The Life of David: A Series of Unfortunate Events

STUDENT Study Guide on Second Samuel

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Background Information

In the Hebrew Bible, First and Second Samuel is one book. In the second century BC the Septuagint (group of seventy men) translated the book from the original Hebrew text into Greek and split it into two books at that time. 1

This study deals with the second book division which was written around 930BC and covers the last forty years of David’s life. It was written by several authors but no one knows for sure who wrote which part. We know that David wrote many of the Psalms during this time period and one of them is included in 2 Samuel 22. In 1 Chronicles 29:29 we are told the other possible authors are the prophets Gad and Nathan.

The book of 1 Samuel introduced David (approximate age of fifteen) when Samuel anointed him to be king of Israel. In his teens and twenties David dealt mostly with Saul but from his thirties until his death at age seventy, David seems to encounter one negative situation after another; every chapter of 2 Samuel seems worse than the one before. We are not told how much time elapses between each event but we know that David is thirty years old at the beginning of 2 Samuel.

The adult life of David became a series of unfortunate events. Each chapter of this study guide will focus on a negative event and how David dealt with it. Remember to put yourself into David’s place and consider how you would have handled the event if it happened to you.

Unfortunate Event: Death of Saul and Jonathan

The book of 1 Samuel ends with David living within the enemy territory of the Philistines in a city called Ziklag which had been given to David by Achish, king of Gath. David and his army of six hundred men spent approximately six years on the run from King Saul before settling in Ziklag for sixteen months. (1 Samuel 27:1-7)

As we begin our study of 2 Samuel, David has just experienced an unfortunate event; while David and his men were away, the Amalekites raided Ziklag. (1 Samuel 30) They burned the city and took all the men’s families and everything they owned. The circumstances were so bad that in their grief; David’s men threatened to kill him. David sought God’s help and received assurances that he and his men would win the battle against Amalek and recover everything that was taken. Even though they won the battle, David’s emotions were still a bit ragged when he heard the news of Saul and his son’s deaths three days later. (1 Samuel 31) As long as David stayed in Ziklag and the Philistine territories, Saul stopped searching for David. At the time of their deaths, David had not seen either Saul or Jonathan for over a year.

The final chapter of 1 Samuel records the death of Saul and three of his four sons. Look on the map and see if you can find Mount Gilboa where the Philistines killed Saul and his sons.

Read 1 Samuel 31:1-6. How do these verses say that Saul died?

Read 2 Samuel 1. Describe the man who brought David the news of Saul and his son’s deaths. (2 Samuel 1:2-3, 8, 13)

What was the real story about Saul’s death? (2 Samuel 1:5-10)

What did he take from the body of Saul and bring to David? (2 Samuel 1:10)

How did David react to the news given by the Amalekite? (2 Samuel 1:11-16)

What was the name of David’s song of lament and who was supposed to sing it? (2 Samuel 1:17-27)

Lament: a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, a song, piece of music, or poem expressing sorrow as well as to mourn a loss or persons death. 1

What does 2 Samuel 1:23-24 reveal about David’s feelings for Saul?

When I was in Sunday school classes as a child, the teachers would often tell the story of David and Jonathan’s friendship. The pictures used to tell the story always portrayed them as young men of the same age, height, and build. It seems that no one stopped to read the surrounding Scriptures to figure out that David wasn’t yet born when Saul became king. Since Jonathan was a leader in Saul’s army, it means that he was at least twenty years of age during the first years of Saul’s reign. Therefore, Jonathan was probably twenty years older than David (approximately thirty five years old when he met David).

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4. Who was the instigator of the friendship?

What type of love did Jonathan have for David? (See John 15:13)

How did David describe his best friend and brother in law Jonathan? (2 Samuel 1:25-26)

God used Jonathan to protect David’s life many times from his father Saul’s attempts to kill David. (See 1 Samuel 19:1-7, 20:1-2, 25-42) David must have felt terrible that he hadn’t been in a position to save the lives of Saul and Jonathan in battle. Even after living with the Philistines for eighteen months, David’s allegiance was *always* to Israel. 2 Samuel 1:19-20 reveals that he didn’t want the Philistines to gloat over their deaths.

What happened to the bodies of Saul and his sons? (1 Samuel 31:8-13)

Why were the men of Jabesh-gilead loyal to Saul? (Read all of 1 Samuel 11)

Locate Jabesh-gilead and Beth-shan (east of Mount Gilboa) on your Bible map. It was about a twenty mile round trip for these men who left the comfort of their homes to walk all night and risk their lives to retrieve the bodies; then travel back home to burn and bury them.

What was David’s reaction to the men of Jabesh-gilead in 2 Samuel 2:4-7?

Why did David make the statement in 2 Samuel 2:7?

At this point in time, David didn’t have the full support of the nation of Israel, only his own tribe of Judah. David expressed his desire that the men of Jabesh-gilead who had shown such loyalty and faithfulness to Saul would now give their allegiance to him. After hearing about the deaths of Saul and three of his sons, how did David decide what he should do next? (1 Samuel 2:1-4)

See if you can locate Hebron on your map. It was approximately a thirty mile trip from Ziklag to Hebron. Who were the people that followed David in this step of faith?

Who approached whom? Did David go to the leaders of Judah or did they come to him?

God’s timing is interesting. David’s city of Ziklag had been burned down by the Amalekites and during the three days they were back after winning the battle over the Amalekites, I’m sure that David and his men were busy clearing out the wreckage and preparing supplies to rebuild their homes. But after hearing about Saul and Jonathan, David prays and asks God for his next step. He was told to move to Hebron.

I believe that the total destruction of Ziklag made the decision to leave for Hebron easy for both David and his six hundred men. What the men had seen as a tragedy in their lives, was really a blessing from God to help them let go of their past and be ready and willing to step into their future. God hadn’t caused the tragedy but He did use it for their good. (See Romans 8:28)

Many times God will give us a direction to take but then we must choose to step out in faith and then *wait* for the next step. By faith, David moved his family (his two wives, his brothers and their families) along with the six hundred army men and their families to Hebron (a thirty mile trip) without knowing if he would be fully accepted as king by the elders and people of Judah or not. David had already prepared “good ground” with the people of Judah by sharing his spoils of war with them before knowing about Saul’s death. (See 1 Samuel 30:26-31) David sowed seeds of kindness without knowing when/if he would reap a harvest of kindness back.

Samuel had anointed David as a boy of fifteen, he is now a man of thirty. Have you ever received a promise from God that took a long time to be fulfilled? Are you still waiting? Look up 2 Corinthians 1:20, Philippians 1:6 and Habakkuk 2:3 and be encouraged!

Write down what promise you are holding onto today and pray these verses over it.

Unfortunate Event: Civil War Casualties

2 Samuel 5:4-5 tells us that David was thirty years old when Judah anointed him to be king over their tribe. This was approximately fifteen years after Samuel brought David in from the sheep fields to anoint him in front of his father and brothers. (1 Samuel 16:1-13) Fifteen years is a long time to wait to see a promise from God fulfilled but even then, it was only partially fulfilled as we will see in 2 Samuel 3. Saul’s cousin Abner, was the commander of the Israeli army and wasn’t ready to give up his status of power without a fight.

Cast of main characters in the war:

Ish-bosheth (also known as Eshbaal (1 Chronicles 8:33) and Ishvi (1 Samuel 14:49): He was Saul’s youngest son, probably five to six years older than David and technically David’s brother in law. He was thirty five years old when his father and brothers were killed in battle. Ish-bosheth was old enough to fight in the army so if he was in the same battle, he escaped injury but he may have remained behind at home and not gone to war. As the sole surviving legal son, Ish-bosheth became the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. We are told in 2 Samuel 2:10 that he was forty years old when he became king over Israel. He only reigned two years so there is a five year gap between Saul’s death and Ish-bosheth’s becoming king over eleven tribes of Israel. We are not told that he was ever anointed by the priests and people to become king; only placed into power by Abner.

Abner: He was the son of Ner, Saul’s uncle so he was the cousin of King Saul and became a type of uncle to Ish-bosheth. (1 Samuel 14:50-51) Saul made Abner the captain of the Israeli army and he knew David well because they served together in the army following David’s encounter with Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:55-18:5) After Saul died Abner took over the role of leader/protector/dictator of Israel for five years before finally crowning Ish-bosheth as a *puppet* king. He proved to have no real loyalty other than to himself.

Joab: He was the son of David’s older sister Zeruiah; so was a nephew to David. (See 1 Chronicles 2:16) Since David’s siblings were older than he, Joab and his two brothers may have been close to David’s age of thirty at this time. Joab earned the position of commander of David’s army. (1 Chronicles 11:6) He had a bad temper and kept grudges. He was loyal to his brothers and his own interests more than David’s.

Abishai: He was brother to Joab and Asahel so he was also David’s nephew. He may have been the oldest of the three brothers because his name is listed first which usually denotes birth order. David made Abishai commander of the thirty *mighty men* of his army because he was an awesome warrior. (See 2 Samuel 23:18-19) The thirty *mighty men* may have been a separate section of the army like a *Seal* *team* today. He remained loyal to David all of his life.

Asahel: He was the youngest brother of the three nephews of David by his sister Zeruiah. He was an extremely fast and agile runner and would have been very useful as a messenger from David to Joab on the battle field. His stubbornness and immaturity caused his own early death.

Read 2 Samuel 3:1, 6. How is the civil war described in these verses?

What do you think it means that the house of Saul was becoming weaker?

The civil war lasted for over seven years. During this time there would have been many battles; each side trying to gain ground for their leader and cause the other side to bow in defeat. Remember also that the other enemies of Israel would have continued to war with them as well. Both Abner and Joab would be losing soldiers to the Philistines and other surrounding nations as well as to each other’s armies.

During the first five years of the civil war, Abner used his position as commander of the Israeli army to become somewhat of a dictator. The people had been used to obeying his military directions and since Ish-bosheth showed no sign of wanting to take his father’s place as king, they willingly trusted Abner to protect and care for their well-being.

There were obviously some people who did not want Abner to lead them and were quite willing to have David as their new king. (See 2 Samuel 3:17) Abner could not allow that to happen since David already had his nephew Joab holding the position of Army Commander. Abner was probably nearing the age of seventy, at best David would probably have forced him to retire; at worst, David may have killed him so there was no attempt to take over political power again.

Read 2 Samuel 2:8-11. After leading the people through a military dictatorship, there must have been enough voices asking for a king (David) that Abner forced Ish-bosheth to take his place on the throne of Israel. How old was Ish-bosheth when he became king over Israel?

How long was David’s total reign as king over Judah?

By subtracting the two year reign of Ish-bosheth from the seven and one half year reign of David we reach the five years that Abner held the power over Israel. Read and compare 2 Samuel 2:12-17, 31 and 1 Samuel 17:1-10. How are these two battle arrangements the same?

What is different about them?

This way to do battle seems strange but obviously it was part of the culture at that time. It is a testament to both Joab and Abner’s leadership and training that the soldiers were so evenly matched. Keep in mind that all of these men had probably fought together as one army under Abner and David before Saul started trying to kill David. (See 1 Samuel 18:5, 27-30)

What did Abner say to Joab to end his losing battle? (2 Samuel 2:24-31)

What was Joab’s response?

How many men did Abner lose in the battle?

How many did Joab lose?

Look on your Bible maps and locate the city of Mahanaim; then find the city of Gibeon. The distance between where the battle took place and the city where Abner had set Ish-bosheth up as king (2 Samuel 2:8) was almost fifty miles and included crossing the Jordan River.

What time of day did Abner’s army make the trip back home? (2 Samuel 2:29)

I’m sure that Abner wanted to get away from the area as fast as he could in case Joab changed his mind. Now let’s look at the event that caused Abner to make a hasty retreat. Read 2 Samuel 2:18-24, 32. How is Asahel described?

What do his actions tell you about his character or maturity level?

Abner didn’t want to kill Asahel and may have reasoned that it would be better for one of his men to fight Asahel instead of himself. Abner respected Joab as an equal; they were both battle scarred commanders of large armies. How did Abner try to stop Asahel from making a poor decision?

Abner understood the younger man’s desire to prove himself in battle. How many times did Abner try to get Asahel to fight someone else so he could have something to show from the battle (prize/spoil)?

Why do you think Asahel wouldn’t listen to Abner’s warnings?

I think it is important to remember that Asahel was the youngest of the three brothers in their Uncle David’s army. The oldest brother Abishai was commander of David’s *mighty men* (thirty elite soldiers) and his other brother Joab was commander over the rest of David’s army. I think it is possible that Asahel was trying to make a name for himself in this battle and thought that if he killed Abner he could attain more prestige and earn himself a higher place in David’s army. God had given Asahel a wonderful natural skill of running fast; a skill that would have been very useful to David. At this time there was no way to communicate other than through sending messengers. The faster the runner, the quicker the messages are delivered and answers received. Has God given you a natural skill that you take for granted?

It is easy to feel that your ability is *normal* and of no special value or significance, but in God’s hands, your skill can become a blessing to many in His kingdom. Stop right now and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how He wants to use your gift(s) for God’s glory. Look for opportunities this week and as the Spirit prompts you, step out in faith and use your skill(s) to serve others. What do these Scriptures tell us about our abilities and the plan God has to use them?

Ephesians 2:10

1 Peter 4:10-11

Colossians 3:23-24

It seems obvious that Asahel was somewhat immature and felt that he was living in the shadow of his older brothers. Abner had been the commander of Israel’s army for at least thirty years so he was not only older and wiser than Asahel but a seasoned warrior as well. Abner may have been in his late sixties to early seventies at this time so it is possible that because Asahel was agile and could run so fast, he may have thought he could out maneuver Abner in a fight. Sadly, Asahel refused to stop after Abner’s two attempts to warn him and he died as a result.

Have you ever behaved like Asahel and not taken advice from someone wiser and more accomplished when they attempted to help you? What was the outcome? According to 2 Samuel 2:32 where did Joab go from the battle field?

Find Gibeon and Bethlehem on your Bible map. It was a ten mile walk carrying Asahel’s body to their family tomb in Bethlehem and then another hike of about fifteen miles from Bethlehem back to Hebron, the city of David’s kingdom. After fighting and chasing the Israeli army all day, Joab and his men walked a total of twenty five miles during the night hours; half the mileage and time that it took Abner and his army on their fifty mile march to reach Ish-bosheth’s kingdom to the north. Thankfully the armies were now going in opposite directions.

