

# Things That Need to Be Removed

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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Good morning, First Baptist family. Well, on a typical Sunday morning, you would be in this place but on this morning, I am in your place. We recognize today as we are in an online community, that many of you are in your homes, your living rooms, maybe at your kitchen table, some of you are driving down the road listening to us on 97.7 FM, our live broadcast, but however the Lord has you today, we welcome you to this very unique time, not just in the life of First Baptist but in the life of society as a whole. In fact, there may be some of you today who are part of our First Baptist, Opelika service who would not regularly be able to attend here because you're not in this specific location. Many of you are from other states or maybe even other countries and we welcome you today to this unique expression of the First Baptist Church of Opelika.

Now there are two introductory things that I want to address this morning before we get to the message and the first thing is this, that this is actually very timely. You say, "What do you mean very timely?" Well, several years ago in another state, we found ourselves in a very similar situation. There was an ice or a snowstorm that came through on late Friday night and Saturday that as we know here in the south, we're oftentimes not as prepared to travel in such conditions, and because of that all the churches in the community had to cancel their Sunday morning gatherings. The reason this is timely is we didn't have online presentations as we do today, we didn't have the ability to stream live into your kitchen, your living room, or into your car, and so this is very timely in a world in that we're gonna address in just a moment where things are just a little bit different now, at least we have the opportunity to gather together in this environment. Many of you are worshiping today maybe like you haven't in years, maybe sometimes your children are in children's church and you're in this place, but today you're around the table in your living room and so today's very timely and we're grateful that you have joined us.

The second thing I want you to know, that today is very temporary. As the old statement says, this too shall pass. Now none of us knows how and/or when what we know as social distancing is gonna subside in our culture, but I want you to hear me clearly that we as a leadership team, we as the staff here, we're already making what we might call exit strategies. How do we get back to what we used to know as normal? Now we're probably gonna embrace a new normal but as far as having people in large gatherings and having

our schedule as we're so often used to, and some of you have been used to for decades of your life. And so as we're in an online presence today, it's just you, me, a camera and an empty room, as we go forward, if we are encouraged and by the advice of those to continue social distancing, we're hopefully going to strategize a means of returning back to the normal that you and I are so used to. As we have an online presence in the days ahead, it is our goal and our desire to hopefully even add elements to this online worship experience so that we can begin that process of getting back to what we're so familiar with.

I guess the one thing I would add to that in this time that is temporary, is that in a place such as this we think, "Well, I guess the church is just shut down." No, we're not shut down at all. The only thing that has changed is our large gatherings. You may or may not be familiar with this because of the service that you attend or the ministry that you're involved in, is on any given Sunday morning when you step on the campus of First Baptist, Opelika, there are between 2,500-3,000 people on this campus, and so in that environment, obviously we would be in large gatherings but today not so much, but the other ministries of the church are continuing. We still have our regular office hours, our church staff, our ministers are still doing what they would regularly do in the course of the days and the hours. We're still having Gospel conversations. We're still doing benevolence. We're still meeting people's spiritual and physical needs. The church as you and I know it here at First Baptist, Opelika, really the only change in the days ahead are these large gatherings and aren't you grateful as I am that we can have somewhat of an online community together.

Now one thing we're not gonna do today for multiple reasons is we're not gonna pass the plate. Number one, that would probably be advantageous based on those who understand the world we're walking through. Number two, there's nobody to pass the plate to today. And so let me encourage you, if you're one of our regular givers or if you want to be one of our regular contributors to the ministries here at First Opelika, utilize our online platforms or do what so many of you do the last week of the calendar year, just stop by the church office, drop it off, mail it in. The only difference when it comes to giving is we're not passing the plate; all the other opportunities and options are completely available.

So again, this is very timely for all of us. We have the technology to do so and it is very temporary. It's just a transition. We don't know how, when or where, but I promise you we are already working not just day by day but hour by hour of how we can return to the environment we're most familiar and oftentimes most comfortable with.

One last item before we get to the word of God and the message for today. You may have heard that those in the faith community as well as those in the political environment have asked for today to be a National Day of Prayer. They have called on those that are people of faith to beckon and to beseech the Lord to bless among us, and so maybe you're in the living room environment of your world, maybe you're driving in the car, I'm gonna invite you in just a moment just for a time and a season of prayer. Now I would urge you to pray for what we're about to pray about throughout the course of this day and throughout

this week. We're gonna pray for health. We're gonna pray for wisdom. We're gonna pray for our leaders. And this is not just something that takes place over 60-90 seconds and we're done, I want to encourage you over the course of the next hours and even days to make this a part of your life and so we're gonna join many people of faith this morning just in a brief time of prayer before we get to the word of God.

So let's pray together.

