



# COUNSEL & CAPITAL

**DRAFT**

## **Turning Dreams Into Reality**

### *The Biblical Pattern for Accomplishing Major Initiatives*

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Most Christian organizations continually seek ways to expand their impact. Expansions could involve such things as building a facility, establishing a new operational unit or launching a major outreach. Frequently, believing that pursuing a godly goal will be sufficient, projects are launched prematurely. Often, obstacles to progress begin appearing. Some, such as securing the adequate funds, are obvious. Others may be less evident.

Scripture generally and I Chronicles 28 & 29 specifically, suggests there is a different strategy on “how to proceed.” In this passage the main actor is David and the major initiative is the building of the Temple. This scripture lays out in sequence the six steps for undertaking a major initiative.

### **Inspiring Vision**

*“It was my desire to build a Temple where the ark of the Lord’s Covenant,  
God’s footstool, could rest permanently.” – I Chronicles 28:2 (NLT)*

The first step in accomplishing a major initiative is identifying the vision. It is a step that Christian leaders tend to do well. There are plenty of people with plenty of ideas. Many are worthy and admirable. Such was the case with David.

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*“An inspiring vision is  
the vital first step.”*

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Importantly, David’s vision was inspiring. It was also clear, succinct, and impactful. The exercise of reducing the vision to a statement that meets these criteria is difficult and seldom done well.

The building of a permanent Temple with an effective vision statement undoubtedly inspired a people whose history included enslavement and wandering. It also was undoubtedly inspiring for the Ark of the Covenant - the most important element in the Tabernacle worship - to finally have a fixed place of honor in the Temple.

David's vision was clear and expressed in a concise manner. Thomas Jefferson, who once said "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will suffice," was undoubtedly proud of David's economic use of language.

Part of an inspiring vision is that if achieved, it will be impactful. In the case of the Temple, it had an enormous impact – not only for the people who experienced it first-hand, but on every generation for thousands of years.

One final observation. Announcing such a bold undertaking was not without risk. Failing to complete the Temple would have discredited the King and possibly cost him his throne. However, David and Solomon were wise enough to understand if no risks are taken, no benefits will occur. Without daring to achieve, no meaningful success can be obtained. So, it is not the presence of risk that is relevant, but the relationship between the risk and the potential rewards, as well as, the probability of each occurring.

An inspiring vision is the vital first step in turning a dream into reality. The next step is a bit more difficult.

## **Credible Plan**

*"Then David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple..." – I Chronicles 28:11 (NLT)*

This is the second step and one that many ministries and frankly, many small enterprises, do very poorly. The painstaking work that goes into generating a credible plan to accomplish the vision is all too often ignored, resulting in unclear direction, or worse, chaos. Stephen Case, the founder of AOL once said, "A vision without a plan is a hallucination." Simply stated, planning is often undervalued.

Some believe planning is inconsistent with trusting God. It is unclear whether this perspective arises from a lack of appreciation for the many references related to planning throughout the Bible or just laziness. One need not look farther than David, "a man after God's own heart," to see the appropriate level of planning he and God believed was necessary for the building of the Temple.

*“Then David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple and its surroundings, including the entry room, the storerooms, the upstairs rooms, the inner rooms, and the inner sanctuary – which was the place of atonement.*

*David also gave Solomon all the plans he had in mind for the courtyards . . . , the outside rooms, the treasuries, and the rooms for the gifts dedicated to the Lord.*

*The king also gave Solomon the instructions concerning the work of the various divisions of priests and Levites in the Temple of the Lord. And he gave specifications for the items in the Temple that were to be used for worship.*

*David gave instructions regarding how much gold and silver should be used to make the items needed for service. . . . lampstands and lamps, . . . for the table on which the Bread of the Presence would be placed and . . . for other tables. . . . the solid gold meat hooks . . . and for the basins, pitchers, and dishes, as well as the amount of silver for every dish. He designated the amount of refined gold for the altar of incense.*

*Finally, he gave him a plan for the Lord’s “chariot” - the gold cherubim whose wings were stretched out over the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant.*

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***“God is in the details.”***

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The plan should also be in writing. As a young man I was asked by a wise business leader where my plan was for a business idea. I smugly pointed to my head. He said, “A plan that is not in writing is not a plan.” Putting the plan in writing is consistent with I Chronicles 28:19, which says, *“‘All this,’ David said, ‘I have in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan.’”*

Many people and ministries reject planning for a variety of reasons. Some think it reflects an absence of faith. This passage and other parts of scripture make it clear that God both plans and directs our steps. Many avoid planning because they do not think the plan will remain relevant. The military’s emphasize on planning is legendary, while always acknowledging that, “No plan stays intact after the first contact with the enemy.”

The sheer number of verses David devotes to the plan may be relevant to the importance God places on this topic. The plan was detailed and comprehensive. Those who believe the saying “the devil is in the details,” may want to reconsider. After reading this passage it is clear “God is in the details.”

# Leadership

*“The Lord said to me, ‘Your son Solomon will build my Temple and its courtyards...’” – I Chronicles 28:6 (NLT)*

Most people would readily agree that leadership is critical for accomplishing any major initiative. We would argue there are at least three important questions about leadership that are answered in I Chronicles 28 and 29.

