

Title: Turnaround Leaders

[Slide 1]

Text: 2 Chronicles 6

A Place for God?

Crisis moment:

[Slide 2]

It was a crisis moment decades in the making. Israel's first successful king had died after a 40 year reign. King David had taken a demoralized and divided people and forged them into a nation. He had extended Israel's borders and enriched the realm. A people who had known nothing but war had become a nation at peace.

In his later years, however, all had not been well with the king and his family. Even as he lay dying, his many sons by various mothers were plotting their takeover of the realm. In the end, the winner was a young man named Solomon. Solomon was linked to the defining scandal of David's reign – a sordid and ugly affair which left an esteemed general dead, the king a confirmed adulterer, and a family torn apart by rebellion. But now, Solomon had been crowned king. What kind of king would he be?

Turning things around:

In moments such as these, things can go either way: they can go downhill in a heartbeat. Or perhaps a true leader can seize the moment and turn things around. What does such a moment look like? Consider Steve Jobs.

In 1997 Apple was on the way out. It had lost nearly 50% of its revenue and was close to going bankrupt. That was when Steve Jobs came back from exile to take the helm. So how did he turn Apple around to become the only tech company to "define not just one, but two computing eras"? (entrepreneur.com)

Then he set out to do what had never been done before: put a computer in every pocket instead of trying to compete with the PC world in putting a computer on every desktop. He just didn't call it a computer.

He started by rolling out something simple and irresistible: all it did was play music. It was easy to use and provided something everyone loves. He called it the iPod. It became “the first mobile computer product that reached mass adoption around the world and defined a new market.” (entrepreneur.com)

The rest, as they say, is history. The iPod became the iPhone. The iPhone became the iPad. Programs became apps. Music stores became iTunes. At last count, Apple has sold over 700 million iPhones. Each one is a computer in your pocket.

A Place for God:

King Solomon – like Steve Jobs – could have tried to do a thousand things at the same time. He could have played to public opinion to curry favor with his new subjects. He could have drawn all the attention to himself as royalty. Instead, Solomon’s first and most important goal was to make a place for God: a place for God in his own life and in the life of his people and nation.

Solomon’s crowning achievement was to build the Temple for the LORD – a Temple which is referred to as Solomon’s Temple to this day. As he stood before his people on the day the Temple was dedicated, he said these words:

[Slide 3]

2 Chronicles 6:7-11 NIV

“My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, ‘You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.’

[Slide 4]

“The LORD has kept the promise he made. I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. There I have placed the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with the people of Israel.”

The father’s dream had become the son’s reality. The new king had done the one thing that mattered: building a place where the LORD would dwell with His people.

If a computer in your pocket can change the world, how much more having the Creator God living in your world?

Whether you know it or not, you are living in a crisis moment – a moment that will define everything that follows. Things may seem crazy in your world, or they may be very stable. You may not see yourself as a leader, but don't be fooled. God wants to do through you what He did through King Solomon. He wants to help you turn things around by making a place for Him to live in your world.

He is calling you and me to be turnaround leaders.

Turnaround Contract

The Faithful God:

[Slide 5]

Inside the holiest room in the Temple was a piece of sacred furniture known as the Ark of the Covenant. Inside this gold-covered box were the stone tablets that Moses had brought down from Mt. Sinai. They spelled out the core responsibilities of the solemn contract or Covenant between God and Israel. So sacred was this Covenant that it defined the very Presence of God.

But for the Covenant to work, each party would have to be faithful. If either party broke faith with the other, the deal was off. Would God keep faith with the wonderful promises embedded in the Covenant? Would His subjects remain faithful to Him as Lord?

When Solomon kneels to pray the great Prayer of Dedication for the new Temple, he begins by asking God to be the Faithful God:

[Slide 6]

2 Chronicles 6:14-17 NIV

He said:

"LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. 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.

[Slide 7]

"Now, LORD, the 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 successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.' And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true."

God has proven Himself faithful and true. This is what is meant by "the righteousness of God." Now, in this crisis moment filled with such risk and promise, Solomon reminds God of His promises. Only if God is faithful will Solomon and his people be able to go forward.

"And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word...come true!"

The Faith of the People:

Solomon recognizes that God can't "fit" into any building a human could construct:

[Slide 8]

2 Chronicles 6:18 NIV

"But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

But one thing that *can* happen in this Temple is that a needy people can find access to their God. More than anything else, it will be a place of prayer:

[Slide 9]

2 Chronicles 6:20-21 NIV

"May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive."

Did you notice the last word of this part of Solomon's prayer? "Forgive." The reality is that we humans, however good our intentions, can never live up to

God's Covenant. God will be forever faithful to His side of the contract; not so for us.

Solomon acknowledges this reality by praying into the brokenness of the world. The major portion of his Prayer of Dedication addresses the many ways in which people can stray from God's commands.

- Solomon asks God to uphold His own moral standards. When someone lies about their sin, he asks God to "hear from heaven and act." (2 Chronicles 6:23)
- When Israel is defeated by her enemies because of their sin against God, and then come to this Temple to ask forgiveness, he asks that God restore their fortunes.
- When Israel is punished by drought or other disasters because of breaking her side of the Covenant, and then pray and ask for forgiveness, Solomon asks that God teach them "the right way to live" and make the land fruitful again.

The Temple is not just a place for God; it is also a place for people. Even foreigners are included in its blessings!

[Slide 10]

2 Chronicles 6:32-33 NIV

"As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name."

God had promised Abraham that all nations and peoples would be blessed through him and his family. The Temple, God in our midst, brought that promise to reality.

Turnaround Contract:

But what if things became so terrible that the Temple itself ceased to exist? What if God no longer lived among His people? Would that be the end of the Covenant? Or would the Covenant be a "turnaround contract"?

At the end of Solomon's prayer, he prays into the worst-case scenario of Israel banished to exile because of her unfaithfulness to God. His prayer

contains a “when” and an “if.” One day the nation will fail, it’s just a matter of time.

[Slide 11]

2 Chronicles 6:36 NIV

“When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near;”

Here is the supreme test of the Covenant. At this point God Himself could walk away from it, as it were. But Solomon says “if”:

[Slide 12]

2 Chronicles 6:37, 39 NIV

“...and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly’...

“...then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.”

Once again, even if it had been destroyed, there will be a city and a Temple – a place where God can be found.

Turnaround Leaders

It’s Our Turn:

We live in a time that calls for Turnaround Leaders: people who will dedicate themselves to making a place for God in their lives and their world. To properly make our mark on this world means to make *His mark on His world*.

Our world can’t afford to wait for another generation of Christians to come along and make a place for God. We are the ones standing in the crisis moment. We are God’s Turnaround Leaders.

Like Solomon, we are called to welcome God into every nook and cranny of our lives and relationships, homes and community.

Turnaround prayer:

It starts, as it did for Solomon, with prayer. His final words can just as easily be ours!

[Slide 13]

2 Chronicles 6:41-42 NIV

*"Now arise, LORD God, and come to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.*

*May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
may your faithful people rejoice in your goodness."*

We are God's Temple. We are the priests who worship Him in our hearts and lives. We are called to be faithful. That is what a Turnaround leader looks like.

Turnaround Leaders:

So what needs to be turned around in your world?

Would you commit to becoming a turnaround leader this morning? Would you commit to bringing to God that area of your life or world that needs His forgiveness, power, blessing? When you do, you lay the foundation of a place where God will dwell.