

David: Issues of the Heart

A Continuing Heart

Part 8

“A Continuing Heart”

REC: September 27, 2015

1 Chronicles 28

Pastor Charles Price

One of the less visible but vital aspects of leadership in this church is the leadership of our board. Nine folks who are part of our church board; the chairman is Stuart Hartley and I am going to ask Stuart to come up and make an important announcement to us this morning. Stuart, thank you very much indeed.

Well thank you Charles, and good morning to everybody. I am very excited this morning to announce that after an extensive search by our succession committee (which is primarily made up of the board) that we have unanimously chosen a new lead pastor for the Peoples Church.

Although our search was international, God has ultimately led us to someone right here in our church family.

Now our careful and prayerful process began well over a year ago when Charles Price advised the board that he would step down from his role as senior pastor and enable a younger person to give leadership to the church.

Charles agreed at that time to remain on staff until the summer of 2016, and that has not changed.

The succession committee searched extensively for a new lead pastor. We considered many candidates with the goal of finding someone who would demonstrate four key attributes that we felt were very important.

The first one was to be a highly competent teacher.

The second was a personal character that is godly, committed to integrity and loving towards people.

The third was a passion for God's global mission (which is sort of the DNA of this church) starting here at home and extending around the world.

And finally, proven leadership abilities.

Now throughout our months of meetings, conversations and interviews, we prayed that the Lord would allow us to unanimously agree on His choice for this important role.

Our chosen candidate demonstrates all of the four attributes outlined during the search process. He is a very competent teacher who will now have an opportunity to continue developing that skill as he teaches more regularly here at the Peoples Church.

He demonstrates godly character with integrity and with genuine love for people.

He shares the passion of our church to serve in God's global mission, both locally and internationally.

He also has proven leadership abilities, serving as the leader in a local missions organization.

And he has also had many active roles as leader here at Peoples.

So by now you will be asking who is our candidate. Well, I am very pleased to announce that the board has wholeheartedly and enthusiastically agreed to invite Brett McBride to serve. This is Brett and Stephanie.

Just to finish here, Brett has attended this church (for those of you who don't know Brett) for many years and he is already well known and well loved.

And the good news is that Brett has accepted this opportunity. So maybe once again, let's welcome with a warm Peoples welcome Brett and Stephanie.

Eighteen years ago this very month, just down the road at the Don Valley Parkway on Sheppard Avenue a member from Peoples Church challenged me on where my life was headed because I, like the prodigal son, was running away from God.

And God used a member from this church to lead me into a relationship with Jesus Christ. I remember spending my first Easter here. During the Easter service, the Good Friday service, sitting up on that balcony over there, weeping my eyes out because I was just amazed that God would forgive a sinner like me.

And I wanted the whole world to know that if He could save a sinner like me, He could save anyone.

Six months after I started attending the Peoples Church, eighteen years ago, I heard Tony Campolo speak on this very stage during our Global Outreach conference, and heard God's call into ministry, and where I was sent to the inner city of Philadelphia where I met my wife, Stephanie.

Upon my return to Toronto I knew that God was calling me into full time ministry and it was confirmed by the church, standing with me for the last seventeen years, standing with us and our family to serve those people in our city who will never enter a church door, to serve those outside the church.

And most recently, I really truly believe God has called me to be a part of the Peoples Church, to serve alongside the team here and to serve alongside each one of you to reach out for the thousands of people in our city who will never enter a church door, and to be partners with our global partners, again to reach out for the millions of people who will never enter a church door.

If you had told me eighteen years ago that I would be standing on this stage, I wouldn't have believed you. And there is much more to this story that I will share on another occasion when I have time. But it is a testimony to God's amazing grace. And I look forward to serving with the team here and serving with you. Thank you very much.

Okay, I thought it would be kind of neat just to pray for Brett and Stephanie as they embark on this new role and I thought we would go to one of the people who have been in this church a long, long time - I won't even ask how long - for Art, and for Art to pray for Brett in terms of the going forward.

And then we are going to ask Hilary Price to pray for Stephanie in her new role as a pastor and also for the family as well and the kids.

Precious Heavenly Father, what an awesome privilege to be able to come to the throne of grace in prayer, to a living Savior, not made of wood or stone, but a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.

