

Week 20: *The Davidic Covenant*

Hook



Main Point: No matter how good our ideas are, they don't always match God's plan.

Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood premiered in 1968 and ran for more than 900 episodes.¹ Television was not Fred Rogers's original career path; he planned to attend seminary immediately after college and serve as a Presbyterian minister. "I never in a million years thought that I'd be on TV – that that would be part of what I was supposed to do," commented Rogers.² In his early days on television, Rogers used his lunch breaks to work on his seminary degree; after eight years of coursework, he graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 1963.³ Although he never served in a pastoral role, Rogers viewed his television offering as his ministry. Rogers would pray before each episode, "Let some word that is said be yours."⁴

Q: Describe a time in your life when you were surprised by what God was calling you to do.

Q: Have you ever had plans to do something good, and God called you away from it? What did you learn through the process?

Q: What makes God's plans for you special?

RECAP: This is a new period of David's life (lessons 18–22), when David is finally made king over all of Israel after 20 to 30 years of waiting. So far, we have seen David inquire

of the Lord at every step along the way, and we have seen his heart for worship as the primary, foundational thing in his kingdom. This week, we'll see David offer to build a temple for the Lord and God's surprising response.

Week 20: *The Davidic Covenant*

Book (*Note: 1 Chronicles 17 is parallel to this passage.*)

Main Point: No matter how good our ideas are, they don't always match God's plan.

2 Samuel 7:1–7 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Sometimes God will surprise you with what He *doesn't* want you to do.

Q: Why did Nathan tell David to go and do "all that is in your heart"?

Q: How is God's response to David's offer surprising?

We learned last week that it was typical in the ancient world for a king who had conquered the land of his enemies to build a temple for his god as a thank-you, a way to honor the god who helped him win his battles.⁵ After a very long period (20 to 30 years) of waiting to be king, David had finally taken the throne of all of Israel and defeated the Philistines, giving him rest from all his surrounding enemies (7:1). The first thing he did was bring the ark of the covenant to his capital city (6:15) so the presence of the Lord would dwell among His people as God had promised in the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 25:8; 29:45). To David, this was the moment that the promises God had made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3; 15:4–5; 17:8) and then to Moses and the exodus generation (Exodus 6:6–8) were finally coming fully true.

God promised Abraham: 1) people, 2) land, and 3) blessing. By the beginning of Exodus, God had delivered on the promise of the people or "great nation." They were great in number (Exodus 1:7). But they didn't have their own land; they were slaves in Egypt. They started taking the land in the conquest but didn't take it all (Joshua 13:1–7). As recorded in the book of Judges and during Saul's reign, they continued to fight with the Canaanites and Philistines who were still in the land. But David finally accomplished "rest" from his surrounding enemies (7:1). This doesn't mean the Philistines had been driven out or destroyed; they would attack David again at the end of his reign (2 Samuel 21–23). But for now, David had subdued them and taken control of the promised land (7:1; 8:1).⁶ This seemed like the time that God's promises had finally come true. They were one united people living in peace in the promised land as God's people, His kingdom. Now it was time to build a temple, a "house," for Him.

David had brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, so God was dwelling among His people, but it was still in a tent (the tabernacle) while David lived in a house of cedar (7:2). This seemed out of balance to David, which he told Nathan, who had taken over Samuel's role as prophet to the king. Nathan responded to go and do "all that is in your

heart” because “the Lord is with you” (7:3). Again, the emphasis is on David’s heart, his inner man, a heart that wanted to worship and honor God and understood his place in comparison to God. Nathan also emphasized that the Lord was with David, something the text continues to say about David throughout his story. Building a temple for God is a good thing to do, and David was a righteous king who had the Holy Spirit upon him. If he wanted to build a temple, it was probably the right thing to do.

But God gave David a surprising answer. God said He had never dwelled in a house since He first brought the people out of Egypt and made the covenant to be their God. He didn’t need to start now. For 450 years, God had never asked any leader of Israel to build a house for Him (7:5–7), and He wasn’t asking David to do it now. This was all David’s idea. Even if it was a good idea, it wasn’t what God was asking David to do.

