

## September 12 Lesson 2 (NIV)

### Praise in Dance

Devotional Reading: 2 Samuel 6:12–19

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 6

2 Samuel 6:1–5, 14–19

1 David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. 2 He and all his men went to Baalah in 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 on the ark. 3 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 4 with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. 5 David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, 15 while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

16 As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

17 They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. 18 After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty. 19 Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

#### Key Text

*David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.—2 Samuel 6:5*

### Celebrating God

#### Unit 1: God’s People Offer Praise

##### Lesson Outline

##### Introduction

##### A. If at First ...

##### B. Lesson Context

I. A Hopeful Gesture (2 Samuel 6:1–5)

A. Gathering the People (vv. 1–2)

B. Acquiring the Ark (vv. 3–4)

C. Celebrating the Occasion (v. 5)

II. A Hope Fulfilled (2 Samuel 6:14–16)

A. The Dancing King (v. 14)

Importance of Being Fully Dressed

B. The Shouting People (v. 15)

C. The Disgruntled Queen (v. 16)

III. A Hope Shared (2 Samuel 6:17–19)

A. God Grants Success (v. 17)

B. David Blesses the People (v. 18)

C. Israel Shares the Bounty (v. 19)

A Meal That Unites

Conclusion

A. The End and the Means

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Abinadab

Uh-bin-uh-dab.

Ahio

Ah-yo.

Baalah

Bay-ul-eh.

Beth Shemesh

Beth She-mesh.

cherubim

chair-uh-bim.

ephod

ee-fod.

Josephus

Jo-see-fus.

Kiriath Jearim

Kir-iath Jee-uh-rim or Jee-a-rim.

Leviticus

Leh-vit-ih-kus.

Michal

My-kal.

Obed-Edom

O-bed Ee-dum.

Philistines

Fuh-liss-teenz or Fill-us-teenz.

Uzzah

Uz-zuh.

## Introduction

### A. If at First ...

Failure is difficult to deal with, especially for dreamers with big plans. Many youths dream of the perfect job and end up settling for one that simply pays the bills. Some couples dream of the perfect outdoor wedding and end up making the best of a rainy day. Parents often dream of having the perfect family but end up struggling to hold together the fragile unity that remains after years of conflict and tragedy.

When it comes to preparing for the perfect job, wedding, or family, we are seldom granted a redo. Some dreams simply don't pan out and never will. But we

thank the Lord that such is not always the case! Some failures allow for second chances. Hence the proverb “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

It takes grit, determination, and a good dose of vulnerability to recover from a failure—especially a public failure—and then attempt the same feat again. King David suffered a highly visible public failure. Yet we learn in today’s lesson that he refused to let it define him. And God was gracious to grant him success on his second try. But would the people come together to celebrate with David?

## B. Lesson Context

Today’s lesson focuses on the relocation of the ark of the covenant to David’s new capital city, Jerusalem (see the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15). The ark of the covenant was Israel’s most sacred object. It was an ornate chest constructed to God’s specifications in about 1446 BC.

The lid of the ark was called the atonement cover. That lid featured two winged cherubim facing each other from opposite ends; that’s where God said he would meet with Moses (Exodus 25:10–22). One detail of the ark’s construction is especially important for today’s lesson: the gold rings and wooden poles (see 2 Samuel 6:3, below). The ark itself contained the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s staff, and manna from Israel’s wilderness wanderings (Hebrews 9:4; compare Exodus 40:20). These were reminders of deliverance from Egypt and provisions on the way to the promised land.

The ark was housed in the innermost part of the tabernacle, “the Most Holy Place” (Leviticus 16:2). Only the high priest was ever allowed to enter, and that only once a year after extensive acts of ritual cleansing (16:3–25). That ark was so holy that those responsible for its upkeep and transportation were not allowed to touch it, lest they die (Numbers 4:15, 20; see 2 Samuel 6:5, below).

After God led the Israelites into the promised land, they forsook the covenant during the period of the judges (about 1380–1050 BC). Repeated numerous times was the dreary cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration.

As that period drew to a close in the days of Samuel, the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant and took it to Ashdod (about 1070 BC). That was a city near the Mediterranean coast and about 45 miles west of Jerusalem. But God inflicted

health problems on the Philistines, so they sent the ark back to Israel (1 Samuel 5:6–6:12).

The cart transporting the ark made its way to the Israelite city of Beth Shemesh (1 Samuel 6:13–15). Unfortunately, the people there disrespected the ark by gazing on its contents, and 70 people died as a result (6:19). So residents sent it to Kiriath Jearim, where it stayed for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1–2) until the days of King David.

The first seven and a half years of David's reign was a time of distraction as he was occupied with securing his position as king (2 Samuel 1:1–5:5). Having successfully done so, and having secured Jerusalem as his capital as well as defeating the Philistines again (5:6–25), David turned his attention to the ark.

