

Walking With God in a Pandemic

Recovering from the Biggest Crisis of Your Life

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to first Samuel, chapter 30, verse 1. So, today, we're going to talk about, and the title of the message is, recovering from the biggest crisis of your life. The problem, or the challenge in a talk like this is that each of you, each of us, are at a different level of spiritual maturity. And also, our experience with crises varies all over the map. But one thing is for sure. All of us do want to be spiritually mature, and all of us have been through at least one crisis and probably many. So, today, we want to look at an archetypical story. It's the story of David facing the biggest crisis of his life.

Now, over the last couple of weeks, we talked about faith. We said that you can live a supernatural life by faith, and the word of God is where it starts. And then the last time when we were together, we talked about why you can believe that the Bible is the word of God. And the Big Idea was that in the word of God, we find a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say, exactly the way he wanted to say it. So, we come to this story this morning, and we ask the question, okay, well, why did the Holy Spirit preserve this story, exactly what God wanted to say, exactly the way that he wanted to say it? Well, it is an archetype for how you and I can handle the biggest crisis of our lives. Probably for most of us, this pandemic certainly would qualify, but then there are also other kinds of crises as well that keep going on. And so, we'll delve into that as we go along.

So, hopefully, you have downloaded your handout and if not, you can go ahead and pause and do that. And then in the first circle, if you'd write the words, "Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse."

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE

So, we're going to look at, really, one of the scariest stories in the entire Bible, but first, some background. So, David, who was anointed to be the king of Israel in first Samuel, chapter 16, and then for 17, he goes out and he slew the giant Goliath. He became a national hero. King Saul appointed him as one of his military commanders. He was more successful than any of the other commanders. The people said, "Saul has slain his thousands, David, his tens of thousands." And so, Saul became jealous of David. So jealous, in fact, that he decided that he wanted to kill him, tried to pin him to the wall two times by throwing a spear at him.

So then, David went from national hero to fugitive on the run with a band of men of questionable character, some of them. And Saul chased him for... It's difficult to tell. It looks like David was a young man. Maybe he was late teens, maybe early twenties when he first came out of the scene and did this thing with Goliath. But we know that he was pretty much on the run until just before he turned 30. He became the king when he was 30. And this terrible story, this scary story that we're going to look at this morning, happened just before he became the king. We know that on the run, he was hiding in caves. We know that he went to King Achish, the king of the Philistines in Gath, where he feigned insanity. And then, the last year and four months, last 16 months of his life leading up to the story, we're going to look at today.

He actually had gone back to King Achish and was given a town called Ziklag, Z-I-K-L-A-G, where David, his 600 men and all of their families were living. And what David was doing is, he was going to King Achish and reporting on all of the exploits where he had gone on raiding parties, but he was telling King Achish that he had been doing it against the people of Judah, when in reality, he had been doing it against the Amalekites. He had been decimating the Amalekites and a couple of other tribes, and that he was not leaving anyone alive so that no one could tell the story. So, there was this kind of deceit going on. So, he was kind of like a double agent, if you will. And then King Achish, in what I think is one of the great ironies of the Bible, is getting ready to go up against the nation of Israel, and King Saul is going to be leading the nation of Israel, and David is wanting to go and, at least pretend that he wants to go, and fight with King Achish.

But King Achish's commanders don't want anything to do with David, on their side, because they think that this Hebrew will turn against them and side with King Saul and his people. So, this is the battle in which King Saul dies. And after which, David becomes the king. But King Achish, because of his commanders, sends David back to Ziklag. And that's where we come to this incredibly scary story. This is the biggest disaster of David's life. And so, let's begin and read at verse 1. It says, "David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day." So, everything there was within 40 or 50 miles of each other. And so, it was basically a three-day journey. It says, "Now the Amalekites. Now this was, these were the people that, that David had been raiding, right? Now, the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag." Negev, that just means the south, the south part of the nation or the region.

"They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old." So, basically, David and his men had left behind their families, unprotected apparently. The Amalekites had come and raided the town and kidnapped the entire population, all of their wives, all of their children, young and old. It says they killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way. And the reason they did this was probably that they were going to be involved in human trafficking. They were going to separate out the most promising of the people and sell them as slaves. And it's verse 3, "When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive." So, you think about the biggest crisis of your life. This was certainly going to be the biggest crisis of David's life. Verse 4. "So, David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep."

Now, all of us have had moments where we have wept so much that we didn't feel like we had anything left to weep, but so maybe just take a moment to reflect on that for yourself. I've had multiple times myself. I remember one of the most bitter times of weeping that I just kind of wept myself out. I was sitting on a park bench near the East River in New York City. I had gone up to see my friend, Tom Skinner, in the middle of my own business crisis, the biggest crisis of my life, which lasted for seven years. And I just remember reading the scriptures and them speaking, that I might add, and they were speaking to me so powerfully and God was basically changing my heart, comforting my heart, giving me peace. I was just weeping, weeping, weeping, weeping until I couldn't weep anymore. And you have no doubt done the same.

