

Timeline

- 1050 B.C. +
SAUL BECOMES KING

- 1010 +
SAUL DIES; DAVID BECOMES KING OF JUDAH

- 1003 +
DAVID BECOMES KING OF ALL ISRAEL

- 1000 +
DAVID CAPTURES JERUSALEM

- 997(?) +
DAVID CAPTURES RABBAH

- 980(?) +
DAVID'S CENSUS

- 970 +
SOLOMON BECOMES KING

- 930 +
THE KINGDOM DIVIDES

WHAT'S THE POINT OF 1 Chronicles?

+++

A godly man
can achieve
much.

1 Chronicles

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? It retells the story of David's reign, showing God's purpose in the history of Israel.

WHO WROTE IT? Tradition says it was Ezra. Whoever compiled the information wrote during the time of Ezra.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? The events in the book happened between 1010 and 970 B.C.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? The beginning of the monarchy.

THE BREAKDOWN

Chapters 1–9: Genealogies
Chapters 10–21: David's rule
Chapters 22–29: David prepares to hand over the reins

KEY CONCEPTS

King
Warriors
Temple

SCORECARD

Saul: The first king of Israel
David: Israel's greatest king
Solomon: David's son and successor

READING TIME



WORTH MEMORIZING

- **28:9** "Learn to know the God of your ancestors intimately. Worship and serve him with your whole heart and a willing mind. For the Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought. If you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."
- **29:11-13** "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength. O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!"

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

- **TRUSTING GOD.** Parts of this book read like a thriller war novel. Yet underneath the action is one truth: Trusting God is the key to a successful life.



ne of life's great tragedies is the loss of memory. When people suffer dementia, they lose touch with their past; in doing so they lose hope in their future.

The book of 1 Chronicles was written to keep the post-exilic Israelites from suffering spiritual dementia by providing a summary of their history. It gave their collective memory both a heritage and a hope.

According to tradition, the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles was Ezra, and he wrote these books to reassure the returning exiles that God was still at work in the promises He had given. These exiles had few personal recollections of the days before the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. They had never seen the glorious temple of Solomon. They had never experienced the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds in Jerusalem during the feasts. And so someone—Ezra maybe—compiled a history for the returning exiles. If 1 and 2 Kings were written to explain why the nation was exiled, 1 and 2 Chronicles were written to explain that the returning exiles were still the people of God. The first chapters of this book provide genealogies proving they were indeed heirs of the promises. The rest of the book is about David's reign, Solomon's Temple, and the Davidic Covenant promising a perpetual throne to Israel.

As you study 1 Chronicles, remember the heritage God has given you. The Bible frequently warns against forgetting what He has done; for in our heritage—in our own chronicles—are the keys to our future.



KEY THOUGHT:

God's covenant to David and His promises to Israel are perpetual, designed to give His people a heritage and a future.



KEY VERSE:

"Set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy articles of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the LORD." 1 Chronicles 22:19



KEY ACTION:

Crown the Lord as King, and joyfully labor in the service of His work.



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, help me to remain strong and courageous, trusting my future in Your hands.

BASIC SURVEY

1 CHRONICLES

AUTHOR: Not stated, but traditionally Ezra the priest.

DATE: Covers the history of Israel, from around 1010 BC (the death of King Saul) to about 970 BC (the death of King David).

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

King David's reign is detailed and analyzed.

DETAILS, PLEASE

First Chronicles provides a history of Israel, going as far back as Adam. By the eleventh chapter, the story turns to Israel's greatest king, David, with special emphasis on his leadership of national worship. Another important focus is on God's promise that David would have an eternal kingly line through his descendant Jesus Christ.

QUOTABLE

> "And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever" (17:14 NKJV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

First Chronicles covers much of the same information as 2 Samuel does, but without some of the seedier aspects of David's life—such as his adultery with Bathsheba and the engineered killing of her husband, Uriah.

SO WHAT?

