

Effective Management

But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings. (2 Kings 22:7)

Scripture: 2 Kings 22:1–10

Song: “He Leadeth Me”

I have worked in organizations of various sizes—a mid-sized church, a small school, a large university, and a multinational organization. They all shared two characteristics that are crucial to accomplishing your mission effectively. First, you need staff with the character and competence to do their jobs. Second, you need to trust that staff to do what they know how to do without micromanaging. Giving people the freedom to do their jobs without breathing down their necks is the most effective way to accomplish your mission.

Josiah was a great king. Unlike many of his predecessors, Josiah’s heart was set on doing what God desired. He took bold steps to rid the country of idolatry, and he installed trustworthy, God-honoring managers to oversee important projects such as repairing the temple complex. One byproduct of entrusting godly people to these tasks was the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple.

It’s tempting to take shortcuts to achieve our goals. But God calls us to be faithful in every aspect of our work, including our interactions with others. It might take time for our faithfulness to pay off fully, but we can take comfort in knowing that God is in charge of the timing.

Father, may I be trustworthy in all the work You give me to do. And may I trust You to take care of the rest. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

December 1–7. **Troy D. Stuart** is married, has three sons, and has worked internationally as a Christian educator.

God's Unabridged Word

“Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book.” (2 Kings 22:13)

Scripture: 2 Kings 22:11–20

Song: “Song of Repentance”

Freedom of the press is a bedrock of life in the United States. As established in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, freedom of the press provides checks and balances on the information available to citizens. Our world has witnessed many examples of the devastating effects produced by authoritarian regimes who strictly control the messages their people are and are not permitted to hear, see, and access.

King Josiah heard troubling news when his secretary, Shaphan, read from the newly discovered Book of the Law. Shaphan’s reading revealed that God was angry with His people because of their disobedience. Rather than hide this news, Josiah ordered the high priest and his attendants to inquire of the Lord and of Huldah, the prophet, about these words. Even though God’s word contained a message so disturbing that Josiah tore his robes, the king chose to bring this news into the light.

Sometimes God’s words are troubling. Scripture has much to say about sin and its consequences. However, God also has much to say about repentance and grace. Like Josiah, we can face difficult teaching with a spirit of humility and willingness to change.

Father, I confess my sins and acknowledge my shortcomings. Thank You for Your everlasting grace and mercy toward me through Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Clear Vision

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. (Luke 24:30–31)

Scripture: Luke 24:25–32

Song: “Open My Eyes, That I May See”

One afternoon, I visited some friends who had purchased a new 85" television. Standing about 15 feet away from the screen, I removed my glasses and tried to read the words in an advertisement. Unfortunately, I could not make out a single word, even on that giant TV. Like nearly 1.7 million adults in the United States, I need corrective lenses to see clearly.

This passage in Luke tells of two men and their powerful encounter with the risen Christ as they travel to a village near Jerusalem. Downhearted and spiritually blind because of the news about Jesus' crucifixion, they are unable to see that the person walking beside them is Jesus Himself! After reprimanding them for not understanding what the prophets had written about Him, Jesus instructs them in the Scriptures and compassionately reveals His identity while breaking bread with them. This revelation fills their hearts with joy, and they enthusiastically set out to tell others that Jesus has risen.

Jesus gives us many opportunities to know Him. He reveals Himself in Scripture, through others, in church gatherings, and through nature. It is our responsibility to open our eyes so we can see Him in all the ways He shows Himself to us.

Father, thank You for raising Jesus to life. Help me see clearly how to live as His disciple. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Listen to the Law

He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (Nehemiah 8:3)

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1–8

Song: “Thy Word”

I once served on a jury for a lengthy trial. Before our deliberations, the judge read over 50 pages of the law to us. All jurors’ eyes and ears were attuned to the judge as he read the words that would guide our decision of innocence or guilt. No one nodded off or looked away in boredom. The high stakes we were facing demanded that we absorb every last word.

