



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 8 – Authentic Worship

Pop Quiz: Top artists to leave a lasting mark on music in the past sixty years . . . Who's on your list? Taylor? Bono? Beatles? Elvis? Go back farther . . . Armstrong? Gershwin? Go farther . . . Beethoven? Go back 3,000 years and there's one name: David. The sweet psalmist of Israel.

Goals for This Session:

- Discover how David ushered in a new era of worship.
- Consider why it was David's cherished desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem.
- Examine what keeps worship from becoming a formality.
- Pray honest prayers that cultivate reverence and joy in authentic worship.

Ice Breaker

"We worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship." Would you agree with this description of our culture, even in the church? Why or why not?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **2 Samuel 6:1–23** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

In our last session, David's exile was nearly over. Three days after returning to Ziklag, David got word that Saul and Jonathan died in battle against the Philistines. David's grief went deep and his eulogy in their honor became part of Israel's collective memory (2 Samuel 1:17–27).

At God's direction, David went to Hebron. The tribe of Judah anointed him king, but Abner put Saul's surviving son over the remaining eleven tribes. For seven and a half years, God blessed David's limited reign. When Abner saw he was on the losing side, he negotiated a position for himself and switched loyalties to David. At 37, David became king over all Israel.

David's first step to unite his fractured nation was to establish a new capital. He captured territory promised to Israel since the days of Joshua and renamed the city Jerusalem. As long as David ruled only Judah, the Philistines left him alone; but when he became king of the whole nation, the Philistines attacked. David was ready and with God's go-ahead, he pushed back hard. The enemy retreated so fast they left their idols behind, which David and his men burned. But the Philistines came back for more. This time, God gave David a different strategy: come from behind and wait for the sound of wind in the treetops—God's signal that He was going out before them. It was a decisive victory, and Israel regained territory that Saul lost in his last battle. "The Lord did it!" David exclaimed. "He burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" (2 Samuel 5:20 NLT) And indeed He did!

Day Two – Right Motives, Wrong Methods

Read 2 Samuel 6:1–11.

David was firmly established in Jerusalem, but something was missing. The covenant David made when he was anointed king (2 Samuel 5:2–3) was more than a swearing-in ceremony; it was a solemn promise before God to uphold God's law and shepherd the people wisely.

1. The ark was the holiest symbol of God's presence with Israel. The Lord spoke to Moses from the mercy seat and gave instructions for leading the people (Exodus 25:22). With that in mind, what does it say about David's motive, as Israel's new king, to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem?

As a man after God's heart, what was David's express desire?

Psalms 25:4–5

Psalms 27:4

Q: Why was the ark at the house of Abinadab?

A: When Eli was priest (and Samuel just a boy) the ark was at Shiloh. Eli's wicked sons took the ark from the tabernacle and carried it, like a good luck charm, into battle and lost it to the Philistines. God abandoned the tabernacle at Shiloh and let it be destroyed (Jeremiah 7:12–14 and Psalm 78:60–61). The Philistines returned the ark and eventually it was sent to Abinadab's house where it remained in obscurity (for about 75 years) until David brought it to Jerusalem.

2. It's been said that those who forget the mistakes of history are bound to repeat them. Sadly, that's what happened on David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

Compare details from an earlier account with the ark. Note similarities between the method David used and the previous consequences of mishandling the ark.

- a. The Philistines put the ark of God on a new cart to transport it (1 Samuel 6:7).
 - b. Some men looked in the ark and were struck dead for lack of reverence (1 Samuel 6:19).
 - c. The people were devastated and afraid to have the ark near them (1 Samuel 6:19–21).
3. David's anger was a response to his confusion and shock when God acted differently than he expected or understood. The ease he felt in approaching God was shaken and he abandoned the ark for the time being. Is there a lesson here for us?

- a. "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" David was stunned. It was one thing to see God "*break out*" against the enemy (2 Samuel 5:20) but what did the catastrophe with Uzzah show David about good intentions and God's holiness?
- b. David should have known better . . . right? But step into Israel's history and David's quick approach begins to look familiar.

The ark was treated as a national relic, stored away and forgotten. During his 40-year reign, Saul's attention to spiritual matters was casual and careless. God's prophet, Samuel (who was respected, but not always listened to) had been gone for nearly a decade. Fair to say, at 37, David's heart was strong after God but he had some essential lessons to learn. David was God's man to usher in a new era of worship, but seeking God's presence will always require coming to God on His terms.

In what ways can we be guilty of seeking shortcuts into God's presence without proper regard for His holiness?

- c. Think about it. What is the difference between *being afraid* of God and *fearing* God?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

Take five minutes to proclaim (declare, acknowledge) to God something of His greatness. Not just in general—*be specific*.

Day Three – The Right Thing in the Right Way

Read 2 Samuel 6:12–19.

Leaving the ark with Obed-Edom was a relief for David, but it ended up being a blessing for this ordinary man and his family. This part of the story reads like a passing detail until David takes notice, but God is in the details.