The positive focus of 1 Chronicles is designed to remind the Jews that, despite their punishment for sin, they were still God's special people. When God makes a promise, He keeps it.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 16 AND PROVERBS 2.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 77. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 77. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 77. →

HIDDEN TREASURE

DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN

While David was hiding in the wilderness, God raised up mighty men—fighters of almost superhuman strength and ability—to help him. For example, Gath's greatest warriors joined him. "These Gathites were army commanders; the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand" (1 Chronicles 12:14 NIV). Adino the Ezrite, chief among David's captains, "killed eight hundred men at one time" (2 Samuel 23:8 NKJV). Then there was Shamnah. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop. Shamnah's men were frightened and fled, but he took a stand alone in the middle of that field and killed all the Philistines who attacked. God gave these men extraordinary strength and skill to establish David as king and to help him build his kingdom.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 11:10-25 AND 12:1-22.

HIDDEN TREASURE

AMMONITES AND ARAMEANS DEFEATED

One time Hanun, king of Ammon, deliberately offended David. Then, realizing the seriousness of his mistake, he hired two Aramean kingdoms to fight for him. Joab arrived with a medium-sized army and found himself surrounded by over 32,000 soldiers. So he put half the army under the command of his brother. He then said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then come over and help me. . . . And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will help you. Be courageous! Let us fight bravely. . . . May the Lord's will be done" (1 Chronicles 19:12-13 NIV). The men of Israel fought so fiercely that the enemy fled from them. They won against superior forces because they fought courageously and well, and had one another's backs.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 19 AND PSALM 144.



Although David was not allowed to build the temple, he had an active role in the preparations. Jean Fouquet (c. 1420–1480) painted this image titled *Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem*.



God strengthened King David's men so that David could build his kingdom. This woodcut of King David was created by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872).

HIDDEN TREASURE

DAVID PREPARES TO BUILD

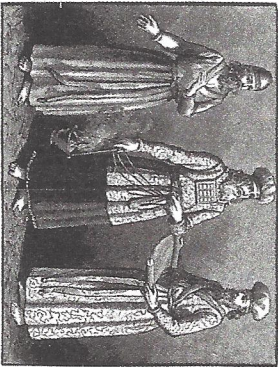
David had wanted to build a temple for God, but God told him that he had shed too much blood, so his son would build it. Nevertheless, David had a part to play. As he said, “My son Solomon is still young and inexperienced. And since the Temple to be built for the LORD must be a magnificent structure, famous and glorious throughout the world, I will begin making preparations for it now” (1 Chronicles 22:5 NLT). So David gathered abundant amounts of gold, silver, cedar and other materials. He had labor gangs quarry stones. He also designed the temple and gave Solomon the blueprints. Because of David’s many preparations, it took Solomon only seven years to do the construction (1 Kings 6:37–38).

READ 1 CHRONICLES 28–29.

HIDDEN TREASURE

DAVID ORGANIZES THE LEVITES

About 1445 BC, Moses organized the Levites and assigned them their duties (Numbers 3:14–38), but this was when God’s house was a mobile tent (tabernacle) and their duties consisted of constantly dismantling and setting it up. By David’s day, the tabernacle had been stationary for centuries, and the Levites no longer had assigned duties. When David was still young, he and Samuel began to organize the Levites by assigning the gatekeepers their positions (1 Chronicles 9:22). Around 1000 BC, David appointed singers to worship God (1 Chronicles 6:31–43). Around 980 to 970 BC, when he was making preparations for building a stone temple, God inspired him to assign new duties to the remaining divisions of Levites (1 Chronicles 23:1–32).



Once the tabernacle was stationary, David assigned duties to the Levites, who were the priests and caretakers of the tabernacle.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 23 AND PSALM 147.

BASIC SURVEY

2 CHRONICLES

AUTHOR: Not stated, but traditionally Ezra the priest.

DATE: Covers Israelite history from around 970 BC (the accession of King Solomon) to the 500s BC (when exiled Jews return to Jerusalem).

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

The history of Israel, from Solomon, through division, to destruction.

