

What To Do with the Glory of God—Party On.

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I once heard it said that if you speak to **100 people for one hour**, and you're **unprepared**, then you've just wasted **100 hours of God's time**. That being said, I tremble at the opportunity to share some things with you this morning. It's one of my favorite stories in all of the Bible, so let's pray, and dig in.

I Samuel 4: 1-11

Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. ²The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. ³When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the LORD bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD'S covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies."

⁴So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵When the ark of the LORD'S covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. ⁶Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?"

When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, ⁷the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before. ⁸Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert. ⁹Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!"

¹⁰So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

So God's people, the Israelites decide to take the Ark of the Covenant into battle with them. The Ark of the Covenant was that incredibly important piece of furniture involved in tabernacle worship. The ark itself was only about 4 ft. by 2 ft. by 2 ft. **Humble in appearance, but, great in significance and power.** It was built of Acacia wood, covered with gold, and inside it contained the Law of God—the 10 commandments. The lid of the ark was called the "Mercy Seat," where Moses had crafted two gold cherubim, and there between the cherubim the Shekinah glory of God dwelled, in the Holy of Holies.

After the Israelites get **spanked** on day one—they decide to take the Ark into battle on day two. But The Israelites weren't seeking the Lord for victory, rather they were just looking for a superstitious good-luck charm. **You cannot treat God's presence like a rabbit's foot. It's to be feared, not used.** Look at verse 3→ "that IT may go with us and save us..." They're not looking to the LORD—just looking to the ark OF the Lord. An IT will never bring victory, no matter what IT is—Not the Bible, not Worship, not the Church; all these things are only tools to lead you to the Father, the only source of victory. Don't look to THEM—look to HIM.

Word gets back to Shiloh, where the Ark was previously, under the care of Eli, one of the judges of Israel. The messenger comes to Eli and tells him how 30,000 were killed, including his 2

sons Hophni and Phinehas, and worst of all, the Ark was captured. Eli falls out of his chair, breaks his neck, and dies. When Phinehas' pregnant wife heard the news, she went into preterm labor, has a baby boy, and names him Ichabod, meaning "God's glory is Gone." It was one of the saddest days in the history of the nation of Israel: God's glory had departed from them.

I Samuel 5

¹After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

²**Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. ³When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.** ⁵That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.

⁶The LORD'S hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors.

First of all, if you have to prop up your god, let me tell you: you may want to consider getting a new god. Now if you have to step over the decapitated head of your god, you REALLY need to consider getting a new god. But instead, the philistines choose to honor the spot where Dagon's head landed! **"Let's venerate this ground right here! It's where his head stopped rolling!"** Does that strike anybody else as **hilarious**?

Dagon was huge compared to the Ark of God; an enormous Concrete structure, half fish, half man, set right beside the humble Ark of God—a spit in the face. They thought Dagon was that much bigger than Jehovah. But **The Philistines made his huge mistake: They thought that God was IN THE BOX** But **only a teaspoon of the ocean of his glory** was actually in the box; it was a representation, a symbol, but it didn't contain God! A foolish mistake, but one we still make today—boxing up God. Saying He cannot do this or move in this way today, because it doesn't fit into our boxes. Well, God couldn't fit in THAT box, nor can he fit in THIS box—our Church—nor can he fit in the Box of your paradigms or theologies. He's too big, and will break its borders everytime. You can't systemize the Lord, though we're so prone to, because that which we can systemize and box up, we can predict and control. Do yourself a favor, and ask God to destroy the box you have put him in. The Lord destroyed my box a few years ago at the JH Ranch in California. All of a sudden I'm seeing people healed, souls saved, hard hearts softened, prophecy spoken—these didn't fit in my box! And what God continued to do in my heart that summer is 100% of the reason I'm leading worship today.

When I look at this section of our story, I think of two things. I think of God in a Box, and then I think of the 1st of the 10 Commandments: **2. "I am the Lord Your God, who brought You out of Egypt...Thou Shalt have no other gods before me."**

Premise—there are other gods. Philistia & Assyria's Dagon, Father of Baal (power), Ashteroth (sex), Mammon (money), Mollock (pragmatism)...

Mollock was represented as a horrible idol with fire burning inside so that what was placed in his arms was consumed. In this illustration, a priest has taken a baby from its mother to be offered to Molech. Lest the parents should relent, a loud noise was made on drums to hide the screams. The word for drums is tophim from which the word 'Tophet,' the place mentioned in verses such as Jeremiah 7:31: "They have built the high place of Tophet... to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire." While drums sounded, bands played, and priests chanted, human sacrifices were devoured in the flames.