Unfortunate Event: Political Intrigues and Murder

A new character is introduced:

Rizpah: The concubine (lesser wife) of King Saul who had born him at least two sons who were half-brothers to Ish-bosheth and *nephews* to Abner.

As we read earlier, Abner had full rule over eleven tribes of Israel for five years when Ish-bosheth showed no desire to take the throne. Read 2 Samuel 3:6-11 and Leviticus 18:6-18. What action did Abner take that caused Ish-bosheth to finally question his *uncle* Abner’s authority to rule and why was he offended by Abner’s actions?

What was Abner’s excuse for having sex with his Cousin Saul’s concubine (lesser wife)?

At this time in history a concubine was a female slave who had sex with the man in whose house she served. She was considered to be an *inferior* type of wife with some rights but not technically married to the man of the house. 1 The woman was not given a choice or asked how she felt about the situation; today this would be considered rape and sex trafficking. There are many concubines mentioned throughout the Old Testament and several of the men had multiple concubines besides also having many legal wives. These concubines would have probably lived in what we know today as a *harem*.

By having sex with Rizpah, Abner may have been attempting to solidify his political power over Israel. He was of the same family line as Saul and if he became the new *husband* of Saul’s lesser wife, he may have been more readily accepted to lead the nation by those who were asking for David to be king, or perhaps he really did want to become king himself.

Read 2 Samuel 3:8—11. What threat did Abner make and what was Ish-bosheth’s response to the threat?

As noted in the description of his character, Abner’s loyalty to Ish-bosheth wasn’t deep. Out of his anger Abner let go of his own political agenda and chose to get revenge on Ish-bosheth for the embarrassment (and guilt) he felt when confronted with his sinful treatment of Rizpah. Read 2 Samuel 3:12-21. What did Abner say was in his power to give to David?

What demand did David make in response to Abner’s offer?

Who did David ask to return his first wife Michal to her rightful place in his household?

As we noted before, Ish-bosheth was legally David’s brother in law; he had authority both as head of Saul’s family and king of Israel to order her second husband to give up Michal. How did Michal’s new husband react to David’s demand? (2 Samuel 3:16)

By getting Michal back as his wife, David was securing another piece of evidence to prove his right to rule all of Israel. He had married into Saul’s family giving him the legal right to the throne. The right that Abner tried to obtain for himself through his rape of Saul’s lesser wife Rizpah. How did Abner show some political skill in 2 Samuel 3:17-19?

Both Abner and Saul were from the tribe of Benjamin so it was important that his own tribe agree to the deal he was making with David. When Abner met with David he had the agreement from all eleven tribes of Israel. How did David treat Abner and what was the outcome of the meeting? (2 Samuel 3:20-21)

Read 2 Samuel 3:22-30. Who told Joab about David and Abner’s meeting?

How did Joab try to discredit Abner to cause David to mistrust the deal?

David must have made it clear that he disagreed with Joab’s view of the situation (knowing that Joab had a grudge against Abner because of Asahel’s death) because Joab was angry when he left the meeting. What action did Joab take using his own authority without David’s knowledge?

How did Joab kill Abner?

Compare 2 Samuel 2:23 to 3:27. Do you think it’s a coincidence that Joab struck Abner in the same part of the body to kill him or did he plan it that way as *poetic justice*?

All these men were military soldiers and death was a daily possibility for them but how was the murder of Abner different than the death of Asahel?

Read Exodus 21:12-14. What does God say is the difference between the two men’s deaths?

Abner had left the meeting with David feeling confident that the deal was done and started on his trip back. When the messenger came to call him back to Hebron he went willingly; possibly thinking that David had forgot some important information that Abner needed to bring back to the elders so they could complete the covenant. Little did he know it would cost him his life. Do you think Abner deserved to die through treachery after the way he treated Ish-bosheth, Rizpah and Asahel? Why or why not?

Read 2 Samuel 3:28-39. David had a personal history with each of the men involved in the event: Joab, Abishai, Asahel and Abner. How did he react to the news of what Joab had done?

Who does it say helped Joab kill Abner? (2 Samuel 3:30)

How did David require Joab and all the people in his court to show honor to Abner?

In 2 Samuel 3:33-34 we see David singing another lament. What words did David use to make it clear that Abner had not died honorably as in battle but at the hands of wicked men?

How did the people react to David’s fasting and lament? (2 Samuel 3:38-39)

How did David chastise his servants whose gossip had been the catalyst to the tragic event?

David singled out his servants and spoke harshly to them. He made then realize the depth of harm their gossip had caused. What words of high esteem did David use to describe Abner which compared to the servants lowly position should have caused them shame?

You may never have committed murder but have you ever gossiped or spread tales about someone that started a fire of persecution or brought harm to them? What do these Scriptures say about gossip and the power of the tongue?

Leviticus 19:16

Proverbs 11:13

Proverbs 18:21

Matthew 12:36-37

James 3:5-6

How does David feel about Joab and Abishai now? (2 Samuel 3:28-29, 39)

What David spoke over Joab in 2 Samuel 3:29 was actually a curse on all the men of David’s sister’s family and all of their future descendants. Leprosy and discharges meant that the man would never be allowed to move freely within the community of Israel; they would be considered as *unclean*. (See Leviticus 13:45-46, 15:1-15)

The comment about the distaff referred to a man who was effeminate or perhaps a eunuch; he would have to do *woman’s work* instead of a manly, hardworking occupation. 2 The other descendants would be doomed to die in battle or be unable to feed their families and starve. David was *seriously* angry!

Leaders are held accountable for the actions of those under their authority. Joab abused his authority as commander of the army and directed others to trick Abner into an ambush. In our lives today this could be a role of parent/child, boss/employee, or pastor/parishioner. Have you ever had to take the blame for actions of someone who is under your authority? How did it make you feel and what did you say to the person who caused the harm?

Read 2 Samuel 4:1-3. How did Ish-bosheth feel when he heard that Abner had died?

Why do you think he was afraid?

Like his father Saul, Ish-bosheth was a reluctant king (See 1 Samuel 10:19-24) and also like his father, Ish-bosheth was forty years old when he lost control of his own life. His *uncle* Abner took him from his own home in Gibeah and moved him and the royal court to the city of Mahanaim across the Jordan River into the territory of Gad. (2 Samuel 2:8-10)

It is important to remember that Abner was the real power behind the throne of Israel. He had been the military dictator for five years and then placed Ish-bosheth on the throne as a *puppet king* to appease the elders of Israel who wanted David. Ish-bosheth was not a seasoned warrior and knew that without Abner’s leadership, he had no real chance of leading Israel in the civil war against David. He was probably also fearful of how David would treat him if he conceded the throne because he believed Abner’s murder was done at the command of David.

Who were the brothers Baanah and Rechab to Ish-bosheth? (2 Samuel 4:2)

How do we know that this murder was pre-meditated? What specific information are we given of their plan? (2 Samuel 4:5-7)

Read 2 Samuel 4:8-12. What do you think these men hoped to achieve by murdering Ish-bosheth and bringing his head to David?

Do you think they really believed that the Lord had given them the mission to present David with the kingdom or was it their own idea?

These two commanders in Abner’s army saw into the future and knew that without Abner’s leadership, the Israeli army would be destroyed in any attempt to fight against Joab’s army. They decided to be proactive and make a name for themselves, possibly hoping to earn a place in David’s *mighty men* by showing their loyalty to David. Though they were warriors, they committed murder through deceit and took an unfair advantage; killing Ish-bosheth while he was sleeping.

Have you ever known people who did something awful to someone else in the name of the Lord? New Testament examples would be the stoning of Steven (Acts 6:8 to 7:60) and Saul of Tarsus‘s (Paul) delight in finding Christians to seize and deliver to be imprisoned and killed. (Acts 8:1-3) Even Jesus was put to death by those who were supposed to be representing God’s interests. (Matthew 26:63-67).

World history records many instances of men killing others in the name of God. Examples would include the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition and the English Reformation. Even today terrorists kill many people in the name of their god Allah. Whatever excuse used to sin, God still sees the heart and will punish the evil doer. (See Proverbs 11:21, Isaiah 3:11).

What does James 3:14-16 say is at the root of all evil actions?

How did David respond to Baanah and Rechab’s actions? What previous event did he compare it to? (2 Samuel 4:8-12)

Who did David tell to carry out the death sentence on the men?

What did they do with the bodies and why?

I think David was ensuring that no one else got any bright ideas of *helping* him achieve the rulership of all twelve tribes of Israel. David had a healthy respect for God’s ability and timing to fulfil His promises and didn’t rely on attempts to make it happen himself. (See 1 Peter 5:6) How did David honor Ish-bosheth in death?

While Saul died in battle at the ripe old age of seventy two (1 Samuel 13:1), Ish-bosheth was ambushed in his own home and died at the age of forty two. (2 Samuel 2:10) We aren’t told if he had a family of his own or not. Notice that David did not write a lament for Ish-bosheth, possibly because he hadn’t been a great warrior and he was only a *puppet* king. It may be that David didn’t have the same level of respect or connection to Ish-bosheth that he had experienced with Saul, Jonathan and Abner.

Ish-bosheth’s death was the fourth murder (Saul, Asahel and Abner) in as many chapters of the book of 2 Samuel but there is a big difference in how the murders affected David. For Saul and Abner, David wept, mourned, and wrote laments. He pronounced a death sentence on the murderers of Saul and Ish-Bosheth.

The death of Asahel was considered to be an act of battle so didn’t receive any action or comment from David. David was angry at Joab, but the murder of Abner was *seemingly* ignored by him. He should have put Joab to death for killing Abner outside of a battle situation. Read how in the end, David ensured that Joab was punished through his son Solomon after David’s own death in 1 Kings 2:1-6 and 28-34.

Unfortunate Event: Sudden Death

In 2 Samuel:4, we read about Abner’s change in loyalty from Ish-bosheth to David and the steps he took to create a new covenant between David and the elders of the eleven tribes of Israel. With the death of Abner and Ish-bosheth David no longer had anyone to act as his liaison to create a peace covenant. Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5 and 1 Chronicles 12:23-40. Who approached David to make a covenant?

Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5 and 1 Chronicles 12:23-40. Who approached David to make a covenant?

Add up the number of warriors listed in these Scriptures that came to make David king. How many were there in all?

Notice that it wasn’t just the elders who wanted David as king. After seven years of civil war, all of the tribes of Israel came in person to Hebron to ask David to rule over them. This must have been a big boost to David’s confidence; so much so that he now began to strategize from which city he wanted to rule the re-united kingdom. Locate Hebron on your Bible map and you will notice that it is quite a distance inside of Judah’s territory. David wanted to select a city that was closer to the center of all Israel’s territories as well as a city that was neutral and unbiased (not currently occupied by Israel). He chose the city of Jerusalem (Jebus); but there was a problem with the plan; someone else already lived there.

The Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe that had never been removed during the time of Joshua and Israel’s first battles to take the Promised Land. God had given strict instructions and warnings concerning any interaction between Israel and the Jebusites. What boasts did the Jebusites make about their city of Jerusalem? (2 Samuel 5:6-8)

How did David and his army enter the city? (2 Samuel 5:8)

What award did David promise to the man who killed the first Jebusite inside the city walls? (1 Chronicles 11:6)

According to Ryrie’s NSAB Study Bible notes, the city of Jerusalem was a fortress and naturally defensible from three sides due to its surrounding valleys. It also had its own water supply from a natural spring. On the northern side it had a natural hill/mound (millo) that made the city easy to defend. 1

After David conquered it; what two other names did David use for the city of Jerusalem? (2 Samuel 5:7)

According to 2 Samuel 5:10 why did David become greater and greater?

Read 2 Samuel 5:11-12. Hiram king of Tyre must have been younger than David (who was now in his forties) as the friendship between David and Hiram lasted all of David’s life (thirty more years) and beyond into the life of David’s son Solomon. (See 1 Kings 5:1-12) How did Hiram first contact David and what did he give without being asked? (2 Samuel 5:11)

Upon receiving such an expensive gift from an unknown pagan nation’s ruler, David was quick to understand that it was God giving him favor. Just like the favor he received from Achish king of Gath, (who gave him the city of Ziklag) God was again using a non-believing gentile to bless his life. Have you ever seen this in your own life? Has God used non-Christians to bless you? How and when? How did you react?

The success in obtaining Jerusalem for himself and then the blessing of building materials supplied without asking by Hiram, made David realize that he had *arrived* and was living in the middle of God’s perfect will for his life. How do you know that you have *arrived* and are in the middle of God’s perfect will for you? Read Psalm 90:16-17. How do these verses say you will know?

What does favor look like? Read Luke 2:40 and 52. Fill in the blanks below:

You will continue to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

You will continue to become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

You will increase in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of God will be upon you.

What does the enemy (Satan) do when you begin to have success and see God’s favor on your life? Read 2 Samuel 5:17-25. Why did the Philistines attack?

How did David make his battle plans?

What results did God promise to David and his army?

Did the enemy give up after their first attack and subsequent defeat?

How did the second set of God’s battle instructions differ from the first plan?

In 2 Samuel 5:24 NASB it uses the words “you shall act promptly” and the KJV says “thou shalt bestir thyself”. God gave David a new plan of attack but he had to act quickly in order to gain the victory. (David had already followed this battle strategy when he fought Goliath. See 1 Samuel 17:48). How many times has God answered your prayer for help by giving you an idea or step to take? Did you act right away or did you think it sounded *silly* so you didn’t act on it? What was the result?

It’s so important to remember that God sees the *big picture* and if/when we obey His directions quickly we will experience His blessings on our life. I love what Habakkuk 1:5 says in the TLV.

*“Look among the nations! Observe! Astonish yourself! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days. You will not believe it if it were told.”*

Whenever my view of God gets too small or I think that I know the best way to solve a problem, I am reminded of this verse. I have heard it said that we should pity the person who thinks they know what God will do….it means that their god is *so* small that their human brain can figure him out.

What do these Scriptures say about our God? (Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33)

Now that the local Philistines were subdued and David has settled in to his new city, his thoughts turn to the house of God. (If you wish to read the background of how the ark ended up in Kiriath-jearim it is found in 1 Samuel 5 and 6).

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-2 and 1 Chronicles 13:1-6. Who did David consult in making the decision to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant and bring it to stay in Jerusalem?

How many men went with David to get the Ark of the Covenant? (1 Samuel 6:1-2)

Why do you think David took so many people with him?

