

2 Samuel 7:1-29

SI: I’ve made the point each week that we’re studying the life of David to know Jesus better.

The very first verse of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1 says:

A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of **David**.

In very last chapter of the New Testament, Revelation 22, Jesus says:

I am the Root and the Offspring of **David**,

And in the middle of the New Testament, Paul says:

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from **David**. This is my gospel . . .

You can’t know Jesus as you should if you don’t know David.

So that’s our focus in studying David’s life. Knowing Jesus better.

But another reason we’re studying David is to know ourselves better.

David shows us what it looks like to live by faith.

He goes through all sorts of experiences good and bad and the Bible shows us how he responded as a man of faith.

Have you ever wanted to do something good but you seem to have gotten a no from God? It happened to David. Let’s read about it.

INTRO: A few years ago I met a man who told me he and his wife had wanted to be missionaries. They felt God was calling them to the mission field.

There was even a place where they were drawn to go, it was Ethiopia.

So they studied and planned and prepared and raised support and went.

But soon after they arrived the husband developed a painful medical condition and they had to return to America.

His medical condition turned out to be incurable.

They were able to manage his pain, but not enough to go back to Ethiopia.

And after several years they had come to realize that for some reason God was saying no to their desire to be missionaries.

That’s kind of like this story. David had a good idea.

He wanted to do something for God.

He wanted to build a temple for the ark of the covenant.

It seemed like the right time for him. His kingship was established.

He had set up his capital in the city of Jerusalem and built himself a palace.

The Lord had given him rest from his enemies.

The Philistines and other hostile surrounding nations had been subdued.

So David says: Here I am living in a palace of cedar and the ark of God

is still in a tent. I want to build a proper, permanent temple.

He tells the prophet Nathan what he wants to do, and what does Nathan say? What do pastors always say when a wealthy person wants to give a big donation to the church building fund?

They say, That is wonderful! That's what Nathan says to David.

Whatever you have in mind go ahead and do it for the Lord is with you!

But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan and said:

Tell David I said no. I don't want him to build me a house. I have other plans.

So Nathan reports this to David.

And then David responds with a long, heart-felt prayer.

The title of my sermon is "Pondering God's No's" and that's what I want to do.

As followers of Jesus how are we to think about and respond to those occasions in life when God says no to something good that we want to do?

This story shows that God's no's should make you ponder three things:

Your motives

Your circumstances

Your God

Let's look at each.

MP#1 God's no's should make you ponder your motives

Questions like: What really drives me deep down? What really matters to me? When King Saul, the first king of Israel, rejected God's instructions the prophet Samuel told him, God has rejected you as king and he is seeking a new king. He's seeking a man after his own heart.

And, of course, the man who God found was David. So David is known in the Bible as the man after God's own heart.

He wasn't perfect. I'm not looking forward to 2 Samuel chapter 11 and what we're going to have to read about David's sin with Bathsheba.

You know the terrible shame that is going to come upon him.

It's going to spoil the end of his reign and his life, really. Yet he was, nevertheless, in spite of his sin, the man after God's own heart. And we see that heart in this episode.

When David says to Nathan, here I am living in a palace of cedar while the ark of God remains in a tent, I want to build a house for God it sounds like David is concerned for God and for God's worship.

But it's almost impossible to know his true motives.

David was certainly sincere and I'm sure he spoke with great emotion, but people can fool themselves and think they want to do something for God, when they really want to do it for themselves, or at least for mixed motives. It's when God says no that our motives are revealed.

I know a pastor who had a man in church who taught an adult Sunday school class. It was a well-attended class.

But a new man joined the church and he started teaching Sunday school and he was much more gifted as a teacher and his class grew and some people left the first man's class to sit under the teaching of the new man.

The first man got mad about that.

He stirred up trouble and conflict and eventually he left the church. He got a kind of no from God and it revealed his motives, which I'm sure were partially to good motives, wanting to help people grow in biblical knowledge—but clearly there was a big selfish motivation as well.

So how does David respond when Nathan tells him that God says no to his plans?

With a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. He says, Who am I, O Lord, that you would choose me?