DETAILS, PLEASE

David’s son Solomon is made king, builds the temple, and becomes one of the most prominent rulers ever. But when he dies, the Jewish nation divides. In the remainder of 2 Chronicles, the various kings of the relatively godlier southern nation of Judah are profiled, through the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The book ends with the Persian King Cyrus allowing the Jews to rebuild the devastated temple.

QUOTABLE

> “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion” (6:14 NLT).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Continuing the positive approach of 1 Chronicles (the two books were originally one), 2 Chronicles ends with two verses that exactly repeat the first three verses of Ezra.

SO WHAT?

God’s punishment isn’t intended to hurt people but to bring them back to Him.

READ PSALMS 74 AND 105.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 83. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 83. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 78. →

CLOSER LOOK

A GOOD KING'S MISTAKES

Jehoshaphat was a good king. “The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he . . . walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel. Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand . . . and he had riches and honor in abundance. And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 17:3–6 NKJV).

But “he made an alliance with Ahab of Israel by having his son marry Ahab’s daughter” (2 Chronicles 18:1 NLT). So although he knew that God wanted to destroy evil Ahab (1 Kings 22:20–23), he helped Ahab fight the Arameans. After the battle, a prophet said, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you” (2 Chronicles 19:2 NKJV).

“After this Jehoshaphat . . . allied himself with Ahaziah [Ahab’s son] king of Israel. He acted wickedly in so doing.” They made a fleet of trading ships. Another prophet declared, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works” (2 Chronicles 20:35, 37 NASB). And all his ships were wrecked. After this, Jehoshaphat joined Ahab’s other son Jehoram in battle against Moab (2 Kings 3:1–14). Although God gave them an initial victory, they failed to conquer Moab.

Nevertheless, Jehoshaphat loved God and trusted Him completely. When the armies of three kings were invading, he prayed, “Our God . . . we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV). As a result, God gave him a miraculous victory.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 17 AND 20.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 79.



CLOSER LOOK

HEZEKIAH AND THE ASSYRIANS



King Hezekiah was faithful to God and refused to pay tribute to the Assyrians.

it, he reneged. He sent an army commander to Jerusalem demanding its surrender, saying that he’d deport everyone to a distant land.

Hezekiah encouraged his people, “With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chronicles 32:8 NIV). The commander laughed. “Don’t let him fool you into trusting in the LORD. . . . What makes you think that the LORD can rescue Jerusalem from me?” (2 Kings 18:30, 35 NLT).

Hezekiah went into the temple and prayed desperately. A few nights later, God sent an angel into the Assyrian camp and wiped out 185,000 soldiers. After that, Hezekiah “was exalted in the sight of all nations” and many foreigners brought offerings for God (2 Chronicles 32:23 NASB). God not only honored Hezekiah, but restored riches to him.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 31:1–32:25.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 80.



CLOSER LOOK

JOSIAH DESTROYS IDOL WORSHIP

God's temple had been neglected for decades, and King Josiah had workmen repair it. Then the high priest found the lost Law of Moses. A scribe took it to Josiah and read it, and when he heard its warnings for disobedience, Josiah became afraid that judgment was imminent. However, a prophetess named Huldah said that because of Josiah's tender heart, the disaster wouldn't happen in his day.

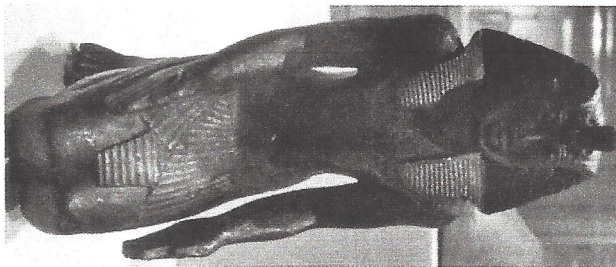
Josiah now knew just how abhorrent idol worship was to God, so he gathered his people and reaffirmed their commitment to the Lord. He then threw the idols and pagan altars out of the temple of God and got rid of the idolatrous priests throughout Judea. "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength" (2 Kings 23:25 NIV). So "Josiah removed all detestable idols from the entire land of Israel" (2 Chronicles 34:33 NLT).

