

## Prayer

Forgive us when we wander from Your presence, Almighty God. Your path is straight and true, and we are always seeking to explore other options. Thank You for Your great patience with us, and remind us of the cost Jesus paid because of the sins of all humanity. Reign us in sharply where necessary, gracious Lord, remind us of our faults and continue Your gracious work of renewal in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ; AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The Seas

*Pray for those who risk their lives at sea in hazardous conditions to drill for oil or work on ships, civil and military, and have to be away from home for long periods of time.*

### On-going prayers

- Give thanks to God for the liberties you enjoy
- Pray for those who repair and renew our roads and bridges
- Pray for those responsible for foreign affairs in your country

## Meditation

We call upon You, Living Lord, Saviour and friend of all:

Heal us from the sicknesses of our disturbed world  
Which flood our souls with destruction; through

Swearing and abusive use of language;  
Degrading images of women and pornography;  
Glamorised perversions of love on television;  
The social lottery of care and health provision;  
Financial pressures to spend, spend, spend;  
Violence shown as the way to get what you want.

Show us the light of Jesus which leads us through darkness,  
And brings us even now to that place of peace,  
Which is 'faith, hope and love'.

## Bible Study - 2 Samuel 6:12-19

<sup>12</sup> 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 and brought the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom up to the city of David with rejoicing.

<sup>13</sup> When those who carried the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, David sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf. <sup>14</sup> David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup> So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

<sup>16</sup> When the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

<sup>17</sup> They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place within the tent that David had pitched for it. David then presented burnt offerings and fellowship sacrifices before the Lord. <sup>18</sup> When David had finished presenting these sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, <sup>19</sup> and distributed food among the whole gathering of Israel, both men and women. He gave them each a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins, after which all the people went back to their homes.

## Review

There are occasions in the life of God's people when our happiness and joy flow over into the praise of God, and the result is infectious and joyous worship. You may have experienced times such as this, and they can be life changing for everyone. After many years of trial, struggle, battle and personal hardship, David had been accepted as King by all the tribes of Israel, had established a new capital city from which to rule the nation, and symbolised the newfound unity of God's people by bringing the ancient symbol of their faith, the Ark of the Covenant, up to Jerusalem. He was at last able to 'let his hair down' and worship the Lord with the liberty of knowing that he had completed the journey that the Lord has set before him. He had learned hard lessons about walking in the ways of the Lord on his long journey, but the entry into Jerusalem of the Ark was a unique time for joy and celebration, which would never return.

**Michal's reaction** No great celebration happens, however, without its detractors. In this case, the tragic figure of Michal challenges the joyous David and attempts to make a mockery of the way David behaved (6:16). David probably knew that he would have to sort out his relationship with Michal, and we will read about this in tomorrow's passage. To his credit, however, he was able to focus on the right thing to do for all God's people, and the great day of celebration concluded with David distributing food to all the assembled people as a traditional Jewish sign of fellowship.

**Moving the Ark** Just before this passage, an unhappy incident occurred when a Levitical priest, Uzzah, died whilst handling the Ark of the Covenant on its journey to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:6-11). David had been very angry with God about this, because although he respected the holiness of the Ark, he felt that it would make a laughing stock of Israelite faith if it became known that the Lord killed anyone who accidentally touched something holy, and he was reluctant to take the Ark into his care (6:10). This is why the Ark had been left at the house of Obed-edom. This incident is somewhat puzzling to us today, but it may help if we read about it in the record of the Book of Chronicles. Chronicles covers much of the same ground as the books of 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings, but with very different emphases. In 1 Chronicles 15:13, we read that after the death of Uzzah, David realised that the Ark should not have been carried on an ox-cart (requiring the fatal touch from Uzzah to hold it steady) but it should have been carried by the priests themselves with poles which fitted in rings on the Ark. So the Ark was eventually brought up to Jerusalem, as prescribed (Ex 25:14f.), after David discovered that Obed-edom had been blessed whilst he had the Ark, and probably when he learned how to overcome the problem of how it should be moved!

The amazing nature of the celebration that followed is unique in the Old Testament, and maybe even the New. The worship contained traditional formal elements of Israelite worship, and free expressions of worship in the form of dance and music, and the whole spectacle constituted drama as well! These celebratory forms of worship may or may not have been original to David, but we do not have any other record of such worship. The sacrifices were not practiced as an alternative to traditional sacrifices, but in addition to them; sacrifices were offered both whilst the Ark was moved (6:13) and also when it arrived

in Jerusalem (6:17), alongside the shouting, dancing and blowing of trumpets! It is interesting to look again at the equivalent record of this story of 1 Chronicles 15, and discover a long list of appointments by David to certain Levites, whose job it would be to continue this 'new' worship of the Lord with songs, cymbals, trumpets and 'shouts'. Indeed, one of those appointed at this time was Asaph, the author of several significant Psalms (50, 73-83). Clearly, David set in motion a highly significant period of creativity in the worship life of Israel, and he led from the front by dancing 'before the Lord with all his might' (6:14).

David then finished the great celebration with a feast for all present. Indeed, the main purpose of the 'fellowship sacrifice' (see Leviticus 2,3) was for the sacrificial meat to be shared. By doing this, David was restoring the proper meaning of the ancient system of sacrifices, as well as establishing potentially new forms of worship by his personal encouragement of the arts.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How much do you know about the 'Ark of the Covenant', and what it meant to God's people? Use any reference book you may have to find out more.
2. Share in group discussion any events in your life that have any spiritual similarities with 'bringing the Ark to Jerusalem'.
3. Should our worship of the Lord always be fundamentally the same? Is it possible to do 'new things' in worship without using modern technology?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*I love the ideas of the worship which are embedded within this text and the equivalent in Chronicles. They point us towards an uninhibited love of God and an expression of this within the life of God's people that is both creative and a true blessing. It helps us understand that God intends us to use our artistic faculties within worship and enjoy it, and it helps us understand that God delights in our pushing forward the boundaries of worship. The only guidelines are that what is done is done expressly for the honour of God and according to His Word. It is a solemn, but open invitation!*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *To what extent does the worship in your church continue to be the same Sunday by Sunday? Write down a few sentences describing your own feeling about worship in the life of your church, and let God speak to you through looking carefully at your feelings about worship.*
- *Talk to a close friend about what worship means to you, and ask them to tell you what worship means to them. What are the differences and similarities? Discuss them.*

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, bless my soul that I might offer You the true worship of the sacrifice of my whole life. The world does not understand this, and sometime I do not understand this, but within such commitment lies my eternal destiny, as I seek to do now what I shall one day do in heaven! Praise You and thank You, Lord Jesus. AMEN