

“One Question You Cannot Ignore”

I Chronicles 29:1-9

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Nothing captures our attention like a good question. “Your son hit a ball toward my house and do you know where it landed?” “I understand that your daughter is getting married. Congratulations! Oh, by the way, do you know how much a wedding costs these days?” “You did not look at the back of the car when you came in, did you?”

Some questions have a way of grabbing our attention and stopping us in our tracks. The question we are going to examine today from the Old Testament is one of them. As a matter of fact, I think it is one of the stickiest questions in the Bible. It demands an answer and will haunt us until we do so.

This question is found in I Chronicles 29:5, “**Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?**” See what I mean about following you? It won’t let you put it on a shelf and walk away like you would a book that you are going to read on a rainy day. No, it goes wherever you go distracting you, competing for your attention.

So, I challenge you to answer it this morning. Before you do so, however, let me give you the background for the question and some insight into its meaning.

The question was asked by David, the second king of Israel, in the waning years of his life. He revealed his dream for building a temple in Jerusalem where his people could worship the Lord. Even though he would not live to see the construction of the temple, he wanted to lay the groundwork for it. Therefore, one of his last acts as king was to raise the funds for the building of the temple.

It was during this fund raising project that David asked this Velcro question, “Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?” I think you understand why I am asking this question this morning. As we gather to make our commitments to our capital campaign, “Faith, Family, and Future: Expanding the Legacy of the Smoke Rise Spirit,” we need to hear and answer David’s question.

“**Now**, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?” The timing of this question was important and David knew it. No leader can ask more of his people than he is willing to do. This is why David prefaced this question with a personal testimony. He shared with his people his love for God and eagerness to give his resources to build this temple.

“In my devotion to the temple of my God, I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen” I Chronicles 29:3-5.

I have tried to follow David’s lead. While Jackie and I cannot match the size of David’s gift, we have made a sacrificial commitment to this campaign and do so cheerfully. We believe in this project and the benefits that will come from it. We are honored to partner with you to make this dream become reality.

“Now, **who is willing** to consecrate himself today to the Lord?” David made the commitment a voluntary one, didn’t he? He did not want any one to be forced into

participating in this project. Neither did he want to exclude anyone by selecting a few of his countrymen to help him. He wanted to give everyone an equal opportunity to get on board, so he made the invitation open and broad.

I suppose he could have taxed the people and required them to participate in this project, but I am glad he did not. Believers don't need to be forced to do something for God. They need to do so willingly and cheerfully as a result of a relationship with God based upon love, trust and obedience. This is why I talk about stewardship being a lifestyle rather than an event. A faithful steward weighs every decision in light of God's will for him or her at that moment.

“Now, who is willing **to consecrate** himself today to the Lord?” To consecrate means to set aside the common for sacred purposes. It reflects the attitude of a humble person that has faith in God to use whatever he or she offers in powerful and even miraculous ways.

In my opinion, the clearest image of Jesus that we saw in the Twentieth Century was Mother Teresa. Our Lord was a homeless, penniless, Galilean carpenter that dedicated his life to serving God and helping people. She adopted his values, lifestyle and mission with all her heart, soul, mind and strength. She said one time that her goal in life was “to be a pencil in His hand” and she was. What a book He wrote through this willing servant.

Who would have thought that a baby born in Skopje, Yugoslavia on August 26, 1910 that would not grow to be five feet in stature would become a spiritual giant? Who could have predicted that the youngest of three children born to an obscure Albanian carpenter would be the founder of five hundred seventeen Missionaries of Charity throughout one hundred countries worldwide? Which of her neighbors could have told you that she would be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her untiring efforts to meet the needs of poor people around the world?

How was she able to do so much? Why did she make such a difference in our world? She gave her life, all of it, to the Lord. She “set aside the common for sacred purposes” and He performed miracle after miracle through her. What an inspiration she was to so many, including me. I hope her life influenced yours, too, and has motivated you to be a “pencil in His hand.”

“Now, who is willing to consecrate **himself** today to the Lord?” David was wise to focus the attention of his listeners on themselves. No one can speak for another, or at least he should not.

Perhaps you remember a story I told on one of my first Sundays with you. I shared with you the fact that I am not a big fan of boiled okra. I refuse to eat anything that looks like it grew on the side of a ship.

The first two homes Jackie and I ate in during my earliest pastorate, even before we were married, the hostesses served us boiled okra. Not wanting to hurt their feelings or draw attention to the fact that I had taken no okra, I took the bowl when handed to me and said, “Oh, Jackie loves okra.” After that proclamation, I proceeded to hand Jackie the bowl and encouraged her to take an extra helping. While I think I accomplished my goal of hiding the fact that I did not take any okra, I also strained our tender relationship. After it happened the second time, Jackie let me know in a loving but firm way that I did not need to speak for her. Believe me, I did not do that again!

Making a commitment to God is not something I can do for another, either. As much as I may want to speak for others, I cannot. David knew this and put the focus squarely where it belonged, on each individual.

“Now, who is willing to consecrate himself **today** to the Lord?” David knew human nature, didn’t he? He knew that people have a tendency to procrastinate. God’s people may have had good intentions, but unless activated, those intentions were worthless.

This was why he included this short timetable. He was not interested in what people would do at another time under different circumstances. He needed to know what they were willing to do that very day.

I have said on numerous occasions that I know it would have been easier to have had this campaign two or three years ago when the economy was stronger and there was no immediate threat of war. However, we cannot turn the calendar back and recapture those good times. We must deal with life as we know it now and seize the opportunities before us. This is why this portion of David’s prayer is so pertinent to us. The question asks what we are going to do today. Maybe this is why this question will not release us until we answer it. It demands an immediate reply.

“Now, who is willing to consecrate himself **today to the Lord?**” I find this part of the question to be most interesting. David was trying to raise money to build a temple to the Lord. He did not, however, ask his people to consecrate themselves to the building of this structure. He asked who was willing to give his or her life to the Lord. He knew that when a person gives God his or her life, all of it, that arranging priorities and accepting responsibilities will naturally follow. He had that much confidence in God and his people.

How did they respond? Was David’s confidence in them rewarded? It certainly was. Listen to I Chronicles 29:6,9, “Then the leaders of the families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king’s work gave willingly. The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.”

I want you to know that I have this kind of confidence in you, too. I know you love the Lord and want to be faithful stewards. I trust that you have prayed and asked for His guidance. Like David, I have confidence in Him and you and thank you in advance for following His lead.