And Lord, we know that the board and the church has been praying for a new pastor. Thank You Lord for answering that prayer, and we commit Brett into Your precious care, Lord. I know that taking on such an awesome responsibility, Satan will do a number on him and cause him to fear. But Precious Lord, we know that he has been called and that You will equip him and You will anoint his lips as he proclaims the precious truths. Guide, guard him and protect him, Precious Heavenly Father we pray. These things we ask in Your most precious and holy name, Amen.

Let's pray for Steph.

Lord, thank You for this day. Thank You for Stephanie. Thank You for the lovely beautiful person she is in You. Thank You for her family. Thank You for Jady and Caleb, the boys. And thank You Lord, over the next months as she and Brett prepare to step into this role that she doesn't have to change anything. She just has to remain in Your love. Thank You that she knows Your love. She knows who she is in You. Thank You that in the quiet place she has a deep relationship with You and a deep compassion for the people around her. I pray for her. I pray, Lord, when the fears arise, that You would quell them, that You would comfort her, that You would encourage her, that You would empower her, that You would lead her into a place of trust where she doesn't skip a beat; she just walks in her relationship into this role with You in the summer, next summer.

We thank You for Brett and Steph. I pray for their marriage over the next months. I pray would You protect them, You would enable them to encourage each other, see each other, hear each other and be strong in You as they walk into this new role. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Amen! Thank you.

Well this is a wonderful day and as you leave this morning, you will be given a copy of a little brochure introducing our new lead pastor. And in it there is also a transition timetable in case you wonder what the process is.

Brett will join our staff on March 1st. And he and I will work alongside each other until May 1 when we will have an induction of Brett into the role of the lead pastor here.

And then I will work alongside Brett for the next two months, finishing at the end of June.

So that's the schedule, but it's in here plus a little background to him and to his family, and a great picture that you can put on your fridge or keep in your Bible or on your dart board where you keep these things. And that will remind you to be praying over these next days, not just for our transition but the transition of Urban Promise where Brett has been such a valued leader, as they transition too into new leadership there.

Well, I am going to ask you if you have got your Bible to turn to 1 Chronicles Chapter 28. We have been looking at King David just for a couple of weeks. We have met him so far only as a teenaged boy when God set him aside, not expected to be even a candidate by his family, by anybody.

And God said, I have looked for a man after My own heart – this is the boy.

And then last week we saw him, still as a teenager, take on Goliath and experience victory in that situation, a situation where Saul had been promised victory but hadn't the courage or the spirit of dependence on God to step out into that situation.

Well I am going to jump now to the end of his life. This message is coming completely out of sequence as far as looking at David's life, and we will go back to earlier events, but I want to look at a passage where David announces his succession plans for the nation of Israel and where the baton is being passed from David, who has been on the throne for 40 years, to his son Solomon.

I knew if I didn't speak on this kind of line this morning, none of you would be listening to me anyway – you would be thinking about the succession, the implications of it, and so on. And so I want to talk about David's succession to Solomon.

I believe you will see, as I have seen surprisingly, some wonderful parallels to this story and to our own.

It is actually quite remarkable that in 87 years of history, since the Peoples Church was founded, this month September 1928; in the 87 years since then, this is only the fourth passing of the baton.

And this of course will take place next year now. We are just telling you what is coming here today.

But there are some wonderfully simple principles here and I am going to read Verse 1 just to get the setting of 1 Chronicles Chapter 28.

“David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors.”

That is, David brought together into Jerusalem all the great leaders of the nation, all the folks with vested interests, all the people who were stakeholders in the nation of Israel. And first he reminded them of his own story in Verse 4 where he says,

“The LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever.”

He talks about the fact, the next few verses, “I was not the expected person, I was not from the expected family. God had told Samuel to “go to the house of Jesse and bring all his sons before Me,” you remember.

And he brought seven sons before him, but he had eight. David, he didn’t even bring for the interview because they didn’t regard him in any way a likely candidate for this role.

So David says to them, “You know, I didn’t look for this role; God called me to it.”

Laying the foundation there that in the nation of Israel it is not human business to decide who is going to be king. God set him apart for that role.

As we equally recognize in the church of Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself is not just the patron in whose name we do it; He is its head, He is its Lord. He is the one who leads; He is the one who guides.

And so now after 40 years on the throne, David is aging; it is getting time for the next generation. And he says in Verse 5,

“Of all my sons – and the LORD has given me many – he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.”