Since David had recently defeated the Philistines in the surrounding area of Jerusalem; he may have realized that some Philistines from others cities near to their travel route might see this trip as a new opportunity to attack David when his attention was focused on other things. Turn to your Bible maps and locate Kiriath-jearim (Baale-judah, Baalah). How far is it from Jerusalem?

How long does it say the ark remained in the home of Abinadab, and what was the name of the man consecrated to serve before the ark in presence of the Lord? (1 Samuel 7:1-2)

Read 2 Samuel 6:3-8 and 1 Chronicles 13:6-11. What items did David bring along to move the ark?

Kiriath-jearim is at least a ten mile walk from Jerusalem. David’s *logic* said that it would be much easier and faster if the ark rode in a cart pulled by oxen on such a long and dusty trip. Who were the men that David chose to help move the ark? (2 Samuel 6:3-7)

Had these two men been consecrated (set apart as holy) to be in the presence of the ark?

Who should have been the man to accompany the ark and why was he a better choice? (1 Samuel 7:1-2)

What were David and the other people focusing on while they went in front of the cart? (2 Samuel 6:5)

What happened when the cart hit a bump in the road? (2 Samuel 6:6-7, 1 Chronicles 13:9-10)

What was David’s first reaction to the death of Uzzah? What feeling came next? (2 Samuel 6:8-9)

David and the people had been busy praising the Lord with dancing, singing and playing all sorts of worship instruments. Why didn’t God just accept the intent of their hearts of worship and ignore the wrong way they went about moving the ark?

Good intentions cannot wash away sinful acts.

Compare how the ark was treated in 1 Samuel 4:4, 11. Who carried it into battle?

Hophni and Phineas were terrible men but they were priests in the lineage of Kohath so they were *legally* able to carry the ark properly. Read 1 Samuel 6:1-12. How did the Philistines carry the ark and why did they *get away* with moving the ark in this way but David did not?

God is gracious to unbelievers who try to do what is right even if the way they do it isn’t wholly correct. In their ignorance, their hearts were right and they honored God in the best way they knew how. (See Acts 3:17-20, 10:34-48, 17:23-27; 1 Timothy 1:12-16)

So why did God *have* to punish Uzzah? (Exodus 25:14-22; Numbers 3:30-32, 4:15, 7:6-9)

Do you think that both Eleazar’s brothers; Uzzah and Ahio had become so used to having the ark of God in their home that they no longer held any awe of the presence of God that it contained? (God dwelt above the mercy seat that was on top of the ark.)

Even though we are to approach God’s throne with holy awe and thankfulness, the Psalms of David are also full of his questions and complaints about situations and people in his life. David reacted to Uzzah’s death with anger towards God but I think he really felt guilty that it was his fault Uzzah died, not God’s.

As you studied the specific instructions God gave the Levitical tribe of Kohath, it is not surprising that a death occurred. It *was* David’s fault because he hadn’t taken the time to ask God about his plan to move the ark or even ask the priests for their input. David reacted in anger and fear instead of humility and repentance. How long did the ark stay at the house of Obed-edom? (2 Samuel 6:10-12)

How did the presence of God affect Obed-edom’s household?

Notice that Obed-edom was not the only person blessed when he allowed the presence of God into his home. There are many instances in the New Testament when someone invited the presence of God into their home by believing in Jesus, and all of their household also believed and were saved. (See Acts 10:1-2, 24, 44; 16:27-34)

These Scriptures in 2 Samuel 6:11-12 tell us that all of Obed-edom’s household and *all that belonged to him* was blessed. This means that there were real, physical signs of God’s blessing. Read Deuteronomy 7:12-15 and list all the areas that God promised to bless His people:

These blessings from God still apply to the life of a Christ follower today! God’s blessing might show up as a long awaited pregnancy; an inheritance of money, a job raise that clears all your debts; a gift card to your favorite restaurant arrives in the mail; an offer on your house that is beyond the asking price; your body totally healed of cancer. Thankfully the possibilities are endless! We serve a *big* God who *delights* in giving good gifts to His children! (Matthew 7:11)

What did David decide to do when he heard that God was blessing Obed-edom’s household? (2 Samuel 6:12)

Read 1 Chronicles 15:2-28 and 2 Samuel 6:12-15. How did David plan to carry the ark this time?

According to 1 Chronicles 15:13, David fully understood where his first plan had gone awry. The second time, he made sure to move it God’s way. How many Levites were there and what preparations did they have to make before they could carry the ark?

Read Psalm 24. We don’t know if David wrote this after Uzzah died or after the second attempt to bring the ark into Jerusalem but it sounds like David had learned his lesson well: view God as holy, hold Him in awe and worship Him with clean hands and a pure heart.

We noted earlier that Kiriath-jearim was located ten miles from Jerusalem, Obed-edom was only two miles closer to Jerusalem so they still had another eight miles to carry the ark. 2 Samuel 6:13 says that the group stopped every six paces to sacrifice an ox and fatling.

According to Wikipedia, *a pace equals the distance of two steps or approximately* *five feet and one thousand paces equal a mile*. 2

See if you can do the math problem using the numbers we know:

Eight miles = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ paces. Divided by six (pace stops) = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ paces;

Divided by five (feet) = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_feet where they stopped to make a sacrifice to God.

If I did the math right; they stopped approximately two hundred and sixty six times during the eight mile trip to Jerusalem. Imagine the scene. Every thirty feet, they built an altar of rocks, laid the kindling, started the fire, and then butchered the animals. Even if some of the priests were sent ahead, it still would have taken a *long* time to complete the journey. David went out of his way to ensure everyone had a proper view of God’s holiness and the respect that must be shown in His presence.

David loved music and both played and sang his own compositions. What instruments are listed in David’s *marching band*? (1 Chronicles 15:19-28)

What was David doing at the head of this parade? (2 Samuel 6:16, 1 Chronicles 15:29)

David had prepared a tent for the ark to reside in, but we are not told if this was the tent made during the Exodus, or a new one. The original tent was last mentioned in 1 Samuel 2:22; before the ark was taken by the Philistines and finally ended up in Kiriath-jearim where our story began.

What was David’s first action once the ark was placed in the tent? (2 Samuel 6:17-18)

What did David give to every person after he had spoken a blessing over them? (2 Samuel 6:19)

2 Samuel 6:19 says that David gave out three different kinds of cake/bread to the people. It boggles the mind how many cakes of bread that would have been. There were thousands and thousands of people in attendance and every single person received three cakes. David not only spoke a blessing over the people but he also gave them a tangible blessing to take away with them as well. (Like a take home box of cake from a wedding.)

Read 2 Samuel 6:16 and 20-23. After blessing the people, David went home and said a blessing over every member of his own household. As we saw earlier, Michal had once loved David but through no fault of her own, he was taken from her and she was given to another man. These comments made by Michal, reveal that her love had long since turned to bitterness and she now completely despised David.

David had just spent at least one full day worshipping and praising the Lord and yet when he returned home, he came face to face with his real life. What was David’s reaction to Michal’s comments?

David gladly humbled himself before God and others. He didn’t have a big ego at this point in his life, but Michal’s words still must have hurt. Jesus reminded his disciples that a prophet (person God is using) often gets the least respect from members of his own family. (Mark 6:4)

Have you ever followed God by stepping out into something new and been well received by others but members of your own family didn’t think much of it and didn’t support your efforts? How did you build yourself up in God?

How did David build himself up in 2 Samuel 6:21?

When I am feeling unsupported in my efforts to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in my life, I often remind myself of the words in the old hymn “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”. Its message is that even if no one else goes with me, I commit to follow Jesus without turning back. 3

*The only people we truly need to support us is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, everyone one else is just icing on the cake!*

Unfortunate Event: God says “No”

Read and compare 2 Samuel 7:1-17 with 1 Chronicles 17:1-15. These Scriptures are almost word for word so it seems fair to assume that it was the prophet Nathan who wrote both these accounts of David’s history. What was God’s response to David’s desire to build Him a house (temple)?

What did God promise to David?

Which descendant is God talking about in 2 Samuel 7:12-15? (See 1 Kings 2:1-4)

Read and compare 2 Samuel 7:18-29 with 1 Chronicles 17:16-27. Again these prayers are almost word for word. What words did David use to show his humble position before God even though he was the king of Israel?

What event in Israel’s history did David say proved the greatness of God? (2 Samuel 7:23-24)

What two things did David ask God to confirm and establish forever? (2 Samuel 7:25-36)

How did God fulfill His promise that David’s descendant would sit on the throne forever? (Revelation 5:5 and 22:16)

David’s dream was to build a beautiful temple for God’s presence to dwell; a place where David could sing and play his songs of worship and lead the people of Israel to do the same*. It was a good idea but it wasn’t God’s idea*. Have you ever had a dream or idea that you thought was a *God idea* but as you began to take steps to make it a reality, you felt that God was telling you *not* to do it? What happened?

It wasn’t God’s will for David to build Him a temple but He did allow David to provide everything Solomon would need for it. In history, the temple has always been called by Solomon’s name, but it really should have had David’s name on it. *Every part of the building was planned and provided for by David before his death.*

Read 1 Chronicles 28:9-19 and 29:1-9. How did David get the plans for the temple buildings? (1 Chronicles 28:19)

Read and compare 2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 18. Make a list of all the nations that David defeated/subdued:

1 Chronicles 18:4 gives an enlarged description of 2 Samuel 8:4. The difference in numbers is thought to be a copyist error. There were one thousand horsemen on chariots, the other six thousand were on horseback. Why do you think David hamstrung nine hundred of the chariot horses? (He probably burned the extra chariots as well.)

Perhaps David only had one hundred men able to drive chariots. The extra chariots and their horses would not be useful to the Israeli army. If the chariots were captured, they could once again, be used by Israel’s enemy. You can apply this to the armies of today and in the place of horses, think tanks.

If you only had one hundred men able to drive tanks, the remaining tanks could be used against you. If you destroyed the extra tanks, they could no longer become a tool of the enemy. David kept only what was useful and got rid of the excess baggage. (He would have needed a lot of food to keep the extra horses alive.)

How can this apply to your life today? Is there anything in your life that you have more than you need or more than you can ever use? (Those three dozen cans of soup you just had to buy because they were on sale?) What can you give away to bless and meet the needs of others? What do you need to throw out that is cluttering your life and/or using up your resources of time, money, energy to store for *someday* when you *might* need it?

All during the year there are needs at your local food banks and shelters. These *extra* items in your house could be used by God to bless someone right now. Do you need to clean out your closets? Your pantry? Is it time to downsize your home and let someone else use and enjoy that rarely used dining table and hutch? What about the bedroom suites sitting in rooms no longer filled with growing children; now only growing dust bunnies?

I encourage you to pray over the things in your home and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you can/should let go of today. Write down what you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you today and then act on it!

2 Samuel 8:2 is a curious verse. Ryrie’s Study Bible gives two possible interpretations: The first possibility is that David had the enemy soldiers lie on the ground to measure their height. The soldiers that were two lines (a measuring rod) tall (adult size) were killed and those that were only one line tall (young boys/youths) lived. The second interpretation is that David had all the men lay down and in equal rows and it was down to luck which row would survive 1 and the rest would meet gruesome deaths. (See 1 Chronicles 20:3)

Either way the people that survived became David’s servants who had to bring him tribute. This meant that the people who remained in the nations like Moab, had to bring regular payment to David and in return, he would keep the peace and they would now be entitled to his protection from other enemy nations attacks. 2

As an interesting side note; in 1 Samuel 22:3-4 we find that David left his mother and father in the care and protection of the king of Moab. (His great grandmother Ruth’s family lived in Moab). It is now twenty to thirty years later and David no longer shows any family loyalty to the land of Moab.

Read 1 Chronicles 18:6 and 2 Samuel 8:6, 14. What military strategy did David use to ensure that the nations he defeated didn’t rebel again?

*This same military strategy is in use today. Following World War II, America installed military bases in both Germany and Japan that are still in operation.*

What did David do with all of the gold, bronze and silver he collected as *spoil* from these conquered nations? (2 Samuel 8:7-12, 1 Chronicles 18:7-11)

Where did it eventually end up? (1 Kings 7:51)

Compare 2 Samuel 8:13-14 and 1 Chronicles 18:12-13. Who was the man that led the defeat of Edom in the valley of salt and what was his relationship to David?

In 2 Samuel 23:18-19 you will find a further description of Abishai’s ability as a warrior. He was good enough to be in charge of the thirty *mighty men* but not as skillful as the top three men in David’s army. What phrase is repeated in these chapters that reveals the true source of David’s victories? (2 Samuel 8:6, 14; 1 Chronicles 18:6, 13)

How can you apply this to your life today? Do you acknowledge God’s hand in your successes or do you take all the credit? Read Isaiah 42:5-13. What are the promises to those who give God the glory in these verses?

Now that David (with God’s help) had subdued his enemies for a time, he was able to concentrate on setting up the inner workings of his kingdom. Read 2 Samuel 8:15-17. Who does it say were David’s chief ministers?

While David was creating the framework of his kingdom’s leadership, I believe it was also a time of remembering his days in Saul’s court. He was a young teenager when Samuel anointed him to become the next King of Israel. (1 Samuel 16:11-13)

David was in his late teens or early twenties when he went to work for King Saul’s court and joined the army (after defeating Goliath). Saul set David in charge of men in war, made him court musician and then gave his youngest daughter Michal to David in marriage. (1 Samuel 18) I think David’s fondest memory of those days, was his friendship with Jonathan.

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 20:12-17 and 23:16-18. What was the covenant that David and Jonathan made to each other?

What did David promise Jonathan that he would not do? (1 Samuel 20:15)

Read 2 Samuel 9. David is legally Mephibosheth’s uncle (he was still married to Jonathan’s sister Michal) and therefore had the right to look after his welfare. What question did David ask about Jonathan’s family?

How did Mephibosheth become lame? (2 Samuel 4:4)

If Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul and Jonathan died in battle, he would now be in his mid to late teens. (David was king for seven and one half years in Hebron before becoming king over all Israel after Ish-bosheth’s murder.) Mephibosheth’s nurse panicked upon hearing of Jonathan’s death; afraid that the new king would kill off any possible legal heirs to the throne. (Read 2 Chronicles 22:10-12 for an example of this type of occurrence).

