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with God's Word from the books of

1&2 CHRONICLES

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LifeChange
S E R I E S

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1 & 2 CHRONICLES

NAVPRESS 

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1 and 2 Chronicles

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ISBN 978-1-61521-766-3

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 15 14
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the individual books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding, plus a thirst to return to the book throughout your life.
2. To give you study patterns and skills that help you explore every part of the Bible.
3. To offer you historical background, word definitions, and explanation notes to aid your study.
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole.
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

As you begin

This guide includes twelve lessons that will take you chapter by chapter through all of 1 and 2 Chronicles. To benefit most from this time, here's a good way to begin your work on each lesson:

1. Pray for God's help to keep you mentally alert and spiritually sensitive.
2. Read attentively the entire passage mentioned in the lesson's title. (You may want to read the passage from two or more Bible versions—perhaps at least once from a more literal translation such as the New International Version, English Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, or New King James Version and perhaps once more in a paraphrase such as *The Message* or the New Living Translation.) Do your reading in an environment that's as free as possible from distractions. Allow your mind and heart to meditate on the words you encounter—words that are God's personal gift to you and to all His people.

After reading the passage, you're ready to dive into the numbered questions in this guide that make up the main portion of each lesson. Each of these questions is followed by blank space for writing your answers. (This act

of writing your answers helps clarify your thinking and stimulates your mental engagement with the passage as well as your later recall.) Use extra paper or a notebook if the space for recording your answers seems too cramped. Continue through the questions in numbered order. If any question seems too difficult or unclear, just skip it and go on to the next.

Most of the questions will direct you back to 1 and 2 Chronicles to look again at a certain portion of the assigned passage for that lesson. At this point, be sure to use a more literal Bible translation rather than a paraphrase.

As you look closer at a passage, it's helpful to approach it in this progression:

Observe. What does the passage actually *say*? Ask God to help you see it clearly. Notice everything that's there.

Interpret. What does the passage *mean*? Ask God to help you understand. And remember that any passage's meaning is fundamentally determined by its *context*. So stay alert to all you see about the setting and background of 1 and 2 Chronicles, and keep thinking of each book as a whole while you proceed through it chapter by chapter. You'll be progressively building up your insights and familiarity with what it's all about.

Apply. Keep asking yourself, *How does this truth affect my life?* Pray for God's help as you examine yourself in light of that truth and in light of His purpose for each passage.

Try to consciously follow all three of these steps as you shape your written answer to each question in the lesson.

The extras

In addition to the regular numbered questions you see in this guide, each lesson also offers several "optional" questions or suggestions that appear in the margins. All of these will appear under one of three headings:

Optional Application. These are suggested options for application. Consider these with prayerful sensitivity to the Lord's guidance.

For Thought and Discussion. Many of these questions address various ethical issues and other biblical principles that lead to a wide range of implications. They tend to be particularly suited for group discussion.

For Further Study. These often include cross-references to other parts of the Bible that shed light on a topic in the lesson, plus questions that delve deeper into the passage.

(For additional help for more effective Bible study, refer to the "Study Aids" section starting on page 129.)

Changing your life

Don't let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God's Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, "Lord, what do You want me to notice here?" "Father, why is this true?" "Lord, how does my life measure up to this?" Let biblical truth sink into your inner convictions so you'll increasingly be able to act on this truth as a natural way of living.

At times you may want to consider memorizing a certain verse or passage you come across in your study, one that particularly challenges or encourages you. To help with that, write down the words on a card to keep with you, and set aside a few minutes each day to think about the passage. Recite it to yourself repeatedly, always thinking about its meaning. Return to it as often as you can for a brief review. You'll soon find the words coming to mind spontaneously, and they'll begin to affect your motives and actions.

For group study

Exploring Scripture together in a group is especially valuable for the encouragement, support, and accountability it provides as you seek to apply God's Word to your life. Together you can listen jointly for God's guidance, pray for each other, help one another resist temptation, and share the spiritual principles you're learning to put into practice. Together you affirm that growing in faith, hope, and love is important and that you need each other in the process.