Infant sacrifice showed that the family would put their trade, or their farm, their affairs before their child. Oh we don't bow down to stone structures or Iron Idols today, but the same demonic forces are still ruining lives today. 30,000 women every week in America march into abortion clinics and incinerate the babies in their wombs, putting pragmatism—what's practical—before the life of their child.

We're not tempted by the multi-breasted idols to the sex-goddess Ashteroth today, but she's still gripping many men's private lives in the form of a little playboy Bunny. I think you see the point—the idols may have changed, but the demonic forces behind them are still around and active.

But here's the promise → **B. Promise—I will take care of them.** If you've setup idols in your life, allowed darkness to creep into your heart, you don't just ignore them and hope they'll go away, you don't just pray against the darkness, you don't go karate-chopping at it trying to get rid of it; just **bring in the light of the Lord**, where there is light there can be no darkness. Saturate yourself in the Light of the World, and he will take care of your Dagon. And thankfully, in this command there's a final prophecy: **C. Prophecy—one day every knee will bow and tongue confess...** One day you won't have to worry about these gods anymore—they'll all be thrown into the fiery lake, and chained up in the abyss far from reach of God's children. It's a beautiful prophecy.

What did Jesus say about this? Coming into Jerusalem that Palm Sunday, he said if God's people won't cry out in praise, then the rocks would. The Philistines weren't going to, and the Israelites certainly didn't, so Dagon did. God will get his glory and He will get his worship—even if it comes from rocks and stone idols.

What happens after this: The Philistines realize that **the presence of God can be a real pain in the rear**—i.e., it's giving them all hemorrhoids. Plagues of rats and hemorrhoids come upon each town they pass this Ark to, until finally they get a bright idea and say, "Let's give this thing back!!!" So the leaders get together, and come up with this plan:

I Samuel 6

⁷"Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. ⁸Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, ⁹but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us and that it happened to us by chance."

¹⁰So they did this. **They took two such cows and hitched them to the cart and penned up their calves.** ¹¹**They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart ...** ¹²**Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.**

God has always wanted to be with his people. The Ark made a B-LINE to Israel, despite the fact that they attached the cart to two nursing cows—which wouldn't voluntarily leave their young under any circumstances...and, two cows that had never been yoked together before—which apparently is a bad idea—but these weren't just any cows, these were cows being lead by the Lord—these were HOLY COWS!

They headed straight toward the town of Beth Shemesh, where some workers in the field no doubt got the surprise of their life! It's been SEVEN MONTHS since the Ark was originally captured at this point, and now two cows, without anyone or anything guiding them, are coming down the road carrying the Ark of the Covenant straight into town! The guys go ballistic and take the Ark off of the cart, chop up the wood, slaughter the cows and have a worship time! God's glory has returned to his people! It's party time.

Chapter 6 continues to describe what happened next. At some time during their celebration, they have the thought that the Philistines may have tried to rip them off, by stealing items out from the Ark, such as the 10 Commandments, so they decide to investigate it. Upon doing so, 50,070 men die that day in Beth Shemesh. . 50thousand men died. Why? They removed the lid—the lid—the lid! The Lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat, upon which the Shekinah glory of God dwelled; they removed the Mercy Seat from the Ark and gazed into the Ark, beholding the perfect Law of God—and it killed them. It tells us something about our approach to a perfect God—apart from mercy, we have no chance. If we take God's mercy out of the equation, we'll end up like the 50,000 men from Beth Shemesh. Make no mistake: The Law brings death. BUT! The Spirit brings life; When the Law came down to Mt. Sinai some 3,000 men died that day; when the Spirit came down to Mt. Zion, some 3,000 souls were made alive in Christ 2,000 years later.

The people of Beth Shemesh want to get rid of the Ark, and so they call to the next town to come and take it away from them. It ends up at the house of Abinadab, where it stayed for 20 years. Saul was king at the time, and he doesn't particularly care about the glory and presence of God, and so for the next 20 years the Ark would sit in the house of Abinidab, until finally David succeeds to the throne of King. Not wanting to be King over a nation whose banner waves "Ichabod!" he takes 30,000 men to Abinidab's house to bring it back into Jerusalem, the capital city. The story picks up in 2 Samuel 6.

