

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Who Is Willing?

Great endeavors are not successful just because they are great. They are successful because people are willing to give of themselves to make them happen.

"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver. . . . Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29:3, 5).

Near the end of his long and illustrious reign, King David's final service to his nation was to prepare them for the building of a permanent temple to God. In his farewell address to the people, David challenged them to match his own generous contribution to the building project (v. 2-5). This construction project was not just another public works boondoggle, but the temple of God—"not for man but for the Lord God," (v. 1). Their national identity would be reflected in this glorious structure, so it deserved their best.

As king, David could have imposed a "temple construction tax" on everyone to guarantee a sufficient collection. But David knew that a temple built from funds gained by coercion would become an object of scorn among the people,

rather than pride. This was *their* temple, so their participation in its construction had to be voluntary. David's challenge, "Who then is willing to consecrate himself?" placed the outcome of the project squarely on the shoulders of the people themselves. How much did this temple really mean to them?

David's challenge was met, even exceeded, by an overwhelming response by the people (v. 6-8). Thanks to their generosity, Solomon had ample materials to build a beautiful temple to God.

Notice that the writer gives credit for this positive outcome where it was due: "with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord" (v. 9). This language is strikingly familiar to Paul's description of the Macedonian churches: "they were freely willing . . . they first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:3-4). In both cases, the mission was successful because the people freely gave out of willing hearts.

A willing heart is always the defining characteristic of God's people. Service that is rendered to God out of a sense of duty or compulsion means

nothing to Him; any tyrant can get that by turning the screws tighter. What delights Him is service that is freely offered from a heart that genuinely shares God's ideals.

Nowhere is this principle more apparent than in the great work of evangelism. Unlike David's temple, the edifice we are building is a spiritual temple comprised of living stones (Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5). God's method of building this structure — very much like Israel's temple — is largely dependent on the efforts of His people. How much do we want the church to grow? How much in time and resources are we willing to invest to make it happen? With respect to church growth, David's question still carries urgency today: "Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"

By relying entirely on the free will of the people, David risked getting little in response. But God's people will always come through when they feel a personal stake in the challenge—and if they are willing to consecrate themselves to the task.

— David King