

Doing the Right Thing the Wrong Way – 2 Samuel 6:1-15

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Introduction

Have you ever done the right thing the wrong way? Where you had the right motive but the wrong method?

Hopefully you've never been the daughter who decided to bless her dad by filling up his truck's gas tank only to realize her dad's truck is a diesel after putting in regular gas. **Right thing, wrong way.**

Or then there is Robinhood who steals from the rich to feed the poor. **Right motive, wrong method.**

Tonight, we are going to see King David do the right thing the wrong way. We will see him have the right motive but employ the wrong method.

Context

As we come to 2 Samuel 6, we find David finally reigning as king over Israel. By this time, he is around 30 years old. Saul and his sons are now dead, so David begins to establish himself as king.

One of David's first acts as king is to come up against the inhabitants of Jerusalem who were the Jebusites. He takes the land and establishes his stronghold in which he refers to as the City of David.

After this the Philistines hear about David's new reign, they seek to come against him. David inquires of the Lord as was his custom and God promises deliverance. And so, David drives back the Philistines there at the end [2 Samuel 5](#).

In light of this, David will seek to move the Ark of the Covenant to his newly found stronghold to officially make this the capital where all Israel would gather to worship and seek the Lord.

You can look at some of these initial moves like how a president focus' on those **first 100 days in office**. David is reforming things how they should have been under Saul but never were.

But like Paul speaks of his Jewish brothers in Romans 10, David shows a zeal for God here that was not according to knowledge, and we will seek to learn from his mistakes that we might not only serve God with a right heart but serve Him in the right way within our own lives.

From what the text portrays, it seems like David has a good and noble intention. He wants to reestablish and restore the worship system for all of Israel. Doing something that had been neglected under King Saul for more than 40 years.

Without a doubt, this is also what God would have desired as He is the one who gave them instructions to build the Ark some 400 years earlier. The Ark represented God's presence among the people and now that David is king, things can begin to change toward the way it's supposed to be.

But what we see from our text is that David went about this the wrong way. He does what he thinks is best in the moment but not what God had said. **He does what seems to be convenient but not what God had commanded and the results were disastrous.**

The Scenario (Let me lay out for you the scenario described in our passage...)

David gathers 30,000 choice men of Israel; these were the men of war that he had earlier taken to conquer Jerusalem and push back the Philistines.

David is coming off a double victory against the Philistines and in the last victory, they had left their false gods behind, and we are told that David carries them off. As had been done previously, there might have been an attempt to once again steal the Ark of God away from Israel and so David comes prepared with 30,000 choice men of war.

There is a parallel account of this story in 1 Chronicles that tells us that it was all of Israel that went out with David to move the Ark. There would have been many people there to witness this event.

So, they come to the place where the Ark had been for 50 plus years. Back in 1 Samuel 7, after being in the hands of the Philistines, the Ark settled in a small region known as Baalah of Judah but better known as Kiriath Jearim. This is about 8 miles from Jerusalem.

The Ark had been stored at a particular house on a hill of a man named Abinadab so many years ago.

Ark of God (*Ark of the Covenant, Ark of the Testimony*)

If you have ever seen Indiana Jones, you already have something in your mind.

What is it? Symbolically represented God's throne here on earth, represented His presence

What was it for? For the people of Israel to worship their God

What did it look like? Gold plated chest, about 4 feet long, 2 feet wide, 2 feet high, cherubim angels

It was about 400 years old by this time and inside were the tablets of the law from Mount Sinai, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that miraculously budded.

Later on, it would be this very Ark that would be the center of the holy of holies in the temple that Solomon builds.

David has the sons of Abinadab handle the transport of the Ark and they do so on a cart. During the transport, the oxen pulling the cart stumbles and Uzzah reaches out his hand to take hold of it, which at first glance seems like a good thing to do, but this angers the Lord and the Lord strikes Uzzah dead on the spot. *Things seem to have escalated quickly.*

David is now angry and afraid of the Lord so the work of moving the Ark ceases. Then this guy Obed-Edom's house is presumably close by, so it ends up staying there for three months. God radically blesses this guy and his family while the Ark is there.

Now eventually this will all end well but we will get to that after we study the critical mistakes that were made along the way.

So what's the deal? Why did this all go down in this way? And what can we learn from this?

There are three major mistakes that David makes that we can learn from....

1) Consulted Men, Rather Than God

David had a very common practice of “inquiring of the Lord”. Over the course of 1 & 2 Samuel, we find 9 specific times where David inquires of the Lord. And those are only the times that are recorded. He had just done this in the previous chapter when it came to defeating the Philistines. **To inquire is to ask and expect an answer.** Yet nowhere do we see that happening in our passage.

