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Learning how to  
**talk to God**  
from the great prayers of the Bible

## **Solomon's Prayer of Dedication**

### **2 Chronicles 6**

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## SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION

### 2 Chronicles 6

The majestic creator of the universe has invited us to talk to Him. Prayer is the wonderful gift of experiencing a relationship with God and having a conversation with Him. This invitation to pray proves how much God loves us and cares about us. It's permission to cry out to Him for help anytime about anything. And it really makes a difference. Prayer makes a difference because He promises to listen and He promises to act.

So this spring, we are *learning how to talk to God from the great prayers of the Bible. But the goal is not to learn more, but to pray more!*

This morning, we're going to look at Solomon's great prayer dedicating the temple.

One of America's greatest structures is the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.<sup>1</sup> When we lived there, I would occasionally take a day and wander around the cathedral, find a prayer room, and spend time with God. National Cathedral is the 6th largest cathedral in the world. Its central tower is over 300' tall. The largest bell weighs 24,000 pounds and there are more than 10,000 pipes in the great organ. It is adorned with 320 angels and 215 stained-glass windows. More than 150 people are interred in the cathedral, including Woodrow Wilson and Helen Keller. It was meant to be a place where America, as a nation, could call upon God during times of national emergency or national mourning.<sup>2</sup> The cornerstone was laid in 1907 by President Theodore Roosevelt, and it would take 83 years and 4 architects to complete the National Cathedral.

There is a theology of cathedral architecture that goes back a thousand years to Europe. The design of the cathedral was intended to make one feel small, overwhelmed, and awed. And every detail had a theological function.<sup>3</sup>

The footprint of the cathedral was usually in the form of a cross. The cornerstone of the foundation represented Christ as the cornerstone of the faith. The stained-glass windows told the Christian story with pictures. The columns represented saints who held up the faith. The ceilings and arches were given great height and breadth to represent the transcendence of God. As the cathedral bell rang out, it would remind people of the presence of God in their community. And the spires of cathedral would rise above the trees and could be seen for miles, always there to help people find their way to God. The cathedral was meant to point people to the grandeur of God.

And that's exactly what David had in mind 3,000 years ago. David wanted to build a magnificent temple for his magnificent God.<sup>4</sup> The Lord commended David's heart and promised to fulfill his dream, and that the temple would be "exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands" (1 Chronicles 22:5). But it would be Solomon, David's son, who would build it.<sup>5</sup>

David spent the last half of his life accumulating tons of gold and silver and materials for the temple. And through a dream, the Lord gave David detailed architectural plans for the temple.<sup>6</sup> David passed these plans on to Solomon, who began work on the temple in 967 BC.<sup>7</sup> It took 7

years to complete.<sup>8</sup> Solomon assigned 70,000 men to transport loads, 80,000 men to quarry stones, and 3,600 men to supervise the workforce.<sup>9</sup>

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon “knelt on his knees” and “spread out his hands” toward God and prayed, “Will God really live on earth? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!” (2 Chronicles 6:13, 6:18, NLT). And then he repeated the words that he had heard his father David utter so many times. “***O Lord, there is none like You!***” (2 Chronicles 6:14).

On the day of the dedication, a great choir of 4,000 voices sang out and 120 trumpeters blasted their horns joined by hundreds of others playing harps and lyres and clashing cymbals.<sup>10</sup> The Bible says there were so many animals sacrificed in worship of God that the number could not be counted.<sup>11</sup> All the people sang and shouted praise to the Lord, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever” (2 Chronicles 5:13, ESV). And the Bible says the glory of the Lord, in the form of a cloud, filled the temple and was so intense the priests could not stand it.<sup>12</sup>

Then Solomon stood before all the people and declared, “The Lord has kept the promise he made. I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel ... and I have built this temple ***for the name of the Lord***, the God of Israel” (2 Chronicles 6:10, NIV).

And then Solomon prayed, dedicating the temple to the Lord. And here is where the lesson for us begins. What can we learn from Solomon’s great prayer? As we walk through his prayer, there are several principles we can apply to our own prayer lives.

### **PRAY WITH HUMILITY AND REVERENCE**

We can learn a lot from Solomon’s posture. Solomon “knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven” (2 Chronicles 6:13, ESV). As king, Solomon was accustomed to everyone kneeling before him. But he knew there was a greater king, so in this moment, the king knelt before God. Kneeling has always been a symbol of humility and reverence. So as you pray, pray with humility and reverence.