A group of four to ten people allows for the closest understanding of each other and the richest discussions in Bible study, but you can adapt this guide for other-sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and church classes. Both new and mature Christians will benefit from the guide, regardless of their previous experience in Bible study.

Aim for a positive atmosphere of acceptance, honesty, and openness. In your first meeting, explore candidly everyone's expectations and goals for your time together.

A typical schedule for group study is to take one lesson per week, but feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or omit some questions in a lesson if your preparation or discussion time is limited. (You can always return to this guide later for further study on your own.)

When you come together, you probably won't have time to discuss all the questions in the lesson, so it's helpful to choose ahead of time the ones you want to make sure to cover thoroughly. This is one of the main responsibilities a group leader typically assumes.

Each lesson in this guide ends with a section called "For the group." It gives advice for that particular lesson on how to focus the discussion, how to apply the lesson to daily life, and so on. Reading each lesson's "For the group" section ahead of time can help the leader be more effective in guiding the group.

You'll get the greatest benefit from your time together if each group member also prepares ahead of time by writing out his or her answers to each question in the lesson. The private reflection and prayer this preparation can stimulate will be especially important in helping everyone discern how God wants you to apply each lesson to your daily lives.

There are many ways to structure the group meeting, and in fact you may want to vary your routine occasionally to help keep things fresh.

Here are some of the elements you can consider including as you come together for each lesson:

Pray together. It's good to pause for prayer as you begin your time together.

When you begin with prayer, it's worthwhile and honoring to God to ask especially for His Holy Spirit's guidance of your time together. If you write down each other's prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes

Worship. Some groups like to sing together and worship God with prayers of praise.

Review. You may want to take time to discuss what difference the previous week's lesson has made in your lives as well as recall the major emphasis you discovered in the passage for that week.

Read the passage aloud. Once you're ready to focus attention together on the assigned Scripture passage in the week's lesson, read it aloud. (One person could do this, or the reading could be shared.)

Open up for questions. Allow time for group members to mention anything in the passage they may have particular questions about.

Summarize the passage. Have one or two people offer a summary of what the passage says.

Discuss. This will be the heart of your time together and will likely take the biggest portion of your time. Focus on the questions you see as the most important and most helpful. Allow and encourage everyone to be part of the discussion for each question. You may want to take written notes as the discussion proceeds. Ask follow-up questions to sharpen your attention and deepen your understanding of what you discuss. You may want to give special attention to the questions in the margins under the heading "For Thought and Discussion."

Encourage further personal study. You can find more opportunities for exploring this lesson's themes and issues under the heading "For Further Study" in the margins throughout the lesson. You can also pursue some of these together during your group time.

Focus on application. Look especially at the "Optional Application" listed in the margins throughout the lesson. Keep encouraging one another in the continual work of adjusting your lives to the truths God gives in Scripture.

Summarize your discoveries. You may want to read aloud through the passage one last time together, using the opportunity to solidify your understanding and appreciation of it and clarify how the Lord is speaking to you through it.

Look ahead. Glance together at the headings and questions in the next lesson to see what's coming next.

Give thanks to God. It's good to end your time together by pausing to express gratitude to God for His Word and the work of His Spirit in your minds and hearts during your time together.

Keep these worthy guidelines in mind throughout your time together:

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

(HEBREWS 10:24)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

(GALATIANS 6:2)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

(ROMANS 15:7)

THE BOOKS OF 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

A Chosen Nation, a Privileged Mission

What do you do when life isn't turning out the way you expected it would? What if there seems to be a disconnect between the life the Bible promises and the life you actually have? You're struggling with confusion and disappointment, and trying to hold onto faith. This is the situation the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written to address.

A disappointed nation

In 450-400 BC, a fragile community of Jews lives in the southern part of the Promised Land. Judah isn't a free nation but an insignificant backwater ruled by the Persian Empire. The Jews have a temple in Jerusalem, but it is a poor shadow of the magnificent temple that stood there for centuries before the Babylonians turned it to rubble. That catastrophe is 150 years in the past now, a distant legend, but the Jews are still trying to make sense of it.