This can be a difficult thing to understand about God’s will. He doesn’t always do what we think makes the most sense. Even if we think a thing would be good. Even if we think a thing would bring Him glory. Building a temple was not a bad thing. God said David’s son Solomon would build the temple in the very next generation. He wasn’t against building a temple; it just wasn’t what God was asking *David* to do. No matter how good it was, it wasn’t David’s calling. In Chronicles, David told Solomon *why* God didn’t want David to build the temple – he had shed too much blood. David had fought many great wars, but Solomon would reign in peace. Solomon means “peace” and Jerusalem means “city of peace.” God wanted Solomon to be the one to build the house “in His name” (1 Chronicles 22:6–10).

Sometimes we may have a great idea that would be amazing to do for God’s Kingdom and would bring Him honor and glory, but we’re just not the one who is supposed to do it. Or it’s not the right timing. Or it’s a great idea, but it’s just not what God wants. Godly people submit to God’s will, God’s timing and God’s calling. They don’t try to push forward with their great ideas about what to do for God. They listen to what God is asking them to do.

Q: Share about times when God has surprised you with His calling and plans in your life.

Q: How can we be sure we are following God’s will, not just good ideas?

2 Samuel 7:8–16 [Read]

Talking Point 2: God doesn’t *need* us to do things for Him, but He delights in using us.

Q: How did God respond to David’s offer to build a house for Him?

Q: How does God's promise reflect both David's son Solomon and His future Son, Jesus?

This passage is typically identified by theologians as the Davidic Covenant. It echoes previous covenants God made with other people in biblical history but adds its own promises. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God making a covenant with an individual (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David) to bless *all people* through them. Each covenant builds on the one before it and grows narrower in focus. The covenants with Adam and Noah blessed all humanity as they multiplied, filled the earth, and cared for it. Next, through Abraham, He chose one family/nation. Then He rescued Abraham's descendants from slavery and made a covenant with them through Moses. Here God chose an even smaller portion of that nation, David's family.

David offered to build a "house" (temple) for God because he saw that he was living in a real, permanent house of cedar, while God's Spirit (on the ark of the covenant) was dwelling in a temporary tent. But instead, God said He would build a "house" (a dynasty) for David (7:16). God reminded David that it was He who took him from being a lowly shepherd to being king of Israel. God didn't *need* David to lift Him up; He was lifting David up! It's not that God didn't appreciate David's heart, but God didn't *need* anything from him. He is the One who gives.⁷

The first promises are like God's promise to Abraham – blessing and a great name (7:9), a land/place for His people (7:10), and peace and rest in the land (7:10–11). But then He gave David a specific promise – that his line would rule Israel forever (7:13). This promise had a more immediate short-term fulfillment in David's son Solomon but also a long-term fulfillment in the future Messiah. The short-term fulfillment was about God's physical kingdom here on earth, the nation of Israel. The long-term fulfillment was about His future spiritual kingdom – both the Church on earth, and the future eschatological kingdom of God in the age to come.

Solomon's kingdom would be an earthly "type" of the future eschatological kingdom of God – worship, abundance, and peace/rest. Solomon would be the son of David who would build a house for God's name (the temple), and he would sit on the throne of Israel in peace. Solomon's reign, before his heart was turned away from God by foreign wives and the kingdom was split by his son, was the golden age of Israel's history. When God told Solomon that his punishment would be the dividing of the kingdom, He said he wouldn't do it during Solomon's lifetime for the sake of his father, David. Just as He promised here, He disciplined Solomon but did not take His steadfast love away from him (7:14). He still honored the Davidic Covenant, and the Davidic Dynasty continued in Judah (the southern kingdom) throughout its history (1 Kings 11:1–13).

At the same time, both modern and ancient theologians see this as a promise of the Messiah who would rule an *eternal* kingdom (7:16). The Jews in Jesus' day would have been looking for a "son of David" to come as Messiah. This is why Matthew's Gospel starts with a genealogy proving Jesus' lineage, following all the kings of Judah until the exile, then including Zerubbabel, who led the Jews back from the exile (Matthew 1:1–17; Romans 1:3). This is Jesus' royal lineage. A lineage that also includes four key Gentile women from biblical history who all had somewhat scandalous stories, showing us that the kingdom of God is also for the Gentiles and the marginalized. David did not need to build a building for God's Spirit to dwell in. Jesus was the temple of the Holy Spirit, and through His death and Resurrection, He made all of us temples of the Holy Spirit, too (1 Corinthians 6:19). The covenant that only grew narrower in the Old Testament burst wide open in the new covenant through Jesus.⁸

Q: What difference does it make to think of yourself as a "temple" of the Holy Spirit? How does it affect your thinking? Your desires? Your actions? Your purpose?