*Heavenly Father, even though we gather in this place and it looks very different than what we're used to, God, we may be wearing different clothes than we're used to wearing at church, we may be in a different location but, God, we recognize today that you are the same God today that you were days ago, weeks ago, months ago. Our world may have changed, God, but you have not and so, God, today we believe that you're still a God who heals and we know there are some sick people that are among us, we know there are some scared people around us and, God, we pray that you would heal their bodies, you would heal their emotions. God, we pray at the same time that you would give wisdom to those who are in the medical field, those who are decision makers, those who are caretakers, those who are loved ones, those who are friends, God, give us wisdom just to know what to do, how to do it, and the process by which we need. And God, more than anything, in spite of the healing and the wisdom, Lord, I pray that the people of this land and the people of this world that are walking through such difficult days would take these days, would see them for what they are and they would do what you have encouraged us to do all the way back since the book of Genesis, that we would turn from our wicked ways, we would repent of our sins and we would surrender and submit our lives to you. God, I pray that in the midst of that which is so uncertain and so what we might call disastrous, that people would turn to you as not just the healer of their bodies but the Savior of their soul. Help us, O God, today in this world that looks so different to be the light and the salt you've called us to be. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Now this morning I mentioned that we were gonna have a message, we're gonna have a sermon, a study of God's word and, again, whether the environment is very casual or very formal, wherever you may be, I want you to understand a couple of things that are gonna be a little bit different today. The first one is this, it's gonna feel more like a Bible study than it does a sermon. In a typical worship experience, you would go to Sunday school and you would dialogue with other people, you would read Scriptures together, pray together, challenge each other, and then you would come into a room such as this and you would hear an exposition of the word of God, and oftentimes the Lord takes those two experiences and he marries them together as a means of you living out your life to the next time that we gather. Well, those small group Bible studies were not as plentiful and abundant as we're used to and so today I'm gonna try to take kind of both of those experiences into one and give you more of a Bible study than a sermon and here's what my hope is, that you'll take the truths from God's word today and not just allow it to be one hour of your life in your living room or in your kitchen, but allow this to be a guide, maybe you're a note-taker, maybe you're someone who writes these things down, to guide you in these uncharted days that we are navigating in our culture today.

The second thing that I want to encourage you to do if not already, is make sure that you have a copy of the Bible, a copy of the word of God, and maybe you're gonna place it on the table for all of you to gather around, maybe everybody in your environment has their own copy, maybe you're by yourself, maybe you're with a large group because your family is such, but let me encourage you that you have access to the word of God and here's why. In a moment, we're gonna walk through a series of passages, not just one, and I want to make sure you don't just hear me read it but that your eyes are upon it, or maybe you're a note-taker who's reflecting therein. And so let me encourage you to get a copy of God's word because we're gonna be turning today to the book of 1 Chronicles. We're actually gonna begin in just a moment in chapter 11.

Now you may be thinking if you're a first time with us and I don't mean a first time guest like on our campus but the first time to tune in and to be a part of this online service, you may be wondering to yourself, "Why 1 Chronicles? I mean, that could be one of the strangest passages to turn to in days such as this. Well, what you may not be aware of is about three years ago we began to strategize a Bible reading plan for our family of faith, and the way that we rolled it out and hopefully the way that you are experiencing is that every single day there's either a one or two chapter passage of the Bible that we're reading through so those who are students and those who are what we might call senior adults, are all reading the same passage together, and then when we gather together, when we come together in a large gathering or shall I say today, an online community, we reflect back and we look back at that which we read and try to pull it all together as a guide for the days that are ahead. So today when we come to 1 Chronicles in just a moment, chapter 11, please understand that this was the Bible reading plan that the Lord established through our family of faith several years ago and one of the things that I'm a firm believer of is this: it doesn't matter where you find yourself in the Bible, it is always timely for that which we are walking through. In fact, one of the things I've discovered is it doesn't matter whether you're going through a pandemic or a time of prosperity, the word of God is true whatever your circumstance or your situation. In fact, you go to the book of Ecclesiastes 3 and 28 times it talks about the seasons of life: there's a time to be born, there's a time to die; there's a time to weep, there's a time to dance. And sometimes in life things are going exactly as we planned, and other times like these days, not so much, and so oftentimes I think we find ourselves reacting to our circumstances with the words of God and not that there's anything unduly wrong about that, I'm just a firm believer that what God shows us in what we read this week is completely appropriate and apropos for that which we are walking through. Hear me clearly: three years ago when we put this plan together, God knew in his infinite wisdom, his omnipotence, he knew what we're walking through is what we'd be walking through, and so I don't think there's any reason to divert from our Bible reading plan just because life is not going the way that any of us would have scripted it if we'd been in charge thereof.