The maid may have been afraid of Abner or Ish-bosheth as well as whatever rumors she had heard about David. We aren’t told specifically who she was afraid would hurt Mephibosheth, but in the end, it was her own actions that hurt him the most. What is Mephibosheth’s opinion of himself? (2 Samuel 9:8)

When Mephibosheth calls himself a dead dog, he is basically saying that he feels useless as a man. Even the name of the city he was living in gives us insight into his self-loathing. Turn to Amos 6:13. In my NASB index note on this verse, it states that the meaning of Lo-debar is “a thing of nothing”.

See if you can locate Lo-debar on your Bible map. It was just south of the Sea of Chinnereth (also called Galilee, Tiberias, Gennesaret), about thirty five miles north of the city of Mahanaim where his uncle Ish-bosheth and great *uncle* Abner had set up their kingdom ruling eleven tribes of Israel. (2 Samuel 2:8-9)

David would not give Mephibosheth the throne, but what did David return that was Mephibosheth’s legal inheritance through his father Jonathan and his grandfather Saul? (2 Samuel 9:7-13)

What place of honor did David give Mephibosheth in his home? (2 Samuel 9:11-13)

David kept his promise to Jonathan by treating Mephibosheth as a son. He ate at the table with David’s family for the rest of his life. We are given a glimpse of his future, by a comment made by the author (Nathan or Gad) in 2 Samuel 9:12. Mephibosheth became the father of a boy named Mica.

David provided a much needed, family connection to replace the one taken from him by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. (1 Samuel 31:7-8) David also restored Mephibosheth’s legal right to his family land. Mica’s future was now secure, David ensured that he would inherit all the property of his great-grandfather Saul.

Unfortunate Event: Rape and Murder

It seems that everyone has heard the story of David and Bathsheba but few know the story before the story. Read 2 Samuel 10 and 1 Chronicles 19. It is not recorded how or when the Ammonite king Nahash was kind to David but it may have been while he was on the run from Saul. Nahash had been defeated by Saul (1 Samuel 11) and may have later befriended David whom he considered to also be Saul’s enemy. Following the ancient wisdom that the enemy of my enemy could be my friend.

What did Nahash’s son Hanun think about David’s message of condolence?

Who gave Hanun bad advice? (2 Samuel 10:3; 1 Chronicles 19:3)

What did Hanun do to the messengers that David sent? (2 Samuel 10:4)

By shaving off one half of the men’s beards (symbol of manliness) and cutting their tunics off at the hips they were being visually shamed by all who saw them (everyone would be able to see their private parts.) The men were not only physically shamed, but it probably scarred them emotionally as well. David understood that they felt naked and exposed. He gave them time to recover by staying at Jericho until their beards grew back. (Depending on rate of growth this could have been two to four months – the average growth rate of facial hair is one half inch per month.) 1

Read 1 Kings 11:43-12:1-19. How is the story of Solomon’s son Rehoboam similar to Hanun’s story?

It is so important to have mature, Godly people in your life who you can ask for advice. It is foolish to ask those closest to you in age and expect them to have more wisdom than you have yourself. Have you ever made a wrong decision concerning a *small thing* that resulted in an even bigger problem in your life?

Hindsight is always easier than foresight. If at all possible, take a step back from your problem. Give yourself time to consider all possible ramifications before making any big decisions, and most importantly, pray before acting.

What does James 1:5 say you should ask for and what will be the result?

The end result of Rehoboam following bad advice was that the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms for the next three hundred years. The result of Hanun following bad advice was a war with Israel. He hired other countries to fight alongside Ammon but they were all soundly defeated by Israel, and in the end, over forty thousand men died. This war with Ammon and the other nations lasted for over a year.

According to 2 Samuel 10:9-14 who was leading the battle against Ammon?

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-4. While Joab and Abishai were on the front lines of the battle, where was David?

What were the choices David made?

11:1 David \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at Jerusalem.

11:2 David \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from his bed and walked on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

11:3 David \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about the woman.

11:4 David \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ messengers and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ her.

Each choice David made led him to the next one. If he had gone to battle none of the other events would have taken place. If he had stayed in bed, he never would have seen Bathsheba in the privacy of her own home. If David had turned away from watching her bathe, he never would have been curious about who she was.

If he hadn’t talked to his servants about her, he would not have sent men to take her from her home in the middle of the night. If he had never sent the messengers to her home, he would not have raped her and she would not have become pregnant.

Every time that I have heard this story told, no one has ever used the word *rape* in relation to David and Bathsheba. The NASB says David took her and lay with her. The Hebrew word translated here as *took* means to grasp or seize by force (rape). It is the same word used in Genesis 34:2 when Jacob’s daughter Dinah was raped by Shechem. 3

It is important to remember that Bathsheba was a young married woman (probably at least twenty five years younger than David who was in his late forties), living in her own home, getting ready for bed just as she had every night before. Her husband is one of David’s *mighty men* and fighting with the Israeli army against Ammon. Bathsheba naturally assumes that she has privacy and is safe within the walls of her own home.

*These homes were constructed with flat roofs that usually had an outdoor shelter from the sun’s rays and many also had inner courtyards that were kept cool from the heat of the day. 4*

There was no indoor plumbing, and nothing in the text says that Bathsheba was naked and taking a full water bath. It is probable that she was simply using a wet cloth to wash off the dust of the day and nothing in the text says that she knew she was being watched. The only reason David was able to disrupt her privacy was because from the roof of the palace, he had a higher vantage point with an ability to look down into the homes surrounding his own.

To put it plain and clear: David was no better than a voyeur who used his position as king to forcibly take Bathsheba from her own home; rape her and then send her back as if nothing had happened. It isn’t until Bathsheba misses her period (one to two months later) and discovers that she is pregnant that David speaks to her again.

Read 2 Samuel 11:5-13. Here are more wrong choices that David made; leading him from one evil *thought* to an evil *action* of murder. Look up James 1:14-15 and list the steps that lead to sinful actions:

What was David’s evil plan? (2 Samuel 11:6-13)

It seems that David was perfectly willing for Bathsheba to live a lie for the rest of her life and allow Uriah to believe the child was his own flesh and blood. The coldness of such a plan boggles the mind. Put yourself in Bathsheba’s place; full of shame, self-loathing and fear for her life.

At this time in history a woman caught in adultery was to be put to death as punishment. (See Leviticus 20:10 and John 8:1-11). According to the law, David also should have been stoned to death, but Bathsheba understood that she alone would be punished since David was the king.

If David’s plan had worked, Bathsheba would have never known a moment’s peace again. Every time she looked at her child, she would remember the lie she was living. It seems that David no longer had a soft conscience. (1 Samuel 24:5)

Who was Uriah to David? (2 Samuel 23:8 and 39)

How did Uriah’s loyalty to David and his fellow warriors thwart David’s evil plan? (2 Samuel 11:8-13)

How many times did David try to trick Uriah into acting against his conscience?

How did David use Uriah’s own loyalty to bring about his death? Who carried the murder plan letter? (2 Samuel 11:14-17)

What was Joab’s reaction to the letter? (2 Samuel 11:18-22)

Do you remember what David said about Joab’s murder of Abner in 2 Samuel 3:28-39? How can the man who judged Joab and Abishai so harshly be the same man who planned the murder of an innocent man who had shown only loyalty and honor to David all of his life? David not only planned the murder but to ask Uriah to carry the message that would mean his own death seems *especially* mean and low!

I believe that David no longer thought of himself as a flea and a dead dog (1 Samuel 24:14) but now saw himself as master of his own universe. All the surrounding nations were under his thumb and he thought he could do whatever he wanted without anyone questioning him.

Read Proverbs 16:12, 18 and James 4:6-10. What truths did David forget?

Add up how many other people David involved in his sins: How many servants did he question, send with instructions and messages? David may have thought he was sinning in secret, but in the end, everyone in the palace knew what he had done because he had involved each and every one of those servants in his sin. The amazing thing is that David lived for an entire year without repenting.

What does 2 Samuel 11:26-27 say David did after the death of Uriah?

Did marrying Bathsheba make everything all right now? What do you think?

We will see the ripple effects of David’s choices in our next study.

*Every leader should have at least one person in their inner circle, who is willing to confront, and speak the truth when the leader is in the wrong. It is hard to not only hear the truth, be willing to say that you were wrong, but most importantly, willing to turn in a new direction. In future chapters we will see that both Nathan and Joab were willing to confront and argue with David’s bad decisions.*

Unfortunate Event: Cursed

Just like Jesus in the New Testament, in the Old Testament God often delivered His message through story telling: parables. (See Psalm 78:1-4, Matthew 13:33-35) This is still true today when God speaks to His people in dreams and visions. What are they but visual stories God uses to get His message across to his people? (See Peter’s example in Acts 10:9-23)

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-8. Who did God send to confront David with the error of his ways?

What was the story Nathan told David about?

What was David’s reaction to Nathan’s parable and what did David say was the rich man’s sin and how should he be punished? (2 Samuel 12:5-6) See the law in Leviticus 24:17-23.

If a person isn’t corrected quickly after they sin, man’s sinful human nature often draws them further into the sin. No one corrected/confronted David at the time he raped Bathsheba so he continued to make one bad choice after another until he made the final choice to commit Uriah’s murder.

What did David’s son Solomon have to say about sins without a quick judgment in Ecclesiastes 8:11-13?

God is too kind to allow us to stay in our sin. He knows the scars that can form over our hearts and minds if we are not careful to confess our sins and cleanse our consciences. Why did God use a story about sheep to get past David’s natural mental defenses and hit him right at his core?

God knew that deep down David still had the heart of a shepherd so a sheep became the pivotal character in the story. David was really angry that anyone could be so unfeeling and have no compassion on his fellow man.

Read 2 Samuel 12:7-8. Nathan boldly confronts David and tells him “You are the man”. List the things God had done for David in his life according to these verses:

God reminded David of all the times He protected his life and cared for his needs. It was God who put David on the throne and blessed his life; not anything that David had done himself to earn it. According to 2 Samuel 12:9, David’s actions against Uriah revealed his heart attitude. In reality David no longer revered God’s word (law) but despised and disrespected it.

Read Psalm 101:3-4 and apply it to your regular TV/movie/video game/web site choices that you make every day. Don’t fool yourself. All scripture, no matter how long ago it was written, still applies to your life today because it isn’t *just* words on a page.

How do these Scriptures describe the word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12-13)

2 Samuel 12:10-23 contains the ripple effects of the choices David had made to this point. List the evil things that would now come into David’s life.

It was David’s bad choices that brought a curse onto himself and the members of his family. The seeds David sowed in the willful destruction of Bathsheba and Uriah’s family, he reaped in the pain and destruction of his own family members.

How did David react to the news that the child was sick?

The little boy was sick for a week. During that time David fasted and prayed. What was his reasoning according to 2 Samuel 12:22-23?

What did David believe happened to his son when he died?

Read Psalms 32 and 51 in the Amplified Version (if you can). In these Psalms, David reveals the process he went through during this time: sickness and pain of soul, confession, repentance of sin and receiving the total forgiveness of God. Read these Psalms and list which verses show each of the steps David took to move out from under the guilt of his sin and into the freedom of having his sins washed away and remembered no more.

Confession of guilt:

Request for cleansing and forgiveness:

Acceptance of forgiveness/willingness to change:

Promises to hold on to:

Praise/Worship/Thankfulness:

It’s interesting to note that in Psalm 32:2 David talked about having a spirit of deceit. For David to live an entire year making bad choice after bad choice, tells me that he had spiritual blinders on. He could not see his sin, either because he was deceiving himself, and/or Satan was blocking his ability to see and think clearly. (See 2 Corinthians 4:2-4; 1 John 2:10-11 and Revelation 3:17-19)

As you continue reading to the end of Psalms 32 and 51, you understand that God has now opened David’s eyes. David expressing thankfulness for God’s full cleansing from his sin and confident in God’s love. Maybe you have never raped or murdered anyone but is there a sin in your past that has blinded you and kept you from accepting the grace and forgiveness of Jesus that He offers to you today?

You too, can move out from under any guilt and shame you feel over your past sins; confident that you have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus. Jesus took the punishment for your sin and has given you *His* robe of righteousness. In God’s sight, you are whiter than snow and your sins are remembered no more. (See Isaiah 1:18 and 61:10; Micah 7:18-19 and Hebrews 8:12.)

*Even though David agreed with God that he had sinned, he still had to live with the consequences of his actions and so did those around him*. (This may prove to be true in your life as well). We read in 2 Samuel 12:15-23 that the innocent child became sick and died.

*In less than one year’s time* Bathsheba went from an innocent married young woman to a victim of rape. She then realized she was pregnant, which caused her to live in fear for her life. Suddenly Bathsheba became a widow through highly suspicious circumstances and was then forced to marry her rapist. In the end she lost both the husband she had chosen, and her newborn son to death, through no fault of her own. I can’t imagine the amount of stress that Bathsheba felt throughout that awful year.

2 Samuel 12:24 says that David comforted Bathsheba (hopefully she began to feel some affection for David). She became pregnant again with a son who was given two names; Solomon (peaceful - 1 Chronicles 22:9-10) and Jedidiah (beloved of the Lord - 2 Samuel 12:24-25).

Read 2 Samuel 12:26-31. The war with Ammon lasted almost two years. Joab realized it was nearing its end and the capture of its royal city Rabbah was imminent. What was Joab’s reasoning to send for David now?

As we looked at earlier in our study, 2 Samuel 12:31 has different interpretations. It may mean that David killed all the people in horrible ways or that he put them to work on his behalf as builders and brick layers. In the Tree of Life Version of the Holy Scriptures, 2 Samuel 12:31 says it this way:

“Then he [David] brought out the people who were there and put them to work under saws, iron threshing boards and iron axes, and assigned them to brick making; and thus he did to all the cities of Ammon.” 1 (bracket and notation mine)

Unfortunate Event: Incest and Murder

David’s family tree:

Wife #1 Michal Barren, no children

Wife #2 Ahinoam (from Jezreel): Amnon (1st born son)

Wife #3 Abigail (widow of Nabal): Chileab (Daniel)

Wife #4 Maacah (king of Geshur’s daughter) Absalom, Tamar

Wife #5 Haggith Adonijah

Wife #6 Abital Shephatiah

Wife #7 Eglah Ithream

Six of these children were born while David ruled in Hebron for seven and one half years. (2 Samuel 3:2-5)

Wife #8 Bathsheba (widow of Uriah and daughter of Eliam) Solomon, Shimea (Shammua), Shobab, Nathan

David took more wives and concubines while he lived in Jerusalem and more sons and daughters were born to him there. These are the sons of all his *wives* that were born in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, (Be) Eliada, Eliphelet. (2 Samuel 5:14-16; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9)

David’s siblings and their children in our study: (cousins to David’s children)

Sister Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab, Asahel

Sister Abigail: Amasa

Brother Shimeah: Jonadab, Jonathan (might be same person)

I mentioned in the Background Information on 2 Samuel, that there is no way of knowing how much time passes between each of the unfortunate events of David’s life. In this chapter of our study, enough time has gone by that David’s oldest children (born in Hebron) are becoming sexually active. David had set a bad example of taking what he wanted even though it didn’t belong to him (Bathsheba), so it’s not surprising that his oldest son Amnon, also takes what isn’t his.

