

**Joke:** A son was walking along side his father while walking, the kid was looking at his phone and didn't notice a pole in front of him, which resulted with him colliding with the pole.

The father looks over at his boy and said, "That was some a"pole"ing behavior" and began to laugh at his own joke

The son, being slightly irritated, snapped back at the father saying, "was that pun really necessary?"

The father not missing a beat says, "well, you walked right into that one"

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## Chronicles - week 1

Today I want to talk about restarting.

Remember that thing we dealt with called Covid? During that pandemic, during the peak of that there were some difficult losses for many. Lives were lost, jobs were lost, loneliness and depression crept in, and for many it was hard to hold onto hope. And here we are years later, and some are still working hard to recover what they lost.

I'm starting a new series today from the book of Chronicles.

But let me start by laying a foundation by sharing a little of the history behind the book of Chronicles.

All throughout the Scriptures there are lessons we can learn for most if not every situation we will ever face.

And Chronicles was written to teach us how to recover from a national crisis.

I love what author Torrey Martin said in his book *Of Moose and Men*, he said, “The Bible is chock-full of guidance, but God doesn’t spell everything out.”

Sometimes you need to do what Proverbs tell us. . .

Proverbs 25:2 (NIV): It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.

And let me just pause here a moment. God doesn’t hide things from us, he hides things for us. So when we search, and knock, we find, and in the finding there is something exciting about the discovery. (Talk about an Easter egg or scavenger hunt).

The book of Chronicles is a book of recovery. And for this series discovery as well.

And for some of you the enemy has stolen some things from you. Maybe your worship, maybe your joy, maybe your health. I don’t know what it is for you and I’m not really going to touch on it specifically in this series, but let me prophesy to the church today.

It’s time to restore the joy of your salvation. It’s time to get back what the locusts have eaten, it’s time to recovery what the enemy has tried to destroy. (Talk about dreams, ideas, longings, etc.)

Let’s look into the history that lead up to book of Chronicles.

The year was 606 B.C. And Israel was exiled to Babylon. The Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem, broke down its walls, and carried virtually everyone into captivity. The Israelites lost

everything: their homes, their jobs, their identities, their loved ones.

And for 70 years they lived in refugee camps. outside the city of Babylon.

Then God used a Persian King named Cyrus to conquer the Babylonians and set the people free. Cyrus issued an “open up” order to all the conquered nations.

“Go home,” he said. “Rebuild what was taken.”

So the Israelites did.

And in 536 B.C., they returned home. They packed up their possessions, their families and marched the 800 miles back to Jerusalem.

After 70 years where would you even start? Surely the culture had shifted. How do you rebuild after all was lost?

So, to lead them in this endeavor, God sent them two Spirit-filled leaders: Nehemiah and Ezra.

Nehemiah he led Israel in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem so they could have safety.

By the way, even with much opposition Nehemiah rebuilds the walls in 52 days.

And hear this church, we must never allow opposition to hinder what God has called us to. When you stand for the truth of God’s word, and it seems to me even more so in the culture today, you are bound to have opposition. But remain

faithful, stay obedient, and allow God to do what He wants to do in you and through you. God promises He will be with us.

The second leader was Ezra.

Ezra wasn't a builder of walls, he was a builder of hearts. A builder of character. Nehemiah gave people the wall. Ezra gave people the Word.

And if you were to go to the front of your Bible you will find the table of contents, there you'll find 17 historical books at the very front.

The ninth historical book is the book of 1 Samuel. It's followed by 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and 2 Chronicles.

The books of Samuel and Kings record the political history of Israel. During what is called, "the kingdom period."

The book of Chronicles records that same history.

Why two accounts? The first was written for details. The second for lessons.

Samuel and Kings record details. Chronicles records the lessons.

Samuel and Kings tell the story of what happened to Israel. While Chronicles tells the story of what happened to Israel as a result of their choices.

A group of prophets wrote Samuel and Kings. Ezra wrote the book of Chronicles.

And when he penned this book Ezra wrote to a discouraged people. They were returning to a land that flourished under their grandfathers, but under their fathers not so much.

God had removed them from the land to teach them some lessons.

And God was now bringing them back so they could put those lessons into practice.

Chronicles will be our teacher for the next several weeks.

When Covid first hit many were in a panic. They didn't want anybody stopping by. People were praying it would just pass by. Businesses closed, schools closed, churches closed.

And truth is some are still trying to recover. Others have recovered, while some others never did.

The story we're going to read today is about a plague that was cut short, but more importantly is the lesson we are going to learn.

What do you do when you've done something wrong? That's the lesson we can learn from our time together today.