1. For all the years that the ark was kept in Abinadab's house, there is no particular mention of blessing. His son was ordained to maintain the ark (1 Samuel 7:1) and he fulfilled his duty. But what a difference three months made for Obed-Edom! The presence of the Lord in his home was an honor that consistently brought blessing.
 - a. What causes worship to become a formality (going through the motions) for some and an energizing encounter for others?
 - b. When formality starts to creep in, what does God want you to remember about worship and how you express devotion to Him? Make your answer personal and specific.

John 4:24

Mark 12:30

2. Obed-Edom’s family continued to serve after the ark was moved to Jerusalem. He and his sons and grandsons, 62 in all, served as gatekeepers (caretakers) in the Lord’s house (1 Chronicles 26:8, 15).

Worshipping God by serving practical needs is celebrated in song: “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Psalm 84:10 NIV).

Can our ordinary work be properly viewed as a form of worship? In what way?

Galatians 6:9–10

Philippians 2:14–15

Colossians 3:23–24

3. During those three months, David had time to think, pray, and learn what went wrong. Where did he find the answer? He went home and read his Bible! He probably combed through the books of Moses (especially Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy) to educate himself.

Note what David learned about authentic worship, as described in 1 Chronicles 15:2–3, 11–14.

“So David went and brought up the ark of God . . .” (1 Samuel 6:12).

The detailed account (1 Chronicles 15) paints a vivid picture of this event for us. A joyous parade of roughly 1,000 people accompanied the ark on the ten-mile route to Jerusalem. It included:

- ◆ King David
- ◆ Zadok and Abiathar (Head Priests)
- ◆ 868 Levite representatives
- ◆ 7 trumpeters to go ahead of the ark
- ◆ A lead worship team (3 singers with cymbals: Heman, Asaph, and Ethan)
- ◆ 14 musicians (8 harps, 6 lyres)
- ◆ 1 music director (Chenaniah)
- ◆ 2 gatekeepers (including Obed-Edom)
- ◆ Plus numerous elders and captains (government and military officials)

Music was so important to David that he appointed a permanent worship team, led by Asaph, to invoke, thank, and praise the Lord daily in the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 16).

4. David’s new understanding found its way into how he would worship God. Isn’t that what we all aim for? The more we know and obey the Word of God, the more we will love and worship the God of the Word.

Can you recall a significant moment or event when reading God’s Word caused a light to go on in your understanding of Him? Briefly explain. Share the specific verse if you’d like.

5. When the ark was placed in the tabernacle, burnt offerings and peace offerings were made. David blessed the people and distributed gifts of food to everyone.
- a. A burnt offering was a voluntary sacrifice that was entirely consumed on the altar. An animal of prime value was killed and the lifeblood poured on the altar to atone for sin. The rest of the sacrifice was burned until nothing remained and it was accepted as a pleasing aroma to the Lord (Leviticus 1:9).

For those who participated it was an act of consecration, giving themselves completely to God, holding nothing back, in order to please God.

Because Jesus fulfilled what the burnt offering pointed to, we no longer bring a sacrifice to atone for sin (Romans 3:23–25). But the principle of *consecration* still applies. How can our lives be a pleasing aroma to God?

“God delights to have His people worship and praise Him and bring Him their best.

**Warren Wiersbe
Real Worship**

Ephesians 5:2

2 Corinthians 2:14

- b. The peace offering was followed with a festive meal to celebrate the joy of forgiveness and restored fellowship with God. Singing and thanksgiving were a big part of this, so David composed a song for this special day. You can find it in 1 Chronicles 16:7–36 and the opening lines are also in our memory verse.

We suggest you read through it and circle verbs that indicate expressions of worship—not as a homework assignment but just to see *authentic worship* in action. Add what you find to the list here.

| *give thanks* | *call upon* | *make known* | *sing* |

Memory Verse

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

How frequently do I gather with believers to proclaim His greatness?

Why is authentic worship in action so important? How does this energize our faith?

Day Four – Her Father’s Daughter

Read 2 Samuel 6:20–23.

After the public celebration was ended, David went home to bless his household. There would be joy in sharing a meal and retelling the day’s events to his own family. But Michal was waiting on the porch for him and it was obvious she wasn’t happy.

1. When she was young and in love, Saul had tried to use Michal as a snare for David; now, at a spiritual high point in David’s life, it seems the devil did too. How did Michal speak to David and what was she accusing him of?
 - a. Michal’s scorn wasn’t suddenly caused by a look out the window; it was a slow burn. Given their marriage history, what other factors would fuel Michal’s contempt?
2. David’s linen ephod was a simple white garment worn by ordinary priests—in fact, the priests who carried the ark and directed worship were dressed the same way (1 Chronicles 15:27). Nothing about David’s apparel or behavior fit Michal’s image of royalty. He was praising and rejoicing—she saw cavorting. Consider David’s response. What did he mean by:
 - a. “I will be even more undignified than this . . .”
 - b. “. . . as for the maidservants . . . by them I will be held in honor.”
3. Put yourself in Michal’s position. Rather than participate in worship that day, she observed and critiqued. What can we learn from Michal?
4. Put yourself in David’s position. He didn’t perform to impress. His worship was honest to God and appropriate for the occasion. What can we learn from David?

Memory Verse

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

What do I allow to hinder or hold me back from *letting the whole world know* what He has done?

