

David's Sacrifice

It's beautiful," said Aaron. "I really like how you inlaid the cross."

"Thanks," said Earl. "Do you think your pastor will like it?"

"He'll love it," said Aaron while examining the mahogany wood pulpit. Aaron was a member of Abundant Word and Life Church, a small congregation of about 50 people. The church had been renting space in a strip mall for months. Aaron told his pastor that he would donate a new pulpit, which the church sorely needed.

The pastor said he didn't want anything fancy. He wanted something sturdy and that bore the emblem of the cross.

Aaron contacted Earl, an expert woodworker with a lucrative business that Aaron had once done marketing and design work for.

As Aaron ran his hand across the top of the pulpit, Earl said, "I'm in the mind to just give you the lectern for all the great marketing you've done for my business."

Aaron looked up at him. "What?"

"You don't owe me anything, Aaron," Earl clarified. "Consider it a gift."

"You know, that is very generous of you," Aaron said. "I do appreciate your gesture, but I will pay the full price for the pulpit. I set out to make it a gift for the church."

"Besides," Aaron smiled. "I don't want to give something that didn't cost me anything."

1. *Are there times in which it could be hard to sacrifice to God?*

2. *Does God understand when we hold back on giving our best?*

3. *How can we plan and prepare to give God our best?*

God Sends a Plague

1 Chronicles 21:14–19 KJV

14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.

15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go

1 Chronicles 21:14–19 NIV

¹⁴ So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead.

¹⁵ And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown.

¹⁷ David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

¹⁸ Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar

up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

The angel of God brings a plague on Israel after David ordered a census for prideful reasons (1 Chron. 21:1–13). Seventy thousand men die as a result (v. 14). But before the angel destroys Jerusalem, God relents (v. 13).

While David and his elders were on their way to Gideon to offer sacrifices for forgiveness, David sees the angel who was bringing disaster (v. 17). The angel instructs David to build an altar to Yahweh at the threshing floor of Araunah (“Ornan” in the KJV), where the angel was waiting (v. 15).

4. *Why does God relent after sending a plague on Israel?*
5. *What does this action show about God’s mercy?*
6. *Why would God ask David to build an altar to Him?*

David’s Offering

1 Chronicles 21:20–26 KJV

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the

1 Chronicles 21:20–26 NIV

20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. 21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

22 David said to him, “Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.

LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.

Sell it to me at the full price.”

²³ Araunah said to David, “Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this.”

²⁴ But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”

²⁵ So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. ²⁶ David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

David approaches Araunah to buy his threshing floor in order to build an altar to God. He won't allow Araunah to give away valuable land for free (v. 24). David requests to pay the full price for the land to house an altar to God, which shows the sincerity of his motives. David builds the altar and brings “burnt offerings and fellowship offerings” (v. 25). In response, God sends fire, a sign that God is pleased and accepts these sacrifices from David. David—“a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14)—turns back to God, who was ready to restore him.

7. *Why does David pay for the threshing floor?*

8. *Why does God send fire from heaven?*

God Forgives

1 Chronicles 21:27–30 KJV

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

28 At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

1 Chronicles 21:27–30 NIV

²⁷ Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. ²⁸ At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. ²⁹ The tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon. ³⁰ But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

The threshing floor was on Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son (Gen. 22). Now it would be where the tabernacle would be kept, until a permanent temple could be built by Solomon—again, on this piece of land. This space would be a memorial of God’s grace and a sign of His willingness to forgive and heal His people.

God tells His angel to sheath the sword. A sheathed sword indicates an end of judgment: the plague is over. The tabernacle of the Lord is moved to the “high place at Gibeon” (v. 29). But the text gives a note that David would not come to this place again: “he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord” (1 Chron. 21:30).

9. *What does sheathed sword communicate (v. 27)?*

10. *Why might David continue to be afraid (v. 29)?*

A Living Sacrifice

We are commanded in Romans 12:1 to “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.” I remember that, at fifteen years old, I was clueless what those words might mean. Still, somehow I knew then that I wanted to please God and give Him my whole life.

My first challenge was choosing a university. There was a good school in the back of my mind, a place that I had always wanted to be. But when it came down to making that choice, God led me in a different direction. God knew that I needed to be somewhere that would give me the friendships and spiritual foundation that I would need to serve in full-time ministry. I could have chosen to ignore the Spirit’s prompting, but I am so glad that God had something different in mind.

After university, my plans and God’s plans were still miles apart. All I wanted was to marry my high school sweetheart and live a comfortable life in my hometown. I had a good job lined up and a comfortable career in mind. But God called me to leave everything familiar behind and to train overseas as a missionary. I wasn’t prepared for a radical change. But through a lot of prayer and spiritual counsel, I came to understand that God was asking me to do this.

It felt like a momentous sacrifice. But in a strange reversal, the “costly sacrifice” that felt so hard rewarded me—not with comfort of financial security, but with a community and a story that I would trade for nothing.

11. *How has God’s direction to you changed over time?*

12. *Do we ever get rewarded for offering “costly sacrifices?” When?*

13. *Is it easy or difficult to trust God with our plans?*

Take My Life, and Let It Be.

Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee,
Take my moments and my days;

let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Lord, I give my life to Thee, Thine forever to be"

—Frances Ridley Havergal, 1874

► *Reflect on what it means to give your life to God, as a consecration and a ceaseless praise. Begin each day this next week reading the words above and asking God to help your actions, words, and thoughts to be a pleasing sacrifice of ceaseless praise to Him.*

KEY VERSE

And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. —1 Chronicles 21:24 KJV

But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." —1 Chronicles 21:24 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of May 5 through May 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Ezra 6:13–22—A Joyful Celebration.

Tues. Psalm 18:1–15—God Heard Me in My Distress.

Wed. Acts 7:2–16—God in Mesopotamia.

Thurs. Acts 7:30–41—God in the Wilderness.

Fri. Acts 7:42–50—God Needs No Temple.

Sat. 2 Chronicles 6:12, 14–27—Hear Our Prayers, O God.

Sun. 2 Chronicles 7:1–7, 11—God's Glory Fills the Temple.