Who is like you, O Lord, that you would redeem your people from slavery? David's motives are exposed.

He really did want to please God. He did want God to be worshipped. He wasn't just wanting to build the temple for some personal fulfillment or personal aggrandizement.

Was David disappointed? He doesn't say so. But many years later when he was starting to hand off his reign to his son Solomon he tells him:

I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God, but God told me no. I had it in my heart.

Then David talks extensively about plans for building the temple and all the preparation he has made so that Solomon can carry out his plans when he is dead. And you realize how even years later, this is still important to David.

So I'm sure he was disappointed.

That former missionary I mentioned who went to Ethiopia briefly.

When he told me his story, it had been about 10 years and he still had a burden for Ethiopia and having to turn his back on that dream still hurt.

But other things he said showed that he and his wife had processed it like David.

They were acknowledging God's goodness and sovereignty, even if they didn't understand why he had done what he did to them.

This is a kind of straightforward application:

When God says no to good things, your motives are going to be exposed.

Ponder them. Examine yourself.

There will probably be some good, God-honoring motives.

That should encourage you. That's evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Any time we want to honor God and are willing to submit, that's sanctification.

You may also spot some selfish motives that are exposed.

You might be surprised by your anger or how you lash out at people or God.

Repent of those things. Don't let them take over and lead to bitterness.

But I don't think it's wrong to be disappointed, and it's not wrong for this to even be something that stays with you for years or decades and that you talk about with longing for what might have been.

God might use that to motivate someone else to pick up the mantle.

MP#2 God's no's should make you ponder your circumstances

David is faced with two negatives of God's guidance.

Not yet. It's not God's will at this time.

Not you. It's not God's will for this person.

Maybe this will be helpful to someone here this morning.

Sometimes God says not yet.

David had a generous and good dream, to build a temple for the ark.

He told Nathan who said that's a wonderful idea, get on with it.

And I'm sure David could barely sleep that night, starting to plan the temple.

But God spoke to Nathan and said: I didn't ask for a temple to be built.

Lord outlines the history, all this time I've lived in a tent. Not the time yet.

We don't have prophets to tell us when God says not yet.

Instead, God communicates this to us through circumstances.

Providential events interrupt our plans, even great things want to do for God.

It could be any number of things: The death of a parent, the requirements of a job, financial debts that need to be paid, getting married, finding out having a baby—all sorts of ordinary things of life can be ways God says: Not yet.

I've met Christians who have experienced this and they feel guilty.

I wanted to do this great thing for God, I had this dream—but life happened,

we got married and then baby came along and I had to take this job and years

have passed and now here I am and I never did what God wanted me to do.

God's blessed me but I'm afraid I settled for second best.

That's the wrong way of looking at it.

Your desire to do that great thing was pleasing to God.

God was pleased with David's desire to build the temple, even though it wasn't God's will for it to be done at that time.

You can have great desires for God that never happen because it's not God's time.

Those circumstances that intervened were God's providence.

But what you have to realize is God was pleased with your desire.

God was pleased with David's desire to build the temple, though wasn't time.

1 Timothy 3:1, Paul says if anyone desires to be an overseer, desires noble task.

He's saying: It's good to desire to be a leader in God's church.

God is pleased with noble aspirations and dreams.

But could be any number of circumstances that prevent that. Not yet.

The other negative of divine guidance is not you.

I'm going to do this and fulfill the dream you have but through someone else. This comes out most clearly not in this passage but in 1 Chronicles 22:7-8 where David is telling his son Solomon about this episode in his life.

And he adds a detail that is missing in 2 Samuel 7.

David said to Solomon: My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God. But this word of the LORD came to me: You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.

This needs very careful thought.

It's not saying that David was morally or spiritually inferior to Solomon because David was a man of war and Solomon was a man of peace.

There is absolutely no criticism of David for the battles he fought for Israel.

The reason David had to fight was because of Israel's unfaithfulness.

Israel's sin is what led to being attacked by enemies. David God's chosen savior. If God's purpose was to have a land of Israel with borders, somebody had to do the dirty work of defending those borders, God called David to do the dirty work. From perspective of redemptive history, David a much greater man than Solomon.

