

MANual Lessons from the Chronicler

This next lesson from The MANual, my NIV version of the Bible, is titled "Review and Regrets" It comes from Chronicles, which are considered supplementary to the books of Samuel and Kings since they are the sources for the historical review. Similar to my prior posts on Samuel and Kings, the lessons from Chronicles come from two books. The difference is that 1 and 2 Chronicles include a genealogy of the people of Israel. The similarity is it includes tales of their sordid history with evil kings.

The Chronicler

First Chronicles and Second Chronicles are presumed from Ezra, a scribe who became a priest that lived among the people exiled into captivity in Babylon. Its writer, or Chronicler, teaches the people of Israel that genuine worship of God must remain the center of their individual lives in order to unify as a nation.

Ezra wrote in approximately 430 B.C. to chronicle the events that occurred 1000-960 B.C. after the capture of the northern and southern kingdoms. These two books follow pair of books by Samuel and the pair on Kings. They precede the singular books of Ezra and Nehemiah to conclude the history-oriented books of the Old Testament.

The Chronicler shows his own interests and slanted point of view in these books. He virtually ignores the northern kingdom, presumably to indicate his bias toward the southern kingdom of Judah, which was ruled by the house of David and Temple in Jerusalem. Ezra includes the genealogy from Adam to King Saul (1 Chronicles 1-2), the death of Saul, and the reign of King David (10-29). He continues with the reign of King Solomon (2 Chronicles 1-9), and the division of the monarchy

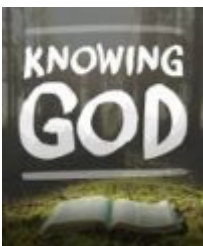
into the northern and southern kingdoms until the end of the Babylonian Exile (2 Chronicles 10–36).

The Reign of David

The books of Chronicles enhance the glory of King David's reign rather than diminish it. For example, the Chronicler explains that David brings the Ark of the Covenant, captured and hidden by the Philistines, back into the care of the Hebrew people. He describes David's military exploits and how David makes his plans for the Temple (1 Chronicles 22). He shows that David gathers the funds and materials for the construction, and also arranges for the administration and worship services by the Levites, priests, and musicians.

Except God did not want David to build the temple. God said, "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." (1 Chronicles 28:3). Instead, God wanted a man of peace to construct the temple, not a man of war. The last two chapters of 1 Chronicles describe the transition to Solomon as the king of Israel to fulfill God's plans by building the Temple (1 Kings 5–7)

First Chronicles shows the importance of maintaining a relationship and focus on God. David has flaws but God increased his capacity to worship and desire to build the Temple.



God is a Promise Keeper

God's promises still hold true today. Scripture tells us God is always with us, He will never let us down. He loves us no

matter what. David's heart was in the right place but not until later in life. Chapter 16 is David's song of thanks for remembering what God had done. David is telling others about it by showing God's glory to others. He offers his gifts of self, time, and resources. God kept His promise to bless David's descendants with the kingdom; not because David earned it or deserved it but because God loved him despite his flaws.

- What doubts do you have that God loves you despite your flaws?
 - David sang to praise God. How do you thank God for His love? Does it show by the way you live your life?
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Second Chronicles describes the time of Solomon, who became king after his father dies. It reveals how quickly a life can deteriorate spiritually, mentally, and socially when someone fails to stay focused on God.

Solomon's Reign

Solomon is likewise glorified by the chronicler, and the unfavorable aspects of his life are omitted (see 1 Kings 11 about his many wives and adversaries). Will Solomon turn out to be a good king? Will he build the Temple to God that he's been talking about for a while now? The second book opens with Solomon seeking wisdom with God appearing to him, "What do you want? Ask and I will give it to you?" (2 Chronicles 1:7).



Ask for Wisdom

God blessed Solomon with great wisdom after approving the way Solomon ordered his priorities. Solomon put the needs of his

people first by asking for wisdom rather than riches.

- How would you respond if you were the recipient of this message from above tonight?
 - When have you prayed that God would give you wisdom for a big decision?
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Solomon eventually receives the wealth and honor that made him famous. He makes his father's dream of a Temple a reality. Chapters 3 & 4 of 2 Chronicles detail the instructions for a Temple to replace the moveable Tabernacle that accompanied the people of Israel throughout the wilderness. The craftsmanship and furnishings of the permanent Temple were stunning. The construction became the people's acts of worship. The leaders of the tribes brought the Ark to the Temple and Solomon gave his prayer of dedication (Chapter 6). After 40 years of a peaceful and prosperous reign, Solomon dies and his son, Rehoboam assumes the throne (Chapter 9).

The National Revolt

The southern kingdom of Judah holds the Temple. Chapter 10 begins with an uprising against Rehoboam by the northern kingdom led by its new king, Jeroboam. The north is in constant war with David's ancestors, who now rule the south. The entire nation wavers between obedience and abandonment of God's commands throughout 20 good and evil kings. Among these kings were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah.

Hezekiah started as one of the most godless kings of Judah. His father, King Ahaz turned away from God and encouraged idolatry. Yet, Hezekiah did what was right and followed the Lord. Perhaps his mother, Abijah changed the direction of his life. Sadly, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh became perhaps one of the worst kings ever. He intentionally desecrated Solomon's Temple with idols, worshipped pagan gods, and even sacrificed

his own children. His son, Amon takes over and rules like his father at first by not humbling himself. Amon gets assassinated in his own palace (chapters 33-34). His son, Josiah takes over the kingdom.

Josiah hears about God's expectations in a reading of the Book of Law. He cleans out the Temple and revives the nations' obedience to God. Josiah dies in battle (chapter 35) and several young, inexperienced kings follow. They again degraded worship and defile the Temple. The people revered their idols more than God.



Your Legacy

The genealogy in Chronicles is there to remind us of God's promise to David that if we remain faithful, He will bless our descendants. David chose to live differently and follow God later in his life. His son, Solomon, learned the lesson late as well. Similar to Solomon, Hezekiah discovered the only guarantee of success came when he asked for God's input. If God didn't OK it, Hezekiah didn't do it. Manasseh eventually cried out to God for forgiveness and changed his life.

- Do you know about your ancestors? Were they Christ-followers? Research your family history by gathering the stories from your mother and father. How did those influence you today?
- Consider what your children might say when asked about your life. What can you do to fix your legacy if it needs to change?

God isn't looking for perfection. He's looking for obedience. Obedience that comes from our heart.

Second Chronicles concludes as King Nebuchadnezzar of the new Babylonian Empire attacks Jerusalem. He burns the Temple along with most of the city, and the people are again exiled. Fortunately, after 70 years of despair, God moves King Cyrus of Persia to defeat the Babylonians. The exiles return to Judah and start rebuilding the Temple.



God Buddy Focus

The books of Chronicles reinforce the necessity to understand your roots and how you developed a moral and spiritual foundation. Even if your family's legacy is less than impressive though, you're not doomed to follow the same path. You can start a legacy of faith that will set you on a better path and a good example for your descendants. The key is keeping your heart focused on worshipping and serving God.

This week in a group:

1. Discuss your family history and the impact (good or bad) it has on you today. Be brutally honest with yourself about your upbringing and whether you live a godly life.
2. Read the story of Solomon and identify ways that your life demonstrates that you consider the needs of others ahead of your pursuit of riches and fame.
3. Read 1 Chronicles 16 which is David's song of praise. List all the things that are good about your life now, and give God the glory for those.

We will learn more from Ezra about God's faithfulness as the exiles return from captivity in our next lesson from The

MANual.