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22. What did Amnon take that he had no right to take?

According to Leviticus 18:1-6, 9, 20:17 why was this the wrong thing for Amnon to do?

Just as we saw with David, how did Amnon fulfil James 1:14-15?

Who gave Amnon the plan to trick Tamar and what was his relationship to Amnon, Tamar and Absalom? (2 Samuel 13:3-5)

Just as David used his servants to draw Bathsheba into a trap, how did Amnon use David to force Tamar to walk into the trap he had set for her? (2 Samuel 13:6-7)

Tamar knew that only the king could approve of a brother and half-sister getting married, thus setting aside the law of God. Abraham and Sarah were half siblings too but it was before the law was given. (Genesis 20:1-13) Tamar did her best to talk her half-brother out of raping her, but 2 Samuel 13:14 says that Amnon wouldn’t listen. He took what he wanted even when she resisted, and just like his father David, once he was done with her, he told her to go away. Tamar knew that if she did, life as she knew it was over.

In this time of history, a girl’s virginity was the most valuable thing she could bring to her marriage. If it was taken from her, so was her ability to enter into a pure marriage covenant. How did Tamar reveal on the outside the irreparable damage that had been done to her on the inside? (2 Samuel 13:18-19)

Who came to her rescue? (2 Samuel 13:20)

What was David’s reaction? Did David *do* anything to help his daughter or to confront Amnon? (2 Samuel 13:21)

I believe that it was David’s own feelings of guilt and shame that kept him from confronting Amnon. David had no right to “cast the first stone” (John 8:3-7) because of his own prior actions. When Tamar needed her father David to stand up for her and protect her from her older half-brother Amnon, he didn’t do anything.

Only Absalom came to Tamar’s rescue and even then he told her to be quiet and hid her within his own home. Compare this to the rape of Dinah and the reactions of her father Jacob, and brothers Simeon and Levi in Genesis 34.

Read 2 Samuel 13:23-39. How long did Absalom wait to plan his revenge on Amnon?

There is an old saying that revenge is best served cold, but to allow two whole years to go by means that Absalom had a long time to put a plan together. It seems fitting that just like Amnon used David to force Tamar into a trap, so too Absalom used David to get Amnon to walk into the trap set for him. (Sowing and reaping: Galatians 6:7-8)

How did Absalom use David to put his plan into place? (2 Samuel 13:24-27)

Did Absalom kill Amnon himself? Who did it? (2 Samuel 13:28-29)

Who was the person that brought David the news? (2 Samuel 13:32-35)

How did David first react when he thought all of his children were dead and then when it was *only* Amnon that died? (2 Samuel 13:30-33, 36-39)

I find it interesting that cousin Jonadab (instigator of Amnon’s rape of Tamar), was also involved in the end of Amnon’s story. It was he who told David that *only* Amnon was dead. It does not say that he was sorry or wept, only the other sons were weeping and scared. What does this tell you, if anything, about Jonadab’s attitude toward his royal cousins?

Where did Absalom run to escape punishment? (2 Samuel 13:37-38)

Who was the king of Geshur to Absalom? (2 Samuel 3:3)

Geshur was located on the east side of present day Sea of Galilee in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh, to the far north of Jerusalem; a trip of approximately eighty miles. How long did Absalom stay with his grandfather in Geshur? (2 Samuel 13:38)

What does 2 Samuel 13:39 say David felt about the murder of Amnon and the absence of Absalom?

David may have been willing to forgive and forget the murder of Amnon but he proved unwilling to reach out to Absalom. Again David failed to act as a father should; confronting the sin in his child and bringing about reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness. (See Matthew 18:12-15; Galatian 6:1-2; James 5:19-20)

David failed in his role as father to his older children and three of his sons ended up causing him a lot of grief and pain. If you are a parent, take a lesson from David’s life of what *not* to do. If you want your child to love and honor God; it is up to you to live a life that models what a Christ follower looks like. You must not just *show* them but also *tell* them how to know God through a personal relationship with Jesus.

During the three years that Absalom was gone, Joab watched David and understood that David missed his son, but didn’t know how to get him back home without seeming to approve of the murder of Amnon. Joab came up with a plan; another parable, (since Nathan’s seemed to work so well), but this story was acted in a play, for an audience of one. Notice that 2 Samuel 14:3e says that Joab put the words into her mouth: he wrote the script himself.

Read 2 Samuel 14. What was the plot of the play? Who was the woman supposed to be?

What did David promise to do for the woman in 2 Samuel 14:10-11?

The woman must have felt safe enough to confront David with her question in 2 Samuel 14:13. What did she say David was guilty of in the eyes of the people?

David confronted the woman and asked if it was Joab who put the words in her mouth. She agreed that it was Joab and then she praised David about being an angel of God and knowing all that happens on the earth. (Not at all true as we have seen by his own actions). But the story had done its job; Joab had made it clear that it was time to bring Absalom back from Geshur.

Who did David send to get Absalom? (2 Samuel 14:21-23)

What was the condition David placed upon Absalom’s return to Jerusalem? (2 Samuel 14:24)

Do you think this showed forgiveness and reconciliation?

What message do you think it really sent to Absalom?

How is Absalom described in 2 Samuel 14:25-26?

How many children did Absalom have? (2 Samuel 14:27)

According to 2 Samuel 14:27, Absalom had a family of his own; three boys and one girl. He named his daughter after his sister Tamar. We can infer that his children were young adults at this time because his daughter is called a *woman* of beautiful appearance. So Absalom must be in his late thirties by this time and David would be in his late sixties.

How long did Absalom live in his own home (a type of house arrest) after returning from Geshur without seeing his father David? (2 Samuel 14:28)

How did Absalom attempt to go through the proper channels to see his father the king? (2 Samuel 14:29-33)

Joab was the man David sent to bring Absalom back from Geshur, so that is who Absalom attempted to speak with after waiting two years for his father to see him. What happened when Joab refused to speak with Absalom? (2 Samuel 14:30-32)

By burning Joab’s ripe crops in the field; Absalom caused enough pain/loss to ensure Joab would pay attention to him. What was Absalom’s complaint? (2 Samuel 14:32)

What was the end result? (2 Samuel 14:33)

We will see in the next chapter that even though David kissed Absalom, all was *not* right in their relationship.

Unfortunate Event: Conspiracy and Treason

Cast of new characters:

Ahithophel the Gilonite: court counselor to David, father of Eliam, grandfather of Bathsheba

Zadok: Priest, seer in charge of the Levites who cared for the ark of God

Abiathar: Priest, Levite that served in the care of the ark of God

Ahimaaz: son of Zadok the priest, used as a messenger to David

Jonathan: son of Abiathar the priest, used as a messenger to David

Hushai: the Archite, friend of David, spy for David in Absalom’s new court

Ziba: servant to Mephibosheth’s (Jonathan’s son) family

Shimei: son of Gera, relative of Saul’s family, from the tribe of Benjamin

Amasa: nephew of David, cousin to Absalom, Joab and Abishai; commander over Absalom’s (Israel’s main) army

Note: There is a copyist error in 2 Samuel 15:7. Most texts use the words forty years but this cannot be. According to the original writings, the time period should be read as four years. 1 (David only ruled a total of forty years, and Absalom hadn’t been alive that long). You will understand it properly in the context of the story.

Read 2 Samuel 15. Absalom had already spent three years in Geshur with his grandfather before David allowed him to come back to Jerusalem. David then continued to refuse him family access for another two years. We know that it is Absalom’s nature to hold onto offenses and bitterness for long periods of time, and during these times, he plots his revenge.

What plan did Absalom create to take revenge against what he considered to be his father’s poor treatment of himself?

How did Absalom sway the public opinion from David to himself? (2 Samuel 15:2-6)

Did the plan work?

Absalom stole the loyalty of the people through manipulation and deceit. He lifted his status through the use of chariots and horses. He would have men run in front calling out to clear the road. Absalom lifted himself up and did not depend on God to give him favor with the people. He went against everything 1 Peter 5:6 says to do.

It is important to remember, that *whatever you do to manipulate a situation to your benefit; you will have to continue doing, if you expect to keep it*. Have you ever tried to promote yourself? Did it work? What did you have to do to keep the position?

What does Jesus say in Luke 14:7-11 about the person who exalts himself?

How did Absalom again involve David in setting Absalom’s plan into action? (2 Samuel 15:7-9)

How many other men did Absalom trick into helping his plan? (2 Samuel 15:11)

Who willingly conspired with Absalom to commit treason against David? (2 Samuel 15:12)

Ahithophel the Gilonite is called David’s counselor. Who was he was in connection to other people in David’s life? Read 2 Samuel 23:34, 39 and 2 Samuel 11:3.

Ahithophel the Gilonite was the father of Eliam. Eliam was one of the thirty *mighty men* in David’s army. Uriah the Hittite (also one of the *mighty men*) was the husband of Eliam’s daughter Bathsheba. Therefore, Ahithophel was grandfather to both Bathsheba and Uriah. It is obvious that he held a long time grudge of his own against David for the irreparable harm he did to Bathsheba and her husband. This was his best chance to punish David for the evil he had done to Ahithophel’s family. We will read more of his plan later in this study.

How did David react to the news of Absalom’s treason? Read 2 Samuel 15:13-37.

Who did David take with him out of his household? (2 Samuel 15:14-23)

Who did David say had to stay behind and why? (2 Samuel 15:16)

How many of the men who came with David from Gath (Ziklag) went with him? Who were these men? See 1 Samuel 27 and 30.

These were the same loyal men who had been living and fighting alongside David during the years he was running away from Saul. They and their families, lived amongst the enemy Philistine’s, in David’s city of Ziklag for eighteen months. It was during this time that news of Saul’s death reached them. They followed David to Hebron and seven years later, helped David capture Jerusalem. These six hundred men became David’s personal army. All of them remained loyal to him during Absalom’s attempt to take the throne.

Why do you think David willingly left Jerusalem with his (almost) entire family, servants and army of men instead of staying to fight for his right to the throne?

Do you suppose David was trying to prevent another civil war?

This was not the first time David had to depend on God to honor his claim to the throne and sad to say, it won’t be his last. David was anointed by the prophet Samuel as a young teenager, but he didn’t have a throne until he was thirty. (Judah) He had to wait another seven years for God to move Abner and Ish-bosheth out of power before he was able to sit on Israel’s throne. Absalom was just another obstacle and though David was emotionally hurt by Absalom’s actions, he didn’t want to deal with it by fighting him directly.

Who was David depending upon to bring him back to the throne? (2 Samuel 15:25-29)

Why wouldn’t David allow the priests to bring the ark of God out of the city of Jerusalem?

What mountain did David climb while crying and visibly humbling himself by covering his head and going barefoot? (2 Samuel 15:30)

This is the very same Mount of Olives where Jesus spent a lot of solitary time praying and where he was ultimately betrayed by Judas. (Approximately one thousand years later). See Luke 22:39-48.

When David was told that Ahithophel had conspired with Absalom what did David pray would happen to the counsel he gave to Absalom? (2 Samuel 15:31)

Who did David ask to be a spy in Absalom’s circle of advisors? (2 Samuel 15:32-37)

2 Samuel 16:1-4 is another story within the bigger story. We met Jonathan’s only living son, Mephibosheth, in 2 Samuel 9 along with his family servant Ziba. These verses tell us that Ziba has brought supplies to David and his men. What did he bring to David?

When David asked where Mephibosheth himself was, what did Ziba say? (2 Samuel 16:3)

Ziba is inferring that Mephibosheth is siding with Absalom and committing treason. How does David react to the news? (2 Samuel 16:4)

Do you think it was true? Read 2 Samuel 19:24-29 for the rest of the story. Who do you believe is telling the truth?

Do you think David handled it the right way by splitting up Mephibosheth’s family inheritance and giving half to Ziba and his family?

Notice that Mephibosheth called David an *angel of God* just like the wise woman who acted out Joab’s parable in 2 Samuel 4. David was surrounded by people who *over* praised him. Because of this, I think David wasn’t sure who to trust. He wanted to honor his covenant with Jonathan, so he allowed Mephibosheth keep enough of his inheritance to support his family and future descendants. Only God knows which man was telling the truth and we can ask them when we get to heaven.

2 Samuel 16:5-14 is like a comical intermission in the middle of a tense dramatic play. David had just suffered another emotional blow from Mephibosheth’s possible treason. He is walking out of the city full of grief when he and his people are attacked by a man throwing rocks.

Who is the man and who is he related to? (2 Samuel 16:5)

What was Shimei’s opinion of Absalom committing treason against David? What did he compare it to? (2 Samuel 16:6-8)

What was Abishai’s (David’s nephew and leader of his *mighty men*) response to Shimei’s verbal and physical attacks on David? (2 Samuel 16:9)

Read 1 Chronicles 28:2-3 and compare it to Shimei’s words in 2 Samuel 16:7. Was Shimei speaking for God by prophesying these words or was Satan using them to make David doubt God’s love for him?

Do you think David sounded fatalistic in 2 Samuel 16:11 or realistic?

Remember that David had spent years being treated badly by his own family and Saul. I think David experienced so many obstacles, that he learned to continually trust God with every aspect of life. Read Psalm 3:1-8 which was written while David was running from Absalom.

What does this Psalm say about God’s role in David’s life and how he responded to God’s comfort?

Read the next events in Shimei’s story in 2 Samuel 19:15-23. Do you believe Shimei is really sorry for what he said to David or just trying to save his own life?

Do you think David really forgave him? Read the end of Shimei’s story in 1 Kings 2:8-9 and 2:36-46. Did David forgive and forget?

