

Be a Man After God's Heart: Life of David, Study Eight
Loyalty

"Now, Therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own."¹

Even though David repented of the sin he committed with Bathsheba against the Lord, as we studied in Week Four, and was forgiven in the eyes of God and man, the consequences of his choice continued to surface in his life. We see the repercussions most clearly in 2 Samuel 13 through 19: the loss of loyalty and eventual death of his beloved, son Absalom.

David had many sons:

Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second, Kileab the son of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of Maakah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream the son of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.²

Over time, his first son Amnon, fell in love with his sister Tamar whose brother was Absalom. He raped Tamar and

hence, ruined her life and future. David responds emotionally, with fury but with a marked lack of action. After two years of waiting to see if David would punish Amnon for what he did to his sister Tamar, Absalom takes matters into his own hands and devises a plan to murder Amnon. His plan moves forward with success and he and his friends kill his brother. David grieves deeply over the loss of Amnon and Absalom flees to Geshur for three years until he is summoned by David to come back to Jerusalem. At this point, Absalom's heart was cold, he bowed before David and David kissed him, but it is obvious from the lack of relationship that followed that it was just a formal gesture, signifying nothing.

David had lost Absalom's heart and loyalty through his lack of action and refusal to execute justice or actively extend mercy. As the chapters proceed, Absalom spends day after day winning the hearts of the people of Israel and setting himself up to overthrow his own father's throne. He is successful and is declared king in Hebron, collects an army, and marches straight to Jerusalem to kill his father and usurp his position. David flees for his life and despite his son's betrayal, we see great loyalty from David's closest friends and his warriors. Person after person took steps to protect David, provide for him, and save his life from Absalom. Absalom enters a war with his father's army and is killed. David is left with another dead son and more grief and heartache.

So what happened here? How could Absalom believe it was right to kill his father and take the throne way before his time? How could Absalom think he could conquer David's army? "David had never asked for forgiveness. He had never taken his rightful place of authority over family events. David made plenty of mistakes, but Absalom did not have to follow suit. He could have called on the mercy of God and forgiven David

¹ NIV, 2 Samuel 12:10

² NIV, 2 Samuel 3:2-5

for failing him, even if his father never admitted how wrongly he handled his family. God would have held David responsible, and Absalom would have been free. Instead, he locked himself in the prison of bitterness where character eroded in the darkness of his soul.”³ God is faithful, he would have called David out again for not dealing with Amnon through his Prophets. Absalom was impatient, prideful, and angry; a bad combination that ultimately compromised his loyalty to God and his father.

2 Chronicles 16:9 states, “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” ‘Fully committed’ and ‘loyal’ are used interchangeably here in this scripture. “God is looking for loyalty-because it is a God-quality. It’s a divine attribute that pulsates at the very core of the everlasting Trinity; defining the very personality of God...loyalty means...I reserve my affections for Him only. Second, it means that I look to Him alone as the source of my salvation and deliverance and help.”⁴ God is looking for people on the earth who are fully committed and loyal to Him. Absalom was committed neither to David nor God. Instead, he chose his own agenda, on his own time, and did not go to God for his help and source of salvation.

Our loyalty will be tested in this life, both our commitment to God and to the leaders God has put in our life. King Saul and David were not perfect, but David had a loyal heart both toward God and toward Saul. David was anointed king, but he waited on God’s timing to make it happen. He did not try to purposefully win hearts and steal Saul’s throne. God gave him favor and the hearts of the people in His perfect timing.

³ Moore, Beth. 181

⁴ Sorge, Bob. *Loyalty the Reach of the Noble Heart*. Oasis House: Grandview, 2004.

As a result, David was seasoned by character building trials and tests. When God gave him the throne, he was so fruitful, God chose to birth his own Son, Jesus Christ, from his family line. “Absalom had a cynical view of his father’s agenda. He never believed that his father loved him enough to do right by him. So he concluded that if he was going to get his rightful due, he would have to wrest for it himself from his father’s hand.”⁵ As men, we often question God’s love for us when he is building our character and forming us into “kings.” We must believe we are loved and that God disciplines and tests those he loves to make them the best they can be.

Every leader has to be led. As leaders we are led by God and others. As men, it is often hard to submit to the authority God has placed in our life, especially if that authority has failed or hurt us. We must recognize that just because our leader is not perfect, our calling to serve under them or wait on God for their removal is not negated. It is important to link yourself as a man of God with Davids: men and women whose hearts are fully loyal to God and totally committed to seeking to glorify Him. These Davids will be used to strengthen your character and your own loyalty to God and others. Do not link yourself with Absaloms: men and women who do not want to wait on God for his timing and testing to bring forth their destiny and calling. Perhaps even more importantly, don’t become an Absalom, allowing your anger, hurt, or bitterness from the past erode your loyalty. God will vindicate you as He did David. Wait for it.

Scripture Reading: NIV

⁵ Sorge, Bob. *Loyalty the Reach of the Noble Heart*. Oasis House: Grandview, 2004.