King Josiah committed his life to the Lord, and God richly rewarded him. In 628 BC, the Assyrian king died, and with his once-mighty empire in decline, the Assyrians were forced to abandon northern Israel. With them gone, Josiah expanded his kingdom. The first thing he did was to abolish idols throughout the north.

Then in 609 BC, Pharaoh Neco led an army out of Egypt to help the Assyrians fight the Babylonians. Josiah tried to intervene but died in that battle.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 34-35.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 83. →



Josiah died while trying to intervene when Pharaoh Neco (seen here as a statue) fought Babylon.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE PRIEST AND THE PRINCE

When King Amaziah died, his mother, Athaliah, sent soldiers to murder all her grandsons. But Princess Jehoshеba grabbed her nephew, baby Joash, and hid him in another bedroom. She was the wife of the high priest, Jehoiada, so she smuggled the baby into the temple. For six years Athaliah ruled Judah and enforced Baal worship. Then Jehoiada called the commanders of the temple guards, showed them Prince Joash, and had them swear loyalty. Next he informed all the priests and rulers. Then Jehoiada gathered all of the temple guards, crowned Joash, and shouted, "Long live the king!" (2 Chronicles 23:11 NKJV). The temple guards executed Athaliah; then seven-year-old Joash sat on the throne with Jehoiada to advise him.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 22-23.

HIDDEN TREASURE

AMAZIAH'S FOLLY

When he became king of Judah, Amaziah worshipped the Lord. Therefore, God gave him a great victory over the Edomites. Then, astonishingly, he brought back the idols of Edom and worshipped them. A prophet rebuked the king for worshipping idols that hadn't even been able to save people from *him*. But Amaziah didn't listen. He then challenged Jehoash, king of Israel: "Come, let us face each other in battle." Jehoash answered, "Why should you meddle with trouble so that you fall—you and Judah with you?" (2 Kings 14:10 NKJV). But Amaziah again refused to listen, and in the battle that followed, Judah was defeated. Amaziah was imprisoned in Samaria for ten years. After Jehoash's death, he was released and returned to Judah.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 25 AND PSALM 107.

HIDDEN TREASURES

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS

One day King Hezekiah became deathly sick from a boil. God sent Isaiah to tell him to put his house in order, for he would surely die. After Isaiah left his bedchamber, Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed, reminding God that he had served Him faithfully. God stopped Isaiah before he reached the middle court and sent him back with this message: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. . . . And I will add to your days fifteen years" (2 Kings 20:5–6 NKJV). Despite his miraculous healing, however, "Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up." But again "Hezekiah humbled himself," and *again* God held back His judgment (2 Chronicles 32:25–26 NKJV).

READ 2 CHRONICLES 32:24–33 AND PSALMS 93–94.

HIDDEN TREASURES

MANASSEH'S EVIL AND REPENTANCE

When Manasseh became king, he became a vassal of the Assyrians. He worshipped Baal and other pagan gods, built them altars in God's temple, practiced witchcraft, consulted mediums, and killed many innocent people. Then the Assyrians suspected Manasseh of plotting against them, so they imprisoned him in Babylon. "In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly," God heard him and restored him to his throne. "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God" (2 Chronicles 33:12–13 NIV). Manasseh removed the idol altar from God's temple. He tore down all the pagan altars he had built in Jerusalem. Then he restored the altar of the Lord and commanded all Judah to serve the Lord.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 33 AND PSALM 85.



Manasseh originally worshipped other gods—including Baal, as seen in this image. However, he turned to God when he was captured and imprisoned.

SPOTLIGHT

CHOOSE YOUR EPITAPH

What would you like to have engraved on your tombstone? Here are some options from 2 Chronicles:

KING REHOBOAM

"He was an evil king, for he did not seek the Lord with all his heart." 12:14

KING JEHOSHAPHAT

"... a man who sought the Lord with all his heart." 22:9

KING AMAZIAH

"... did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, but not wholeheartedly." 25:2

KING HEZEKIAH

"In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow God's laws and commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful." 31:21

KING JOSIAH

"He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all his commands, laws, and decrees with all his heart and soul." 34:31

KING ZEDEKIAH

"Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the Lord. . . . Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the Lord, the God of Israel." 36:12–13

SPOTLIGHT

THE PLUS FACTOR

David was a bold and intelligent leader—no question about it. But behind the scenes, 1 Chronicles shows an extra dynamic that fueled his towering accomplishments.