It is very important to remember that words once spoken can never be erased. Words have the power of death and life (Proverbs 18:21) and Jesus said people will be judged for every spoken idle word. (Matthew 12:36-37) James, the half-brother of Jesus wrote an entire chapter on the danger of the tongue.

Read James 3 now to remind yourself of the trouble words can cause. A fire once started is hard to put out and it can get out of control very quickly. Beware of the words you speak over others and over yourself as well. Speak life!

Unfortunate Event: Rape and Suicide

In 2 Samuel 15 and 16, David and the people loyal to him are leaving Jerusalem voluntarily in the hopes that there will not be another civil war. Through ignoring, and emotionally distancing himself from Absalom’s murder of Amnon, (as well as the rape of Tamar), David had started a sequence of events that were beyond his ability to control.

Even though David’s *wait and see* type of parenting obviously didn’t work, he used this same tactic by ignoring Joab and Abishai’s murder of Abner. We will see at the end of David’s life that ignoring another son brought more treason and murder to his family.

Read 2 Samuel 16:15-19. What did David’s friend Hushai say to make Absalom believe that he would be loyal to Absalom now instead of to David?

God caused Absalom to believe that David’s good friend Hushai could change loyalties so quickly. God allowed it so David could find out Absalom’s battle plans before they happened so a full scale war could be averted. Read 2 Samuel 16:20-23 and compare it to the curse which Nathan spoke to David in 2 Samuel 12:10-12. How did Absalom’s rape of the ten concubines (lesser wives) fulfill this curse?

Who gave Absalom the advice to rape the ten concubines that David had left behind to take care of the house while the rest of the family left (2 Samuel 16:20-23)?

A wise person considers the source of advice before following it.

We noted earlier that Ahithophel was Bathsheba’s grandfather. David had raped Bathsheba in secret and brought shame to her and Ahithophel’s whole family. He advised Absalom to rape David’s concubines in public; on the very roof from which David had watched Bathsheba, as a poetic form of revenge.

Ahithophel didn’t care about the women or Absalom’s desire to rule. By raping David’s lesser wives, Absalom was breaking the law of God in Leviticus 18:8. Ahithophel probably hoped to incite God’s wrathful judgment on the house of David by encouraging Absalom to follow his father’s sinful example. Absalom’s public sin fulfilled the curse spoken by Nathan the prophet in 2 Samuel 12:11-12.

Just as we saw Abner’s attempt to take some of Saul’s authority through his rape of Rizpah; by publically laying claim to David’s lesser wives, Absalom was telling all Israel that he was in possession of all David owned and now had total authority. To put it crudely; it is like a dog who marks out his territory by peeing along the boundary of his yard to keep other dogs from entering. Absalom was marking out his new boundaries over David’s old territory by having public sex with the ten women whose lives would now be forever changed.

What was the end of these women’s sad story? (2 Samuel 20:3)

David’s treatment of these ten women sounds a lot like what happened to his first wife Michal. I think this may be a hidden part of David’s personality that is showing through. What he doesn’t like or know how to deal with he ignores; out of sight = out of mind. He did this with Michal, Joab’s murder of Abner, Amnon’s rape of Tamar, Absalom’s murder of Amnon and now Absalom’s rape of the ten concubines. David does not know how to deal with the problems that his family members are causing in his life; so he compartmentalizes them, pushes them away until they come back later and blow up in his face.

Besides the plan for Absalom to rape the ten women, Ahithophel had another idea. Read 2 Samuel 17:1—23. What was Ahithophel’s plan of action against David?

What was Absalom’s response?

What was Hushai’s idea that Absalom liked better than Ahithophel’s idea? (2 Samuel 17:7-13)

Where had David said he would wait for word from Zadok and Abiathar the priests? (2 Samuel 15:27-29)

Do you think that Zadok had told Hushai where David was waiting for news?

Hushai purposefully tried to scare Absalom with stories about David’s ability to fight his enemies in the wilderness just as he had done while on the run from King Saul. What graphic word pictures did Hushai paint that caused Absalom to doubt the wisdom of Ahithophel’s advice? (2 Samuel 17:8-10)

I believe that Hushai knew exactly where David was waiting and he was desperate to stop anyone from following David before he could be warned of the plan. Who did Hushai meet with as soon as he left Absalom’s presence? (2 Samuel 17:15)

What were Hushai’s instructions to David and who took the message? (2 Samuel 17:15-17)

What happened to Jonathan and Ahimaaz on their journey to bring the message to David? (2 Samuel 17:17-21)

This story reminded me of Rahab concealing the two spies sent out by Joshua to spy on the city of Jericho. (Joshua 2:1-23) In both instances God used a woman to protect the men’s lives. What was David’s response to the message from Hushai? (2 Samuel 17:21-22)

God answered David’s *arrow* *prayer* (2 Samuel 15:31-32) by sending his friend Hushai across his path to act as his spy. God did make Absalom think Ahithophel’s advice to chase David right away was foolishness. God used a *regular* person to bring David the answer to his *arrow prayer*.

*An* arrow prayer *is a quick conversation with God while you are in the middle of a situation. (See Genesis 24:42-45 and Nehemiah 2:6)*

Let this be a lesson to you in your own life today. Your prayer doesn’t have to be long, filled with big words or spoken from a particular place or body position in order for God to hear and respond. God sent Hushai across David’s path within moments to answer David’s prayer. God used Hushai’s friendship with David and his close knowledge of old battle stories to ensure his advice held enough conviction and truth to sway Absalom to ignore Ahithophel’s counsel.

God can and will use regular, ordinary people you know and some people you don’t know, to bring the answers to your prayers. *He also wants to use you to be the answer* to the prayers of other people you know and don’t yet know. Keep your eyes open to opportunities that come your way to be God’s blessing and answer to someone else’s prayers.

What was Ahithophel’s reaction to Absalom rejecting his advice? (2 Samuel 17:23)

Why do you think he killed himself?

I think Ahithophel knew that Absalom would be defeated by David and because of his treasonous acts; he would be under a death sentence. He didn’t want David to have the final say over his life. Ahithophel was probably depressed and feeling that he failed his family by not achieving his full revenge on David.

Bathsheba’s father Eliam, is not mentioned other than his name listed as one of the thirty *mighty men* in 2 Samuel 23:34 so he was probably already dead at this time. 2 Samuel 17:23 says that Ahithophel set his house in order, making sure everything was ready for whoever would inherit the estate before he strangled himself.

Meanwhile, David crossed over the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim where Ish-bosheth and Abner had ruled the eleven tribes of Israel. Read 2 Samuel 17:27-29. Who brought supplies to refresh David’s household and army?

Do you recognize the names of two of these men? We already learned about King Nahash’s family and his son Hanun’s terrible treatment of David’s messengers in 2 Samuel 10; which resulted in a two year war. Shobi is another son of King Nahash of Ammon, who has brought supplies in tribute (legal requirement for peace treaty) or a voluntary show of his loyal support to David’s throne. The other familiar name is Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar. We met him in 2 Samuel 9:4-5 when Mephibosheth (Jonathan’s son) was living in Machir’s home prior to moving to live with David in Jerusalem.

Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim is a new person in our story. How is Barzillai described in 2 Samuel 19:31-39?

It’s important to remember that God can use your life to bless others at any time. You don’t have to be young or old, rich or poor, related or unrelated to the person God calls you to serve. God looks for someone with a willing heart. (See Exodus 35:5, 21-22 and 29; Psalm 51:12-13 and 110:3; Acts 4:32-37)

What were the supplies these three men brought to David and his followers?

We can learn a lesson from David and these three men for our lives today. David hadn’t met Shobi in person but had treated his father Nahash with respect. He hadn’t known Machir before sending for Mephibosheth, but there was respect shown for his good care of Jonathan’s son. We are told that Barzillai was an old man who showed David respect and David returned his respect by taking Barzillai’s son, Chimham, back to Jerusalem to live in the palace.

We don’t know whom God will use in our future to bless us or for us to bless them. It is *very* important to treat every person who crosses our path, with the respect and honor due them as a fellow human being, made in the image of God.

Unfortunate Event: Forest of Death

David is now camping at Mahanaim. Absalom has taken over the royal residence in Jerusalem. Ahithophel is dead. Absalom is preparing his army to pursue his father David, starting another civil war to decide who will rule Israel.

Read 2 Samuel 17:24-26. Whom did Absalom choose to lead the army of Israel?

How were they related? (2 Samuel 17:25)

Read 2 Samuel 18:1-5. Before entering the fight, David first counted the people that were with him. Then what did he do?

This battle plan is much like the one Saul used when he crossed over the Jordan River to fight against Nahash the Ammonite king when they came against the Israeli city of Jabesh-gilead. (1 Samuel 11:11) Joab and David were too young to have fought in that war but the knowledge of battle tactics would have passed down from the older men who had been there. Both Joab and David fought alongside Abner in the Israeli army (before they went on the run from Saul’s attempts to kill David) so they would have gained knowledge from the army veterans they fought beside. (1 Samuel 18:5, 13, 30)

Who were the men put in charge of the three pronged attack? (2 Samuel 18:2)

We read about Ittai the Gittite in 2 Samuel 15:19-22. How did he prove his loyalty to David?

What happened when David told the people that he would also go out to fight? (2 Samuel 18:2-4)

I believe that the people’s response was God’s way of protecting David emotionally from having to fight the younger Absalom in battle himself. What special request did David make to the three men leading the fight? (2 Samuel 18:5)

Look at your Bible map and see if you can locate Mahanaim. The region on the eastern side of the Jordan River where Mahanaim was located is called Gilead. It is the inherited territory of Jacob’s son Gad. Read 2 Samuel 18:6-8. Where did the battle take place? What type of terrain is mentioned?

What strange comment was made about the forest in 2 Samuel 18:8?

There are several theories about this forest that killed so many warriors. 1

1. The terrain itself was made up of cliffs and abrupt drop offs of land into pits or swamps that could not be seen until it was too late.
2. The warriors were easier to catch and kill because the terrain didn’t allow a person to run away easily, allowing an archer in a tree the time to take a clear shot. There may also have been underbrush that a person would have to wade or pick their way through, slowing both the pursuer and the pursued.
3. The forest was full of hungry wild animals such as bears, lions, leopards and wolves.

How many members of Absalom’s army (under Amasa’s leadership) were killed? (2 Samuel 18:7)

It is amazing to think that more people were killed of the twenty thousand men by the natural topography of the land and its wild life than by the sword in battle. Read 2 Samuel 18:9-18. The story of how Absalom was killed by Joab would be funny if it wasn’t so sad. In the end Absalom himself was a casualty of the forest. What caused Absalom to be easy to kill?

What did Joab say he would have given the man who told him about Absalom’s predicament if this man had killed Absalom himself? (2 Samuel 18:11)

What was the man’s response to Joab? (2 Samuel 18:12-13)

I think the man’s response in 2 Samuel 18:13 provides insight into Joab’s character. The warrior basically says that if he killed Absalom, David would find out. If the warrior defended himself by saying “Joab ordered me to kill him”, he knew Joab would deny it.

Read 2 Samuel 18:14-18. How did Joab respond to the man’s comment?

Joab must have really hated Absalom by this time, possibly out of guilt because it had been Joab who talked David into letting Absalom come back to Jerusalem. It was also Absalom who burned down Joab’s field of ripe grain in retaliation for ignoring his requests to see the king. The mob mentality took over once Joab put three spears into Absalom’s heart as his body hung helplessly from the tree branches. Joab’s action set a bad example for the ten younger men to also attack Absalom without fearing or respecting David’s wishes. What did Joab do next?

The warriors that had followed Absalom (under Amasa) were the same men who had followed Joab’s command for years and had fought side by side with David’s personal army of six hundred men. Once Absalom was dead Joab stopped his men from killing their fellow Israeli’s. What did Joab do with the body of Absalom? (2 Samuel 18:17)

2 Samuel 18:18 is a strange side note from the narrator of the story. It seems that Absalom had made what he hoped would be a lasting monument to his name because he had no sons to carry it into the future. This is puzzling because we read in 2 Samuel 14:27 that Absalom had three sons and a daughter, born seemingly while he was in his twenties. It is possible that his sons were killed in battle or perhaps they died earlier in life from some type of sickness….we aren’t given any further information about the boys. Either way, it seems that he is survived only by his beautiful daughter Tamar.

Now the two sons of the priests are brought back into the story line. We last saw them when they were escaping from Absalom’s spies to bring Hushai’s urgent message to David so he could move all the people with him across the Jordan River before Absalom’s army could overtake them.

Read 2 Samuel 18:19-33. Why do you think Joab didn’t want Ahimaaz the priest’s son to carry the message of Absalom’s death to David and instead chose a Cushite slave to bring David the news?

I think Joab remembered the fate of the previous two messengers who thought they were bringing David good news and were killed for their messages. (2 Samuel 1:2-16 and 2 Samuel 4:5-12) Joab was trying to protect Ahimaaz from David’s anger. What happened when Ahimaaz insisted on going anyway?

Ahimaaz ran so fast that he passed the Cushite messenger and was the first to enter Jerusalem. What was the message Ahimaaz gave to David in 2 Samuel 18:28-29?

Did he tell David the *whole* truth?

We are sure that Ahimaaz knew Absalom was dead because Joab told him in 2 Samuel 18:20. Why do you think he lied to David (omitted the truth)?

Ahimaaz may have had time to think on his run as to why Joab didn’t want him to be the one to carry the news of Absalom’s death. Perhaps he began to remember stories of what happened to previous messengers who had carried bad news to David. When he arrived first, he allowed David to think all was well and then stood aside to allow the Cushite slave to deliver the entire truth.

The Cushite thought that he was bringing David good news, perhaps he was unaware that Absalom was David’s son? These verses do not say that David was told *how* Absalom died (by Joab’s hand). Read 2 Samuel 18:33 through 19:7. What was David’s reactions to the news?

I believe that David reacted so deeply to Absalom’s death because of the way he had treated Absalom during the years since Amnon’s death. David had cut off all communication and personal relationship with his son following the murder and now felt guilty and responsible for Absalom’s rebellion. These “if only” thoughts led David into despair and depression.

To have three sons die so early in life was painful, but I think it was even worse to realize that his own sin’s sown in violence against Bathsheba and Uriah, were beginning to reap a harvest that he didn’t want. Remember the curse that Nathan spoke to David in 2 Samuel 12:10-11? The sword would never depart from David’s house, and evil would rise up from his own household. Within ten years of Nathan’s prophecy, two sons had brought evil upon their family and then paid for it with their own violent deaths.