So, let me start with this question. . .

Have you ever done something wrong, don't answer that quite yet there's more. . . Have you ever done something wrong and you knew it was wrong, but chose to do it anyway?

Don't raise your hand.

My guess is chances are we're probably all guilty of that.

And, King David is no exception. David was one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history. Yet he failed. . . many times, and still God loved him, and used him.

The story in 1 Chronicles 21 is a story specifically chosen by Ezra to teach us a lesson about restarting.

His lesson we can learn from today is about starting over with God when we've messed up, when we've disobeyed Him.

And to teach us this lesson, Ezra selects, not what we would consider a huge sin in the life of David.

Again let me pause here, sin is sin, amen. But we look at some sins and think that's a biggie. Others it's just you know that little white lie.

Remember David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba? Does Ezra use that to bring home his point? Nope. How about how he had Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband killed, basically sent him to slaughter to cover up the affair. That's got to be what Ezra used right? Nope. How about the rebellion of David's son Absalom. Nope not the either.

Ezra tells us the story of doing something that most of the time isn't even wrong. Curious? Any ideas?

Now if you have been around churches for any length of time at all you no doubt have heard the lists. There's the nasty nine and the dirty dozen. The 7 deadly sins. And if you grew up in a Christian home in the 60's or 70's, you learned that good boys don't smoke, drink, dance, or chew, or go out with girls that do.

And in 1 Chronicles 21, David does something none of us would ever think of doing. We've never been tempted to do what he did. We've never even thought about doing what he did.

What did David do? . . . He took a census.

And maybe your thinking pastor what's wrong with taking a census? Truth is, normally nothing. I told you Ezra was going to use something that most times isn't even wrong.

Let's read about it in 1 Chronicles 21:1-2. . .

1 Chronicles 21:1–2 (NIV): Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. 2 So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are."

And the thing is censuses aren't bad. Our government is required to take a census every 10 years, they help us figure out how many freeway lanes we need to build. It helps schools project how many students they'll have and how many teachers they'll need and how many classrooms to construct.

In the book of Numbers, God Himself ordered a census of Israel as they left Egypt. And He ordered a second census as they got ready to enter the Promised Land.

Censuses aren't sins. Usually. But David's was, why? Because David was taking one to measure not the improvements needed in the community, not the government's seats, but David wanted to measure His own

greatness.

- He wasn't at war.
- He didn't need to know how many fighting men he had.
- He just wanted to know how many troops he had so he could pat himself on the back.

And Joab, the commander of the army, knew there was no good reason for this census, so Scripture tells us. . .

1 Chronicles 21:3 (NIV): But Joab replied, "May the Lord multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

And David re-thought about the whole thing and changed his mind. Nope.

Watch this. . .

1 Chronicles 21:4–7 (NIV): The king's word, however, overruled Joab; so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem. 5 Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah. 6 But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him. 7 This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel.

Now let me pause here once again because I don't want you getting the idea that every time you are disobedient, or mess up, or do something that displeases Papa that He is waiting to punish you.



I don't believe that for a minute. However, there is a concept called sowing and reaping. And what I do know is this. . .

Even when I mess up, when I'm not obeying His voice. When I sow something that is displeasing to God. I need to repent, turn away from that thing and if I do that. . .

1 John 1:9 (TPT): But if we freely admit our sins when his light uncovers them, he will be faithful to forgive us every time. God is just to forgive us our sins because of Christ, and he will continue to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And I also know that can God can and does use that thing to bring about good.

Genesis 50:20 (NIV): You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

And in Romans we are told. . .

Romans 8:28 (NIV): And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

At the same time, in Scripture, God has used plagues to get people's attention.

And to David's credit. . .

1 Chronicles 21:8 (NIV): Then David said to God, “I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.”

You almost wonder if David rehearsed this ahead of time.

Maybe he thought, “I’m going to take this census, and I know it’s wrong, but I also know God loves me, so after I take it, if I get caught, I’ll just ask God to forgive me. And He will.”

Now before you write that idea off let’s be honest with ourselves a moment. There are some Christians that think that almost every time they sin. God’s grace is sufficient we say. His mercy endures forever we rationalize.

But Paul said it this way. . .

Romans 6:1–2 (NLT): Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?  
2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

And here’s the thing, this sin doesn’t take place in the New Testament, in the New Covenant It happens in the Old.

And truth is God is a God of justice, so sin always has to be paid for.

And the good news for us is, Jesus paid for our sins, permanently, as our once-for-all perfect lamb of God with His sacrifice on the Cross.

But with David the Cross hasn’t happened yet. David’s sin hasn’t already been paid for. It’s going to have to be paid for now.