He doesn’t say, “This is my choice; he was my favorite son.”

“This is what God has shown us.”

And I want to give you four parallels I think will be relevant to us as a church as well.

First is that Solomon is appointed by God.

“Of all my sons – and the LORD has given me many – he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD of Israel.”

David had many sons. Solomon actually was his tenth son, way down the list.

Eight or nine years before this one of David’s sons, Absalom had rebelled and had sought to take the kingdom from his father. In fact he plunged Israel into civil war, though eventually Absalom was defeated and killed.

When David was old and bedridden, just before this, his fourth son (though he was then the oldest surviving son) called Adonijah, declared himself king. He was a popular favorite. In fact he was such a popular favorite that all David’s family pretty well turned to support Adonijah.

And even Joab, if you know the story, who had been David’s trusted general for many years, who had fought many of the great battles during David’s reign; he too turned against David in David’s dying days and supported Adonijah.

But you know Adonijah was on his own agenda because 1 Kings 1, which gives us more detail about that, says,

“Now Adonijah...put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king.’”

The ESV says,

“Now Adonijah exalted himself, saying, ‘I will be king.’”

He put himself forward; he exalted himself, which is a sure recipe for disaster eventually.

He had his following but this popular choice was not God’s choice.

“The LORD has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne.”

And do you know there is no record that Solomon ever sought the throne.

David told his mother Bathsheba a little while before that “your son Solomon will succeed to the throne.” But there is no indication that Solomon had expressed any interest in it or certainly sought it.

And it is an observation of mine over many years now that the best people in leadership are those who don’t actually want to be there. The best people in leadership; they have no ambition to be there because then they do not come with their own agenda.

If you have an ambition to lead, you probably have an agenda that is your own.

Neither is their identity then tied up with what they are doing. They can pick it up as instructed and they can put it down as instructed and there is no crisis of identity in doing that because their identity, their security is not in what they do. And what they do, they hold lightly.

You know, if I can give you one or two trade secrets about the process we have been through in the last few months, Brett’s name appeared on our list of candidates very early. In fact he may well have been the first name on our list.

But last October he got in touch and he asked that we take his name off the list. (Who said Hallelujah?)

I am so glad you said that! I had a mixture of being disappointed, because I had sensed from several years ago that Brett would be the right person. I had a sense of disappointment; at the same time a secret delight that if this is from God, God will bring it about. He will speak to Brett as well as to the rest of us and bring confirmation. And that’s what happened.

And in March, six months later, God, who had been speaking to Brett at various times and various ways, spoke very clearly to him. And so we put his name back on the list. But I know he would not have applied for this position had it been advertised any more than I would have applied for this position 15 years ago.

God put His hand on Brett and spoke into his heart and into his mind and planted vision in his heart. And you know it's from God when that simultaneously is planted in the hearts of other people.

You know Saul of Tarsus was told "you will preach the gospel to the world. You will go to the Gentiles and kings, etc." And for about 15 years he didn't do any of that until in Antioch. When they were praying and worshiping, the Holy Spirit said to the elders of the church in Antioch, "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Our own personal sense of guidance is corroborated by the sense of direction and guidance that other people have. Guidance is subjective; we can get it wrong sometimes. That's why the confirmation – if God speaks to one person, He will speak to others confirming that same thing.

But Adonijah and others, they exalted themselves; they put themselves forward, after Solomon's death by the way. A man called Jeroboam put himself forward and it led to an absolute disaster and split the nation in two and it stayed that way for centuries.

Jesus said in Matthew 23 [vs.12],

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

That's why we are to walk humbly with God and then leave the consequences in His hands.

There have always been challenges to leadership through the Bible – always have been. Paul, in the New Testament, was challenged about his apostleship – was he genuine or not? To the Old Testament – and just one example, you know, when Moses was leading the Israelite through the wilderness and his brother Aaron was leading with him – they were together.

There developed a movement of key men in the nation who were bent on getting Moses out. They wanted to get rid of him as their leader.

And I will just read you a couple of things because there is a very important lesson in this. In Numbers 16:2 where this whole gang of leaders, they rose up against Moses.

“With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders, who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron.”

So these folks are not just, you know, people sitting, you know, behind a post having a conversation and stirring things up. These were actually people who had been appointed to the leadership council of Israel. And 250 of them rose up to oppose Moses and Aaron.