2 Samuel 6

David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ²He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah[£] to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name,[£] the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³**They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴with the ark of God on it,[£] and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs[£] and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.**

⁶When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷The LORD'S anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

⁸Then David was angry because the LORD'S wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.[£]

Why did David put the Ark on a NEW CART? Because that's the way the Philistines did it! **We cannot treat the things of God the way the World treats the things of God.** It's also so much more expedient—we're talking about a 12 mile trek they're about to embark on. But God's not looking for EXPEDIENCE—He's just looking for OBEDIENCE. But David didn't seek the Lord nor did he study the scriptures to see how to carry the Ark, and instead he began the processional in his flesh.

Here's the scene: Ahio was out front, leading the way. Ahio means "Glad Handed, Mr. Personality." This guy's in a great mood; he's a fun, happy, can-do kind of guy. He's exactly the guy you want leading your building campaign... Then his brother Uzzah was in the back, guiding the cart, keeping things steady. Uzzah means "Strength." This guy's Jack-Dieseled-Huge! He's got it all under control; this plan's sure to work! So, just picture Steve Prout up front, and big Dan Beaver bringing up the rear—what could go wrong! But it WOULD go wrong.

The road gets bumpy and the cart loses balance, so Uzzah reaches out to steady the Ark and is killed on the spot! I would've done the same thing, wouldn't you? I'd be the first in line to "GIVE GOD A HAND." But there's that same point again: **God doesn't need a hand.** He doesn't need to be propped up like the Philistines' Dagon did. And who are we to think that we could prop him up, even if he did?

Why did things go wrong that day for David? Why was God's Ark being moved on an cart? Because it was being moved in the flesh, not in the Spirit. God had specifically instructed his people WHO could carry the Ark, and HOW they were to do it. But David never sought the Lord; he just moved ahead in his flesh.

Some churches seek to bring the glory of God in, even today, on a new cart. Question: **What is a cart?** Simply put, it's Boards, and Big Wheels. "We need revival!" "Let's bring in God's glory to our church, **get things rolling** around here..." And so they'll form their board meetings, and see which Big Wheels they can bring in to speak, which big shots they can bring in to lead worship, and on they go, trying to roll in the glory of God. I've seen it all-too many times, when I'm expected to bring the glory in AS the worship leader. It's not always the best way. Well David learned that moving ahead in his flesh wasn't the best way.

What do you mean Aaron? Done in the flesh? Well Just Look at the instruments they were playing: harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals, castanets... they're all **played and empowered** by the HAND! David was seeking to bring back the glory and presence of God in his flesh, and anytime the plans of God are interfered with by the flesh, it produces death. Now back to our story:

⁹David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" ¹⁰He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

I love this part! **The Lord blessed him and his entire household.** Picture how this looked practically: the cattle were forever pregnant, the sheep were growing thick coats of wool, the kids were getting along, their grades were going up at school, Obed-Edom's getting promoted at the office, maybe Mrs. Obed-Edom was forever pregnant! ☺ Who knows exactly how it looked, but his entire household became blessed, because he had the presence and glory of God in his home.

Men, as God's assigned high-priests of our families, we need to commit to establishing the presence of God in our homes. Then we'll prosper. Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto You." We need to raise up families and children that are used to the presence of God in their homes. What are your kids used to having in your living room? MTV, HBO, the Lord's name being taken in vain? Or are they used to seeing you in the Word in the mornings, in prayer in the evenings... You are the priest in your home-- What's a priest but someone who stands before God on behalf of people, and stands before people on behalf of God. We as leaders of our families need to be interceding for

our kids and wives, going before the Father with them in mind, and then sharing the Word with them, teaching it to them, leading them closer to the Lord. It's our highest calling, and greatest ministry opportunity.

I've said this since before Cooper was ever born, but the greatest worship I will ever lead will not be before 500 people, or 500,000 people; The greatest worship I will EVER lead will be seen in the lives of my wife and kids, lived in obedient faithfulness to the Lord. That is my Highest Priority and Calling. God could use anyone to lead worship for 500,000; but He's **specifically appointed ME to lead my little tribe of 3**. And if you've got kids, he's appointed you too—welcome to FULL TIME MINISTRY.

So Obed-Edom had the Ark of God for three months, and everything in his household was blessed.

¹²Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with **shouts and the sound of trumpets**.