So today, we find ourselves in 1 Chronicles 11. We're actually gonna walk all the way through chapter 17 in periodic passages, and I want you to hear that the passages that we're about to read or about to study are very similar to the world we're walking in today. You say, "Well, how can this apply to a global pandemic? There's nothing going on in

these passages about worldwide illness and sickness and mass shutdowns of sports industries and schools and such." You're correct in that statement but I want you to know this one thing: in chapter 10 of 1 Chronicles Saul was the king, in chapter 11 David is the king. Why is that important? Because it's never going to be the same again. They don't call it the city of Saul, they call it the city of David. The world as they knew it had changed for good.

You know today that the world you and I know is forever changed. We can never go back the way it used to be. Now we're finding ways to somehow integrate what we used to know into what we now are aware of but the world has changed today. You and I are living in a new reality. There is a new means by which we're gonna navigate life and so what I want you to see in chapters 11 and forward, we have the entire kingship of who we know as David. At the very beginning, Saul dies. David becomes the king. When you get to the end of this section, David turns the throne over to his son Solomon. So today we're not studying the life of David as the young man who Samuel anointed as the future king, as the youngest of his brothers, we're not studying the young man who had the faith of the slingshot and the stones and the word of God and took out that famous giant by the name of Goliath. In fact, today we're gonna see David not just as an adult but as one who was king, one who was a ruler and the days had changed. It would no longer be as it was under Saul. The days would be different. You and I today are walking down a very similar path. Our world today is different than it was a few days ago. Interesting how even three years in advance not knowing what was coming, the word of God is perfectly timed for our lives.

As we walk through these passages, I want to address four things that need to be removed from our lives. Now allow me to, shall I said, retread on the last few moments. These things need to be removed from our lives whether we're going through good times or bad times, certain times or uncertain times, pandemics or prosperity. These principles from the word of God are true whether this room is empty or whether it is full. They are true whether the whole world is in a panic about a respiratory disease or if everything's fine. The word of God and the principles therein have not changed.

So I want to invite you today to turn to 1 Chronicles 11 beginning in verse 1. I want to address this transition from the reign of Saul to the reign of David. It says,

1 Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2 And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. 3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

What we see here is this transition that I spoke of. No longer is Saul the king, David is the king, and in light of the person of Saul, the first thing that needs to desperately be

removed from our lives is what I want to call toxic people. Now that's one of those phrases, toxicity, that has just gone somewhat viral, no pun intended, in our society today. We hear about a toxic workplace, or we hear about a toxic relationship, or we hear about a toxic this and a toxic that. I want to address the issue of toxic people not from what we might call a detrimental workplace but from a biblical perspective. When you look at the life of Saul, even when you look at him in his death, he was very clearly toxic. In other words, the things that he did, the way he lived was detrimental to those that were around him but not just what we might call a negative work environment or a strenuous relationship.

If we want to see the details, let me invite you to go back up into chapter 10, there's a verse in verse 13 that sums up for us the life of Saul as far as his rebellion or his toxic lifestyle. It says in verse 13,

13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;

In that one simple verse it brings up two incidences in Saul's life that lead to us understanding of how toxic he was from a biblical perspective. The first one took place back in 1 Samuel 15 where it talks about this transgression that he committed. Yes, he was anointed as the king of Israel and oftentimes even in the life of David, you'll see a king who's allowed to be a prophet, but you'll never see a king outside of Jesus Christ, who we'll address in just a moment, who's allowed the office of priest as well.

What did Saul do? He had won this incredible battle. He had the spoils of those that were around him and he was prepared to have not just a community churchwide but a nationwide worship service. The only problem was that the priest, Samuel, wasn't there and nobody knew when he would arrive. So what did he do? He took it upon himself to cross the line that God told him never to cross. He enacted the role of being a priest when it was not his role. That very famous line of Samuel when he walks into the situation, he says, "Why do I hear the bleating in my ears?" In other words, these animals that are properly as far as the form is concerned being sacrificed, but not by the right man and not in the right manner. Saul begins to argue and rationalize, "I didn't know when you were gonna show up." Do you remember what Samuel said to him? This is in verse 23 of 1 Samuel 15, this sums up the transgression here in chapter 10, verse 13, he says, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry." Now when we think of witchcraft and idolatry, those are detrimental in all aspects, but rebellion and stubbornness? You see, the transgression that Saul committed was completely contrary to the word of God.

Now the second story when it says that he entreated this witch of Endor or this familiar spirit, is found at the end of his life in 1 Samuel 28. Saul is about to be presented with his last battle in life. He is concerned that the favor of God will not rest upon him or his family. He's concerned about his life, his son's life, Israel's life, and so he decides to entreat the famous witch of Endor, one who had a familiar spirit, and he goes into her and

he desires that Samuel, the priest who removed the kingship from him and anointed David, that Samuel come up from the dead and give him wisdom, give him advice in days such as this. In relevance to this story, when Saul goes to her house or place of business, the Bible doesn't speak explicitly, she makes it clear to him, "Do you not understand that Saul has said this is illegal and yet you're asking me to do so?" You see, the Bible says that he disguised himself, he put on different clothing, probably altered maybe even his countenance and facial hair so that nobody would recognize who he was.