And God told Moses to set two tests. The second one is the one – they didn’t really accept the first one; the second one is the one I want to mention to you. He said, “I want you to bring” (you can read this in Numbers Chapter 17) “I want you to get the leaders of every one of the twelve tribes to bring their staff.”

It was pretty standard – people carried a staff with them. “And I want Aaron to bring a staff representing the tribe of Judah. I want you to bring them to the Tabernacle.”

And so these twelve leaders came, each with their staff. And then they placed these staffs in the area known as the Holy Place in the Temple, put them down, left them.

And Moses said, in effect, “Now go back home, have some dinner, go to bed and come back in the morning.”

When they came back in the morning they went into the Tabernacle and all the staffs were exactly as they had been left the night before except Aaron’s staff, which had budded and blossomed and produced almonds.

The message was this: when God calls somebody there is life in what they do. But if we clamour for something which is not from God, if we want a position that is not given to us by God, there will be no life.

You may have organizational skills and you could move the people around but you will eventually frustrate them because there is no life coming out of that ministry.

And Aaron's staff, which now budded and blossomed, was indication that God was in the calling of Moses and Aaron. And if something is not of God, the force of a person's personality may keep something moving along, seemingly, but there will be no fruit and it will be lifeless.

And I want to say to you this morning that it is the absolute conviction of my heart, as it is of those who have been involved in this process, that Brett McBride is God's choice for this place – God's choice. And therefore in advance I know it will be fruitful. And there will be things that will come from that.

You know there were a lot of prophets in the Old Testament who loved the idea of being a prophet, loved the idea of influencing people, but they weren't from God.

And Jeremiah talks about them. "I didn't send them but they ran. I didn't speak but they spoke." [Jer. 23:2] And all they left was turmoil behind them, confusion.

And when Amos, one of the prophets, minor prophets of the Old Testament, Amos was challenged by a man called Amaziah, who told him to stop prophesying and go home. "You know, you are not one of us; you don't have all the qualifications that you ought to have if you are going to be a prophet." (Because they had prophetic schools that people went to.)

And Amos said this: "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son. I was a shepherd boy." He also took care of sycamore trees.

“But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophecy to my people.’”

That's in Amos 7:14. He says, "No, I don't have any of the qualifications that you would normally look for. I am just a shepherd boy. I looked after a few sycamore trees. But God spoke to me and said, 'Go, leave your sycamore trees, leave your flocks and go and preach and I will give you what to say.'”

“That's what I'm doing,” said Amos. “I take no title for myself. You don't want to call me a prophet? I have absolutely no concern about that at all. I am only concerned to do what God has called me to do.”

It's a wonderful spirit.

So that's the first thing. Solomon was appointed by God.

Second thing: Solomon is under the authority of God because in Verse 5, which I just read and I will read it again,

“Of all my sons – and the LORD has given me many – he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne...”

Listen to this:

“...to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.”

Notice carefully what David says there. He doesn't say, “He has called him to sit on the throne of Israel” but to “sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.”

In other words, Solomon was not the ultimate king. God was the ultimate king. It was God's throne that he was to share in. And therefore, as it had not been David's kingdom earlier and it was not Solomon's kingdom now, it was the Lord's kingdom.

And they were to operate not in independence of Him but in full dependence on Him.

And that's the great thing about ministry you know. We are not in authority; we are under authority.

The word for pastor, as many of you will know, is the word for shepherd, exactly the same word for shepherd.

And there is one ultimate shepherd of course. Jesus said in John 10,

“I am the good shepherd.”

Hebrews 13:20 speaks of “Our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep.”

1 Peter 5:4 says,

“When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory.”

So He is the Good Shepherd, He is the Great Shepherd, He is the Chief Shepherd, so who are we? Who are the pastors? They are the under-shepherds who operate under the Chief Shepherd.

And our task is to connect people not with ourselves but connect people with the Shepherd. We are simply an intermediate in that process.

The great danger is instead of people bringing people and taking them to Christ, taking them to Christ, taking them to Christ – He’s the Shepherd; I’m just the ... what they do is they bring them to ourselves. “Come to me” and they set up their little kingdom, set up their little dominions. And it is always God-less that will lead to disaster.

And we who are under-shepherds are simply operating under the Chief Shepherd. Christ is the head of His church and He is capable of acting as head.