### **PRAY KNOWING THAT YOU BELONG TO HIM**

We can also learn something from how Solomon addressed God. “O Lord, God of Israel,” he said (2 Chronicles 6:14, ESV). Solomon was declaring that the God of Israel was his God. That he, and the entire nation, belonged to God. He believed that because of the Lord’s covenant throughout history. The Lord said, “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:12, NAS).<sup>13</sup> He said, “I have called you by name, and you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1, NLT).<sup>14</sup>

That’s true of us as well. Through faith in Jesus, we belong to Him.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, we can pray with confidence. Knowing that He is our Father, that we belong to Him, and that He cares about us.

## **PRAY TO THE ONE AND ONLY GOD**

In his prayer, Solomon repeated the words he had heard his father David say so many times.<sup>16</sup> “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you” (2 Chronicles 6:14, ESV).

We hear that phrase repeated by others throughout the Bible.<sup>17</sup> Moses said it. “The Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other” (Deuteronomy 4:39, NIV). Joshua said it. “For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? (Deuteronomy 3:24, NIV). Hannah said it. “There is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you” (1 Samuel 2:2, NIV). Fourteen times, in two chapters, the Lord said to Isaiah, “I am the Lord, there is no other” (Isaiah 45:5, ESV).

As you pray, realize you are praying to the one and only God. There is no one else to turn to.

## **PRAY TO OUR FAITHFUL AND LOVING GOD**

And what makes God unique? The answer is in Solomon’s prayer. “O Lord, there is no God like you, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to those who walk before you with all their heart” (2 Chronicles 6:14, ESV).<sup>18</sup>

The word “covenant” points to His faithfulness. God keeps His promises. The second word, “steadfast love,” is closely related to the first. It’s the Hebrew word *hesed*, a special word emphasizing God’s love toward us. As Solomon prayed, he pondered the character of his God. And we should do the same thing, pondering the character of God as we pray. He is faithful. He loves us. That’s His character, and we can trust His character. He will never let us down. He will never fail us. So as you pray, pray knowing that He is faithful and that He loves you.

## **PRAY HIS PROMISES BACK TO HIM**

As you pray, pray His promises back to Him. Solomon did. “You have kept your promise to your servant David my father, with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it – as it is today. Now Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel’ ... O Lord, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true” (2 Chronicles 6:15-17, NIV). And the Lord’s promise would have a double fulfillment. One, that Solomon succeeded David to sit on the throne. And two, that an heir of David would eternally reign, which was fulfilled in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Bible contains over 8,000 promises from God. Find any promise in the Bible, and it’s still true today. Like the Lord’s promise to Joshua, when He said, “Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9, NIV). That was a promise to Joshua, but we can learn from that promise and apply it to our lives as well. We can pray that promise back to Him. “Lord, do for me what you did for Joshua. Just as You had a plan for Joshua, make clear Your plan for me. Just as You promised to be with Joshua, O Lord,

please be with me.” At the end of his life Joshua said, “Not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled. Not one has failed” (Joshua 23:14, NIV).

God is faithful. He keeps His promises. The Bible says, “God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?” (Numbers 23:19, NLT). The answer is no! Why? Because “He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23, NAS). Find any promise in the Bible, and it’s still true today. So as you pray, as Solomon did, pray His promises back to Him.

### **PRAY REALIZING HOW BIG HE IS**

In amazement of the greatness of God, Solomon continued his prayer, and said, “Will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built” (2 Chronicles 6:18, ESV).

The purpose of the temple was not to provide a house for God but to provide a place for people to come to God. The grandeur and beauty and sheer size of the temple was meant to be overwhelming. To compel people to realize how big and great and powerful and holy God is.

Several years ago, I was the speaker on our high school houseboat trip. Three hundred of us lived on twenty 84’ houseboats for a week. We tied them together side by side, and those 20 houseboats were as long as a football field. For a whole week we worshiped under the stars. On the last night, another pastor closed the service by simply saying, “Look up.” We looked up. The sky was brilliant with stars, and it was so big. The sky was our cathedral. And we felt so small. I felt small. It was a very powerful and reverent moment. It was as if God was saying, “Monty! Look up.”

David felt the same thing when he said, “The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak, night after night they make him known” (Psalm 19:1-2, NLT). David said, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their lights ... For He spoke, and it was done” (Psalm 33:6, 9, NAS).

Solomon knew that if the universe was not big enough to contain God, then certainly neither was the temple he built. So, if God is great enough to create the universe, He is great enough to handle anything you may be going through. So as you pray, realize how big and great and powerful He is.

### **PRAY AND CALL ON HIM TO LISTEN**

And as you pray, call on Him to listen. That’s the purpose of prayer. We want Him to hear us. Twelve times in his prayer, Solomon asked the Lord to hear his prayers. “Listen to my prayer and my plea, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you ... May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place. May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this place. Yes, hear us from heaven” (2 Chronicles 6:19-21, NLT).