Look let's pick up in verse 9. . .

1 Chronicles 21:9–12 (NIV): The Lord said to Gad, David's seer, 10 "Go and tell David, 'This is what the Lord says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.' " 11 So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what the Lord says: 'Take your choice: 12 three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the Lord—days of plague in the land, with the angel of the Lord ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me."

Hear this church, sin is always painful. Paying for sin is painful as well.

Think about Jesus' death, it was painful, but thank God when He said it is finished. . .it is finished. Our debt has been paid for. And that's good news. Doesn't mean there are no consequences it means they are forgiven when we ask our Heavenly Father do forgive us.

Someone once said, "sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."

But ai digress. . .

Back to our story, if you were David, how would you choose between famine, war, and plague?

Here's David's choice. . .

1 Chronicles 21:13–17 (NIV): David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is

very great; but do not let me fall into human hands.” 14 So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. 15 And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the Lord saw it and relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of the Lord was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 16 David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. 17 David said to God, “Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Lord my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people.”

And David went a step further. . .

1 Chronicles 21:18–28 (NIV): Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord. 20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. 21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground. 22 David said to him, “Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price.” 23 Araunah said to David, “Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood,

and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this.”  
24 But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”  
25 So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. 26 David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. 27 Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. 28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.

One reason Ezra tells this story is to help the Israelites understand the history of their Temple, and why it was located where it was.

Their Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. It's now the dwelling place of God on earth. It's the one place they were allowed to make sacrifices to atone for their sins. It's critical they rebuild the Temple. So Ezra wants them to understand why the Temple was built where it was.

And this story explains that.

The angel of the Lord stops the plague at “the threshing floor of Ornan.”

A threshing floor was usually at the top of a bluff or cliff or hill where there is just enough wind so that the farmer can bring his wheat there and, using a pitchfork, can throw it up in the air. The wind would then blow the chaff away, and the kernels of wheat, which are heavier than chaff, fall back to the ground, for the farmer to collect.

Ezra doesn't tell us this, because everyone reading the story already knew it, but the threshing floor of Ornan was located on ancient Mount Moriah.

Have you ever heard of Mt. Moriah? Do you remember what happened there 1,500 years earlier?

The story is found in Genesis 22, and it's where God says to Abraham, "Abraham, take your son, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and sacrifice him to Me there."

So Abraham takes Isaac to Mt. Moriah, where he straps him to an altar, and is about to thrust a knife into his chest when God says, "Abraham, do not lay a hand on the boy! Now I know that you will not withhold anything from me, because you did not withhold your only son."

Ezra wants the people to know why the ground of the Temple Mount is holy ground. And it's because? . .

- The plague of the angel of the Lord was stopped there.
- And a lamb was provided there in place of Isaac, the son of Abraham.

The second reason Ezra wants us to know this census and plague story is because this story is our story. It's a do-over story.

Like David, we've all done things wrong and have done and said things to puff up our pride and egos.

We may never have been tempted to commit adultery or murder, but we've all given in to the temptation to commit those "little sins" – sins we knew were wrong when we did

them, because God told us they were wrong. But decided to go ahead with it anyway.

Ezra is reminding us that little sins matter, sin is sin, and they must be atoned for.

Little sins still have the potential to cause big problems, this one cost Israel 70,000 men, all because of the pride of one leader.

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV): Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

So, what's the lesson in all of this. . .

Ezra is teaching us about forgiveness. – What it looks like, and what happens when we repent.

Ezra is teaching us the costliness of sin. – One man's sin – which didn't really seem like that big a deal, did it?

Look at this. . .

Romans 5:19 (NLT): Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

In this story one man's sin cost 70,000 other men their lives.

Sometimes we think that what we do in the privacy of our own minds is just between us and God. "It's just a little sin," we say. "It won't hurt anybody." – Except maybe me, and that's my choice.

Truth is church our sin rarely only effects you. He often effects those around and close to us as well. (Give examples).

And sometimes to rationalize it all we think besides, God loves me, so after I ask forgiveness, He'll let it go, and we even believe it will happen without any consequences.

David's sin was small, and personal, yet incredibly costly.

And God's response was creative, instructive, and ultimately merciful.

God's response was creative in it's choices: "David, do you want

- 3 years of war,
- 3 months of famine,
- 3 days of plague?"

God gives David a choice, because he wants David to take responsibility.

So David chooses. He chooses the option that allows for God's mercy. He says, "I'd rather fall into God's hands than men's hands."

He understood how merciful God is and how cruel man can be.

So the plague starts. And people die.