The prophets wrote that after God let the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and take the Jews into exile, He would restore Israel to its former glory. Yet the great-grandparents of today's Jews returned from exile a hundred years ago, and it would be laughable to call their little nation glorious. Harvests are sometimes terrible. Persia demands taxes to fund its wars with Greece. Those two superpowers have impressive, well-funded religions that overshadow Judah's worship of her God. Just north of Judah, the Samaritans practice an odious religion that mixes the old faith of Israel with paganism. And to cap it all off, the Jews themselves are constantly squabbling with one another.

They wonder, where is God? Is He greater than the gods of the superpowers? Are the Jews truly heirs to God's promises? How should they worship? Is there any hope of a king descended from the great King David?

A pastor's heart

An educated Jew, a member of the priestly tribe of Levi, and possibly a priest himself, has a pastor's heart to respond to such questions. He is steeped in the Bible from Genesis through Kings, and he sees God's hand in the whole history of his people. This pastor wants them to step back from their day-to-day frustrations and see the big story they are part of. We don't know his name; we call him simply "the Chronicler." He writes an account of God and His people from Adam to the exile, to help the people of his generation understand who God is and what He is up to.

His main source is the earlier books of the Bible, although he may use other sources that haven't survived. As history, Chronicles is a supplement to the other books, especially 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.

Overview of Chronicles

In Hebrew, Chronicles is one book. It was divided in two when it was translated into Greek a few centuries before Christ. An outline looks like this:

- I. 1 Chronicles 1–9. Genealogies trace the family of God's promise from Adam to Abraham, to Judah, to David, to the royal line after David, followed by the other tribes of Israel including Levi (the Chronicler's tribe). Genealogies then identify the Jews who returned to Judah after the exile (the recent ancestors of those living when the Chronicler wrote).
- II. 1 Chronicles 10–29. King David is the ideal king who establishes Israel, fights off Israel's enemies, and prepares for the building of the temple.
- III. 2 Chronicles 1–9. King Solomon follows David's pattern by building the temple and ruling a kingdom of peace and prosperity.
- IV. 2 Chronicles 10–36. The kingdom splits apart after Solomon's death, the kings of Judah plunge into sin, and God has to judge them. Chronicles ends with the exile to Babylon and a brief mention of Persia letting the Jews return to their homeland after the exile.

Message and themes

The themes the Chronicler addresses include:

- God has a covenant relationship with His people—what does that mean and why does it matter?
- We worship a generous God who chose one nation in order to bless all nations.
- God exiled His people from the Promised Land because of sin but restored them to the land because of His grace and their repentance.
- God reveals His nature in how He acts in the details of history.

- Worship is crucial.
- Obedience to God's Word is crucial.
- Sin brings disaster and judgment from God.
- God never stops offering grace.
- God is sovereign over His people's lives and history.
- The present is connected to the past. The past matters now.
- The future is full of hope.
- God's people are one.

1 CHRONICLES

1-7

The Heritage of God's People

1. For getting the most from 1 and 2 Chronicles, one of the best guidelines is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, words Paul wrote with the Old Testament first in view. He said that *all* Scripture is of great benefit to (a) teach us, (b) rebuke us, (c) correct us, and (d) train us in righteousness. Paul added that these Scriptures completely equip the person of God “for every good work.” As you think seriously about those guidelines, in which of these areas do you especially want to experience the usefulness of 1 and 2 Chronicles? Express your desire in a written prayer to God.

2. In Jeremiah 23:29, God says that His Word is “like fire” and “like a hammer.” He can use the Scriptures to burn away unclean thoughts

Optional

Application: We read that after Jesus' resurrection, when He was explaining Old Testament passages to His disciples, He "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). Ask God to do that kind of work in *your* mind as you study 1 and 2 Chronicles so you're released and free to learn everything He wants you to learn here and so you can become as bold, worshipful, and faithful as those early disciples of Jesus were. Express this desire to Him in prayer.

For Thought and Discussion: Before launching into a closer look at 1 and 2 Chronicles, summarize what you already know about these books.

and desires in our hearts. He can also use Scripture, with hammer-like hardness, to crush and crumble our spiritual hardness. From your study of 1 and 2 Chronicles, how do you most want to see the fire-and-hammer power of God's Word at work in your own life? Again, express this longing in a written prayer to God.

