

## JUST A LITTLE HAND II Samuel 6:1-7

### INTRODUCTION:

“It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.” Ever hear that line? But what if you believe that:

- All you need for sky diving is a good umbrella
- Plumbers have better cures for constipation than doctors
- Red traffic lights mean ‘go’.

Maybe what you believe does matter after all.

“It doesn’t matter what God you worship so long as you worship some God.” Ever hear that one? Try telling that to a Hindu who grew up in the era before Christianity had much influence in India. Before Christianity gained momentum in India, millions of Hindus sincerely believed that:

- Baby girls should be drowned in the Ganges so they can be reincarnated as boys
- Surviving widows should be cremated alive with their deceased husbands
- The gross discrimination and prejudice of the Hindu caste system should be enforced

Maybe which god you worship does make a difference.

“It doesn’t matter what route you take, we’re all going to the same place.” Ever hear that one?

- I once got on a wrong train in Luxembourg and instead of going to Belgium, I was headed for Italy.
- Once, when driving to Peoria, on the North side of Effingham, I took the wrong fork in the “Y” of I-57 & I-70 and ended up in Indiana before I realized my mistake.
- A UPS driver in Lincoln, IL delivered a package to the office of the First Christian Church and, heading back to his truck, went through the wrong door and fell into the baptistery.

Maybe it does make a difference which route you take if you want to end up where you want to end up.

“It doesn’t matter how you worship as long as you worship the Lord.” Anyone ever said that to you? I wonder if anyone ever said that to King David of Israel or one of his subjects: a man by the name of Uzzah. May I read his story for you? It is found in II Samuel 6:1-7?

**6**<sup>1</sup> David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. <sup>2</sup> He 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. <sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> with the ark of God on it and Ahio was walking in front of it.<sup>5</sup> David 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.*

*<sup>6</sup> When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.<sup>7</sup> The 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.*

Richard Carlson wrote the book, *Don't Sweat The Small Stuff - - And It's All Small Stuff*. This little book spent 100 weeks on the *New York Times* Best Seller List. I'm not surprised. We'd like to think that the details don't matter. And if Carlson is correct that we are not to sweat the small stuff and that it is all small stuff, then nothing matters. It's all details. Nothing is worth taking seriously.

Carlson's philosophy may be comforting but it is wrong. If you have read the Bible you will know that God cares about the details, the specifics, the particulars. Let me give you some examples

#### **I. GOD CARES ABOUT WHY WE WORSHIP**

The Ark of the Covenant was, perhaps, the most significant physical object to the people of Israel. It was a chest that contained reminders of God's provision and God's protection for the Hebrew people. On top of the Ark of the Covenant were the figures of two angels whose wings touched. The cradle formed by the wings of these golden angels was called the Mercy Seat and the Mercy Seat was regarded as the very throne of God.

After God directed the people to make the Ark of the Covenant while they were camped at Mount Sinai, the Ark of the Covenant was always carried before them when they broke camp and moved on. God had specified exactly who could transport the Ark and how. Poles of Acacia wood were to be inserted through rings on the sides of the Ark and they were to be left there. Then, any time the Ark was to be moved, it was to be carried by priests from the tribe of Levi. The priests were to touch only the poles affixed to the Ark; they were not to touch the Ark, itself.

When the Hebrews set up camp, they always erected their tent of meeting in the center of their camp. And in the center of this place of worship, the Ark of the Covenant was placed in a restricted place called the Holy of Holies where only the High Priest could go; and he only once each year on the Day of Atonement.

When the High Priest of the Hebrews offered sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, he would sprinkle the blood of a lamb on the Mercy Seat and the presence of God would descend to His throne and He would meet man there.

When the Hebrews went into combat, the Ark of the Covenant was carried before them as a visible reminder that God was leading them into battle.

Some of Israel's enemies, seeing their reverence for the Ark of the Covenant, misunderstood its meaning to the Hebrews. The Philistines, for instance, thought the Ark of the Covenant was the god of the Israelites and that if they could capture the Ark, they would own the god of Israel. They believed if they owned the god of the Israelites, they could control them.

So, as recorded in I Samuel 4, the Philistines defeated the Israelites in battle and captured the Ark of the Covenant. But the Ark of God did not bring blessing to the enemies of God; only a curse. So the Philistines sent the Ark back to the Israelites.

The first of the Israelites to see the return of the Ark of the Covenant were the people of Beth Shemesh. They were overjoyed to see the Ark and, perhaps wanting to make sure that everything was in it that was supposed to be in it, they opened the Ark and look inside. Some 70 of them were struck down and died because they had dared to do such a thing.

In fear, the people of Beth Shemesh asked the citizens of Kiriath Jearim to come take the Ark to their town. The people of Kiriath Jearim did so and put the Ark of the Covenant at the house of a man named Abinadab. I Samuel 7:2 says the Ark stayed at the home of Abinadab for 20 years.