As the numbers mount, David realizes the magnitude of his sin. "I did this," he says. "I caused this to happen."



What happened in David's heart is a roadmap to restoration to God. And Ezra uses this story to teach us how to reconcile with God when we've disobeyed Him.

It's a simple process, really. If your taking notes you might want to write it down.

The first thing Ezra encourages us to do is. . .

Admit your sin. Look at the first half of verse 17. ..

1 Chronicles 21:17 (NIV): David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. . .

He's saying, "This is my fault. I caused this. I own this. "

The lesson of the census is that God relents when we repent.

When we sin, consequences occur. It's sowing and reaping.

The way to reverse them starts by admitting that you had a part in them. So often we blame others, or the devil.

The second step Ezra's teaching is to take responsibility for your actions.

Verse 17 finishes with. . .

1 Chronicles 21:17 (NIV): . . .What have they done? Lord my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

Every restart begins with taking responsibility. We have to own what we've done and be willing to shoulder the responsibility for the harm we've caused.

Ezra's third lesson to us is that once we accept responsibility, we need to do what we can to make things right.

Now listen sometimes you can't make it right with the people that were hurt. Sometimes those relationships can't be reconciled. Try as you might some hold on to the offense. And that's a whole other message for a different time.

But how do you make things right with God?

You start by admitting your sin, and taking responsibility.

And truth is sometimes you don't really know what more to do.

David doesn't know what more to do. So God tells him.

Listen to this, there is an important lesson here. . .

1 Chronicles 21:18 (NIV): Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

God tells Gad to tell David to set up an altar.

And David could do that easily. In a few hours. Just by gathering rocks and some wood and then building a platform there in the middle of the field.

But let me read verse 18 again. . .

1 Chronicles 21:18 (NIV): Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Do you think that when God asked David to set up an altar, He intended for David to just set up an altar?

He doesn't tell him to do any more than that, but what is God implying and expecting when the altar is built?

I think God is hoping that David is going to sacrifice something on it. He doesn't say that but He knows David understands the purpose of the altar.

This might be the most important lesson of the chapter:

Ezra is teaching us what to do when we've disobeyed God and pushed Him away.

He's teaching us how to restart after we've sinned, no matter how minor the sin.

With the rest of the chapter, David did not just set up an altar. He buys the field. And the wood for the fire. And the oxen for the sacrifice.

Everything David needed for the process was offered to him. At no cost to himself. But David didn't want something that cost Him nothing. So, he buys them. . .not at a discount but at the full price.

Ezra is showing us that once David comes around to owning his sin and taking responsibility for it, he not only does what God asks. . .but he also gives his best and offers God more than what was asked of him.

David – will forever be known as a man after God's own heart, and he was a man after God's own heart because more than anything, David wanted to please God.

So. . .

- He sets up the altar.
- offers a sacrifice.
- pays full price for the animals, and the wood.
- And he even buys the field on which he makes the sacrifice.

I want to be like David. A man after God's own heart. Don't you? That even after I've made mistakes, made bad choices, sinned, and been disobedient I want offer to God my very best and not take what doesn't cost me anything.

The story starts with David in sin. And it ends with some us wanting to emulate him. What a change.

There's a story in Matthew 26 about a woman who comes to Jesus and pours a bottle of expensive perfume over his feet.

That bottle of perfume was worth around \$50,000 of today's dollars.

One of the Disciples said, "What a waste! We could have used that money to feed the poor."

Jesus rebuked him by saying, "This woman did a noble thing for me." He accepted the lavish gift, because He knew He was worthy of that gift.

That's why we offer the sacrifice of praise. We praise and worship even if you've had three Mondays. That's sacrifice and God is worthy of it all. No matter how you feel.

It's easy to rationalize being frugal towards God, because He doesn't need anything, and He owns everything.

But God is touched when we act lavishly towards Him.

David decides he isn't going to do just the minimum.

1 Chronicles 21:24 (NIV): But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

What a story this is a story to imitate: If we do sin, big or small, let's respond to it like David. Let's thrust ourselves on the mercy of God, admit our sin, take responsibility for it, give your best in return and do the things that move the heart of God as we move our hearts towards Him

I will not offer the Lord that which costs me nothing.

When we hurt somebody, let's do more than say, "I'm sorry."

When God asks for an offering, let's buy the field.

You've heard it said, "You can't out give God"? What if we tried to out love God?

Think we could do it? Not a chance. He'll always show us more love than we show Him. But it would be fun to try. It would certainly get some talking.

Can we be a church that lavishly loves our neighbors. I hope so.

Will it be costly? Sure. . .But it will be worth it!

Prayer