Q: What does it tell you that God chose a man such as David to be the ancestor of Jesus? How does it make you feel about God's calling, choosing and plans?

2 Samuel 7:16–29 and Psalm 30 [Read]

Talking Point 3: No matter what, a godly person's response to God is always worship.

Q: What elements did David's prayer of response to God's promises contain?

Q: How does this prayer compare to Psalm 30, which David wrote for the occasion of the dedication of the temple even though he wasn't the one to build it?

David's response to God's promises was even more worship. He started his prayer with humility – "Who am I" that you have chosen me for these amazing promises (7:18–20)? Then he simply praised God Himself. "You are great, O Lord God! ... there is none like you" (7:22). He recognized that God's relationship to His people in Israel was unique and amazing. They did nothing to deserve His grace and love, yet He rescued them out of slavery, gave them their own land, and became their God (7:23–24). David called on God to keep His promises (7:25–26), which he knew God would keep because His "words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant" (7:27–29). David said he had the courage to pray this prayer because he knew God was a God who kept His promises. He had seen God keep His covenants to Abraham and Moses throughout Israel's history, and he had also seen how God was keeping His promises to David. God had promised David would be king, and though it took 30 years, it was finally true, in God's perfect timing.

The psalm David wrote for the dedication of the future temple his son would build recounts all God had done for David. He lifted him out of the depths and listened when David called to Him for help (30:1–2). He spared David from the pit and turned his wailing into dancing (30:3, 11). He made David’s royal mountain stand firm (30:7). David had gone through all those years of struggle and come out with greater faith in God and His promises. When Saul had struggles, he reacted in fear. But David’s struggles strengthened his faith in God. Nothing in David’s life was an accident. Every step along the way developed in David a heart of worship and prepared him for his calling. As a shepherd boy playing his lyre in the fields and learning how to be a “shepherd leader” of God’s people. As a warrior in Saul’s house, learning to listen for God’s leading and trust in Him to fight his battles. On the run from Saul, learning to trust in God as His refuge and strength in times of trouble. All of it grew David’s faith in God, helped him to grow as a humble servant leader, and developed a heart of worship.

Q: How have your life’s struggles grown your faith in God? Your desire to worship Him? How have they developed your character and strength?

Q: If you were to write a psalm responding to all the ways God has helped you, what would it say?

Week 20: *The Davidic Covenant*

Took

Main Point: No matter how good our ideas are, they don't always match God's plan.

Navigating detours on the road in an unfamiliar area can be a nightmare. Congestion, frustration from other drivers, and navigation apps that haven't yet accounted for new traffic patterns can cause stress levels to rise.

Imagine driving in an unknown area and being able to slide over to the passenger seat and allowing a local resident who knows all the roads, to get behind the wheel. You could trust that, although you had anticipated a different route, the driver knows exactly where to go. Peace replaces anxiety. You can take in the scenery and appreciate that you're exactly where you need to be.

Q: Where do you find peace when your life takes a detour?

Q: Why should you trust God when plans change?

CHALLENGES

THINK: How has God surprised you with His plans for your life? How have things turned out differently than you thought they would? Looking back on the twists and turns and struggles in your past, how did God use them to grow and prepare you for what He was calling you to do next? How does God's surprising us help build our faith?

PRAY for God to help you to see how He wants to use you to fulfill His plans and purposes. Don't come up with your own plan and ask Him to bless it. Truly seek what He is calling you to do. Lay yourself at His feet in humble service and listen for His voice.

ACT: Follow. Ask God what He wants you to do for His kingdom. It can be something small; it doesn't have to be your life's calling. What is He leading you to do for His kingdom right now, in this moment? Don't just come up with a list of your own good ideas. Ask for His guidance and then listen for His voice.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week we'll see David's military successes now that he is the king over a unified Israel, with God at the center of his kingdom. We'll see how David trusted in the Lord and gave all glory and honor to Him for his victories.

¹ <https://www.tvinsider.com/1011184/mister-rogers-neighborhood-trivia-fred-rogers/>

² <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/the-real-mister-rogers/>

³ <https://www.syntrinity.org/mister-rogers/>

⁴ <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/the-real-mister-rogers/>

⁵ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁶ *The ESV Study Bible has a very helpful map that shows the land of Israel during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, which makes it easy to see how much more land David conquered than Saul.* *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁷ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁸ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).