As I mentioned before we find a parallel account to this story in 1 Chronicles. Within the account in Chronicles there are some additional details given that clarify this reality for us.

1 Chronicles 13:1-4

Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader. ² And David said to all the assembly of Israel, “If *it seems good to you*, and if it is of the Lord our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere *who are* left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites *who are* in their cities *and* their common-lands, that they may gather together to us; ³ and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul.” ⁴ Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

Notice that “*if it seems good to you*” comes before “*if it is of the Lord our God*”. It may seem small, but I don’t think it’s without significance. **Notice** even at the end of verse 4, the emphasis is that it is right in the eyes of all the people.

“The Lord is mentioned but not asked. He is included but not consulted.”

And in our own lives we must never allow the Lord to be merely mentioned and not consulted.

While there is absolute wisdom and safety in godly counsel, this must only come as have we have first sought the Lord on the matter. That we have first spent time in His word and brought our inquiries before Him in prayer.

Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Now the leaders’ advice was to go for it and that wasn’t bad advice. As I said before, having the Ark come and be in a central place for the worship of God’s people was what God would want but David is not off to a good start and this WHOLE ordeal could have been avoided.

If David had sought the counsel of the Lord, David would have been reminded of the right way of doing things. God would have given instruction and warning. It was written in the law, but David did not go back and look through to see HOW the Ark was to be moved.

This is good for us to remember. Even when we have good intentions for doing something and everyone gives us the thumbs up, ***we are best to seek the Lord and seek Him first.*** To make sure that you aren’t about to do a good thing in the wrong way.

Jesus told us that He gave us the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth. Beware when it seems that you have it all down. It is when you think you stand that the Bible warns that you’ll fall.

John 15:5 (Jesus said...)

⁵“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

We must not go far from the vine & forget the timeless truth that without Him we can do nothing.

There is a grave danger in the Christian walk of starting in the Spirit but finishing in the flesh...

Galatians 3:3

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

And like David, the results will be disastrous when we do it our way.

As we seek to live for the Lord in all areas of our life we must not merely mention and include Him but rather **DEPEND FULLY** on His counsel and guidance that He supplies in His Word and by His Spirit.

2) Did The Lord's Work, The World's Way

³ *So they set the Ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.*

The mode of transportation that was picked for the Ark was* a new cart. And as I did originally, you might say, **“So what? At least its new!”**

The problem was that this was not the method that God had commanded 400 years earlier.

Numbers 4:15

¹⁵ And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. “These *are* the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

This was something that was available to be known at this time. It wasn't like this was secret information. A few verses before this God also instructs to cover the Ark with badgers' skins when it is moved. This was also something that was probably not done correctly.

In the very design by God the Ark was created to be carried.

Exodus 25:12-14

¹² You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in its four corners; two rings *shall be* on one side, and two rings on the other side. ¹³ And you shall make poles *of* acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them.

The Ark had 2 poles on both sides, and it was to be carried on their shoulders.

But I mean come on, carry the Ark when we could use a cart? A cart is much more efficient. It will be way easier to transport to Jerusalem! It won't be so heavy on our shoulders, and we have these great oxen that will pull it for us!

This was not only against the clear command of God, but it was actually a tactic that the ignorant Philistines used when they stole the Ark and oh did it cause them all kinds of trouble!

Years earlier, before the Ark found its way to Abinadab's house the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines. They bring in into their temple in Ashdod and God begins to bring havoc on the nation. Their idols are falling over, and everyone is getting tumors. So they know they have to get rid of this thing but they don't know what to do, so they put it on a cart!

1 Samuel 6:10-11

¹⁰ Then the men did so; they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. ¹¹ And they set the ark of the Lord on the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors.

It then rolls into a place called Beth Shemesh and the people there look into the Ark and God kills 50,070 men because of it! *This was not something to be taken lightly!*

Using the cart probably seemed to make the most sense in the moment. They might have thought we can get it to the City of David even quicker and be able to worship.

WE MUST REMEMBER THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD'S WAY.

When we do His work, when we seek to worship Him, it must be on His terms and not ours.

Regardless of leadership books we read, financial advisers we listen to, or any other worldly methodology, going with God's word and God's way will always be the best way. It might be foolishness to the world, but we must put God's word overall.

We can easily justify actions with spiritual language and then compromise the clear Word of God given to us. While we won't find ourselves having to move the Ark of God, we will find ourselves in other situations where we must choose His way or the world's way.