## I. A Hopeful Gesture

(2 Samuel 6:1–5)

### A. Gathering the People (vv. 1–2)

1. David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand.

Again refers to David's reassembling the men of his army. They had conquered Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6) and defeated Philistine armies (5:20–25). When it came to defeating the Jebusites of Jerusalem, David as their leader appears to have done so on his own accord, though God gave him success (5:6–10). Regarding defeat of the Philistines, David twice inquired of the Lord (5:19, 23). It may be significant, then, that there is no record of David's consulting the Lord regarding what he (David) had in mind next.

The number thirty thousand is interesting in that it is also the number of men who died when the Philistines defeated the Israelites and captured the ark in 1 Samuel 4:10. This parallelism suggests that readers should view today's passage in light of that earlier encounter with the ark.

2a. He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God,

Baalah in Judah is another name for Kiriath Jearim (see Lesson Context plus Joshua 15:9 and 1 Chronicles 13:6). That town is only about eight miles west of

Jerusalem, so a walking trip can be made from Jerusalem to there and back in one day. The ark had been resting there for some 20 years since its recovery from the Philistines (see Lesson Context).

2b. which is called by the Name, the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

Every aspect of God's designation is significant in this verse. Lord (indicated by small capital letters within the text to show the name Yahweh was used) refers to the personal name of Israel's God (compare Genesis 4:26; Exodus 3:14). The word translated Almighty is translated "hosts" in older versions of the Bible and may refer to angelic beings who serve the Lord as he directs (see Psalm 148:2; compare Hebrews 1:13–14). It also may refer to stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies that he had created (Nehemiah 9:6). The word speaks to God's fighting on behalf of his chosen people (example: Isaiah 1:24; see also on Psalm 84:1 in lesson 8). The bottom line is that this designation celebrates the Lord's power in various contexts (examples: 1 Samuel 17:45; Isaiah 1:24).

#### B. Acquiring the Ark (vv. 3–4)

3a. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill.

Had David consulted the Levites, whom God appointed to care for the ark (see Numbers 1:50–51; 1 Chronicles 6:48), he would have learned that the ark must be carried by only two long wooden poles through rings affixed to the ark (Exodus 25:12–15; 37:5). This method both (1) kept the ark a safe distance from human contact and (2) kept the top-heavy ark stable.

Why David chose instead to set the ark of God on a new cart isn't revealed in the text. Perhaps it is evidence of David's ignorance of the law, or maybe it betrays a flippancy toward God's presence. Or he could have thought that if a cart safely brought the ark back from the Philistines, it could surely take the ark safely to Jerusalem (see Lesson Context).

Older versions of the Bible include the town name "Gibeah" instead of hill. This is because the Hebrew word can refer to either a hill or a specific town. If the latter, it likely was Gibeah, located about four miles north of Jerusalem and nine miles east of Kiriath Jearim. Elsewhere, the underlying Hebrew word is translated "hill"

(1 Samuel 26:3), and that may be the sense here. This would suggest that the house of Abinadab was located on a small hill (see 1 Samuel 7:1).

3b–4. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it.

A common assumption today is that Abinadab was a Levite, an assumption also held by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 6.1.4). However, we should conclude that Abinadab was not a Levite since 1 Chronicles 15:12–13 has David’s later statement that Levites were not involved in transporting the ark of God on this occasion.

Four Levites (specifically Kohathites; see Numbers 4:1–15) were to carry the ark by means of the two poles that were kept in the gold rings (Exodus 25:14–15). Two branches of the Levites did indeed use carts for transportation of various tabernacle items, but not the branch that was charged with transporting the ark (Numbers 7:4–9). The use of a cart in this regard is reckless in that it indicates David’s failure in not inquiring of the Lord regarding procedure.

### C. Celebrating the Occasion (v. 5)

5. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

King David and the Israelites celebrated in grand style the consecration of David’s capital city. He spared no expense with wood, string, and percussion instruments. On the distinctions among the various kinds of instruments, see the commentary on Psalm 150:3–5 in lesson 9.

The celebration was cut short, however, by tragedy: when the cart tipped, the ark slid, and Uzzah lost his life trying to stabilize it (2 Samuel 6:6–7, not in today’s text). The party ended, and David left the ark in the house of Obed-Edom, where it remained until David tried again (6:6–13). When David sent for the ark a second time, he had greater respect for God’s holy presence. God must be honored and his instructions obeyed. Having learned his lesson, David picked up his celebration where it left off and welcomed the ark into his city the right way—our next verse.

## II. A Hope Fulfilled

(2 Samuel 6:14–16)

## A. The Dancing King (v. 14)

### 14a. Wearing a linen ephod,

The ephod was one of six pieces of clothing traditionally worn by priests (see Exodus 28). In terms of construction, ephods were to be made “of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen” with “two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners” (28:6–7). As part of a larger ensemble, the ephod’s holy intent was to communicate “dignity and honor” (28:2).

Given all that, it is unclear what we should make of King David’s wearing of a priest’s garment since the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king were normally distinct from one another (compare 1 Kings 1:32–45). Perhaps the safest conclusion is that David wore the ephod in the same sense that young Samuel did in 1 Samuel 2:18: a waistcoat suitable for worship. That would lead us to understand the garment as having religious significance apart from the priesthood.