2 Samuel 13:23-39

Two years later, when Absalom's sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons to come there. ²⁴ Absalom went to the king and said, "Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his attendants please join me?" ²⁵ "No, my son," the king replied. "All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you." Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go but gave him his blessing. ²⁶ Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon come with us." The king asked him, "Why should he go with you?" ²⁷ But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king's sons. ²⁸ Absalom ordered his men, "Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon down,' then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I given you this order? Be strong and brave." ²⁹ So Absalom's men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king's sons got up, mounted their mules and fled. ³⁰ While they were on their way, the report came to David: "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons; not one of them is left." ³¹ The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn. ³² But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom's express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar." ³³ My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king's sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead." ³⁴ Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, "I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill." ³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, "See, the king's sons have come; it has happened just as your

servant said." ³⁶ As he finished speaking, the king's sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants wept very bitterly. ³⁷ Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned many days for his son. ³⁸ After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. ³⁹ And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death.

2 Samuel 14:21-33

The king said to Joab, "Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom." ²² Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honor, and he blessed the king. Joab said, "Today your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant's request." ²³ Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. ²⁴ But the king said, "He must go to his own house; he must not see my face." So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king. ²⁵ In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. ²⁶ Whenever he cut the hair of his head — he used to cut his hair once a year because it became too heavy for him — he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard. ²⁷ Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom. His daughter's name was Tamar, and she became a beautiful woman. ²⁸ Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face. ²⁹ Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him. So he sent a second time, but he refused to come. ³⁰ Then he said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

³¹ Then Joab did go to Absalom's house, and he said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" ³² Absalom said to Joab, "Look, I sent word to you and said, 'Come here so I can send you to the king to ask, 'Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there!'" Now then, I want to see the king's face, and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death." ³³ So Joab went to the king and told him this. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came in and bowed down with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

2 Samuel 15:1-16

In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. ² He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." ⁴ And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that they receive justice." ⁵ Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the heart of the people of Israel. ⁷ At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD." ⁸ While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: 'If the LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.'"

⁹ The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he went to Hebron. ¹⁰ Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'" ¹¹ Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. ¹² While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing. ¹³ A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom." ¹⁴ Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword." ¹⁵ The king's officials answered him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses." ¹⁶ The king set out, with his entire household following him;"

Prayer Partners Assignment:

1. Scripture Memory: Psalm 3:3-4 *"But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high."* ⁴ *I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain."*
2. Read 2 Samuel Chapters 13-19 and Psalm 3
3. Meet with your prayer partner this week to discuss the readings, answer the following questions, and pray.
 - A. What becomes of Absalom and do you view David's reaction as right, wrong, or both (if possible)?

- B. Shimei curses David and throws stones on him and his men when he flees for his life. How does David's reaction impact you? Later, Shimei apologizes. What do you think about David's reaction to his apology?
- C. How does David's dependency on God through these chapters strengthen you in dealing with your own family?
- D. In Psalm 3, David is surprised to even wake his heart hurts so bad and his life was fiercely on the line, is there a verse in this Psalm that you can relate to and why?

Sample Discussion Questions

Pre-Article Questions:

- 1. How would you define loyalty? Can you describe a situation in your life, or a friend's life, where loyalty really blessed you?
- 2. How does loyalty play out in our relationship with Christ?

Text Questions:

- 1. In 2 Samuel 13, Absalom tells his friends to be "brave and strong," how does Absalom's appeal to their pride similar to that of Satan's temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4?
- 2. Looking at 2 Samuel 13 and 14, in what ways did David's reaction to Amnon's death create more bitterness and anger in Absalom?

- 3. What were some of the steps Absalom took in Chapter 15 to begin to overthrow David's throne?
- 4. Do you think God would have spared David having more pain and heartache in his family had David dealt appropriately with Amnon and Absalom? Why or why not?
- 5. Read Luke 15:11-32 and 2 Samuel 14:33 compare and contrast the two sons (Absalom and Prodigal) and the two fathers (Father and David)? Now read 2 Samuel 18:31-33. Absalom is dead, in what ways does David's heart towards his son seem to have shifted after reading this?

Application Questions:

- 1. How would you describe loyalty? In what ways has God demonstrated His loyal or fully committed heart towards you? In what ways has a friend or leader demonstrated loyalty towards you?
- 2. Can you share a time in your life when your loyalty toward God or in an important relationship was tested?
- 3. Why do you think David did not control his family tragedy and take action with Amnon in the first place? Satan often uses sin and failure against us so that even after we sincerely repent we remain inactive. "Two wrongs don't make a right...restoration does not mean you can no longer stand for the truth because you fell. Restoration means you must stand." Have you experienced this lately and in what ways can you take a stand against the enemy and confront the situations that are facing you or your friends with truth and love?
- 4. What were some of the strategies and tactics the devil used to stir up disloyalty and betrayal in Absalom? In

what ways can we combat the lies of the enemy when tempted to be disloyal to our leaders or friends?

5. Absalom struggled started out with sincere intentions to help his sister then got entangled with bitterness and unforgiveness ending in his dismay after 11 years. Have you experienced a time of unforgiveness in your life towards a loved one? What does the Bible have to say about unforgiveness? How have you since dealt with your unforgiveness and received healing? Do you need more healing in this area and how can the small group help stand with you in this?
6. After reading the story of the prodigal son and hearing David's lamenting words over his imperfect son Absalom, how does this help you understand your Heavenly Father God a little more when it comes to you as His son? How do you feel like you have grown in your understanding of the "Father's heart" in the past few years or weeks?