



God Honors

God honors people who demonstrate God's priorities.

2 KINGS 12:4-16

An old saying goes, "Many people don't plan to fail; they just fail to plan." Some may fail to consider how long it will take to complete a project. Others are busy doing many things but do not prioritize the most important projects. We may be overwhelmed with the enormity of the task, so we put it off hoping it will take care of itself. Eventually, we reveal our priorities in the tasks we complete. What we think is important, we get done.

How do you decide on what tasks to be done next? What does the criteria used say about your priorities?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

2 KINGS 11:1–16:20 (2 CHRON. 22:10–28:27)

Elijah and Elisha focused their ministries on the Northern Kingdom of Israel and thus involved the kings of Israel. These included Ahab and Ahaziah for Elijah; Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash for Elisha.

A figure present in the ministries of both prophets was Jezebel, the scheming and idolatrous wife of King Ahab. She, the daughter of the king of Sidon, was a Baal worshiper. Jezebel had led the prophets of Baal in a showdown against Elijah at Mount Carmel. Additionally, witchcraft and prostitution were associated with her (2 Kings 9:22). King Jehu eventually killed Jezebel and eliminated Baalism and its followers from Israel (9:30-37; 10:18-28).

The attention now moves from the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and King Joash. When Judah's King Jehoshaphat died, his son Jehoram (Joram) became king. Jehoram was married to Athaliah. He brought Baalism to Judah. Upon Jehoram's death, his son Ahaziah became king.

Ahaziah continued Baal worship in Judah. He ruled only one year before dying. When Ahaziah died, his mother Athaliah was determined to rule Israel. To ensure that happened, she pronounced a death sentence on all of David's male descendants; these were heirs to the throne. Indeed, all were killed except one—a one-year-old named Joash (Jehoash). Similar to the story of Moses, the young boy was hidden away for his own safety. Joash's aunt Jehoshеba (who was married to a Hebrew priest named Jehoiada) hid Joash along with his nurse in the Jerusalem temple. There they stayed for six years, until just before Athaliah's disastrous reign was brought to an end. In those formative years, Joash was taught by Jehoiada the priest.

As you read through 2 Kings 12:4-16, look for points of accountability. What role did accountability play in the repairing of the temple?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PROBLEM (2 KINGS 12:4-8)

⁴ Then Joash said to the priests, “All the dedicated silver brought to the LORD’s temple, census silver, silver from vows, and all silver voluntarily given for the LORD’s temple— ⁵ each priest is to take it from his assessor and repair whatever damage is found in the temple.” ⁶ But by the twenty-third year of the reign of King Joash, the priests had not repaired the damage to the temple. ⁷ So King Joash called the priest Jehoiada and the other priests and asked, “Why haven’t you repaired the temple’s damage? Since you haven’t, don’t take any silver from your assessors; instead, hand it over for the repair of the temple.” ⁸ So the priests agreed that they would receive no silver from the people and would not be the ones to repair the temple’s damage.

VERSES 4-5

Joash (also called Jehoash) saw that the temple needed repair. The Scripture says he “took it to heart to renovate the LORD’s temple” (2 Chron. 24:4). At this point, the temple was about 125-150 years old. It was showing the wear and tear that occurs as a structure is used. Beyond this, some of the leaders who preceded Joash had not taken care of the temple or its belongings. As if this were not enough, the sons of Athaliah had stolen the sacred instruments from the Lord’s temple and used them in a temple that honored Baal, which would have also been in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 24:7).

Joash instructed the priests to take *all of the dedicated silver* that people brought to the temple and to redirect the funds in order to *repair whatever damage is found in the temple*. These funds had previously gone to the priests for food and other personal needs, so dedicating the offerings to temple repair was a radical departure from the norm.

The *dedicated silver* came from three sources: First was the *census silver*. This was a half-shekel that each man aged twenty or above was to bring annually to the temple. Although this was originally a one-time contribution (Ex. 30:13-14), it had developed into an annual tax after Solomon completed the Jerusalem temple. Second was *silver from vows* that people had promised to give to the Lord.