We find this plea for God to hear throughout the Psalms. I suppose it's the greatest plea of the human heart. Solomon learned this from his father David, who often begged God to listen. "Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray" (Psalm 5:2, NIV). "Hear my prayer, Lord, and listen to my cry for help. Do not be silent to my tears" (Psalm 39:12, NAS). "O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy" (Psalm 143:1, NIV).

Nothing is more wonderful, and brings more peace and assurance and hope, than knowing that God hears our prayers. David was overjoyed when he said, "In my distress I called to the Lord. I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice. My cry came before him, into his ears" (Psalm 18:6, NIV). And with great affection, David said, "I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer" (Psalm 116:1, NLT).

Again, twelve times in his prayer, Solomon asked the Lord to hear his prayers. "Hear us from heaven" (2 Chronicles 6:21, NLT). So, as you pray, call on Him to hear you, and trust that He will.

### IF ...

For the next seventeen verses, like fine print in a contract, Solomon seems to negotiate with God. He realized the nation was fickle and vulnerable to sin, and he wanted to make sure God would forgive them when they did.

Solomon prayed through seven scenarios, and in each one, asked the Lord, "Please hear from heaven."

- "If someone sins, and then repents, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>19</sup>
- "If the nation is defeated because we have sinned, and yet we repent, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>20</sup>
- "If there is no rain because we have sinned, and yet we repent, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>21</sup>
- "If there is famine or plague because we have sinned, and yet we repent, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>22</sup>
- "If a foreigner comes into our land, hears of Your greatness and prays to You, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>23</sup>
- "If You send us into battle to face a great enemy, O Lord, please hear from heaven."<sup>24</sup>
- "When we sin against You – for there is no one who does not sin – and yet we repent, O Lord, hear from heaven."<sup>25</sup>

His prayer crescendos in verse 40, "My God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place" (2 Chronicles 6:40, NIV). Solomon prayed through seven scenarios asking the Lord to "hear from heaven."

## WHEN SOLOMON FINISHED HIS PRAYER

And here's what happened when Solomon finished his prayer.

“As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever’” (2 Chronicles 7:1-3, ESV).<sup>26</sup>

There's very little facedown worship these days. That's the theme of Matt Redman's book, in which he writes, “When we face up to the glory of God, we soon find ourselves facedown in worship ... Facedown is the ultimate sign of reverence ... Facedown worship is the overflow of a heart humbled and amazed by the glory of God ... When a soul is captivated by the Almighty, bending low is the only appropriate response.”<sup>27</sup>

Sadly, there is little facedown worship these days, and little facedown prayer as well. But the Bible is filled with it.

- When God spoke to Abraham, He promised to make his family a great nation, and the Bible says Abraham “fell on his face” (Genesis 17:3).
- When David was convicted of his sin, the Bible says David “fell on his face” (1 Chronicles 21:16).
- When Ezekiel was allowed a glimpse into heaven and saw the glory of God, he said, “I fell on my face” (Ezekiel 1:28).
- When God spoke to Daniel in answer to his prayer, he said, “I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless” (Daniel 10:15, NIV).
- When John was allowed a peek into heaven, he saw the majesty and holiness of God, and he described all the creatures of heaven falling down before God with their faces on the ground.<sup>28</sup>

As I introduce each message each week, I remind us of the most amazing thought. That the majestic creator of universe invites us to talk to Him. Yet, as we approach Him and dare to talk to Him, we must remember Psalm 2:11. Which says, “Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.” “Rejoice with trembling.”

We see this mixture of rejoicing and reverence throughout the Bible.<sup>29</sup> We see it in Psalm 95. “O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord ... (and) let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95:1, 6, NAS).

And we see it at the dedication of the temple. “When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, *they bowed down with their faces to the*

*ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord*, saying, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever’” (2 Chronicles 7:3, ESV).

## CONCLUSION

Solomon’s dedication of the temple is also recorded in 1 Kings 8, which gives some extra information. After he finished his prayer, after fire came down from heaven, after the people fell on their faces in worship, Solomon stood and addressed the people. “Blessed be the Lord ... May the Lord our God be with us ... The Lord is God, there is no one else. Therefore, may your hearts be wholly devoted to the Lord” (1 Kings 8:56, 57, 60-61, NAS).<sup>30</sup>

The dedication of the temple was probably the greatest event most of the people witnessed in their lifetime. It was grand and glorious. But it was not merely ceremonial. It was meant to be personal. The dedication of the temple included the dedication of the people.

“May your hearts be wholly devoted to the Lord.” Wholly, fully, completely. We cannot pray with a divided heart, with a heart partially devoted to God. When we pray, our hearts must be “wholly devoted to the Lord.”