"Why would we give part our money to the church? They have what they need. I'm sure that God would want us to use this for our kid's college fund. That's a better use."

"We will just catch the service online and stay home. This will be better for us as a family, so we don't get so mad at each other getting out of the house or in the parking lot."

Beware of worldly ways creeping in as we seek to live for the Lord.

3) Chose The Wrong People

³ So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

The sons of Abinadab: Uzzah & Ahio

They probably seemed like the obvious choice. They had been taking care of the Ark for years now. There was no one with better experience. *Maybe they were even like really buff. Or like professional cart pullers.*

Yet, God had already chosen people for this task: those of the tribe of Levi

This is what David realized the second time he attempts to move the Ark...

1 Chronicles 15:2

² Then David said, "No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever."

When speaking to the Levites the second time, David recognizes his error... now unfortunately Uzzah gets the brunt of it but this was a result of David's failed leadership...

1 Chronicles 15:12-13

¹² He said to them, "You *are* the heads of the fathers' *houses* of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel to *the place* I have prepared for it. ¹³ For because you *did not do it* the first *time*, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order."

"the Lord broke out against us", Uzzah's error was a result first of David's error as king.

David should have never put Uzzah there to move the Ark in the first place. They handled the holiness of God in a common way.

Remember there was a great crowd gathered and this whole ordeal was done with an irreverence for the Word of God. God gave warning in His word, but His word was not consulted nor followed.

There is an old say that says, "*familiarity breeds contempt.*" Now while you don't see any evil intention from Uzzah, it could have been his familiarity with this ark that he had grown up with that created a lack of reverence for it.

We must not be guilty of the same. We must not allow things of God to become so familiar that we no longer show Him the reverence that is due to His name. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And as much as Jesus now calls us His brethren, and no longer refers to us as servants but as friends, He is still the Lord of lords and the King of kings and is to be rightly revered.

Often times we make decisions only in a way that makes the most sense to us. We can often sacrifice spiritual discernment at the altar of practicality. I wonder how much we might do the right thing the wrong way. Where we do the Lord's work in our life the worlds way. Where we look at efficiency rather than holiness. We comprise for the sake of convenience.

May we learn from David's mistakes and not have this be true in our own lives. We must learn to look at things the way that God does and realize how He has chosen to do things.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

God's way typically seems foolish to the world, and it's designed to be that way. When the way we live makes sense to an unbeliever, we might be closer to this danger than we think.

Have the ways of the world crept into our life? Are there things that we do that have the right motives but the wrong methods?

One of the ways we can know the answer to those questions is by looking at who we consult first with our decision making. This is the starting point. Do we go to the Lord? Do we go to the Word? Or do we assume to know what He wants? Have we got in the habit of doing what seems right to us and to those around us?

And then secondly, do we compromise for what is convenient over what is commanded?

With the best intentions, we can let the philosophies and ideologies of the world become part of our work in the kingdom. And like we've witnessed here; it won't end well.

You might say, well why couldn't God just look past it?

I mean they had the best intentions. If you look again at verse 5, they were even doing this joyfully with all kinds of instruments. They were worshipping! They were doing a good thing!

In our culture we have the misconception that sincerity of heart is what matters most. As long as they were sincere it doesn't make any difference what they believe and do. There is the common statement, "*God knows my heart.*" And that is absolutely true, He knows your wicked and deceitful heart. You see motives can be deceitful and so we must go back to what GOD HAS SAID and that we must do regardless of our supposed good intention.

Jesus said, not all who say "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES the Will of My Father in heaven.

Though they came with singing and joy we must know this...

"Joy is not always a sign of the Lord's approval nor is joy ever an excuse for disobedience."

By the end of this day, the results aren't great. Well other than for Obed-Edom.

David is left Angry & Afraid

⁸ And David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. ⁹ David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?"

This left David with a skewed vision of who God was. This left a skewed vision of who God was to all the people there. *This will be the inevitable result of bringing worldly methods into kingdom living.*

David's anger here was based on confusion. He didn't get why his good intentions weren't good enough but as we have come to see God not only cares about the motives but the actions that follow.

David asks the question, "*How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?*" This should have been a question that he asked beforehand, not after.

God's Work Ceases

¹⁰ So David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.

There was the initial illusion that the process was going to work great. We have this thing on a cart, Uzzah and Ahio know what they are doing. All is great! At first... But doing God's work the world's way will always be short lived.