Ezra read God’s word to the people of Judah as they embarked on a new era in their history. The crowd assembled before him knew what it was like to be exiled from their homeland because of their nation’s unfaithfulness to God. Ezra and the Levites instructed the people in the Law to ensure that everyone thoroughly understood God’s word.

The people of Judah who assembled before Ezra serve as a model for us today. From daybreak until noon, everyone listened attentively to Ezra as he read God’s word. They knew that their future well-being depended on it. Attending to God’s Word is as vital to our future as it was to the men and women in Ezra’s day.

Father, may I read, study, and apply the words You have given in Scripture with even greater seriousness than jurors who must understand the law used to render a verdict in court. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Expert Testimony

And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. (John 5:37–38)

Scripture: John 5:37–47

Song: “Holy Spirit, Truth Divine”

Expert testimony is a foundational element of many court cases. I was a juror in a trial that involved several expert witnesses. We heard from pathologists at prestigious hospitals, forensic scientists who have worked with some of the most famous celebrities and businesspeople in the country, and a policy-maker who helped author the rules for medical billing. Some decisions we rendered had to be based on the testimony of these expert men and women.

In John 5, Jesus wants His audience to understand that the Scriptures they revere point to Him. But it's not just the Scriptures that testify about Him. The Father Himself declares that Jesus is the one the people have been waiting for. Unfortunately, these experts in the law misidentify the central figure to whom Scripture points in God's plan of salvation.

No person has ever produced a better reference letter than Jesus. The entirety of Scripture, God's very Word to humanity, testifies that He is the Messiah, sent by God so that we might have life in His name. May we listen carefully as Christ guides us into relationship with God and one another.

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to show me the way to eternal life. May I hear and obey His words. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Commissioning Ceremony

“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18)

Scripture: John 17:14–19

Song: “Lord, You Give the Great Commission”

Taking part in a ceremony or special time of blessing is inspiring when you are starting a new assignment. I remember how meaningful it was to me to be prayed over by my church and other Christians before moving to Thailand as a missionary. Some institutions, such as the U.S. military and police academies, have reverent commissioning ceremonies to signify that a person is ready to be sent out into new and potentially dangerous work.

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus spends time praying for His followers. He recognizes that His disciples are now so transformed that their lives are radically different from people of the world. However, His prayer is not one of retreat. It is a prayer of strength that these disciples will be faithful to their commission to bring good news to the world, just as He has been faithful in carrying out the assignment His Father gave Him.

Jesus’ commission to these disciples applies to us as well. While our everyday lives certainly look different from theirs, the core message has not changed. We are to offer to others the good news of Christ—not just in words, but by living as people who are set apart for a radical, holy purpose.

Father, help me live a holy life and protect me from evil as I share the gospel with those around me. Give me courage to carry out Your commission. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Sweet Akha Honey

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. (Psalm 19:10)

Scripture: Psalm 19:7–13

Song: “More Precious Than Gold”

The Akha people are an ethnic group who live in the hills of various Southeast Asian countries. There are numerous Akha villages in northern Thailand, where I used to work. Many Akha people are adept at farming produce that grows in the forests. One of the most delightful treats I received from an Akha friend was natural honey that had been collected directly from a hive. The naturally sweet flavor was magnificent compared to the highly processed honey I was accustomed to eating.

The psalmist compares God’s law to items of exquisite value in his culture—honey and gold. In fact, the psalmist says that God’s words to mankind are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey straight from the honeycomb. The Lord’s statutes, decrees, and commands refresh our souls, not the transitory things of the world.

Today’s passage invites us into a relationship with God’s Word. Reading Scripture is not an act of drudgery. Instead, it is an opportunity to listen to God as He teaches us about Himself, His love for us, and how we can best live in the world He created and lovingly sustains.

Father, thank You for giving us the Bible. I pray that my study of Scripture will allow me to know You more fully as I learn how to live in a way that reflects Jesus’ love. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.