There's no criticism of David for going to war.

Nevertheless, the other side of the equation is that men have always perceived war is against God's divine order. War is abnormal. War is a feature of the fall.

So it would be inappropriate for a man of war to build God's temple because the temple was to be a symbol of God's perfect rule.

So God wanted his temple to be built by a man of peace.

Once again, this is an experience believers can have that cause them to draw the wrong conclusions and feel guilty about things they shouldn't feel guilty about.

If God says not you, the other man, other woman it's probably not an indictment.

It's not a message that you are morally or spiritually inferior.

David was not morally or spiritually inferior to Solomon.

It's simply that the Lord in his wisdom has some other plan for you and some other work for you to do in his kingdom.

He has his good reasons for that other person to do what you wanted to do.

Perhaps, if you ponder and pray, you might figure that out.

Even if don't get answers, like David helped Solomon, may be a role

MP#3 God's no's should make you ponder your God

What does the Lord reveal about himself to David through this no?

There's a lot here but I love the way it's expressed in verse 8.

Now then, tell my servant David, This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.

David, you were following sheep, now you're leading men.

There's such a contrast here.

You were a nobody, the eighth son, the gofer, the shepherd.

Lord says, I've made you king, I will make your name great.

You want to build me a house, but I'm going to build you a house—
an everlasting dynasty, a throne on which your sons will sit forever.

In those days, when a king in the Ancient Near East achieved power and victory, he would build a temple to his god. And the priests would come and dedicate the temple and they would give oracles supposedly from the god himself.

I got this from one of Tim Keller's sermons.

Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt built a temple to the god Amun-Ra, and the inscriptions in the on the temple have the oracles of the priests. Amun-Ra says: "Since you have built my dwelling place and you have outstripped all other kings in building my monuments now I will establish your throne unto distant days."

Sound familiar? This is the way it was done.

Ancient kings would build their god a house, and then their god would establish the king's reign and dynasty.

David is about to do the same thing and God stops him and says something radical through his prophet Nathan.

Every other religion works on this principle:

You build your god a house, then he builds you a house.

You do something for your god, and then he blesses you.

But LORD says the opposite: I'll build you a house, you don't build me a house.

In all other religions divine blessing is achieved conditionally,

but with the God of the Bible, divine blessing is received unconditionally.

God is saying to David, I'm completely different from all the other so called gods.

And my religion is not just a little different, it's utterly opposed to what every other religion tells you about how to approach God.

It's grace. That's what this whole chapter is about.

And sometimes we need God's no's to see his grace again.

Let me read you something Eugene Peterson wrote about 2 Sam 7

Do you know what I think? I think David was just about to cross over a line from being full of God to full of himself. David, riding the crest of great acclaim, having decisively defeated

the opposition, united God's people and captured the allegiance of all Israel, he was heady with success and he'd begun to think he could do God a favor. But if David continued to develop along these lines he will be ruined as a representative of God's kingdom. If any of us develop an identity in which God and God's grace is less important to who we are than our own actions and performance, our ability to represent God's kingdom is utterly ruined.

David, if I let you, after all your military victories build me a house, you'll slip into the belief that I'm like all the other gods and you'll forget my grace.

I'm not contradicting something I said earlier, when I said David's motives were good and he desired a good thing and God pleased with desire to build.

But I'm making another point that the default setting of the human heart is works-righteousness. I do something for God and he owes me.

Sometimes God uses no's for us to focus on his grace again.

And we don't just talk about grace in general, or as a principle.

2 Pt 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Where is Jesus in this chapter?

God says: David, I promise to make your descendants a dynastic kingship, and I will so commit myself to them that neither death, sin, or time will break promise.

Not death: vs. 12, when rest with father's raise up offspring.

Not sin: vs. 14, when do wrong, will punish but not take away love (bad kings)

Not time: vs. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me;
your throne will be established forever.

Exaggeration? No. God talking. He says it twice.

Pointing to Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven, seated at right hand, coming.

God may have said no to you about something you wanted to do for him, some important thing in your life, but he's made you a part of the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ, and you're going to share in all the promises of that kingdom.

No's are an opportunity to think big thoughts about him.