"There at Hebron, David made a covenant before the Lord with all the elders of Israel." 11:3

"David became more and more powerful, because the Lord of Heaven's Armies was with him." 11:9

"David realized that the Lord had confirmed him as king over Israel and had greatly blessed his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel." 14:2

"David now built several buildings for himself in the City of David. He also prepared a place for the Ark of God and set up a special tent for it." 15:1

"The Lord made David victorious wherever he went." 18:6

"Every part of this plan, David told Solomon, 'was given to me in writing from the hand of the Lord.'" 28:19



Timeline

- + 538 CYRUS'S DECREE
- + 586 JUDAH (SOUTHERN KINGDOM) FALLS
- + 622 BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND
- + 640 JOSIAH BECOMES KING
- + 701 SENNACHERIB TAUNTS HEZEKIAH
- + 715 HEZEKIAH BECOMES KING OF JUDAH
- + 722 ISRAEL (NORTHERN KINGDOM) FALLS
- + 792 UZZIAH BECOMES KING OF JUDAH
- + 841 ATHALIAH SEIZES THE THRONE
- + 853 AHAB KILLED IN BATTLE
- + 872 JEHOASHAPHAT BECOMES KING OF JUDAH
- + 910 ASA BECOMES KING OF JUDAH
- + 930 THE KINGDOM DIVIDES
- + 966-959 TEMPLE BUILT
- + 970 B.C. SOLOMON BECOMES KING

WHAT'S THE POINT OF
2 Chronicles?
 + + +
 Those who rely
 on the Lord
 make a huge
 difference in life.

2 Chronicles

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? The story of Solomon's reign and the subsequent kings of Judah.

WHO WROTE IT? Tradition says it was Ezra. Whoever compiled the information wrote during the time of Ezra.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? The events in the book happened between 970 and 586 B.C.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? Second Chronicles covers Solomon's reign up to the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapters 1–9: The reign of Solomon
- Chapters 10–12: The foolish King Rehoboam
- Chapter 13: King Abijah
- Chapters 14–16: King Asa
- Chapters 17–20: King Jehoshaphat
- Chapters 21–28: Seven lesser kings
- Chapters 29–32: King Hezekiah
- Chapter 33: Kings Manasseh and Amon
- Chapters 34–35: King Josiah
- Chapter 36: The final crash

KEY CONCEPTS

- King
- Temple
- Wisdom
- "Did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight"
- "Did what was evil in the LORD's sight"

SCORECARD

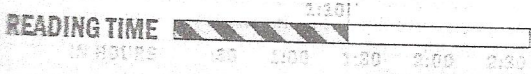
Solomon: Last king of the united kingdom of Israel
Other notable kings: Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah

WORTH MEMORIZING

- **7:14** "Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land."
- **16:9** "The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."
- **31:21** Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful.

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• **TRUE SUCCESS.** Because the wealthy and powerful seem to get the most media attention, many men begin to define success in terms of what will make them feel important. This book is a good corrective to that point of view. It presents a "hall of fame" and a "hall of shame" from God's point of view.





f you've ever gone through a ground-shifting change in life, you know it can be unsettling and upsetting. That's how God's people felt in 2 Chronicles as they returned home after seventy years in captivity. They were a people in transition and needed an explanation of their past and future. Second Chronicles met that need by focusing post-exilic Israel on its heritage and hope, especially as symbolized by the temple in Jerusalem. Terms like *temple* and *the house of the LORD* occur 139 times in 2 Chronicles. Nothing symbolized God's presence among His people more than the temple.

This book tells stories about Solomon, who built the original temple; about Hezekiah, who repaired the temple; and about Josiah, who purified the temple following days of idolatry. During the final years of Judah the temple was plundered and destroyed; but seventy years later a decree went forth to rebuild the temple as a sign of God's enduring care for His people.