David took three months and studied the scriptures; he learned, and came back with the Spirit. Look at the noise-makers here: **Shouts and Trumpets**: both empowered only by BREATH. **In the Hebrew, the word BREATH and the word SPIRIT are the same word: RUACH.** Now they were bringing back the Glory of God into Jerusalem, empowered by the Spirit, and David was GETTING DOWN! Every six steps they had a knockdown dragout worship service! David had tossed his Royal-Robes, stripped down to commoners-clothing, saying "Right now I'm not **THAT GUY** who's in charge of all of Israel—I'm **just A GUY who's dancing and spinning and leaping and GOING HARD after the Lord.**" "With all of his might!" I can't wait to see the tape of this in heaven! What David, the King looked like as he danced before the Lord with all his might.

In college, I had to go with my wife—I got to go with my wife to most of her sorority parties and dances. More often than not, all of us guys would stay pretty relaxed throughout the evening—dance a little, relax, you know, stay cool. But the best memories I have of any of those parties are the ones where we would all just decide to take off our coats, **lay down our 'coolness,'** and hit the dance floor HARD. We would be sweating, huffing, puffing, absolutely making FOOLS out of ourselves—everybody would be laughing at us, we're laughing at each other—and **none of us could really dance!** I MEAN IT WAS UGLY. Those were some of the best memories I have from college, where for a few moments, we just agreed to not care what other people thought. We decided to not worry about **how goofy we looked or how poorly we danced.** Most of us were considered to be in Christian leadership on the campus, but we just threw those robes off for a little while—in no way dishonoring the Lord in our celebration, or dancing in any way that was morally questionable—and danced.

Some of us need to get rid of our robes this morning. Oh, that we could throw off our **Sophistication**, our COOLNESS, our Self-Image—and do what Jesus said, "become like little children." I'm so tired of trying to be cool on stage—I want to throw off that robe in worship. It's what David did here.

(v.19) They finally get the Ark in the tent that David had prepared for it, have some more worship and sacrifices, and then David blesses all the people of Israel, gives them gifts—including raisin-cakes, and sends them home. **David gave them all Raisin Cakes; these were believed to be aphrodisiacs.** Point being, "God's glory is back! His presence is Back!

God's goodness is back!" Be Fruitful and Multiply people, because the Ark is back. **So light the fires, Kick the tires, because the PARTY IS ON.**

I don't know how it happened, but somehow in the last couple hundred years, we've fallen into this **upside-down understanding** That the **PARTY is going on out THERE, and that CHURCH is going on in HERE.** We go OUT THERE to have a good time, and come IN HERE to sit quietly and ponder over our last week. We go out there to GET OUR GROOVE ON, and come in here to GET OUR SNOOZE ON. What we need to remember though, is that God's glory is HERE! God's goodness is HERE! God's Presence is HERE! And it came, lived, and died in the person of Jesus Christ—but that's not all, and that's certainly not the extent of our celebration—it's just the beginning. WE have reason to PARTY ON, because God's goodness, glory, and presence didn't stay in that tomb, but three days later, it BUSTED FREE never to be touched again, and one day soon, we will be caught up and away, into his forever goodness and glory. So this is my message to the world, "THE PARTY --- IS ON! AND THE PARTY IS IN HERE!!!" **We need to get the party back into the church, and get the Church back into the world.**

Six months from now I hope that people driving by 416 Holland Road on a Sunday morning see the whole church just **Bumpin' and Jumpin'** because the PARTY is ON, and it's the same reason every week: GOD is HERE. PARTY ON.

In conclusion—remember our friend Obed-Edom? He had the Ark of God in his home for three months and all his household was blessed. If you look in I Chronicles 15, where most of this story is retold, it lists the people who were appointed to different tasks in the tabernacle where David placed the ark; some to sing, some to play instruments, and some to serve as gatekeepers. And who's name do you find as one of the two gatekeepers? **None other than old Obed-Edom. His life had been changed by the presence of God.** He'd sold the farm, packed up the family, and moved into Jerusalem, so he could spend the rest of his life in the presence of the Lord. Psalm 84 says "I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked..." Spending time in the presence of God will begin to change things for you.

Guys, is your **Marriage struggling**? Establish the presence of God in your home.
Financial difficulties worrying you? Establish the presence of God in your home.
Stuff at the **office** bearing down on you? Establish the presence of God in your home.

Seek first his kingdom guys. Say emphatically like **Joshua**, "As for me and my house, we WILL serve the Lord." What would our church look like on a Sunday morning, if throughout the week we'd all been in God's presence in homes, and then came together to celebrate it corporately? What would happen to our worship times on Sundays? I don't know, but I'm praying that this time next year, I will know.