And this is true within our own lives, when you seek to live for the Lord outside of the instructions given by the Lord, it's a harsh task. Living the Christian life your way is exhausting and burdensome. And God never intended it to be that way. John says in 1 John 5 that the commandments of the Lord are not burdensome. *This is the result of doing the right thing the wrong way.*

*We've looked at **David's mistakes** but let's look at **how he learns** from his mistakes... Between verses 11 & 12 there is a three-month period of time that passes.*

2 Samuel 6:12-15 (let me read to you again the second attempt)

¹² Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. ¹³ And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. ¹⁴ Then David danced before the Lord with all *his* might; and David *was* wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

Someone tells King David that Obed-Edom's house has been crazy blessed over the last 3 months. David's heart is stirred up. He desires that blessing over the whole nation and so he tries this again, yet this time was much different.

What made David the man he was wasn't his perfection, but his willingness to come back to the Lord every time. David was a man on pursuit after the heart of God and when he missed it, as he did here, he comes back. It seems that over those three months, David consults with the Lord and searches His word. It would have been through that process that God shows him his error.

It was the Lord who turned David's anger and fear into motivation and even gladness.

So David tries again. This time his zeal **IS** according to knowledge. David prepares a place for the Ark to go when it arrives. ***His good intention is followed by doing it the right way, God's way.***

1 Chronicles 15:14-16, 25-26

¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. ¹⁵ And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord. ¹⁶ Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren *to be* the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy.

²⁵ So David, the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom with joy. ²⁶ And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.

DON'T MISS VERSE 26

"when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord..."

When you do what God says to do, He will carry out the work by His strength! Though this time it was less convenient and more rigorous, it was lighter because God was in it!

Zechariah 4:6

⁶ So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.

“It is the Spirit of God which sustains the work of God in the life of the people of God!”
Not crafty ideas. Not talented people. It is His Spirit who does the doing.

NOTICE THE EFFORT OF THE PEOPLE

¹³ *And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep.*

Every 6 steps, they put the ark down and they sacrificed animals, oxen and fatted sheep. **Why?** Because God is holy. *God was worthy of their worship. Worthy of their sacrifice.*

To the world, surely this would make no sense. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 2** that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.

This took **A LOT OF WORK**. This was not the quickest way, but it was the right way, it was the Lord’s way.

These days God’s presence is no longer represented by the Ark or a specific location, but rather Scripture tells us that we are the very temple of the Holy Spirit. So, everything we do is to be holy unto the Lord. Our lives are to be lives of worship no matter where we go or what we do. And there is no act of worship that God is unworthy of. No amount of time given, or money spent.

David came to understand this more and more as he got older. Toward the end of his life, he made this statement in the last chapter of 2 Samuel...

2 Samuel 24:24

²⁴ Then the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

Mary, who was the sister of Martha and Lazarus, understood this in John 12 when she came and took a pound of very costly oil and anointed not the head but the feet of Jesus and then proceeded to wipe His feet with her hair, her glory. And while others like Judas sneered at this supposed waste, Jesus received this act of worship and was pleased by not only her heart but her sacrifice of praise.

There is no sacrifice too great, no amount of time too long to truly worship the Lord. As a Christian there is to be no separation between secular and sacred. God has said “Be holy, for I am holy.” ***May we heed the warning to not handle that which is holy in a common way.***

Many people over the years have had a real issue with this passage. They have questioned the justness of God saying that Uzzah didn’t deserve what came to him. And at first glance, the concern is understandable. Many can look at passages like this and think that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament.

And when we have thoughts like that all it shows us is that we have far too small of an understanding of the holiness of Almighty God. *It reveals that the holiness of God has become all too familiar.*

The God who struck Uzzah dead is the same God we worship this day. The Lord does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And He is absolutely JUST in all His ways.

AND THE ONLY REASON we can go to the Lord with boldness and access now is not because of our good motives but because of His great grace. *Uzzah's end is all of our eternal end without Jesus.*

Yet Jesus made THE WAY. By His death, the veil that once separated man from God was torn in two. For He Himself is our peace who has broken down the middle wall of separation and putting to death the enmity that was between us and God, He reconciled us to God and we who were once afar off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

FOR THROUGH HIM WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS BY ONE SPIRIT TOWARD THE FATHER

When it comes to the presence of God, we would all be like Uzzah yet now we can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith and we can hold fast to our confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

I pray that that we would see the Lord, not who we have made Him to be, but for who He is.

That we would see Him like Isaiah did, high and lifted up and like Isaiah heard the angels singing, may we too sing, HOLY HOLY HOLY is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.

The author of Hebrews tells us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God and so may we cling to Christ who is our life! Trust in Him today!

Hebrews 12:28-29

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.