3. Think about these words of Paul to his younger helper Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). God calls you to be a "worker" as you study God's word of truth in 1 and 2 Chronicles. It takes *work*—concentration and perseverance—to fully appropriate God's blessings for us in these books. Express here your commitment before God to work diligently in this study of Chronicles.

4. In one sitting if possible, read attentively all of 1 Chronicles 1–7, taking notes and underlining or highlighting as you go. What impresses you overall as the key features and themes of this part of the book?

The point of the genealogies in chapters 1–9 is to show that the Jews living in the Chronicler’s generation are the legitimate heirs of the promise that can be traced from Adam, to Abraham, to Judah and the other patriarchs, to King David. The genealogies sometimes skip generations, sometimes deal with several family lines at once (see 6:1-3), sometimes drop in a story about some event (see 4:9-10; 5:18-22). They deal with all twelve tribes of Israel, but the focus is on the royal family of David and the priestly tribe of Levi. Those two families lead in the secular and the sacred realms.

Genealogies may bore us, but they show how deeply the Jews valued family and how important family was at a time when God’s promises passed through bloodlines. Each individual, even if he is only a name on a page to us, is a whole valued piece of the story to God. History, too, matters to God. Our faith is not merely a list of doctrinal propositions. It is rooted in events that happened in particular times and places to particular people.

5. “The opening chapter, drawn almost wholly from Genesis, traces the descent of Israel (Jacob) from Adam and depicts the place of his

descendants among the nations.”¹ In this first chapter of 1 Chronicles, which of the persons listed are familiar to you from other parts of Scripture?

Adam (1:1). The story of God’s covenant of promise begins where human history begins.

Abraham (1:28). Abraham is the center point between Adam (see 1:1) and Jacob/Israel (see 2:1). All of Abraham’s descendants are named to show that God kept His promise to make Abraham the father of many nations (see Genesis 17:3-6).²

6. In chapters 2–4, the genealogies focus on the tribe of Judah, with special emphasis on the family of David (in chapters 3 and 4). In addition to David, which of the persons listed in chapters 2–4 are familiar to you from other parts of Scripture?

The sons of Israel (2:1). All twelve tribes are listed in 2:1-2. For the Chronicler, the restoration of Israel will be complete only when all twelve tribes are restored to the land. It’s not enough to restore Judah.

The sons of Judah (2:3). Faithful leadership was supposed to come through the tribe of Judah. Her failure to provide that leadership led to the exile, but God isn’t finished with Judah. She still has a central role in God’s plan.

These were the sons of David (3:1). God promised that the family of David would be the royal line of His people forever (see 1 Chronicles 14:2; 2 Chronicles 2:11). This family is key to God's plan.

In chapter 3, the Chronicler lists the kings from David's line and then the descendants of David who survived the exile. The promised royal line will have to pass through one of those descendants. Ultimately, the Messiah will descend from one of these, so these are important names. They include the two men who led the first and second waves of exiles back to the Promised Land.

7. What theological significance and spiritual instruction do you see in the brief story of Jabez in 4:9-10?

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel . . . and God granted his request (4:10). The Chronicler often notes that prayer to the God of Israel is answered (see 1 Chronicles 5:20-22; 2 Chronicles 20:6-12). He wants his readers to pray.

8. In focusing on the genealogy of Israel's Transjordan tribes, chapter 5 emphasizes tribes that were exiled by the Assyrians a century before Babylon destroyed Judah (see 5:6,22,26).

Optional

Application: What is the faith lesson being taught to the readers of Chronicles in 1 Chronicles 5:18-20, and how does it relate personally to you?

Which of the persons listed here are familiar to you from other parts of Scripture?

A ruler came from [Judah] (5:2). King David.

The battle was God's (5:22). The Chronicler's faith about warfare is that God helps His people win battles and that their prayers are crucial (see 1 Chronicles 12:19; 15:26; 2 Chronicles 20:15; 25:8; 32:10).³

9. What theological significance and spiritual instruction do you see in how the historical record is presented in 5:24-26?

10. In chapter 6, the genealogy focuses on the tribe of Levi. Which of the persons listed here are familiar to you from other parts of Scripture?