According to chapter 10, verse 13, these are the toxic elements of Saul's life, and when I say we need toxic people removed from our lives, these can be summarized in two types of people: heretics and hypocrites. Now I know that those are loaded words so allow me to unpack them for just a moment. A heretic, we normally think of somebody being burned at the stake for being a heretic, but simply by definition standpoint a heretic is somebody who not only believes but speaks and acts erroneously. Is that not what Saul was doing? He was doing something that he was not supposed to do or allowed to do. He was doing it his way and not God's way.

You may be saying, "Well, what do I do about people in my life? You know, sometimes I work with people like that, I'm related to people like that, I live in neighborhoods of people who refuse to do it God's way." Well, in the book of Titus 3:10, in the context of one who will not let up or someone who will not stop communicating or badgering us with information that is contrary to the word of God, it says in verse 10 that when they are a heretic, meaning erroneous, after two times reject them. In other words, listen to the story, hear their argument, but not the third time and definitely not the fourth, the fifth and etc. Oftentimes we get in the environment of somebody who's toxic. They're advocating or communicating something completely contrary to the word of God. The Bible says that after two times, reject it.

You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, thankfully 2 John, a one chapter book toward the end of your Bible, in verse 10 speaking of the same situation, says do not invite them into your home but bid them God speed, and what that means whether it's at the workplace or at your actual literal home, is do not allow it to be a part of the intimacy of your life or the intricate parts of your life. However that looks in your life means I understand how you feel about this and how I view it and we see it differently, let's just lay it to the side. What we need in times like this are for those with false or erroneous teachings according to the word of God, you can hear them out once, maybe even twice, but after that you just need to reject it and move on.

The second group are the hypocrites. Now we know that word well because Jesus preached not just about them but to them significantly in the Gospel accounts. A hypocrite is exactly what Saul did. He disguised himself as somebody he was not. A hypocrite puts one face on one day and another face the next. Jesus made it very clear what the biblical definition of a hypocrite was. In chapter 23 of the Gospel of Matthew, he says do what they're teaching you but do not do as they do. In other words, a hypocrite is someone who speaks what truth is or they speak what are the things of God, but their lifestyle in no way, shape or fashion advocates what they're preaching. And so I think we

would utilize the same methodology: after two times, rejection. Don't make them a part of the intimate aspects of our lives.

Oftentimes it is toxic people that, shall we say, can bring a detrimental spiritual effect in our lives. This doesn't mean you cease working with them. It doesn't mean that you're no longer related to them. But just walking through the Scriptures, if they're going contrary to the word of God or they're preaching one thing at one aspect and living a different, do not invite them into your home. In other words, don't make it a part of your life so it begins to impact who you are. We need to remove toxic people from a biblical perspective out of our lives.

Now the second thing that needs to be removed, it's also in chapter 11 of 1 Chronicles, in fact, in a moment we're gonna be in verse 16 through 19 and we're gonna see the story of three men. These are part of David's mighty men. There were hundreds of these but these were the three, they're actually given names here in 1 Chronicles, that were not just the brightest of the bright and the strongest of the strong, they were the ones who knew exactly how to do everything from a military perspective. That's important when we get to the story because what I want you to see today and, boy, is this apropos, we need to remove toxic people but we also need to remove unwarranted fear from our life.

Beginning in verse 16 it says,

16 And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem. 17 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate! 18 And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD, 19 And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.

Now what we see in this story is an example of someone who knows what to do in a certain situation, has all the information and acted thereon. Now we see David coming and saying, "How shall I drink of this when these men put their lives in jeopardy?" You understand that when you are the leader or the captain of the military, you're putting your life in jeopardy every day of your life, this was just a very strategic time in the life of David. He found himself, shall we say, cornered by the Philistines, desperate for a drink of water from Bethlehem, whom we know as the city of David, and these three mighty men using their knowledge, using their intellect, using their skillset, actually went across the lines and brought it back to him.

Now I mentioned unwarranted fear. Boy, that's a word that's being thrown around a whole lot today, this idea of fear, but I think we need to qualify fear. There is warranted fear and there is unwarranted fear. For example, if I were to confess to you that I have a



fear of snakes, I'm not a big fan of snakes. You say, "Well, that's just unwarranted." No, it's not. People die of snakebites. I have a reason to exercise caution and wisdom around them because we have examples, we have data of it not going so well. You say, "Well, these guys, they didn't express any fear at all." I promise you they had warranted fear. They didn't just walk through the front gate of the Philistines and say, "Hey, we're here to get some water." They utilized what they knew and they went around or they went through or however they did so to ensure their safety to provide that which David desired.

