

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: August 26, 2018
Lesson Title: "Disciplined"
Lesson Passage: 2 Samuel 24:10-25

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The lesson passage immediately presents an interpretive problem, because it begins by telling us that "David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people" (24:10), and much of the chapter is devoted to a description of the punishment Israel received for David's iniquity; yet, the first verse of this chapter (24:1) says that the Lord ordered David to "Go, number Israel and Judah." Actually, there are no conclusive answers to this dilemma. The lesson passage itself (2 Sam. 24:10-25) focuses on David's choice of a divine punishment, after being given his choice of one of three alternatives, and, finally, his purchase of property on which to build an altar to the Lord.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the three divine punishments from which David is told to choose. (2) Explain the principle of stewardship involved in David's purchase of the threshing floor of Araunah.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To introduce the lesson, read 2 Samuel 24:10; then ask: "What was the 'great sin,' the iniquity that David prayed about in this verse?" Invite answers, then read 24:10. Suggest that David seems to be repenting that he has taken a census ("numbering the people"). Why was that wrong? The Old Testament scriptures don't give a decisive answer to the question. It is possible that a census was to be the basis of taxation, forced labor and a military draft. (Samuel warned against such things when he was opposing Israel's request for a king, in 1 Samuel 8:10-17.) Perhaps this is why Joab was opposed to the idea (2 Sam. 24:3-4). These things would redound to the grandeur of the king, not the glory of God. This realization might have been the basis of David's confession in 2 Sam. 24:10:

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Comment further on David's confession in v. 10: The biblical record provides considerable evidence that David wasn't morally and spiritually perfect. But his spiritual sensitivity is attested by the fact that he was always willing to acknowledge his violations of the will of God. (Refer to 2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51:1-10).

2. Explain 24:11-12: (1) The reference to Gad as David's "seer" means that he served as an official prophet in the royal palace. (He was first mentioned in 1 Samuel 22:5, then reappears here.) (2) *Note that there are three levels of quotations in verse 12:* [a] "Go and say to David" is

God's instruction to the prophet. [b] "Thus says the Lord" identifies the source of the message. [c] "Three things I offer you; choose one of them" is the beginning of the Lord's message to David.

3. Describe the three choices given to David in 2 Sam. 24:13: (1) Three years of famine (recall the description of famine in Israel in last week's lesson). (2) Three months of pursuit by enemy troops. (3) Three days of contagious plague, an epidemic disease that is very deadly and destructive. NOTE: In all three choices, the death toll would be about the same.

4. Call attention to David's response (24:14): (1) David's response to Gad, "I am in great distress," means literally, "I am very cramped," or, to use an idiomatic expression, "I am in a tight spot." (2) He does not state specifically which of the three choices he prefers, but his plea, "let me not fall into the hand of man," rules out pursuit by enemy warriors. (3) Since it was the time of the wheat harvest, it stands to reason that he would not choose famine, since all of the grain would, somehow, go to waste. (4) Essentially, David's response was, "I want the Lord himself to be the one to decide how he will punish us."

5. *Read the summary of the epidemic in 2 Sam. 24:15-17, then comment:* (1) Israel suffered a terrible disease from that morning until "the appointed time," which was probably the end of the third day. (2) It impacted the whole nation, from Dan in the north to Beersheba on the south. (If a map is available, point out these two locations.) (3) The epidemic took the lives of 70,000 people. ILLUSTRATION: The flu pandemic of 1957-58 killed 70,000 people in the United States. (4) When the Lord saw that the death angel was about to attack Jerusalem (v. 16) he told the death angel to stop, because enough had already died. (5) The more generous side of David's nature comes out in v. 17, when he begs the Lord to stop killing the people, because he is the guilty one, and he and his family should bear the consequences.

6. The final verses of chapter 24 (vv. 18-25) tell us that David obeys instructions to build an altar to the Lord, and offer sacrifices on it, in order to put a stop to the epidemic: (1) The threshing floor of a man named Araunah was the place where the altar is to be built. The presence of Araunah at the threshing place suggests that this was the time of the wheat harvest in early summer. (2) The note that Araunah "looked down" at the king's party (v. 20) suggests that his threshing floor was in an elevated location. (Some scholars say that Solomon's temple would later be built on this site.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Give special attention to verse 24 as a good stewardship text. David accepted responsibility for the calamity that the people had suffered, and he refused to let Araunah carry the financial burden of his sacrifices. God is honored by sacrifices that are offered at cost to the giver.