And so we must take our hands off any sense of ownership – responsibility, yes, we have responsibility; ownership, no, we do not have ownership.

Sometimes I meet people who say to me, “Oh I have been to your church.” Or they might say, “How is your church doing?”

And I nearly always say a similar thing – I nearly always say to them, “I don’t have a church.”

“No, I meant the Peoples Church.”

I say, “I know you meant the Peoples Church. That’s not my church – it’s the church of Jesus Christ.”

And Brett is stepping into a ministry that is a ministry of God that has continued for 87 years. It wasn’t Oswald J. Smith’s church – if it was, it would have died 50 years ago. It’s the church of Jesus Christ.

So he is appointed by God. Solomon is under the authority of God.

Thirdly, Solomon is to obey the agenda of God. And there are two aspects here.

In 1 Chronicles 28:8:

“So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God: Be careful to follow all the commands of the LORD your God.”

What is he saying to Solomon? This is David speaking to Solomon personally now. He is saying, “Solomon, at the heart, center, the foundation of your ministry, must be a deep reverence for the Word of God as the authority in what you do.”

This Book is not a collection of opinions; it is a revelation of the mind and the will of God. It is not for us to cherry pick a few things that we like and to push away the thing we may not. It is our task to take the whole of this Book, to understand it. It is true, it is authoritative, it is sufficient along with the indwelling Holy Spirit who brings it to life and makes it work.

And when Scripture loses its place in our thinking, when it loses its place in our strategizing, when it loses its place in our church gatherings, we will drift from the work of God to something of our own instead.

“So, Solomon, be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord your God.”

Well, how is that done? How do you get people to follow the instructions of the Lord our God?

There is only one way and that is by expounding the Word of God in our gatherings. We won't find His commands, we won't find His ways, we won't find His decrees, we won't find His laws, we won't find His requirements, we won't find His promises other than in the Word of God.

And that's why it is so important that we are men and women of Scripture. I have encouraged you over many years now to bring your Bible – not just any old Bible – a Bible you know, that you are familiar with, that you work with.

And there are many of you who have been here for years who never bring a Bible. You either trust me implicitly, which is extremely dangerous – you trust what I'll say is what it says – or your interest has become superficial.

This Word of God, this revelation of God lies at the heart of everything that we do and everything that we say. And if we stray from this we will be in trouble because in Isaiah 55:8 God said to Isaiah,

“‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD.”

In other words, let's understand – what you think and what I think are not the same – they are not the same.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

“Our ideas, our thoughts are not the same, but here's the difference: Mine are as much higher than yours than the heavens are higher than the earth (which is an immeasurable height) and that's how much higher My thoughts are than your thoughts.”

Our task is to seek out the thoughts of God, to seek out the mind of God, to seek out the work of God. My primary role when I am preparing to teach this Book is always what is the mind of God?

Now I know because of our human limitations, we all see things slightly differently sometimes. But that's okay – that's absolutely okay unless we are saying, “No I am going to try and make this say what it doesn't say.” And then it's not okay.

We must let the Word of God itself be our teacher.

Now Solomon was under the Old Covenant; we are under the New Covenant, which means after Christ, His work and the giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell His people.

And so His ways, His decrees, His commands, His laws, His requirements (which is what David spoke about to Solomon) are now supplemented by His promises, His resources, His Spirit, His enabling, His indwelling us because apart from Him we can do none of these things.

We can only create a veneer of spiritual life if we are doing it simply by our own abilities and not in dependence upon the Spirit of God. Hence the ministry of the Word of God must take us to Christ to leave us in greater dependency upon Him.

I ask of every sermon I preach, how does this leave people more dependent on God? Not, can I give them a to-do list? Not, can I give them a few techniques? But where does this leave people in dependence on God?

So that first aspect is when I say Solomon is to obey the agenda of God, you seek the work of God, and our first responsibility it always towards Him.

David says to Solomon he is to serve God. He doesn't say anything to him about serving the people.

Now that will be the outcome of serving God. But if your object is to serve the people, rather than to serve God, then you will end up serving the people's decrees, the people's commands, the people's requirements, the people's aspirations, the people's needs rather than what God has given, which will address the fundamental needs of people's lives but without importing an agenda that is not God's.

Queen Elizabeth a while ago passed the point of being the longest reigning monarch in 16 nations of the world including Canada.