You see, there's warranted fear and there's unwarranted fear. Unwarranted fear is when we're fearful of something that we have no reason to be fearful of. Allow me to illustrate with a little bit of history. Around 20 years ago, we, humanity, found ourselves in a very similar situation. The economy was in a free-fall. The world and society as we know it had come to a halt. It was the days after what we commonly refer to as 9/11, that day in that time period where planes were hijacked, buildings were taken down, and an incredible number of lives were lost. In the days following, you and I took extreme precaution when we got on an airplane. There are stories even from my own family where we saw pilots stand before the people and say there's a line here at the front of the plane and this person in this seat and this person in that seat, if you cross this line, I've instructed them to take care of business. We saw our bags searched like they'd never been searched before, questions asked that had never been asked before.

One of my favorite stories of post-9/11 in those immediate days, it was about a week after that event. I found myself on a flight and I was on the aisle seat and across the aisle was an incredibly large man. I could tell that he wasn't only physically large and strong but I knew there was a skillset there. He confessed to me before the flight took off that in his prime he had actually been a professional athlete. He looked at me, and this was many years ago, he says, "It looks like you have some athleticism to you." I don't know if he was being serious or sarcastic, but I said, "Yeah, I have a little bit." He said, "I'll tell you what. If anything goes down on this plane, I'll go high, you go low." Was that unwarranted? Is having our bags checked unwarranted? No, because we had information that people had done certain steps to try to harm others and we were just exercising wisdom on how to navigate so as it did not occur to us.

You know, today we're living in a day where everybody's talking about fear and people are questioning, "Do we do this? Do we not do that? Do we gather? Do we not gather?" And to be honest with you, when it comes to a situation such as this morning where I'm in an empty room versus what is typically a very full room, I think we can justify it being warranted because we don't have a whole lot of the data, there are people that are concerned that because of the incubation period we don't know if somebody has it or doesn't have it, and honestly it's like I addressed in the beginning, we're taking this day by day and almost sometimes hour by hour to see how we navigate these waters.

But let me share with you hopefully what will be humorous unwarranted fears. Today, we have broadcasts every night that are sharing with us not only the numbers of infected but the numbers that are dying. We know that the current global pandemic is respiratory illness. We know and we've heard the experts talk about what it does to us as far as our

bodies and how they respond, and today people are making their way to hospitals, they're making their way shopping, they're stocking up on food and necessities, and yet what we're discovering is that one of the most sought after items that you can hardly get a hold of anymore, in fact, one of my children sent me a picture last night from a local large store that had none of it on a shelf is everybody is stocking up on toilet paper. Now can I be honest with you? That is an unwarranted fear.

Now I know people have told me, "Well, we don't know how long we could be quarantined, how long we could be at home. We've just got to make sure we have the necessities." There is nothing that toilet paper is going to do to help a respiratory infection in a global pandemic. I simply say that to you because there are some things that we need to be concerned about like gathering in large groups without complete knowledge of what we're dealing with, but when it comes to everybody hoarding toilet paper, I think we might say that is unwarranted.

You know, 2 Timothy 1:7 has been thrown around all over the place the last few weeks by the people of faith. We do not have the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind. I want you to notice the first phrase. We do not have the spirit of fear. You see, the enemy, you can call him anything you want, you can call him the devil, Satan, the old serpent, the red dragon, all those are biblical names, he wants to speak into your life to exercise fear that is not warranted and that goes way beyond a global pandemic that we're navigating through today.

And what does it say we have? We have love, power and a sound mind. I want to focus on that last aspect for just a minute. You go back in the Gospel of Mark and there's an individual who we call the demoniac. He is ravaged with what Jesus refers to as a legion of demons, in fact, that's who they confess that they are. After Jesus touches him, after Jesus heals him, it says he is seated, he is clothed, and listen to this, in his right mind. You see, when the spirit of fear, when the enemy speaks into our life, we don't think straight, we don't think rationally, we don't think reasonably, and so oftentimes we get caught up in a spirit of fear that is completely unwarranted. When we avoid a poisonous snake in our path or we expect to be screened a certain way getting on a plane, that is a warranted concern or fear because we have information that could be harmful if it so enacts.

So we see that toxic people according to Scripture and unwarranted fears need to be removed from our lives. The third thing I want to address is actually found in chapters 13 and 14 so hopefully you have a Bible with you, you'll turn a few pages with me. I want to look at two things that happened in the life of David that were not only very significant in his life but they teach us that we need to remove personal desires from our life. Now I didn't say inclinations, I didn't say styles, I didn't say preferences. In fact, each and every one of us probably has a different preference on the style of clothing or the model or type of car we would like to drive, or how we decorate our home. I'm not talking styles or preference, I'm talking a desire. You see, when you go into James 1 it says it's that inward desire, it's that lust of the things that our flesh craves that eventually leads to what we

know as sin, and I want you to see two places in David's life where he fell into personal desires that he didn't need to, and I'll talk about that in just a moment.