(See Lev. 27.) These were special offerings that expressed a person's thankfulness to God. Third was *silver voluntarily given for the LORD's temple*. The tradition behind this gift was the freewill offerings described in Leviticus 22:17-25. This offering, which began as an animal presented for sacrifice in the tabernacle, had transitioned to being an offering of silver by the time of Solomon's temple.

Joash instructed each priest to receive the dedicated silver from *his assessor*. The temple restoration work, which occurred about 812 BC, predated the development of government-issued standardized coins by about two centuries. Thus, the assessor's job was to determine the value of the silver based on how much it weighed and how pure it was.

VERSES 6-8

A problem developed with Joash's plan. The priests had not followed through with their assignment. Despite being told to gather the collections quickly, "the Levites did not hurry" (2 Chron. 24:5). As a result, they *had not repaired the damage to the temple*.

Joash thus gathered *the priest • Jehoiada and the other priests* and confronted them about not fulfilling their assignment. Jehoiada had taught Joash (2 Kings 12:2) and was married to Joash's aunt, Jehosheba. She had hidden young Joash in the temple to spare him from his murderous grandmother, Athaliah. Confronting a man who was so important in his life and who was also elderly at this point (see 2 Chron. 24:15) shows how dedicated Joash was to make sure the temple was repaired.

The king and priests came to an agreement. Priests would no longer be responsible for gathering the funds or for making sure the temple was repaired. A new solution was needed.

What factors influence whether we confront someone who has not lived up to expectations?

SOLUTION (2 KINGS 12:9-12)

⁹ Then the priest Jehoiada took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one enters the LORD's temple; the priests who guarded the threshold put into the chest all the

silver that was brought to the LORD's temple.¹⁰ Whenever they saw there was a large amount of silver in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest would go bag up and tally the silver found in the LORD's temple.¹¹ Then they would give the weighed silver to those doing the work — those who oversaw the LORD's temple. They in turn would pay it out to those working on the LORD's temple — the carpenters, the builders,¹² the masons, and the stonecutters — and would use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the damage to the LORD's temple and for all expenses for temple repairs.

VERSES 9-12

Joash, working with Jehoiada, developed a new plan. His intent was to restore both the temple and the proper worship of God to its rightful place in the lives of His people.

The king's heavy involvement in temple life was uncommon. In fact, the last time the temple was mentioned occurred five kings back, when Asa raided the temple treasury of its gold and silver in order to pay a bribe to Ben-hadad, king of Aram (1 Kings 15:18).

Two words describe Joash's new plan. The first is accountability. Rather than having several priests going to collect silver, Joash commanded that *a chest*, meaning a single wooden box, be built to receive and hold the silver offerings that the people would give (2 Chron. 24:8). The Hebrew term used for *chest* most commonly referred in the Old Testament to the ark of the covenant. After Jehoiada *bored a hole* in the lid of the chest, it was placed at the north gate at the temple's inner court. This funneled all the silver into a single location. It went directly from the people to the temple. The *priests who guarded the threshold* referred to three priests who were responsible for making sure no one unclean entered the temple. (See 2 Kings 25:18.) They were given the responsibility of placing the dedicated silver into the chest and did so in front of all the people. Even though there were multiple priests, this new process helped ensure that the entire offering went into a single chest at the temple.

When the chest was full of silver, two people were responsible for counting it and also likely for weighing it: *the king's secretary and the high priest*. Both men had to be held in high regard to maintain these roles. Again, the involvement of more than one person emphasized the transparency of the process.

The king's secretary and the high priest would give the silver to the project overseers. They, in turn, would pay those who were doing the manual labor and purchasing the materials needed for the temple's repairs. This process ensured that the work was getting done and that everybody involved was being paid promptly for his labor. This process and the example of those involved are reminders that financial integrity needs to be a part and a priority in the lives of God's people.

