

Disciplined  
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2 Samuel 24

Opening Question: Sometimes observing the consequences in the lives of others causes us to make a change in our own behavior. **What are some examples?**

- A few weeks ago while studying chapter 21 we said: *“Actions have consequences; consequences that can last a long time and affect others.”*
- This is another lesson about the consequences of a choice.
- In God’s plan for His people He expects obedience. You might say the formula is: Obedience = blessing but disobedience = discipline
- What is the formula for DISOBEDIENCE?
- DISTANCE (from God) leads to DISOBEDIENCE (to God -- SIN) which leads to a DISCONNECT (in relationship with God) followed by DISCIPLINE (from God.)
- Once we’ve disobeyed, repentance is the only repair.
- The Big Idea: Our proximity to God (in relationship) determines our probability of SIN. Closeness brings cleanness; distance brings discipline.
- In this passage, it is clear King David had taken his focus off of God as the source of all power and blessing and was spending more time admiring what he believed were his own accomplishments.
- He had drifted into disobedience, so discipline was just around the corner.
- At first glance David’s disobedience seems like no “big deal.” Often seemingly small choices lead to big consequences.

2 Samuel 24:1 (NLT)

*David Takes a Census*

Once again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he caused David to harm them by taking a census. “Go and count the people of Israel and Judah,” the Lord told him.

- God was angry at Israel. **Even without specifics, what can we assume?**
- This verse says God caused David to bring harm on Israel by counting the army. A parallel version in 1 Chronicles 21:1 –*“Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census of the people of Israel.”<sup>i</sup>*
- **How can we reconcile this? Who caused David to take a census, God or Satan? What about James 1:13? How does this remind us of Job?**
- *“God himself never does evil, but sometimes he uses evil moral agents (demons and sinful human beings) to accomplish his purposes.”<sup>ii</sup>*
- What was the big deal about counting the army? Why was this an act of disobedience? Scholars differ in their interpretations.
- Moses had taken a census of the people more than once. What was different this time? Look at some verses:

Numbers 1:1–2 (NLT)

A year after Israel's departure from Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai. On the first day of the second month of that year he said, 2 "From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their clans and families. List all the men

Numbers 26:1–2 (NLT)

After the plague had ended, the LORD said to Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, 2 "From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their families. List all the men twenty years old or older who are able to go to war."

- **What was different when Moses counted vs when David counted?**
- **Why did David not have a right to do this? Since David was counting his troops, what can we speculate might have been his motives? How do David's actions speak to his trust in God at that moment?**
- Truth: If our ideas and plans are not first God's ideas and plans we can expect negative consequences and discipline.
- There was also the matter of God's command in Exodus 30:12.
- We can assume David had done some drifting in his relationship to God.
- Remember: Our proximity to God determines our probability of SIN. Closeness brings cleanness; distance brings discipline.

2 Samuel 24:10–25 (NLT)

*Judgment for David's Sin*

<sup>10</sup> But after he had taken the census, David's conscience began to bother him. And he said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly by taking this census. Please forgive my guilt, Lord, for doing this foolish thing."

- I wish verse ten were the happy ending of this story!
- **Though he had made a bad choice, what does verse ten remind us about who David really was (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22)? When David's heart got in touch with his head what did he immediately do?**
- An old saying: "keeping short accounts with God." **What does it mean?**
- Confession and repentance bring forgiveness, but it doesn't necessarily remove the consequences.

<sup>11</sup> The next morning the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, who was David's seer. This was the message: <sup>12</sup> "Go and say to David, 'This is what the Lord says: I will give you three choices. Choose one of these punishments, and I will inflict it on you.' "

<sup>13</sup> So Gad came to David and asked him, "Will you choose three years of famine throughout your land, three months of fleeing from your enemies, or three days of severe plague throughout your land? Think this over and decide what answer I should give the Lord who sent me."

<sup>14</sup> “I’m in a desperate situation!” David replied to Gad. “But let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands.”

<sup>15</sup> So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel that morning, and it lasted for three days. A total of 70,000 people died throughout the nation, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. <sup>16</sup> But as the angel was preparing to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord relented and said to the death angel, “Stop! That is enough!” At that moment the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

- Choose your punishment David! Did you or your parents ever use that?
- Three tough choices. **Why did David choose the plague?**
- Are you feeling sorry for the people of Israel right about now? David was the one who ordered the census right? **What do the first few words of verse one remind us about how all this began? Why didn’t the consequences fall on David alone? What does this say about how God sometimes orchestrates consequences for disobedience?**

<sup>17</sup> When David saw the angel, he said to the Lord, “I am the one who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are as innocent as sheep—what have they done? Let your anger fall against me and my family.”

*David Builds an Altar*

<sup>18</sup> That day Gad came to David and said to him, “Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.”

<sup>19</sup> So David went up to do what the Lord had commanded him. <sup>20</sup> When Araunah saw the king and his men coming toward him, he came and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. <sup>21</sup> “Why have you come, my lord the king?” Araunah asked.

David replied, “I have come to buy your threshing floor and to build an altar to the Lord there, so that he will stop the plague.”

<sup>22</sup> “Take it, my lord the king, and use it as you wish,” Araunah said to David.

“Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and you can use the threshing boards and ox yokes for wood to build a fire on the altar. <sup>23</sup> I will give it all to you, Your Majesty, and may the Lord your God accept your sacrifice.”

<sup>24</sup> But the king replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing.” So David paid him fifty pieces of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen.

<sup>25</sup> David built an altar there to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the Lord answered his prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

- Verse 17: Though the people had sinned, David offered to take the punishment on himself.
- **How is this the Old Testament pointing to the New Testament?**
- David built an altar, sacrificed oxen, the Lord answered his prayer, and the plague was stopped. By the way, this threshing floor would later be the site where Solomon would build the temple of the Lord. (2 Chron. 3:1)

### So, What's the Takeaway?

- Over and over again in the Old Testament we see God's chosen people Israel drift into distance in their relationship with Him. Distance brought disobedience, which led to discipline through consequences.
- We said: Our proximity to God determines our probability of SIN.
- Closeness brings cleanness; distance brings discipline.
- Even David, a "man after God's own heart," could succumb to Satan's temptations and drift into disobedience, which led to discipline.
- When David stayed close in his relationship with God; God blessed him.
- Whenever David drifted, there were consequences (a theme of this book.)
- The good news is David's heart was still tender, and even before God sent the consequences David knew he had messed up and confessed it.
- This story applies to you and me too. The further we get from spending time with the Lord and in His word, the more likely we are to make choices and take actions that are contrary to how He has directed us to live.
- Obedience = blessing but disobedience = discipline
- DISTANCE (from God) leads to DISOBEDIENCE (to God -- SIN) which leads to a DISCONNECT (in relationship with God) followed by DISCIPLINE (from God.)
- Once we've disobeyed, repentance is the only repair.
- Every follower of Christ needs to be on guard for any sign that distance is creeping into our relationship with the Lord. The closer we stay to God, the shorter our "accounts" with Him will be, and the clearer His channel of power and blessings to us will remain.

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Ch 21:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> Crossway Bibles. *ESV Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 44648-44649). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.