11. What responsibilities and duties of the Levites are mentioned in chapter 6?

The sons of Levi (6:1). The Levites get lengthy treatment because they led the nation's worship and the Chronicler placed a high value on worship. Many interpreters think he was a Levite himself. His readers would have known some of the names — Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Nadab, Abihu, and more — from other stories in the Bible. The mention of these names would have reminded his readers to learn from these people's virtues and sins.

The men David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD (6:31). The Chronicler gives much attention to music in worship, and the men who led it. See 1 Chronicles 6:31-47; 9:33; 15:16-24; 23:5; 25:1-31; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13; 7:6; 29:25-30; 34:12.

Heman (6:33). A music ministry leader from the time of David (see 6:31; 15:16-19). He played the bronze cymbals when the ark of the covenant was brought into Jerusalem (see 15:19) and at other times (see 16:42). The superscription of Psalm 88 says Heman wrote it.

Asaph (6:39). Asaph too played the cymbals in David's day (see 15:19). The guild of Asaph wrote a dozen psalms (Psalms 50; 73-83), including the psalm for the ark's entrance into Jerusalem (see 1 Chronicles 16:7).

Ethan (6:44). Another cymbal player (see 15:19). The superscription of Psalm 89 says he wrote it.

Making atonement for Israel (6:49). The priests were Levites from the line of Aaron, and this was their most important task. "The word 'atonement' essentially means 'to cover.' God ordained that sin be 'covered' by means of animal sacrifice, whether offered for individuals (as in Leviticus 4:29,31) or the entire nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16). The sacrificial offerings were symbolic of atonement since 'it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin' (Hebrews 10:4)."⁴

For Further Study:
What more can you learn about the duties of the Levites (see 1 Chronicles 6) from Numbers 3:6-9 and 18:5? (See also 1 Chronicles 23:28-31.)

12. In chapter 7, the genealogy focuses on the northern tribes of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher. Which of the persons listed here are familiar to you from other parts of Scripture?

13. What would you say is the main point being made in chapter 7 by including the incident described in 7:21-24?

The story of Ezer and Elead in 7:21-24 does not come from elsewhere in the Bible. The Chronicler adds it to exhort his readers that a temporary loss can be overcome by God's grace and human action. Likewise, the great loss of the exile was temporary and is being overcome.⁵

14. Imagine that you were an Israelite living in Judah after the return from Babylonian exile. What overall impressions and lessons of your national and spiritual heritage would you gain from these genealogical chapters at the beginning of 1 Chronicles?

15. In 1 Chronicles 1–7, what would you select as the key verse or passage—one that best captures or reflects the dynamics of what these chapters are all about?

16. List any lingering questions you have about 1 Chronicles 1–7.

Optional

Application: On the basis of God’s truth revealed to you in this lesson, perhaps the Holy Spirit has helped you sense a new and higher reality in your life that God is inviting you to. If this is true for you, express in your own words the reality that you long for, and use it as a springboard for prayer.

For the group

In your first meeting, it may be helpful to turn to the front of this book and review together the “How to Use This Guide” section.

You may want to focus your discussion for lesson 1 especially on some of the following issues, themes, and concepts (which are recognized as major overall themes in 1 and 2 Chronicles). Which of these are dealt with in some way in chapters 1–7, and how are they further developed there?

- The meaning and significance of God’s covenant relationship with His people
- God’s nature, especially as revealed by how He acts in the details of His people’s history
- The importance and meaning of worship
- For God’s people, the continuity of the present with the past
- The importance of obedience to God’s Word and His laws, and our personal responsibility in that regard
- How sin brings disaster and judgment from God
- God’s continued blessings and grace for His people

- The future hope of God's people
- The unity of God's people
- God's sovereignty over His people's lives and history

The following numbered questions in lesson 1 may stimulate your best and most helpful discussion: 4, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Look also at the exercise in the margin under the heading "For Thought and Discussion."

1. *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), at 1 Chronicles 1:1–9:44.
2. Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, The NIV Application Commentary series, ed. Terry Much (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 63.
3. Hill, 120.
4. Hill, 138–139.
5. Hill, 154.