But 20 years later, King Saul was dead, having taken his own life. David was the new King and David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem, the capital city of his kingdom.

It is possible that David erred in his motive for wanting to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. God had not instructed David to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. Some scholars believe David was doing this for his own glory rather than the Lord's.

Does that ever happen in worship? Does it ever happen that people try to bring attention and focus on themselves instead of the Lord? Can it happen when people pray...and they want to be heard by men? Can it happen when people share pray requests in such a way as to draw attention to themselves and what they know...or to gossip and call it a prayer request? Can it happen when special music becomes performance

instead of praise? Can it happen when a preacher gets more concerned that people are impressed with his words instead of the Word of God? Can it happen that people worship for the wrong motives? It can. It does. And know this: God cares.

## II. GOD CARES ABOUT HOW WE WORSHIP

God not only cares about why we worship, He cares about how we worship.

In the account of this incident that is recorded in I Chronicles 15:11-15, King David reflects on what went wrong at the threshing floor of Nacon when Uzzah touched the Ark and died. David said this:

*<sup>11</sup> Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup> It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." <sup>14</sup> So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>15</sup> And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.*

David said that the Israelites had failed to ask God "how to do it in the prescribed way"; that is, how to move the Ark the way God wanted it moved. Using human reasoning, David and the other Israelites figured that there was a better way to transport the Ark than by means of men carrying it on their shoulders.

- An ox cart could move faster than men carrying a load and David was in a hurry to get the Ark to Jerusalem. "We'll use an ox cart," he reasoned.
- The Ark might get heavy and the men might have to rest too often. "We'll use an ox cart," he thought.
- Oxen are sure-footed and men may stumble. "We'll use an ox cart," he decided.

So a new ox cart was crafted. And oxen were yoked to the cart. And the Ark of the Covenant was placed on the cart. And off they all went.

Things seemed to be going well until the cart got to the threshing floor of Nacon and there, the unthinkable happened. The oxen stumbled. And when they did, the cart jerked. And when it did, the Ark began to topple from its perch on top of the cart. Acting purely on reflex, Uzzah reached out and steadied the Ark of the Covenant with his hand...and died

instantly. God had said that no man was to touch the Ark. And Uzzah had touched the Ark.

The problem arose because the people had failed to transport the Ark the way God said to do so. They came up with what they thought was a better idea and built a cart for the Ark. But if God had wanted a cart, He would have specified a cart. God wanted the Ark of His Presence to be carried by men.

David came to realize that God cares about how we worship Him. Good intentions, sincere motives and pious actions aren't enough to honor God. God wants obedience. God expects obedience. God demands obedience. We cannot say that we honor God and that we are worshiping Him yet fail to honor His commands and fail to obey His word.

So when people tell you that they know what the Bible says about worship but that they think they know a newer, better or more effective way, remember our late friend, Uzzah. God cares about how we worship.

### III. **GOD CARES ABOUT THOSE WHO WORSHIP**

And God cares about those who worship.

As I have said before, the priests, of the tribe of Levi, were the only ones authorized to carry the Ark. They were the ones who were chosen, ordained and set apart for the sacred responsibility of transporting the Ark of the Covenant from one place to another.

But on this occasion, David had a better idea. Rather than the mere functional group of priests that were required to carry the Ark, David thought to make an event out of the occasion. David decided to put the Ark on parade. He and 30,000 of the most prominent citizens of Israel became paraders of the lost Ark.

What should have been spiritual was becoming a spectacle. The Levitical priests were the custodians and escort of the Ark. They were the ones who had been set apart for God and made holy to Him by being marked by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. They were the ones who were to handle the things of God.

In I Peter 2:9, writing about those who have given their lives to Jesus, Simon Peter said, "*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...*" Who can participate in the things of God like the Lord's Supper, leading the church in worship, teaching and proclaiming the Word of God? It is those who have been set apart as "a holy nation, a people belonging to God." It is those who have been cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb.

**CONCLUSION:**

- God still cares about why we worship: our motives matter.
- God still cares about how we worship: our methods matter.
- God still cares about those who worship: Revelation 5:10 informs us that in heaven, there will be those who are authorized to come before the presence of the Lord because they have been made a kingdom of priests to serve God.

Would you like to be authorized to come before the Lord in heaven? The Bible does not leave us to wonder how to receive that opportunity.

- This Book says you must begin by believing that Jesus is God's promised anointed One who lived among us, died for us and rose from the dead.
- The Bible says that you must repent of living for self and turn to living for Jesus.
- God's Word requires that you must acknowledge to others who you believe Jesus to be.
- Scripture teaches that you must be born anew into God's family by being buried with Jesus in baptism and raised to new life in him.

Would you like to be authorized to come before the Lord in heaven? Then come to Him now.

**INVITATION:** #219 – 220 "*Surely The Presence*" & "*He Is Here*"