Can you relate to David’s grief? Have you sown bad choices in your life that are now showing up in the lives of your children or other family members?

In the Old Testament, the sins of the father and God’s judgment upon those sins, carried over to the generations that followed. Praise God, in the covenant of the New Testament, that law is no longer in effect.

What do these verses say God provides in the new covenant through faith in Christ Jesus? (Jeremiah 31:27-34; Ezekiel 18:1-4 and 20-22; Galatians 3:13-14, and 22-29)

David sowed seeds of rape and murder and reaped a harvest of rape and murder in his sons. We cannot control the amount of the harvest, or which future descendants may sow the same bad seeds that we have. *The good news is that on the cross, Jesus broke the power of all curses and died to remove all sin.* If you have trusted in Jesus for salvation, the *penalty* of your sin is gone. You may still live with some of the *consequences* (just as David did), but your children are no longer cursed to follow in your footsteps. (Generational curse)

How did David’s deep grief affect the people who had fought on his side in the battle? (2 Samuel 19:2-3)

We see an example of this in the New Testament after Peter denied Jesus three times and then the cock crowed just as Jesus had prophesied would happen. (Mark 14:66-72) Peter ran away from the rest of the disciples and grieved. He was not at the crucifixion of Jesus (only John and the women were there). Afterwards, when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, (John 20:19-29) Peter did not assert himself in any way but may have kept back from Jesus because of his overwhelming feelings of guilt.

In John 21:1-22 Peter seems to go back to his old life as a fisherman and his choice leads the other disciples to follow his example; they also went back to their boats. How did Jesus confront Peter’s sin of denying Him three times and what picture does Jesus *paint* to restore Peter’s confidence in the plan God has for his life? (John 21:15-17)

Just like Nathan confronted David with a story about sheep, Jesus used the example of sheep and shepherd to restore Peter. In this chapter God used Joab to confront David. What strong words did Joab use to make David realize how he was treating the other members of his family, loyal staff and the very men who had risked their lives for him? (2 Samuel 19:5-7)

What warning did Joab give to David?

Joab warned that if David didn’t react quickly, it would be worse than all the evil that David had experienced since his youth. That’s a big statement considering all of the events that we have studied in David’s life so far. David listened to Joab and acted quickly. Read 2 Samuel 19:8-15. Satan used the *leadership void* caused by David’s grief to bring confusion to the people. What were the people arguing about?

The people had a right to be confused. It seemed that David had left the throne easily and quickly when Absalom rebelled. He seemed to run away, no longer willing to stay and defend Israel from further attacks from within or without. David sent for his friends the priests, Zadok and Abiathar and asked them to represent him to the elders of Judah who had originally made him king. What close relationship did the tribe of Judah have with David?

David was from the tribe of Judah and just as they had been the first to support his right to the throne in Hebron, they now needed to support his return to the throne in Jerusalem. There was one problem though. Absalom had made his cousin Amasa head over the army of Israel, usurping Joab’s position.

What was David solution to reunite the two armies and the two sides of the nation? (2 Samuel 19:14-15)

Who was it that helped David’s household and all the people who had fled with him to cross the Jordan River again? (2 Samuel 19:17)

We read earlier about Ziba and Mephibosheth’s differing accounts of their reactions to Absalom’s rebellion so we won’t go over it again here. You can read the result of their arguments to David here in 2 Samuel 19:24-30. We also already looked at Shimei’s show of repentance as to the words and actions he took against David on his way out of Jerusalem and David’s final judgment shown through his son Solomon in 1 Kings 2:36-46.

In 2 Samuel 19:21-22 Abishai is again pushing his own agenda and personal feelings of insult; trying to manipulate David into becoming angry enough to kill Shimei.

What was David’s response to Abishai in 2 Samuel 19:21-22?

From these verses we understand that David is still unsure of the reception he will get from the people upon his return to Jerusalem. He ends this unexpected emotional saga, by expressing his thanks to Barzillai and promising to take care of Barzillai’s son in Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 19:31-39)

Read 1 Kings 2:7. How did David keep his promise to Barzillai’s family even when David was on his death bed?

Unfortunate Event: Treason and Murder

David crossed back over the Jordan River but does not return directly to Jerusalem. He goes instead to Gilgal to meet with the elders of Israel. Read 2 Samuel 19:40-20:2. Who were the people that went with David to Gilgal? How many from Judah and how many from Israel (other eleven tribes)?

What was the complaint of the eleven tribes of Israel and what negative word did they use to describe their feelings about Judah’s special treatment of David?

How did the people of Judah defend their actions?

Does this verbal battle of accusations back and forth between the tribes seem childish to you? Remember, Satan works through people and strife is a major weapon of his warfare. The Bible has a lot to say about strife: Proverbs 10:12, 15:18, 16:28, 17:14, 20:3, 21:23, 22:10, 28:25; 2 Timothy 2:23-26; James 3:13-18, 4:1-3.

According to these Scriptures what is the main cause of strife and what can you do to stop it from happening?

How is Sheba the son of Bichri described in 2 Samuel 20:1? What tribe is he from?

What speech did Sheba make and what was the result? (2 Samuel 20:2)

Look up 1 Kings 12:16-17 and compare these words of Jeroboam to Sheba’s speech. What line did Jeroboam add to Sheba’s speech?

Benjamin, (the tribe of Saul) did not want to follow a ruler from Judah even though their forefather Jacob had prophesied that Judah would hold the scepter and rule his brothers. (Genesis 49:8-12, 27) Benjamin was prophesied to be a ravenous wolf who devoured his prey; a warring tribe always tearing other people apart. This is why I consider it a miracle (out of the ordinary way) that the tribe of Benjamin followed Judah in the final tearing of the nation of Israel under Rehoboam and Jeroboam. (1 Kings 12:21-24)

Benjamin supplied the warriors the tribe of Judah needed to protect David’s smaller kingdom to the south. The larger kingdom of Israel covered the ten territories to the north, east and west. Israel did split into two separate kingdoms in the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam and Solomon’s servant Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12. We see the first cracks in the unity of Israel’s twelve tribes during David’s reign.

David and his followers returned home to Jerusalem. David dealt with the ten concubines who had been raped by Absalom as we already studied in a previous chapter. David’s mind was once again filled with military tactics; on the attack against the larger army of Israel now led by Sheba. David set aside Joab as commander of his army and gave the position to his nephew Amasa.

Read 2 Samuel 20:4-7. What instructions did David give Amasa and what went wrong with the plan?

Who ended up leading the army in Joab’s place? (2 Samuel 20:6)

Like many young people who are given leadership positions without proper time and mentoring; Amasa didn’t follow David’s instructions showing up when he *felt* like it. We aren’t told what David thought about Amasa at this point, but David knew he could depend upon his nephew Abishai, commander of David’s *mighty men*. (2 Samuel 23:18-19)

Joab went along as a *regular* member of the army. He must have been furious over the demotion of his authority but didn’t take it out on David or his brother Abishai. Like so many of the men in David’s family, Joab held onto his anger and had a plan ready to take revenge.

Read 2 Samuel 20:8-13. What was Joab’s plan?

How does Joab’s betrayal of Amasa mirror the actions of Judas’s betrayal of Jesus? (Matthew 26:47-50)

At least Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray him and had time to deal with the emotional betrayal before experiencing the actual betrayal that led to his death on the cross. Judas may not have thrust the sword into Jesus’s side but his actions produced the same result. Amasa seems to be young and inexperienced not only in how to be a responsible leader but naïve as to the strategies of battle hardened men. The Scripture says that Amasa was not on guard against Joab and yet in reality, he should have expected some type of retaliation from Joab.

Amasa was the only person involved who was surprised by Joab’s action. The entire army knew how Joab murdered Abner in much the same way; revenge for his brother Asahel’s murder. (2 Samuel 3:27) In fact this was an often used method of killing an opponent; grab the man by the beard and put your sword into him at the same time. See 2 Samuel 2:15-16.

Joab and Abishai left the body of Amasa where it lay and pursued Sheba. We know that Joab had ten young men who were his armor bearers and it was one of these men that rallied the army to follow Joab in 2 Samuel 20:11-13. How did the army men react to seeing Amasa’s body in the road?

What did Joab’s armor bearer do to get the army moving again?

This scene brings to mind a modern day freeway where there has been an accident. Even though the cars involved are pulled over to the side and the lanes are clear for traffic to move freely; invariably people in cars on both sides of the freeway will slow down to look and see what has happened which causes a whole new traffic problem. As long as Amasa’s body was visible, all the men slowed and turned their attention to the body instead of remembering the need to hurry and catch Sheba before he could find some place to hide.

Read 2 Samuel 20:14-22 and see if you can locate the city of Abel Beth-maacah on your Bible map (look far north to the border of Dan and Naphtali). This city was over one hundred miles to the north of Jerusalem so that means the hunt for Sheba probably took a few days. They would have to ask questions of people all along the way to make sure they hadn’t missed Sheba stopping off to hide somewhere.

What action to prepare for battle did Joab take when he discovered that Sheba had taken refuge inside the city gates of Abel Beth-maacah? (2 Samuel 20:15)

In this period of history, cities would surround themselves with high, thick walls so in times of enemy attack the people could leave their fields and homes to run inside for protection. They hoped that the enemy would be unable to scale or break through the walls to attack the people holed up inside. Joab decided that the easiest thing to do was throw dirt next to the wall and build a ramp to go over the top.

The NASB says that the army was *wreaking destruction* on the country side to get the dirt that they needed; probably uprooting trees, orchards, and fields of crops without any care for the livelihoods they were destroying. Who called out to Joab from within the city?

The word used for *wise woman* in 2 Samuel 20:16 is the same word and description used in 2 Samuel 14:2 of the woman Joab hired to act out the parable to King David. It appears that Joab had a healthy respect for women and he had no problem in discussing military issues with the lady. What did she say the town of Abel Beth-maacah was known for? (2 Samuel 20:18-19)

The wise woman was telling Joab that military force was not needed; diplomacy and truth were all that they needed to reach an agreement. When Joab described Sheba and his treasonous actions what did he promise he would do if the city gave him Sheba? (2 Samuel 20:20-21)

What did the wise woman promise Joab?

This woman obviously was a leader of the people in this city. They quickly found Sheba, cut off his head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Joab was true to his word and blew the trumpet telling the army to disperse and go back to their homes. Notice that the damage that had been done to their fields and crops was still there to be dealt with but the bigger threat to their city had been resolved.

There is no further mention of civil unrest once Sheba is dead, so it is assumed that the nation is once more united under David’s rule. The last verses of 2 Samuel 20, list the names of people who held leadership positions in David’s kingdom. It reveals that Joab stepped back into his role of commander of the united army of Israel.

Unfortunate Event: Famine and Plague

The last four chapters of 2 Samuel are considered to be a type of appendix with comments and events that are out of the time line of the rest of the book. There are no dates given to note when these may have occurred so we will cover the events of chapter twenty one and chapter twenty four together.

Read 2 Samuel 21:1-14. How long did the famine last and what did David do about it?

What reason did God give David for the famine?

Who were the Gibeonites? Joshua 9:1-27

What was the mistake the leaders of Israel made in Joshua 9:14?

What did the leaders of Israel swear to the Gibeonites and their descendants? (Joshua 9:15, 19)

What reason is given for Saul’s attacks on these servants of Israel? (2 Samuel 21:2, 5)

I think that it is very interesting that the punishment for Saul’s sin was a drought which resulted in a three year famine. The Gibeonites had a covenant to be drawers of water and wood cutters for the entire nation of Israel. God stopped providing water (no work for them and no blessing for Israel) until the sin against them was atoned for.

Even though the sin was not David’s; he and the entire nation were held accountable for the sins of Saul. The entire nation suffered famine for three whole years before David received an answer from the Lord. (Did he pray when it started or only after suffering for three years?) David asked the Gibeonite leader’s what they wanted. Their people had been wrongfully hunted down and killed (just like the Jews were hunted by the Nazi’s and other regimes) even though they had a covenant agreement with the nation of Israel. David promised to do whatever the Gibeonites wanted so Israel could again receive the blessings of God.

What did the Gibeonites ask for? (2 Samuel 21:3-6)

This seems really harsh to us especially when we know that God no longer holds us accountable for the sins of our ancestors. At this time in Israel’s history the children were still held accountable for the sins of their fathers so seven of Saul’s descendants had to die. All of Saul’s sons by his wife Ahinoam were already dead but he still had one daughter and a concubine who had born sons.

Who did David spare because of his covenant with Jonathan? (2 Samuel 21:7)

David not only spared Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth but his grandson Mica. (2 Samuel 9:12). In 1 Samuel 24:21-22 David also made a promise to Saul. What did David swear to Saul?

It should be noted that the husband of Merab was Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite who is a different man than Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim who brought David supplies while escaping from Absalom in 2 Samuel 17:27-29. Neither Saul’s concubine Rizpah nor Saul’s daughter Merab had any say in David’s decision. All seven of their sons were to die as a blood sacrifice to stop the famine.

Where and how were these seven men killed and who carried out the sentence? (2 Samuel 21:6, 9)

As we studied earlier, Saul’s family lived in the city of Gibeah in the tribal territory of Benjamin. By hanging these men in the midst of their family members it sent a heavy message to warn anyone who may be thinking of following in Saul’s footsteps and/or from seeking revenge on the Gibeonite people. God is watching and takes covenants very seriously.

How did Rizpah react? (2 Samuel 21:10)

How did David react when he heard what Rizpah was doing? (2 Samuel 21:11-14)

At the end of 1 Samuel we read how the men of Jabesh-gilead retrieved the mutilated bodies of Saul and his three sons who died in battle against the Philistines and then burned the bodies and buried them under a tree. David wanted to pay his final respects to Saul and Jonathan’s family so he collected their remains and buried them together with the seven new bodies in Saul’s ancestral family tomb. Notice that the famine stopped only after this final burial, bringing a complete closure to the sad history of events.

Read the sad events of 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21:1-7. Why was God angry at David?

Who does the 1 Chronicles passage say gave David the idea to number the people?

What was David trying to find out through the census?

Who tried to talk him out of taking the census? (2 Samuel 24:3-4)

It’s hard to tell when this may have happened in David’s reign. Joab seems to feel free to question David’s actions as he had earlier in our study and yet David ignored Joab’s advice so that fits in with the end of the book after Joab had murdered so many good men and David had lost all respect for Joab.