There’s also the possibility that David’s taking on a priestly role could foreshadow Jesus, who would come as both king and high priest (Hebrews 7). Normally only priests offered sacrifices, but we see an exception to that in 2 Samuel 6:13, 17 (below; compare 1 Kings 8:5, 62; 1 Samuel 10:9–13).

### 14b. David was dancing before the Lord with all his might,

Dancing was a common form of celebration in Israel, especially for women. Israelite women danced with Miriam to celebrate God’s victory over Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20; see lesson 1). During the era of the judges (see Lesson Context), a daughter danced to celebrate her father’s triumphant return from war (Judges 11:34), and the women of Shiloh danced in celebration of an unspecified festival (21:21–23; see further discussion of dance in commentary on Psalms 149:3 and 150:4 in lesson 9). To dance is the opposite of mourning (Psalm 30:11; Lamentations 5:15).

During the time of David, women danced to celebrate the return of Saul’s army after David’s defeat of Goliath and a successful campaign against the Philistines (1 Samuel 18:6–7). Dancing has a negative connotation in Exodus 32:19.

## B. The Shouting People (v. 15)



15. while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

As all Israel joined David, no other instrumental sound other than that of the trumpets is mentioned as accompanying the shouts. It's hard to hear stringed instruments over loud trumpets! Trumpets are associated with priests dozens of times in the Old Testament (example: Joshua 6:4–13, 20) and with the presence of the Lord (examples: Exodus 19:16–19; 20:18; compare Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Revelation 1:10). In the case of the latter, trumpets were linked to fear of God. Once again we see evidence that David took on a role associated more with priests than with kings. But only one person seems to have objected—our next verse.

### C. The Disgruntled Queen (v. 16)

16. As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

Michal was David's first wife, and they had a rough history together (see 1 Samuel 18:20–29; 19:11–17; 25:43–44; 2 Samuel 3:13–16). Her reasons for despising David aren't completely clear. But there may be a clue in the fact that she was not celebrating with the crowds, choosing instead to stay inside and watch from a window. Perhaps she did this to model what she considered to be royal behavior—behavior that kept herself apart from the common people in their revelry.

We are told in 2 Samuel 6:20 (not in our printed text) that Michal accused David of acting in an undignified and inappropriate way in front of other women who served him. David rebuffed her by claiming that he danced before the Lord (6:21–22).

## III. A Hope Shared

(2 Samuel 6:17–19)

### A. God Grants Success (v. 17)

17a. They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it,

David appeared at this point to have completed his mission now that the ark of the Lord was in the tent that David had pitched for it. But this raises a question: Given the cause of the tragedy in 2 Samuel 6:6–7, discussed above, did David’s preparations at this point conform to instructions in Numbers 1:51 for moving the tabernacle? The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15:12–13 indicates not.

17b. and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord.

Burnt offerings (Leviticus 1) were prescribed for specific occasions (examples: Exodus 29:38–42; Numbers 28:9–10). But they were also appropriate as freewill offerings (Leviticus 22:18). Fellowship offerings (Leviticus 3) could express thanks or obligation to God (7:11–16).

Both kinds of sacrifices indicated the joy of the occasion and the felt need to praise God for bringing it about. Regarding the possibility of David’s exercising a priestly role, see commentary on 2 Samuel 6:14b, above.

B. David Blesses the People (v. 18)

18a. After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, David’s son Solomon will later follow in his father’s footsteps by sacrificing burnt offerings and fellowship offerings in dedicating the newly finished temple; the massive numbers of Solomon’s sacrifice recorded in 1 Kings 8:62–63 make an interesting contrast to the “seven bulls and seven rams” offered on this occasion (1 Chronicles 15:26).

18b. he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty.

On pronouncing blessing on the people, compare Leviticus 9:23; Joshua 8:33; 1 Chronicles 16:2; and 2 Chronicles 31:8. Regarding the name of the Lord Almighty, compare 1 Samuel 17:45; 2 Samuel 6:2 (above); and Isaiah 18:7.

C. Israel Shares the Bounty (v. 19)

19. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

The language here is inclusive: David shared this celebration with all the people—not just his fighting men or the priests or those of his own tribe. God’s presence

among his people was a momentous occasion for the whole crowd of Israelites. A full meal for the assembled celebrants was a massive and extravagant undertaking (compare Nehemiah 8:10).

## Conclusion

### A. The End and the Means

We Christians get excited when we see God at work in our midst. We are then tempted to respond in ways that come naturally to us; we are inclined to do what our culture has conditioned us to do when things are going our way.

Yet David learned that not any and all responses are appropriate to our holy God. In every believer's life, the end and the means are all tangled together. How a thing is accomplished matters to the Lord.

We must consult God's Word to learn the right means to the ends we seek as we honor the Lord. We must not rush to do what seems right in our own eyes, even when we are trying to do right by God. Let us not assume we know God's will until we have carefully tested it against his Word.

### B. Prayer

Holy God, teach us to love you like David did when he was at his best. May our excitement take no heed to reactions around us as we seek only to glorify you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Praise God with all your might.