Chapter 13. David is doing what he has desired for a long time and so have the people of God. He is returning the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Now this famous ark of the covenant and oftentimes our culture knows it best by Steven Spielberg and "The Raiders of the Lost Ark." It has been in battle, out of battle. It's been captured by the enemies of God. It's been in the house of God. It's been in the tabernacle. It has wandered places but it's about to have a permanent dwelling place and David more than anything wanted it in Jerusalem and he wanted it in a permanent house, so much so that beginning in verse 7, I want you to see how David brings the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. It says,

7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. 8 And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. 9 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. 10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

One of the most famous stories regarding this famous ark of the covenant is where a man touches the ark that he presumes is about to fall off, and because he touches it, he loses his life, and you may be wondering, "What's the big deal? Why a new cart? In fact, that cart may have actually been a safer way to transport it." The problem is that's not the way God told him to carry it. In fact, if you'll fast-forward to chapter 15, David speaks about how the ark is gonna be covered from that point forward in verse 2. It says,

2 ... David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites;

When you go back to the book of Exodus, there's two things you'll discover about what we know as the famous ark of the covenant and its transportation. It was to be carried by Levites of which these two men were not, secondly, there were rings on the four corners of the ark that staves or large sticks were placed through that they would carry it in its progression. What do you see with this new cart? They're not carrying it the way they're supposed to, with whom they are supposed to. What David is doing, his personal desire to experience the right thing even the wrong way leads to a man's death.

The second thing or the second story I want you to notice is found in chapter 14 and it's just a brief statement. You may not realize how significant this is but David's at the height of his career as king. The ark is returned to Jerusalem. Even though he won't actually construct it, he is making plans for what we know as Solomon, or whom we know as Solomon to build the famous temple. You look in verse 1 it says,

1 ... Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house.

I'm gonna push pause there for just a moment. We're gonna get back to the house of David in a moment. Verse 2,

2 And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel. [Listen to verse 3] 3 And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters.

What we see David doing here is embracing a multiple wife scenario or polygamy for his home, and this is one of those subject matters that people have struggled with over the years. Why do we see Jacob in the book of Genesis, why do we see David here, why do we see individuals who supposedly are incredible men of God allowed to do something of this nature? What's interesting is what David did made sense to David. In other words, it was a desire, "I want to make sure that I have heirs. I want to make sure I'm surrounded by family. I want to make sure there's an abundance of people around me that are for me." Here's the problem, Deuteronomy 17:17 not only advocates that we should not have more than one wife, it says that kings specifically should only have one wife. Jesus advocated this in Matthew 19, this famous section on marriage when he says did you not hear from the beginning that a man and a woman, one of each, were to join themselves in what we know as the covenant of marriage, and whether it's Jacob's life or earlier, even Abraham's life, David's life, when you see a scenario such as this, we see that as the Lord allows their rebellion much as Saul's to unfold, it never turns out well.

Why is this significant? Because of Exodus told David how to carry the ark, the book of Deuteronomy told David how to manage his home, but his personal desire was to do what he wanted to do in spite of what God had said. How does this play out in our lives and how do we need it to be removed? Now for those of you who may have young children in your home, I'm about to use a very large multisyllable word and then I'm gonna make it real simple. We formally call it the quadrilateral approach or the fourfold approach to a biblical concept or principle. Here's how that works out. We look at a subject matter by what does the Bible say or what does Scripture say. The second approach is what does tradition say, what has man always said about this passage or how has the church or a specific denomination viewed this issue. The third thing we do is we use reason or education to kind of rationalize the validity of it for our lives or not. And last but not least we use our own personal experience in the situation.

Now it's at this time that I want to advocate to you and you hear me say this particularly in our Wednesday night Bible study all the time, there are a lot of things in the Bible that are not Baptist and there are a lot of things that are Baptist that are not Bible. Our goal should not be to be a great Baptist, our goal should be to be a biblicist, what does the Bible say, and when the tradition of man is contrary to Scripture, tradition of men should be removed from our lives, and when our own personal experience, what we feel or what we think is contrary to the word of God, it should be removed from our lives, or whatever field of study or whatever reason we have when it's contrary to the word of God, it ought to be removed from our lives. What we see here is what needs to be removed is any

thought, any tradition, any communication or anything that would go contrary to the word of God.