In this census it seems that David was interested to find out the number of men available to fight (twenty years and older) so it may be another clue that it was earlier in his reign when they were still busy fighting the surrounding nations. Look at your Bible maps and see if you can follow the route that Joab and his men took around all the territories of Israel.

How long did it take them to travel the whole land and then report back to David? (2 Samuel 24:8)

How many fighting men were found in all of Israel? (2 Samuel 24:9; 1 Chronicles 21:5-6)

You will notice that there is a difference in total numbers found in these two Scripture references. A note in Ryrie’s NASB study Bible gives a possible reason. The 800,000 of Israel shown in 2 Samuel 24:9, may not have included the 300,000 listed in 1 Chronicles 27, and the 470,000 in Judah, may not have included the 30,000 shown in 2 Samuel 6:1. It was also suggested that the numbers have been rounded up in 1 Chronicles. 1

Who did Joab leave out of the census and why? (1 Chronicles 21:6)

When did David’s conscience start bothering him? (2 Samuel 24:10; 1 Chronicles 21:7-8)

I find it interesting that David didn’t feel guilty during the ten months the men were gone, only *after* he had heard the number of fighting men. Perhaps he realized that *by knowing the number he was limiting what God could and would do*. See what happened to Gideon when he knew the number of fighting men he had in Judges 7:1-22. What lesson do you think God was trying to teach both Gideon and David?

How quickly did God respond to David’s confession of sin in 2 Samuel 24:10-11?

Compare 2 Samuel 24:12-14 and 1 Chronicles 21:10-13. What three choices of punishment did God offer David?

Notice that there is a difference in these texts for the number of years of famine. 1 Samuel 24:13 says seven years of famine and 1 Chronicles 21:12 says three years of famine. It is believed that three years is the correct number as it occurs that way in the earlier copies of the Hebrew Scriptures and the other two choices involved also use the number three. 2

Which option did David choose and why? (2 Samuel 24:14 and 1 Chronicles 21:13)

Which would you have chosen and why?

I have to say that I agree with David’s choice. I trust God way more than any human being because He loves me unconditionally and grace and mercy are who He is not just what He does.

What happened when God sent the pestilence? How many people died? (2 Samuel 24:15)

Find the territory of Dan on your Bible map and then find the city of Beersheba in the southern territory of Simeon. 1 Samuel 24:15 gives these two locations to show us that the pestilence went through every territory and town of Israel; from the farthest north to the furthest south, no area was spared.

What happened when the angel of death neared the city of Jerusalem where David and his family lived? (2 Samuel 24:16-17 and 1 Chronicles 21:15-17))

God allowed David and the elder’s to see into the spirit world, revealing the death angel of the Lord. In the New Testament this gift is called “discerning of spirits”. (1 Corinthians 12:10) David’s shepherd heart was broken once again because it was his sin that the people were paying the price for.

What did David ask God to do to him instead of to the people?

Read God’s response to David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 24:18. How fast did God answer David’s prayer?

What did the prophet Gad tell David to do?

Who was Araunah/Ornan? (2 Samuel 24:19-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:18-28)

These verses in 1 Chronicles tell us more about Araunah/Ornan. How many sons were with him at the threshing floor and what did they do when they too saw the angel of death?

Notice that Araunah/Ornan was a Jebusite (non-Jew). If you recall, these are the very people David fought and killed to gain their fortress city of Jerusalem for his own. (2 Samuel 5:6-9) It’s interesting that God is again telling David to take something from a Jebusite for his own but this time David doesn’t take it by force; he buys it.

How did Araunah/Ornan show David that he respected David’s right of authority over him and everything he owned? Notice how many times he uses the words “lord and king” (2 Samuel 24:21-23)

When David told Araunah/Ornan why he wanted the land that the threshing floor stood upon, he wanted to help. What was he willing to give David besides the land itself?

To process a grain harvest the farmer would use oxen to walk around and around on a hard surface that was covered in the harvested stalks of grain. This action caused the grain to be separated from the stalk and afterward, the grain would be sifted from the chaff and then ground into flour or meal. 3

By Araunah/Ornan offering David not only the land and threshing machine, but his oxen as well; he was giving up the most important tools on which his family’s livelihood depended.

How did David respond to Araunah’s generous offer? (2 Samuel 24:24)

The phrase that David used in 2 Samuel 24:24 is well known. It mattered to David that it should cost him something personally to put an end to the plague because it was his sin that caused it in the first place. David took ownership of his sin; knowing that he deserved to suffer, but God’s kindness protected his family and all the people who lived in the city of Jerusalem from the plague’s destruction. Read what Samuel said was most important to God in 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

What should David have done instead of being stubborn and having his own way? (1 Chronicles 21:3-4)

2 Samuel 24:25 says that David did buy Araunah’s oxen and sacrificed them as a peace offering on an altar that David built himself. It’s important to remember that this entire unfortunate event happened because David wouldn’t obey the wise counsel God had sent; no one had to die. Did you know that this same threshing floor became the site for Solomon’s temple?

What was the name of the mountain that the threshing floor/temple of Solomon was built upon? (2 Chronicles 3:1)

What other major event had happened on Mount Moriah? (Genesis 22:1-18)

It was on Mount Moriah that God put his finger on the long awaited, promised son of Abraham. God asked Abraham if he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac and Abraham’s answer was yes. *Mount Moriah was a place of ultimate obedience and personal sacrifice* so it is fitting that David paid for the threshing site and the oxen that he sacrificed there.

The Exploits of David’s *Mighty Men*

In 2 Samuel 21:15-22 and chapter 23:8-39 we learn more about David’s *mighty men*. 2 Samuel 21:15 begins with an account that took place during one of four wars against the Philistine army; listed all together without any time spans to reference. The battle could be earlier in David’s reign at the time of the other wars with the Philistines we studied in 2 Samuel 8 or later in his reign when David is in his sixties and beginning to grow weak physically. We know from 1 Kings 1:1 and 1 Kings 2:10-11 that David’s body was weakened in old age and he died at the age of seventy. Either way, this may have been the last battle David actually fought in; allowing his *mighty men* to follow in his giant killing footsteps.

David killed Goliath when he was an older teen, perhaps age eighteen. (1 Samuel 17:40-51) If David is now in his sixties, this means that these giants could be Goliath’s sons who were children when he died or perhaps Goliath’s grandsons. (No one knows for sure, only that they were from Goliath’s family line). These giants would know the story of David and their ancestor Goliath very well and probably had long dreamed of revenge against Israel’s king.

According to 2 Samuel 21:15-22, how many descendants of the giants did David’s *mighty men* kill? What are their names and descriptions?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Did you notice that two of the four men who killed the giants were David’s own relatives? Who were the two men and how were they related to David? (2 Samuel 21:16-17, 20-21)

David’s nephews Abishai and Jonathan (brother of Jonadab in 2 Samuel 13:3 or maybe the same person?) both killed a giant. Do you think these second generation *mighty men* of David were able to kill the giants because David had already proved that it was possible to achieve?

When you tell the story of what God has done/is doing in your life; you never know who may be listening. It is so important to talk about the great things God has done so that others can visualize succeeding in those same areas of their own lives. (See Psalm 145:3-13 and John 14:9-14)

What happened when David was attacked by the giant Ishbi-benob? (2 Samuel 21:16-17)

It is interesting to notice that just like Jesus had a close group of three men, then a group of twelve men, then a group of seventy men, then a group of one hundred and twenty people, David also had a group of three men, then thirty men, then an army of thousands.

According to 2 Samuel 23:8-12 who were the top, inner, elite group of three men and why were they considered to be the best?

1.

2.

3.

2 Samuel 23:13-17 tells us an inside story of what happened during a battle with the Philistines when David was again hiding out in the caves of Adullam. It proves that a leader needs to be careful what they say to those who follow behind; this story could have had a terrible ending. It took a lot of self-control for David not to take just a single sip of the water that he had been craving.

How did David show that he realized what his rash words could have cost these three men? How would you have felt if after risking your life to get David what he had asked for (water), he proceeds to pour it out on the ground instead of drinking it?

We know that Abishai is David’s nephew (probably the oldest of the three sons of Zeruiah) and always seemed to be close to David’s side. (See 1 Samuel 26:6-9, 2 Samuel 16:9-11, 19:21-22) What does 2 Samuel 23:18-19 say about Abishai?

The thirty *mighty men* may have been like the *Seal teams* of our military today; having more skill with weapons and battle tactics than men in the regular army. David put Abishai in a position of honor as leader of the thirty *mighty men*. It’s a little confusing after reading the long list of *mighty men* in 2 Samuel 23:20-39; you would think that there would be thirty names, but in reality there are thirty seven. It seems that thirty was the constant number of *mighty men* but as one died in battle another man would rise up to take his position. 1

Therefore, at the time of this writing in 2 Samuel, some of the men listed have already died. We recognize the name of *Asahel* listed in 2 Samuel 23:24; we met him earlier in our study, dying by the hand of Abner (2 Samuel 2:18-23). We also know that *Uriah* the Hittite listed in 2 Samuel 23:39 (Bathsheba’s husband) was killed in battle. I think that it is also probable that Bathsheba’s father *Eliam* (2 Samuel 23:34), who was the son of David’s advisor Ahithophel, was also dead by this time as he is not mentioned anywhere else.

We know that *Benaiah* the son of Jehoiada is still alive at this time. He is famous for killing a lion in a pit on a snowy day; killing a huge Egyptian warrior (2 Samuel 23:20-21) and also because David put him in charge of his personal body guard. He was probably younger than the other *mighty men* because he was still an active member in the royal household when Solomon became king. (See 1 Kings 1:32-38, 2:28-46)

*Shammah* the Hararite who fought amidst a crop of lentils in 2 Samuel 23:11-12 is listed as one of the *mighty men* in 2 Samuel 23:33 and there were probably more stories about each of these men who earned a place among David’s *mighty men*. I’m sure that every member of David’s army hoped to achieve the status and have their name lifted above their peers.

Each of these men were using the talents and skills that God had given them in the service of God’s people. How about you? Are you hoping for notoriety or status from the world, the church at large, or are you satisfied in the place God is using you right now?

It’s good to have a vision/goal for your life but it *must* be in line with what God has planned for you. Seek His plan and you will have all the success you desire. (See Jeremiah 29:11-13 and Psalm 37:3-11)

David’s Song and Last Words

It is not clear why the writer of 2 Samuel felt the need to include one of David’s songs at the end of the book. Look up Psalm 18 and compare it to 2 Samuel 22. Do you see any difference in the two passages?

The preface notation in the NASB of Psalm 18 states that David wrote these words while on the run from King Saul (recorded in the book of 1 Samuel). This proves that these last few chapters of miscellaneous information were put at the end of 2 Samuel as a type of supplemental source of information about David. What do these two passages tell you about David’s fears?

What do they tell you about his trust in God?

How does David describe God and His actions on David’s behalf?

How does David describe himself and his abilities (with God’s help)?

Can you say the same as David that you have kept yourself blameless and the Lord rewards you according to your righteous acts? I don’t think anyone can! Thank God that though we *cannot* keep ourselves totally blameless, *there is One who has already done it in our place! Jesus is our righteousness and God the Father finds us blameless, holy and accepted in Him*. (See Philippians 3:3-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

The words of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 may have been spoken publically or written in a journal like one of the Psalms. Technically the last words we have of David are found in 1 Kings 2:1-9. They are last minute instructions to his son Solomon dealing mainly with the characters that we have studied in this book of 2 Samuel (Joab, Barzillai, and Shimei). These words of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 may have been said just before he actually died but we don’t know the timing for sure.

What statements does David make about himself in 2 Samuel 23:1-7?

What statements does David make about God?

Do you think that David was thinking about Joab and Shimei when he talks about worthless men and/or the worthless men that were part of his army? (2 Samuel 3:39, 23:6-7; 1 Samuel 30:22)

In his old age, David remembers the most important thing that God ever said to him; the everlasting covenant that his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel. (2 Samuel 7:8-16) David writes of it again in Psalm 89:3-4 and 132:10-12, encouraging himself and reminding God of the promise. In Isaiah 9:6-7 the prophet Isaiah writes of the promised king and then in Luke 1:31-32 Gabriel tells Mary that her child will be the fulfilment of this promise.

Finally, in Acts 2:22-36, Peter explains that Jesus is a fulfilment of God’s promise to David. In Revelation 22:16-21, Jesus testifies that He is the root and offspring of David and that He is coming back *soon* to reign over His kingdom. Make sure that you are ready to meet Him!

Conclusion of Our Study

I hope that you have enjoyed this study of David’s adult life as recorded in the book of 2 Samuel. I must confess that while studying this book, there were times when I didn’t like David very much as a person. Thank God that David was not left to remain in the middle of the mess his sinful choices created. God was faithful to free him from the penalty of sin even though David still had to deal with the consequences for the rest of his life. It is important to remember that none of us are good on our own and if God were to leave us alone in our sinful ways, none of us would survive. (Romans 3:23)

I thank God that in the book of 2 Samuel, we have seen *real* people: the good *and* the bad in the lives of these men and women. It is clear that we all need God at every moment and in every area of our lives or we will soon become mired in the ugly results of our own sinful choices. It’s important to remember that every person who believes in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, has the Holy Spirit inside them; helping them to become more than they are on their own. David was a shepherd boy whom God chose to lead a nation as a king. God is still willing to take those who have open hearts to follow His will and place them in positions of authority to bless other’s lives. May your heart be one that is open for the adventure that God has in mind for you!

Most of the Old Testament Psalms that David wrote were written in the midst of the ongoing unfortunate events we have studied in 2 Samuel. I believe that David was able to continue his close walk with God because he was willing to pour out his thoughts and emotions to his heavenly Father. Jeremiah 17:7-8 echoes David’s Psalm 1:1-3 describing the blessed man as a tree; deeply rooted in the word of God. You too can be a well-watered tree that produces fruit even in an entire year (or lifetime) of drought (unfortunate events) if you will keep praying, reading and studying the Bible every day of your life.

I hope to study with you again soon and want to remind you that as you read the Bible, remember to put yourself into the story; claim any promises, obey any directions the Holy Spirit may give you and be encouraged to follow the examples of the men and women who God used to do great and mighty things. The same power dwells inside of you if you have believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and you too can do great and mighty things for God. (Romans 8:11) The word of God is still alive and active and God will use *all* of His word to transform your life – if you let it.

Until next time we study together.

Blessings, Diane

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