First, is there one person in charge? Any initiative’s chance of success can be undermined if there is confusion regarding who is in charge. There must be a single point of leadership control. In this example David was in charge until when on his deathbed he appointed Solomon to take his place.

Second, does the person in charge have the authority necessary to successfully execute the project? No one questioned King Solomon’s authority to build the Temple. However, in many earthly endeavors authority is bifurcated, confused, or explicitly given to a person while practical authority is reserved by another. This problem can occur between a board and its CEO as well as between the CEO and staff members.

Third, is the right person leading? While David wanted to be in charge of the project, he was disqualified by the Lord. In I Chronicles 28:6, David says, *“The Lord said to me, ‘Your son Solomon will build my Temple and its courtyards, for I have chosen him as my son.’”* David was wise and obedient enough to know that he should not be in charge. In a world where power is often eagerly sought, it would be refreshing to see David’s decision repeated more frequently.

A major initiative can be undermined by not having a single person in charge or not empowering that person with proper authority. The outcomes of poorly assigned leadership can be confusion, disagreement, delay, and futility.

## Seed Gift

*“Using every resource at my command, I have gathered as much as I could for building the Temple of my God...And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction.” – I Chronicles 29:2-3 (NLT)*

This is a step that is often skipped to the detriment of a major initiative. The benefits of having a seed gift are significant. A sense of momentum is created. It is often easier to raise the last dollar for a project than it is the first. This is true because invariably people have more confidence to join an endeavor that has already engendered substantial support. There is no doubt that each of us has observed a task that seemed insurmountable in the beginning that did not once significant progress was made.

Regardless of the source, a seed gift is an important encouragement to a successful engagement. David no doubt understood this when he said, *“I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the constructions. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for His Holy Temple.”* David led by example.

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*“David led by example.”*

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He did so in all the steps, maybe nowhere more sacrificially and unselfishly than providing a seed gift.

## Communicate

*“Now then, who will follow my example? Who is willing to give offerings to the Lord today?” – I Chronicles 29:5 (NLT)*

The fifth step is communicating the project’s critical elements as well as the opportunity to participate. Even though the first two verses of I Chronicles 28 focus on communication, it is unambiguous that the step occurred fifth. Communication took place after David identified the vision, developed a plan, chose the leader, gathered the resources and made his own significant financial commitment. When he had completed these tasks it was time to communicate. I Chronicles 28:1-2 says, *“David summoned all the officials of Israel to Jerusalem – the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the army divisions, the other generals and captains, the overseers of the royal property and livestock, the palace officials, the mighty men, and all the other brave warriors in the kingdom. David rose to his feet saying, ‘My brothers and my people!’”* David then launched into a lengthy description of all the major elements of the project.

Near the end of David's announcement, but only after he had shared the vision, the plan, the leadership, and the existence of a seed gift, did he communicate the giving opportunity to others. *"Now then, who will follow my example? Who is willing to give offerings to the Lord today? Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king's administrative officers all gave willingly. For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon."* (1 Chronicles 29:1-9) Frequently, ministries go directly from identifying the vision to trying to raise funds. Skipping the other vital steps – a big mistake!

As David discussed the elements of the project, he was transparent. He did not just communicate the good, but he honestly discussed the project's weaknesses. 1 Chronicles 29:1-2 says, *"The King David said to the whole assembly: 'My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great,..."* The effect on potential donors and the broader community of leaders practicing the God honoring virtue of transparency is often overlooked and underappreciated.

After communicating the opportunity in a compelling, comprehensive, and transparent manner, the community was energized, generous, and joy filled. *"The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD, and King David was filled with joy."* (1 Chronicles 29:1-9). The major initiative was well underway.

Last, but not least. It is very important to note that Solomon communicated again. 2 Chronicles 5 and 6 informs us that Solomon, in his wisdom, chose once again to report to the people after the Temple was built and the ark was delivered and placed in the inner sanctuary.

David and Solomon's communication skills were instrumental in building community, and completing this very important major initiative.

## Credit to God

*"Then David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly: O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name! ...It all belongs to you!*

*- I Chronicles 29:10-16 (NLT)*

Upon completing a major initiative it is easy...and human...to forget to give God the credit. However, the Bible makes clear the importance of giving God all the credit and glory. In fact, God is the one who provided the ability and the gifts to give. In I Chronicles 29:14-16, David acknowledges this reality in his prayer to God, *"But who am I, and who are my people that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us! . . . O Lord our God, even this material we have gathered to build a Temple to honor your holy name comes from you! It all belongs to you."*

Intentional thanks and praise to God reflects the proper relationship between man and his Creator. Humility and respect are evidenced by giving, not taking, credit.

In conclusion, the building of the Temple was an extraordinary and enormous undertaking. Its role in history is and remains significant. The strategic model for accomplishing major initiatives is universal and instructive. We believe these six steps in the sequence set forth are God's plan. If we ignore them, we do so at our own peril. If we follow them, we just might find ourselves doing God's work in God's way.

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