So what we see, the case that's being built here through the life and the kingship of David is there are certain things in our life that if we're really intent on being where God desires us to be, need to be removed. Those toxic relationships need to be held at a distance as Timothy or Titus 3 says. We need to make sure that the fears of our lives are warranted versus unwarranted. And we need to make sure that our personal desires, no matter how much we want them or desire them or inclined toward them, that they don't supersede or go contrary to the word of God. But there's one last aspect, in fact, I'm gonna encourage you to turn over to chapter 17. We're gonna find ourselves in the height of King David's career. We find ourselves here at a place in the Bible where David's authority, his power, his acquisition of resources is greater than ever. We saw him repent of the ark situation. We see him in Psalm 51 repent of the Bathsheba scenario that takes place in his life. But here toward the end of his life, toward the end of his career, he is desiring to begin to put those plans in place that Solomon will see to fruition, the building of the house of the ark of the covenant, and in chapter 17 of 1 Chronicles it says in verse 1,

1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house [remember we spoke about that in chapter 14], that David said to Nathan the prophet [the same one who would confront him about Bathsheba], Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.

Here's what David is saying, "The house that I live in is incredible, it is big, it is prosperous, but the ark of the covenant is still in the tabernacle, still in a house of curtains. It's not where it deserves to be." I want you to notice what it says down in verse 6. This is the Lord speaking not just to David but to Israel. He said,

6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars?

Here's what the Lord's telling Israel, "You've spent so much time on your own stuff, you've spent so much time on your own dwelling place, yet you've completely neglected the things of God." In fact, I think Jesus probably says it best in Matthew 6:33, he says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you."

Now even those of us of faith, we oftentimes, we make statements or we have perspectives that we think sound really good but they're really not biblical according to what we just read. How many times have you said, "Well, my marriage or my family is the number 1 priority in my life"? Well, according to this passage in what we know as Matthew 6, the Lord should be the first priority in your life, then your marriage and your family. Or sometimes we place our jobs, our occupations, our educational pursuits, even our athletic accomplishments, whatever it may be, we place them in such a high regard that they actually supersede what the Lord would desire from our life. Allow me to speak Texan to you for just a moment. The Lord is never pleased when he rides second saddle,

whether that's to your family, to your finances, whatever it may be, and here's what the Lord is saying to David, here's what he's saying to Israel, "You have a beautiful home to live in, you have resources, you have this, you have that, but I am in such a place that you have had no regard for me."

Today we can talk about removing the toxic relationships, we can talk about the unwarranted fears, we can talk about the personal desires, but let me wrap it or sum it all up in that, let me ask you a very difficult question: are there areas in your life that you've placed above God in your life? You know, when you get to the book of 1 John, they're defined as idols. By a simple definition, an idol is just something that gets in between you and God. The very last verse of 1 John 5 it says, "Little children," people of faith, "remove idols from your life." Maybe today the Lord would be saying to you, "You have a wonderful home and you have a wonderful family but what about me?" Maybe he's saying, "You have incredible health but what about me?"

You know, one of the verses that I haven't seen quoted a whole lot as of late that may be the most apropos is the book of 3 John verse 2, that last little book before the book of Jude. It says, "I hope that you have good health but not that above your own soul." In other words, what it is saying to us is to have all the health in the world, which everybody's interested in today, or in some cases to have all the wealth of the world which a lot of people are interested in today, should never supersede our desire with a right relationship with God. Today we have an entire world who is in a pandemic about their personal health, about where they stand in relationship to germs and disinfectant and large crowds versus small crowds, and yet the Lord says it doesn't matter the health that you possess if you don't have a proper relationship with him. He tells David, "You've got a house but what about mine?"

You know, one of the things that has come about with these days is not just uncertainty and concern, and we might even use the word fear, but there are some of you, and hopefully you're one of those today, who has taken kind of a step back and realized your own mortality. You know, that's what a pandemic will do in our lives when we have the opportunity to walk into an environment no matter how crowded it may be, realizing that there might be or could be somebody sick and we don't know if they are or even show the signs thereof, and what if I catch it, and what if it causes me harm. You see, one of the things that's happening in our world today is it's causing us to face our own mortality. Do you know what the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27? "For man must die and face the judgment." Whether it be the global pandemic of today or an accident tomorrow, each and every one of us is one day gonna face our own mortality, we're gonna cease from this life, and let me paraphrase or rephrase verse 6 of chapter 17: your life may be as you've ordered it but how is your relationship with God? You may have built the life you desired but what about your relationship with God? You may have gone and bought all the toilet paper you're gonna need to the next great pandemic but how's your relationship with God?

And at the end of the day, not just this day but every day, that's the most important issue that needs to be settled and maybe today you're that person, maybe you're on that side of

this camera for the very first time or maybe this is how you're regularly a part of us, and maybe today with all that's happened in the world and with the study of the word of God, maybe today's the day you say, "You know what? I need to quit trying to navigate these things on my own. I need to quit trying to do this in my own endeavors, in my own desires. I need to and I'm ready to do it God's way." Do you know what the Bible says in Romans 10? It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. What that simply means is whoever realizes that they are the problem, whoever realizes that they're the one who has sinned and that God is the only one through the person of Jesus Christ can take care of the sin problem, they will be saved. What does that mean? According to John 3:16, that means everlasting life versus much the opposite.

