enlist the help of all of God’s people.

The priests and Levites, however, were too slow in carrying out the king’s order. Perhaps they were overwhelmed with the magnitude of the undertaking. Or perhaps they simply did not think the task of renewing the work of God in their generation was all that important. But the young king thought otherwise and came up with a way to get around it.

To get past the bottleneck, Joash ordered workmen to build a large chest and place it directly “*outside the gate of the LORD’s temple*” (2 Chronicles 24:8). That way any worshiper of the Lord coming to Jerusalem would be given a direct invitation to give to the work of God that needed to be done in their day.

[God put it in the hearts of men like E. O. Ware, who devised a plan of giving for the churches of Louisiana in 1895, and Rev. M. E. Dodd, who, along with an 85-member committee in 1923, drew from Ware to develop the unified giving plan known as the Cooperative Program. The plan was adopted at the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention so that all Southern Baptists might have a part in accomplishing God’s work.]

2. The plan required everyone to give. (2 Chronicles 24:9)

God’s work had suffered under the three monarchs that had preceded Joash on the throne of Judah—Athaliah, Amaziah, and Jehoram. For sixteen years these leaders had pursued the pagan ways of Baal worship (see 2 Chron. 21:11). A temple to Baal was built in Jerusalem, and sources of money needed for the upkeep of the great temple to the Lord built by Solomon were depleted. The Lord God’s house of worship was decaying because needed repairs had not been made; this should never have happened.

In the days of Moses, the Lord had given Israel a way to pay for the repairs that would be a normal part of maintaining Israelite worship centers (Ex. 30:12-16). Every Israelite male age twenty or older was to give one-fifth of an ounce of silver to be used “*for the service of the tent of meeting*” (Ex. 30:16). This was a relatively small amount for any individual to give. However, the rich were not to give more than that, and the poor were not to give less (Ex. 30:15). That way, everyone would have an equal stake in the project. Everyone was to have a part to play in doing the work of God.

God had a plan, and the need was great. Now it was up to the people to make it happen. And the king’s order was the catalyst that set the events in motion. Doing catch-up repairs on the temple and then paying for ongoing maintenance for that incredible facility would require lots of shekels. But God’s plan would work as everyone did his or her part.

[The CP is a plan, which allows everyone to have a part in God's extended work. The percentages from every dollar, whether from the rich or the poor, are the same for each. As everyone participates within the CP effort, the plan for God's work is successful.]

3. As God's people gave, they experienced joy. (2 Chronicles 24:10)

Since the days of Moses God had commanded the Israelites to make contributions for the upkeep of a place of worship. Now as they fulfilled God's command, "all the people rejoiced" (2 Chronicles 24:10). The people found a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in obeying God in the practical matter of giving. Through giving, God's priorities became their priorities. Giving money to support a work that was focused on God helped the people rediscover their fundamental purpose for living. They were on this planet to do "God's thing," and the task was immense. Only as all the people worked together and gave their monies for a common cause could the good plans of God be fulfilled. Yet as they worked together, each giving an affordable amount, a larger amount of money was raised (2 Chronicles 24:11). This in turn magnified the people's excitement and joy.

[One way to experience joy and satisfaction in life is to follow God's plan in the matter of giving. Lasting joy comes only as we obey Him and make His priorities our own. Monies given to the CP allow us, like the joint effort of those restoring the temple, to do together what we

cannot do alone, and give us reason to rejoice.]

4. Because God's people gave, great things were done for God's kingdom. (2 Chronicles 24:11-14)

As the people gave, the Levites gathered "*money in abundance*" (2 Chronicles 24:11). Now it was time for the leaders to use the monies wisely in carrying out the required tasks. The king, along with his mentor Jehoiada, took personal responsibility in putting God's money to good use. They turned it over to Levites "*in charge of the labor on the LORD's temple*" (2 Chronicles 24:12), who in turn hired skilled masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and coppersmiths to restore and beautify the most beautiful building in Jerusalem, the century-and-a-half old house of God.

When it became clear that the people were giving more than enough money for the temple repairs, additional projects to glorify God were undertaken. Faithful giving on the part of God's people always opens up new possibilities for God's work. During the days of the wicked kings who had preceded Joash, unauthorized persons had apparently taken over the day-to-day operations of the temple; it is likely that the sacred objects for use only in the worship of the Lord had been used in pagan cultic rituals (see 2 Chron. 23:18-19). Thus, they needed to be replaced. Accordingly, skilled craftsmen created new "*articles for ministry and for making burnt offerings*" (2 Chronicles 24:14). With the people's gifts, even gold and silver articles were manufactured for use in God's service.

Throughout Jehoiada's lifetime, people *"regularly offered burnt offerings in the LORD's temple"* (2 Chronicles 24:14). For as long as he was alive, the elderly priest encouraged king Joash to keep his personal and national priorities straight. As a result, the work of God flourished throughout the priest's lifetime.

[By giving to the CP, you help the work of God to flourish. What example of giving are you leaving for the next generation? If they give money to God's causes as well as you do, will the work of God flourish or flounder? Your faithfulness promotes values that will last beyond your lifetime.]