And I was extremely impressed by something she said in relation to that. I will read it to you.

“For me, the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide the framework in which I try to lead my life. God sent His only Son to serve, not to be served. And I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ’s words and example.”

That’s pretty good for a queen, isn’t it? Invite her to come and preach here sometime!

She says, “I’m not serving the people” She didn’t say this but the implication: “I’m serving God, I’m accountable to God.”

And in her quiet godly way she has lived in the good of that.

Solomon was to obey God by obeying and teaching the Word of God. But here’s the consequence in Verse 8:

“That you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever.”

God always has the big picture, you know. He says, “I want you to obey and teach the Word of God but it’s not just for the comfort of the 40 years that you will be on the throne” (Solomon didn’t know it was 40 years but we know that in retrospect now), “but you are a custodian, Solomon, for the next generation. You possess this good land; you pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants.”

And when we are doing what He has told Solomon to be doing thus far, we pass our trust, our responsibility on stronger, better, more fruitful than we found it. How? By constantly putting people away to God and they grow.

Henry Blackaby has written a great book on spiritual leadership and it is worth it for one sentence. He says in that book,

“Spiritual leadership is getting people on to God’s agenda.”

Not getting them on God’s agenda, it may be leadership but it’s purely human leadership. It’s not spiritual leadership.

And the task as the church of Jesus Christ is to move people onto God’s agenda.

And so Solomon, here’s the obligation to you, Verse 9, second part of Verse 9:

“If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you.”

Now here’s your job, Solomon. Your job is to seek God, to keep seeking Him. And His job is to be found, that is, to be available to connect with you.

Later one of Solomon’s descendants called King Asa, when he came to the throne, a man called Azariah, a prophet, came to him and he said to Asa these words in 2 Chronicles 15:2,

“Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him.”

Interesting. When is the Lord with you? When you are with Him.

If you seek Him, He will be found by you. If you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

The Lord is with you when you are with Him. So our prayer is not, “Lord, please be with me. Please be with me today. Please be with us on Sunday. Please be with us in this situation, that situation.”

That is a redundant prayer and God may not answer it unless the real prayer is, “Enable me, Lord, to be with You, to be in step with You, to be in union with You.”

Because only as we are with Him is He with us.

So Jesus also said, “Where I am, my servant also will be.”

“Not what my servant – yes, there’s a servant running up over there. Oh yeah, I’ll be with him. I promised him so I will be with him.”

No. He says, “Where I am, that’s where My real servant will be, because My real servant is simply walking in step and in union with Me, discerning of My mind, discerning of My purpose.”

So that’s the third thing. Solomon was appointed by God. He is under the authority of God. He obeys the agenda of God. And the fourth and last thing, Solomon seeks the astuteness of God.

Now the reason why I use that word is not just because it began with A and so it would fit the rest. But in 2 Chronicles Chapter 1 (over the page) Solomon is crowned king. David has now died.

And in Verse 7,

“That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’”

Wow! This wasn’t Christmas Eve either.

God appears and said, “I have a cheque here and it’s blank but it’s in your name. Ask Me for whatever you want Me to give you.”

Now if you were king of Israel, what would you ask for? I mean if you weren't king of Israel, if God spoke to you tonight, "Ask Me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

Well in Verse 10, Solomon said,

"Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

I love the underlining message there. "I am totally out of my depth. Who is able to do this? Give me wisdom. Give me knowledge."

1 Kings 3, there is another version and there Solomon says, [Vs. 9]

"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

Now notice he didn't ask for popularity. He didn't ask for high ratings. He didn't ask for prosperity. He didn't ask for victory in battles (though he would no doubt have many of those). He didn't ask for good reputation. He didn't ask that he would leave a great legacy.

He asked for wisdom, for discernment and for understanding.

And do you know what God said to him in response to that? 2 Chronicles 1:11,

"God said to Solomon, 'Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you.

"And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.'"

“Solomon, because you asked Me for wisdom, everything else you could have asked for is thrown in because that wisdom will be the basis of it.”

The greatest need in any kind of leadership is wisdom.

James 1:5: James says,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

You have to lack wisdom to ask for wisdom. And we must acknowledge our lack of wisdom. Human wisdom is simply not enough. And if you ask, He promises it will be given to you.

And do you know how it is given to you? It is all part of the New Covenant.