Now maybe you're that person today who you're facing your own mortality, maybe that person today realizing it doesn't matter how distant I keep myself from other people, I'm facing the fact that one day I'm gonna pass from this life to the next. Maybe you've never done business with God, never, maybe you've never settled your own sin account, can I encourage you to do so today? Just call out to the Lord. Now you may be seated at home with your family, you may be by yourself, you may do this out in the backyard, today is one of those unique situations. This isn't a time where we're gonna ask you in just a moment to step out and step forward to come to one of those who we've trained to be a counselor, in fact, we'd encourage you just to make contact with us, reach out, chat online, email us, text us, call us, and let us know. We'd love to have these conversations with you. But maybe you're that person today, can I encourage you to have that conversation with God? Maybe you're thinking, "Well, I'm not ready right now," but you may be ready in a couple hours. You may be ready tomorrow when the CDC releases another daily report. I want to make sure that you know how to take care of the sin problem. I want to make sure you know how you can have a right relationship with God and so I just want to kind of guide you somewhat on what that might look like no matter when you do it or where you do it. Let me encourage you just to pray, just to call out to God and maybe your prayer will go a little something like this. Say, "God, I recognize today I'm not perfect. I recognize today I've messed up. I've allowed a lot of things in my life that had no business in my life. I've done things I should have never done, said things I should have never said, and I've thought things I should have never thought, and according to your word that means I've sinned and that means that the result or the wages of that sin is death. God, today I'm ready to face my own mortality because of my own sin problem and I believe that there's no amount of health screenings I can take to fix this, there is no amount of vaccines I can receive to fix this. God, Jesus Christ is the only one who can fix my sin problem and so, God, today I want you to know I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was born on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to pay the ultimate price for my sin by giving his life on the cross. And God, I believe when he rose from the dead he made it actually possible for my sin to be fixed, to be forgiven, and my soul to be saved. God, I don't have all the answers to the problems of the world, I don't know how we're gonna get through this pandemic, but I do know that whether we're in a pandemic or prosperity, I've got a sin problem and I'm asking you through the shed blood of Jesus

Christ to forgive me and save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

Now that's just a simple guide of how whether you're in the backyard, the living room, driving your car, or in a room such as this on a normal crowded Sunday, that you could have the sin problem in your life taken care of by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. If maybe today or in the days ahead you have that conversation with the Lord or you want to do business or maybe you've got questions saying, "I need to talk with somebody," please reach out to us. Sure, we're not in large gatherings at this time and this room's not packed like it normally is, but as I mentioned earlier our staff is still here, our office is still open, we still want to engage and communicate with you whether it's a spiritual need or a physical concern, whatever it is. Please make communication with us.

Well, I know that today was a little bit different than what we're commonly used to, at least here at First Baptist, Opelika, and we don't know what the days ahead look like, and as I mentioned, if we're still in an online environment, we're gonna do everything we can to enhance that in the days ahead, but I do want to invite you to return tonight at 6 PM central time is our normally scheduled Sunday evening service, and we're gonna do another Bible study but this time we're gonna go into 1 Chronicles 21 and there in chapter 21 whom we know as David deals with a character called the angel of the Lord, one of the most mysterious individuals, characters, entities in all of the Bible, and so if you've ever been curious about where the angels came from or how many there are, we're gonna talk about all that tonight but in specific this character known as the angel of the Lord.

You know, in conclusion today the book of 1 Thessalonians by most accounts is the first letter of the Apostle Paul that the Lord gives us as far as the chronology of the early church, and there's a struggle that was happening. The Lord said in John 11, remember the famous Lazarus situation that, "If you believe on me, you'll never die"? Yet there were believers that were dying, there were family members that were physically passing, they were actually doing funerals in those days and they were concerned about it and the Lord began in chapter 4, verse 13 of saying there's a day coming where those who are dead in Christ and alive in Christ will meet together in the air with Christ, a famous passage of resurrection, but when you get to the very last verse of chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians it says, "Comfort one another with these words." Even in the midst of a life that didn't go the way they thought it would or expected it to, even as people of faith, God said comfort one another with these words.

So as we gather in environments such as this, I know it may not have the experience that we may be used to but our comfort comes from the word of God and so we promise you in the days ahead no matter what is coming down, that we will always provide a means somehow to comfort you with the word of God; in a time where it is so uncomfortable, the true comfort we will receive will be from the word of God. So we invite you not only to be a part of our Bible study tonight at 6 PM but in subsequent days we will keep you abreast of all of the developments as far as our exit strategy to getting back to what you and I know as a normal worship experience. Thank you again, no matter where you're located, for being a part of us today. We're grateful that you were a part of this very



unique worship experience of First Baptist Church of Opelika. Return in a few hours as we comfort one another with the words of God. Thank you and God bless.