While God no longer dwells in a physical temple of stone, the New Testament declares that a believer's body and spirit is a temple where He resides. We are bought at a price; therefore, we're to glorify God in our body and spirit, which are His. In today's terms, Solomon's temple cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build. Yet God purchased each of us with something far more valuable—the precious blood of Christ. Let's glorify Him as His temples, houses of His glory, vessels fit for the Master's use.



KEY THOUGHT:

God is determined to have a temple, a dwelling place for His glory on earth.



KEY VERSE:

"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!"
2 Chronicles 36:23



KEY ACTION:

Glorify God in the temple where He resides—in your body and spirit.



KEY PRAYER:

O God, when trouble comes, help me keep my eyes focused on You!

The Shame of Bloody Hands

1 Chronicles 22

WHY DO MANY GUYS like movies with bloody fights, noisy explosions, and chase scenes, while many women prefer films about romance and relationships? Why is it that most men cheer when two chunky football players collide and collapse to the ground, while most women wince and turn away?

It can be risky to generalize about the genders, but men and women seem to have different attitudes toward violence. According to this ancient story about King David, men's taste for violence even worries God at times.

David had a brilliant career as a fighter and commander. His most celebrated battle was the day he knocked off the giant Goliath. King Saul then appointed him to command Israel's army. Subsequently, David led massive battles that resulted in the deaths of thousands.

His military victories made him famous, but they also disqualified him from building God's Temple:

"You have killed many men in the battles you have fought," said God. "And since you have shed so much blood in my sight, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honor my name" (1 Chronicles 22:8).

Some people argue that the God of the Old Testament is cruel and violent, citing the many bloody battles he commissioned Israel to engage in. But in this passage, God shows his distaste for carnage and death.

A sobering thought for all who relish violence today.

A Meeting of Intellectual Equals

2 Chronicles 9:1-12

EVEN AT A TIME when men ruled much of the earth, the queen of Sheba demonstrated that women were capable of ruling large lands and deserved men's respect.

The queen had power and money. Legend says she was also incredibly beautiful. But this passage focuses on her brains: "When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions" (2 Chronicles 9:1). The queen had such a powerful intellectual curiosity that she made a 1500-mile trip to Israel to interrogate Solomon.

"When she met with Solomon, she talked with him about everything she had on her mind. Solomon had answers for all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her" (9:1-2).

Solomon had more women than we can imagine to entertain him. Yet when he was with this queen, he wasn't focusing on her looks. Apparently her conversation was engaging and interesting for the wisest man on earth.

Sometimes husbands and wives can lapse into bland rhetoric, deadening the vitality of a marriage. Busyness and differing interests can lead to rote comments and responses with little real exchange of ideas.

We don't need the wisdom of Solomon or the riches of Sheba to become partners who engage one another's minds on a high and respectful level.

A Woman Who Spoke for God

2 Chronicles 34:22-33

THE BIBLE SHOWCASES plenty of male prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. But this brief passage from the time of King Josiah describes the influence of a female prophet named Huldah. God spoke to her just as he did to male prophets, and the king took her message to heart.

Why did God speak through a woman? It wasn't a case of no males being available. Historians note that Jeremiah was certainly in active ministry at this time, and perhaps others were as well. Still, for some reason, Huldah got the king's call.

In the process of remodeling the Temple, an old scroll was uncovered. It turned out to be all or part of the book of Deuteronomy, filled with commandments from God. King Josiah had not been following many of these commandments because he had not heard all of them. He was very distressed to learn of his unwitting disobedience and sent some of his top men to investigate just how much trouble the nation might be in.

The men went to Huldah without hesitation. They didn't have a debate on her integrity or authenticity. She was known to speak prophetic words with the confidence of God-given authority.

As God had already said through the prophet Joel 200 years before Huldah's time, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike" (Joel 2:28-29).

God's words are available to everyone. Men and women can both learn, discern, grow, provoke, and encourage each other in what God has to say to us today.