And if we are – “wholly devoted to the Lord” – what the Lord promised Solomon, He will promise us. “The Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer ... and My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place’” (2 Chronicles 7:12, 15, NAS). He promised that to Solomon and He promises that to us. ***His eyes and ears will be open to us. He will hear our prayers. And we can pray with confidence.***

This series is about praying. Learning how to talk to God from the great prayers of the Bible. Solomon’s prayer dedicating the temple is certainly one of those great prayers. But the dedication of the temple included the dedication of the people. As Solomon said, “May your hearts be wholly devoted to the Lord” (1 Kings 8:57, 60-61, NAS). We cannot pray with a heart partially devoted to God. When we pray, our hearts must be “wholly devoted to the Lord.”



## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> From [www.cathedral.org](http://www.cathedral.org) website.

<sup>2</sup> The cathedral hosted the funeral service of President Eisenhower, the last sermon of Martin Luther King, Jr. (whose memorial service was held five days later), a thanksgiving service after the release of American hostages in Iran, and a remembrance service after the September 11 tragedy in 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Russell Chamberlain, *The English Cathedral* (Devon, England: Webb & Bower Publishers, 1987), page 62.

<sup>4</sup> The Lord said no, because David had been a “man of war” and had “shed blood.” See 1 Chronicles 17 and 28:3.

<sup>5</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:8 and 2 Samuel 7:12-15.

<sup>6</sup> See 1 Chronicles 28:19.

<sup>7</sup> See 1 Kings 6:1. Temple construction began in 967 BC and was completed seven years later in 960 BC.

<sup>8</sup> See 1 Kings 6:37-38.

<sup>9</sup> See 2 Chronicles 2:2.

<sup>10</sup> See 1 Chronicles 23:5 and 2 Chronicles 5:12.

<sup>11</sup> See 2 Chronicles 5:6.

<sup>12</sup> See 2 Chronicles 5:13-14.

<sup>13</sup> See also Exodus 6:7, 29:45-46, Leviticus 11:45, Jeremiah 30:22.

<sup>14</sup> See Deuteronomy 6:7 and 1 Peter 2:9.

<sup>15</sup> See John 1:12, Galatians 3:26.

<sup>16</sup> See 2 Samuel 7:22, Psalm 86:8.

<sup>17</sup> See Exodus 8:10, 15:11.

<sup>18</sup> Exegeting this verse raises the question if Solomon was referring to one attribute of God or two. The broad answer is that God cannot be divided, that all of His attributes blend together in perfect unity and harmony. But a closer look helps us gain fresh details. The NASB translates the phrase as “keeping Your covenant and Your faithfulness” as one parallel, repeated idea. That He is faithful to keep His covenant with us. The NIV translates the phrase as “you who keep your covenant of love,” thus defining His covenant as one of love. The ESV translates the phrase as “keeping covenant and showing steadfast love.” Although the Hebrew words are closely connected, the ESV suggests two ideas, or two insights into the character of God. The word for “covenant” is meant to point to His faithfulness. The second word, although closely related to the previous, is *hesed*, a special Hebrew word emphasizing God’s love toward us. All this to say that our God is both faithful and loving. So when we pray, we can trust that He will be faithful and fulfill His promises to us, and that He will do that because He loves us.

<sup>19</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:22-23.

<sup>20</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:24-25.

<sup>21</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:26-27.

<sup>22</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:28-31.

<sup>23</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:32-33.

<sup>24</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:34-35.

<sup>25</sup> See 2 Chronicles 6:36-39.

<sup>26</sup> The book of Leviticus gives a similar account. “When fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering, all the people saw it, and they shouted for joy and fell facedown” (Leviticus 9:24, NIV).

<sup>27</sup> Matt Redman, *Facedown* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), pages 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> See Revelation 7:11.

<sup>29</sup> Is it possible to enjoy God and fear God at the same time? Sounds contradictory doesn’t it? But we enjoy and fear things all the time. We enjoy the sun for a day at the beach, but we also respect the sun by wearing sunscreen or we’ll suffer all night with sunburn. We enjoy sitting by a warm fire in the fireplace, but we also respect the fire by putting it out before we go to bed at night. We enjoy and respect things all the time. And the same is true with God. He invites us to enjoy Him, but He also requires that we fear and respect Him.

<sup>30</sup> Sadly, Solomon’s heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord. “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, *except* that he was sacrificing and burning incense on the high places” (1 Kings 3:3, NAS). Why? Because “Solomon loved many foreign women ... For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to follow other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David had been” (1 Kings 11:1, 4, NAS).