So, then, in the next verse, "David's two wives have been captured." And then in verse 6, "David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him. Each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters." And this is part of the price of leadership. You tend to get more credit than you deserve when things are going well, but you also tend to get more than your fair share of the blame when things are not going well. So, they were on their way back to Ziklag to be with their families. And just when you think it couldn't get any worse, after being on the run for a decade, it does get worse. It gets a lot worse. So, how did David respond? And that's important, because what we're going to be looking at today is this man who is the archetype for us of what it means to be a spiritual leader.

I mean, if you're listening to this, I'm guessing you want to be a man after God's own heart. And that's who David is. That's how he is described in scripture. And he is the archetype of the leader that we all want to be. So, we're going to be looking at how he responds. And as we do that, I want to go ahead and give you the big idea. Then, we'll unpack that as we see these lessons from David. And the Big Idea today is: **No agenda but God, no agenda but God's**. No agenda but God, no agenda but God's. This has actually been one of my life principles for decades. I'm not sure how I came up with it, but I remember writing it down one day. I was just so... Who knows? Maybe I was reading David, or it's certainly reading the scriptures. And I just was overwhelmed with this desire that I would have no agenda but God and no agenda but God's, and that's exactly what David shows us, in terms of his response.

So, in the second circle, if you would, you can write the words, "How to recover from the biggest crisis in your life." So, maybe it's this crisis, or maybe it's something else. Maybe you've had your family kidnapped, maybe not literally, but maybe through addiction or maybe through... Maybe you have a family member you haven't seen in a long, long, long time. And so, here are some ideas from David, four lessons from David on how to recover from the biggest crisis of your life.

HOW TO RECOVER FROM THE BIGGEST CRISIS IN YOUR LIFE

And so, the first one we see, reading on in our scripture for the day, in verse 6B. So, these men wanted to stone him because of their sons and daughters, "but David found strength in the Lord." And that's the first lesson, to find our strength in the Lord. So, now, how might he have gone about doing that? Well, my guess is, is that since he was a man after God's own heart, that he was probably immersed already in the remembrance of God's goodness to him, but also probably meditating on scriptures. And for us today, it's meditating on the gospel of Jesus, and just remembering how good and how great he is.

I wrote a Facebook post earlier this week, or sometime in the last few days. And so, I apologize if you've already seen that on Facebook, but I think it's very appropriate. The title of the post was, **What I Learned About God From A Bird Feeder**. So, at the beginning of this pandemic, my wife, Patsy and I, we bought a bird feeder and put it outside our backyard window. And every day, I've gone out and put seed in it. So, the birds, of course, who are the seed is coming for, right? But then, one day this past week, I decided to, in the pre-dawn hours, sit in the backyard and just watch the sunrise. So, I was sitting about 10 feet from the bird feeder. I'd already put the seed into the bird feeder. I was just sitting there, but no birds were coming. Why? Well, they were terrified of this giant human that was sitting next to where they were used to getting their food from, not realizing that I'm the one who is providing the food.

Well, as you might expect, after a certain period of time, they were hungry and I was acting predictably. I was not doing anything dangerous, to look dangerous to them. And so, they finally made their... One bird finally flew onto the top of the bird feeder to sort of check it out. He was the brave one, the first one, and then he flew away without getting any seed. And then, over the next several minutes, several suspicious, doubting birds began to land in various places on the fence and around the yard, just observing what was going on. Then, eventually, when they had determined that I was not a threat, and in spite of their suspicions, doubts, and fears, they slowly began to come to the bird feeder. And then they were eating the food that I had set out for them, not 10 feet away from me. I was just struck with this lesson, this sort of important idea that, and this is what I actually wrote in the Facebook post.

"The analogy was overwhelming: I wanted only to feed them, but they were handicapped by doubts and fears about whether I was for them or against them. Until they trusted." That's what David has done. And that's, he has trusted. You've played the trust game before, I'm sure, at some church camp or summer camp where you fold your arms like this, and then you fall back and you have a couple of catchers. And that is the picture of what David is doing in this process of strengthening himself in the Lord. He's recovering that sense of trust. God is not dangerous. God is predictable. God is all powerful. I'm sure he was reflecting on the attributes of God and how God had never let him down.

So, the first principle of recovering from the biggest crisis of your life is the strengthening yourself in the Lord. And you can strengthen yourself in the Lord. Then, the second principle here is in verse 7 and 8A. It says, "Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, 'Bring me the ephod.' Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the Lord." He said, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?" David inquired of the Lord. This is one of the amazing things about King David, is that in all but a few cases in his entire career, the first thing he did was, he inquired of the Lord before he took action. So, this is the second part of how you and I can recover from the biggest crisis of our life. And that is, we can simply ask God what it is that he wants us to do, the actions that he wants us to take. Ask, seek, knock, and you will receive what you ask for, or have sought. Or if you knock, the door will be opened.