1 Corinthians 1:30, it says,

“Christ Jesus has become for us the wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

It says Christ is our wisdom. He is the source of that.

And so God gave Solomon wisdom. And as we pray for Brett and Stephanie and the team who will be working with them over these next years, right at the top of your list pray for wisdom – divine wisdom, godly wisdom.

It will be different to human wisdom. It won't always be understood by those who operate purely on a human basis.

But 1 King 4:29 says,

“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

“Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.”

Because that was human wisdom – kings of Egypt – all the monarchs around him.

And you remember how that the Queen of Sheba (Sheba was down Ethiopia); she heard about the wisdom of Solomon way up there in Israel. So she travelled all the way through the Sahara, through what we know today as Sudan, through Egypt, round to Israel just to meet Solomon.

And when she spent time with Solomon listening to him, she said, “I didn’t believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half of the greatness of your wisdom was ever told me.”

When wisdom comes from God it is true.

Now let me finish with this. What about the people of Israel in this? Or, on our level, what about the congregation – what about you and me, about the rest of us?

At the top of David’s agenda was building the temple in Jerusalem and God had not allowed him to do that because of things in his own life, and it was going to be passed on to Solomon to do that.

And David talks about that, but the point is this: the whole nation in 1 Chronicles 29 – you read it sometime; I won’t read it to you now because time has gone – but the people joined together, they gave money, they gave materials, they gave skills, they gave time, and they got behind in full support - and not just that, full participation in the work of God.

I trust that will be true for us as a church over these next years as well.

If you call Peoples Church your home, then join us together in building what God wants to accomplish here and through here in our city and the repercussions go across the world.

You know one of the greatest dangers in our Christian lives is simply becoming consumers rather than participants. Consumers come for what they can get. And when they don't get what they want to get, they will move on and they will try to suck another church.

And if that doesn't work they will become a leech in another church, just sucking them all, consumers. "It's for me."

Participants stick. Participants work. Participants pray. Participants join in the excitement of what God is doing.

Participants build a church; consumers only feed off it.

Now I would love to think over these next months and years that we commit to not be consumers only. I know all the dangers of a large church. I can tell you all the dangers and one is that it attracts consumers. That we do not simply be consumers. We do receive, we are blessed, we are enriched, we are invited to consume, but we are called to be participants.

We have been baptized into the body of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, that He is head, can make us part of what He is doing and His agenda.

So David hands the baton to Solomon. After 40 years David is on the throne and now it is time to pass it on, gives it to Solomon. And they all live happily ever after.

I wish! That's not the way life goes, but that's another story.

We are going to pray together. I believe that as there are great days that lie behind us over more than eight decades, I believe there are greater days that lie ahead.

And although this is not an induction service (that is coming in about whatever, 7 months' time) this is just announcement just so that we are aware of this important development in our church's history.

But I want to lead you in prayer. I am going to ask you if you will join with me in praying for the future of this church, in committing to the future of this church, in participating in the future of this church, to stand with me as we pray.

Now don't be embarrassed if you feel you can't stand because there are all kinds of reasons why people cannot commit themselves and nobody is taking count and nobody is going to judge anybody.

If you say, "No, I am committed to what God is going here and I am going to be as full a participant in what God is doing here as I am able to" then would you stand and I will lead us in prayer for our days ahead.

Lord Jesus, I thank You for the display of love for Yourself, which lies at the heart of everything else. We thank You for the way You have led this congregation over so many years. And thank You that ahead of us lie wonderful days, wonderful days that will not be explicable apart from the fact that God is at work here, that lives are being transformed, that people are being born again of the Holy Spirit, that this city feels the impact of this church in a way it hasn't until now, that the world will continue to feel the widespread tentacles that spread out from here into so many places.

Lord, we pray that the Lord Jesus Himself will remain as head, as Lord. We pray again for Brett, for Stephanie, for the particular role You have called them to. We pray for the staff of this church, I pray for the board and the members of the Peoples Ministry Inc., who appoint the board, elect the board every year.

Pray for those of us in the congregation, pray for youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, friendship class leaders, for life group leaders, for those ministering to newcomers into this city, for those ministering to people in hospitals and struggling and disappointed.

Lord, I pray that all these ministries in this place will be enriched and deepened and furthered as we freshly give ourselves to You for that purpose. Thank You.