The second word to describe Joash's new plan is abundance, meaning the people gave generously. The book of 2 Chronicles offers details beyond what we read in 2 Kings. When Joash's new plan was announced, "All the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought the tax, and put it in the chest until it was full" (2 Chron. 24:10). This verse shows that people gave both joyfully and generously—the same way God wants us to give to His work today. Lest we be tempted to think Old Testament principles about giving no longer apply, we should remind ourselves that the New Testament teaches, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Our attitude in giving reflects what is in our hearts.

Because the people gave in abundance, the chest had to be emptied daily (2 Chron. 24:11). The people's generosity was an indication of two things. First, the temple, its upkeep, and thus the proper worship of God had become high priorities for the Israelites. Second, Joash's solution had worked.

How do people's financial practices reveal their priorities?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church*

Each congregation operates under the lordship of Christ through democratic processes, with each member responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. (See 1 Timothy 3:14-15; 1 Peter 5:1-4.)

ACTION (2 KINGS 12:13-16)

¹³ However, no silver bowls, wick trimmers, sprinkling basins, trumpets, or any articles of gold or silver were made for the LORD's temple from the contributions brought to the LORD's temple.

¹⁴ Instead, it was given to those doing the work, and they repaired the LORD's temple with it. ¹⁵ No accounting was required from the men who received the silver to pay those doing the work, since they worked with integrity. ¹⁶ The silver from the guilt offering and the sin offering was not brought to the LORD's temple since it belonged to the priests.

VERSES 13-14

The silver being brought to the temple was used for the repairs and restoration work. None was directed for use in making the instruments that the priests or leaders used in worship practices or services. Verse 13 lists some of the objects the priests used in worship. These same pieces are described as being used in Solomon's temple, although the metals for some of the pieces differed. (See 1 Kings 7:38-50.)

Why would the writer specify that none of the worship implements came from the *contributions brought to the LORD's temple*? Again, the description highlights integrity in the way the temple personnel used the offerings being brought in—the silver was being used for the purpose for which it was given. The silver went *to those doing the work*—the carpenters, builders, masons, and stonecutters (2 Kings 12:12). After all the repairs and restoration work on the temple were complete and all of the people had been paid, the leftover funds were directed toward the articles used to worship (2 Chron. 24:14). Having silver left over again highlights the people's generosity in giving.

VERSES 15-16

Neither the king's scribe nor the high priest called for an *accounting* from those who received the silver. The men involved in this process had such *integrity* that their word and work was beyond suspicion or accusation.

One might think that bypassing the priests in the process would have hurt them financially. They did not suffer, however. They continued to have sufficient income, which they derived from

the sacrificial offerings the people brought. These are explained in Leviticus 7:7-10 and Numbers 5:7-10.

Joash's new system offered two advantages to the earlier one. First, it streamlined the process. Second, there was accountability at every step. People presented their offerings in full view of everyone. Multiple priests were assigned the task of placing the offerings in the chest. Two men of impeccable reputation served as conduits who got the money to the overseers. These overseers who had been hired for the work were also men of flawless character. These two advantages would have enabled outsiders to see the integrity of those involved in leading and doing the restoration work. This "above reproach" system ultimately reflected positively on the reputation of the Lord whose temple was being repaired.

This story is a reminder that handling our money and financial obligations with biblical integrity bears witness of our Christian faith. The Lord is honored as we honor Him with our resources. In turn, God honors that type of integrity.

How might a church bring honor or shame to the name of Christ through the way it oversees its budget?



BIBLE SKILL: *Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.*

Read 2 Kings 12:15 slowly and reflectively. Consider the kind of integrity the men must have had to handle such large amounts of money faithfully. How can integrity in all things make a difference for God's kingdom?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Leaders are accountable for their actions.
- God expects His people to take care of their financial obligations.
- A believer's integrity in business can further the case of God's kingdom.

How can you foster accountability in your life? What actions do you need to take this week to be more mindful of the impact of your actions?

Review your personal finances and see what they reveal about the priorities of your life. What changes do you need to make to better align your priorities with God's?

Discuss with your group the ways financial practices may open the door for sharing the gospel. How can your group help each other be mindful of the impact their financial practices have for the cause of Christ?

PRAYER NEEDS