I gave a talk a few months ago on prayer, and we talked about Luke, chapter 11, verse 8, that we can ask God for anything with shameless audacity. And the reason we can do that is because God wants to give you and me whatever we ask for in prayer, if it's in his will, and watch this, but never less than as much as we need. So, David had this disposition to inquire of the Lord because he was confident that God would tell him what to do. He would give him what he asked. And he also understood that, because of the kindness and the mercy and the love and the grace of God, God would never give him less than as much as he needed. So, you and I, we can recover from the biggest crises of our lives by not only strengthening ourselves in the Lord, but also by inquiring of the Lord.

And so, the Big Idea today is: No agenda but God and no agenda but God's. So these two, first two instructions here, or lessons from David, they apply to no agenda but God. Strengthen yourself in the Lord, inquire of the Lord. No agenda, but God, and then, no agenda, but God's. So, the third lesson we see from this is action. And if you'd look at the next verse in verse 9, it says, "David and the 600 men who met with him, they came to Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. 200 were too tired to go on to fight," but they went on to go ahead and battle the Amalekites. Because God said, "You certainly will overtake them and succeed in the rescue." That's the second half of verse 8. So, he inquired of the Lord, the Lord said, "Pursue them. You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue." And David took his men and he went. He attacked the Amalekites.

And then it says, in verse 17, "David fought them from dusk until evening of the next day." Verse 18, "David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back." So, the third principle is, no agenda but God's. God told him what to do. And David took action. That is the lesson for us. And that is just for us to take action. You've heard it said, "God helps those who help themselves." Many Christians note that that's not in the Bible. And there's some sense in which it's not true, but there is a strong sense in which it is true that God does help those who help themselves. When God tells you or me what to do, then he wants us to take action. He wants us to obey. He wants us to follow through.

And so, you can recover from the biggest crisis that you've ever faced by action, by following through, by doing what God tells you to do. So, in my big crisis, which lasted for seven years, a business crisis. If you've been with me for any period of time, you have probably heard me talk about this before. But I did write a book in 2008, when the great recession came about, and the book was entitled, *How to Survive the Economic Meltdown*. We are coming into the stage of this particular crisis where the stimulus is, the first round of stimulus at least, is certainly running out. And I'm just beginning to hear stories of people needing to sell their homes for quick cash and things like that.

So, if it would be of benefit to you, I would like to offer you a free copy of this book as an ebook in PDF form. And so, we're going to put the web address where you can get that on the screen, but it's ManInTheMirror.org/Free-eBooks. Free dash eBooks. And you will find in that book, a number of practical strategies to help you take action. The thing that God tells you to do after you have

strengthened yourself in the Lord, after you've inquired of the Lord, and he's told you what to do, to strengthen you and to give you the spiritual energy and power to do what the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do, you'll find some terrific strategies to help you do that in that book. So, please take advantage of that if you think it would be helpful.

GOD'S AGENDA FOR LEADING THE RECOVERY

Then in the third circle, and the fourth lesson, God's agenda for leading the recovery. And the rest of this passage, which we won't go into in any detail, in terms of reading, but three more things happen after they do recover all of this plunder and all of the people, and they come back. We find three things that David does as the archetypical leader for us. The first thing that he does is that he makes sure that God gets the glory. The second thing that he does is he makes sure that all of his men are treated fairly. As it turns out, the 400 who went with him to defeat the Amalekites, when they came back, they didn't want to give any of the 200 that were too tired to go on any of the plunder. But David said no. And he made it a rule for the entire nation from that time forward that everybody would be treated equally, those who were part of the supply chain and those who were on the front lines. So, he made sure that his men were treated fairly.

The third thing that David did is that he was generous toward the friends who had helped him along the way when he was on the run from Saul all those years. And it says that he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, those and all the other places where he and his men had roamed.

And so, we have these four tremendous ideas for how each of us can recover from the biggest crisis of our lives. So, maybe you're way down the road in terms of your experience with crisis, and this was a reminder. But maybe, maybe this can be the foundation or the prototype, the archetype for you, in how you think about how you address this crisis. So, no matter what level of spiritual maturity you're on, the lessons that David has learned here in the biggest crisis of his life are the lessons that can help us in our crises as well. So, the Big Idea, again, is: No agenda but God, no agenda but God's. So, strengthen yourself in the Lord, inquire of the Lord, take the action that he tells you to take. And then, be the kind of leader that David was in terms of setting the tone during the recovery phase.

And how do you do that? Well, you do that by treating people fairly, by remembering the friends who helped you along the way. Then, most of all, making sure that God is the one who gets the glory. No agenda but God, no agenda but God's. Let's pray.

Our dearest father, Lord, I thank you for each of these men who are or ever will hear this message, and how much you love them, how much you care for them, just as much as you loved David, and how you want them to be a man after your own heart, just as David was. And so, you have preserved this story for us, and you have given us this archetype for how we can recover from the biggest crisis of our life, just as David recovered from the biggest crisis of his life. So, I pray that you would tutor this to our hearts by the power of your Holy Spirit, and that this would be a refreshing encouragement to each and every man, and that we would have a greater sense of what our next steps are, because of your word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Thank you, men. Hope you have a great rest of the day. Bless you.