

2 SAMUEL

The Reigning King



A Devotional Bible Study
by Sue LeBoutillier

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❧ 2 Samuel — The Reigning King ❧

Greetings Friend — Welcome to our women’s Bible Study through **2 Samuel** entitled, *The Reigning King*. This is a continuation from our study in **1 Samuel** called, *The Coming King*. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Samuel is one long narrative. At some point, it was divided into two scrolls — so, we have also divided our study into these two sessions.

The entire book of Samuel focuses on a *king* for the nation of Israel. But there is a strong undertow in each chapter that no human king would ever bring lasting peace to fully satisfy Israel — no human king would bring lasting peace to any nation, or any person, for that matter. All of humanity has always been longing for a perfect King — which is only found in Jesus, the Christ.

Fortunately, in the middle of this study we find a promise. It is the longest recorded promise in Scripture since the days of Moses. God’s people are promised a perfect King — one who will reign on a throne that *shall be established forever* (**2 Samuel 7:16**).

But in the meantime, as we open **2 Samuel**, we find that Saul, Israel’s first king, has perished in a brutal battle. Now David, *the man after God’s own heart*, the central figure in the books of Samuel, will finally assume that role. His ascension to the throne won’t happen quickly or easily, and neither will his life be lived out perfectly. Even though he was God’s choice to lead Israel, we realize he was only human.

2 Samuel is a book of history, yet there will be opportunities to apply these passages to our own lives. As David’s successes and his failures remind us of our own, we’ll continue our parallel study on *Lessons for Leading*, just like we did in **1 Samuel**.

May the Lord richly bless you as you study His Word!

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How to use this Bible Study

The Reigning King — 2 Samuel is a verse-by-verse study, which has been divided into ten weekly lessons. If you do each lesson, you will read and contemplate every single verse in the entire book.

Whether you are meeting with a friend, a small group, or doing this study on your own — the following would be an ideal path:

#1 Your first step will be to watch/listen to **Week One — Introduction**, either independently or with your group.

#2 Begin **Week Two in your Study Guide**

- ◆ Read the assigned Scriptures and answer the questions for each day. This Study Guide is intended to be completed independently **before** you watch or listen to the teaching associated with each week's lesson. (Also note the sections, *Lessons on Leading* and *Questions for Thought and Discussion* — you won't want to miss them).
- ◆ Then watch/listen to that week's teaching using the links below. You can do this privately or with your group.
- ◆ Then discuss the week's lesson in your group and pray together about applying the passages to your lives.
- ◆ Repeat this process as you do all ten weeks in your Study Guide.

One last reminder — be sure to approach each of the above steps with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and speak to your heart.

To watch the video teachings for this Bible Study go to:

ccontario.com/womens-studies

or

[YouTube.com/calvarychapelontario](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCU)

The best translation of the Bible to use is the one you understand best, and using more than one translation can be a useful aid in your study! This study guide was created using the ESV (English Standard Version).



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Week One — Introduction

Use this page to accompany the Week One teaching video.
(www.ccontario.com/wow-2Samuel)

If you're studying in a group, the questions on page 6 may provide some good discussion starters following the video.

The Old Testament books of **1&2 Samuel** are not really two separate books but one long account. The distinction between the two books can be stated simply —

- ◆ In **1 Samuel**, David was the _____ king, and
- ◆ In **2 Samuel**, David was the _____ king.

1&2 Samuel could also be called "*The Life of David*" because...

- ◆ The central figure is _____
- ◆ The central concept is _____

2 Samuel will cover roughly _____ years time, which was the length of David's reign.

The time marker at the beginning of **2 Samuel 1** tells us this portion of the book begins "*After the death of _____*"

Outline of the Books of Samuel

As the Bible transitions from the book of **Judges** (*no king in Israel*), to the books of **Samuel**, the primary focus is on a **king**. The 55 chapters of Samuel could be briefly organized this way:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1 Sam 1-15 | A Corrupt Priest (Eli) to a Corrupt King (Saul) |
| 1 Sam 16-31 | A Contrast in Kings (Saul and David) |
| 2 Sam 1-10 | The Rise of a Respectable King and the Blessing to Israel |
| 2 Sam 11-12 | The Fall of the King |
| 2 Sam 13-20 | The Consequences of the Fall for both David and Israel |
| 2 Sam 21-24 | An Epilogue Summary of David's Kingdom ¹ |

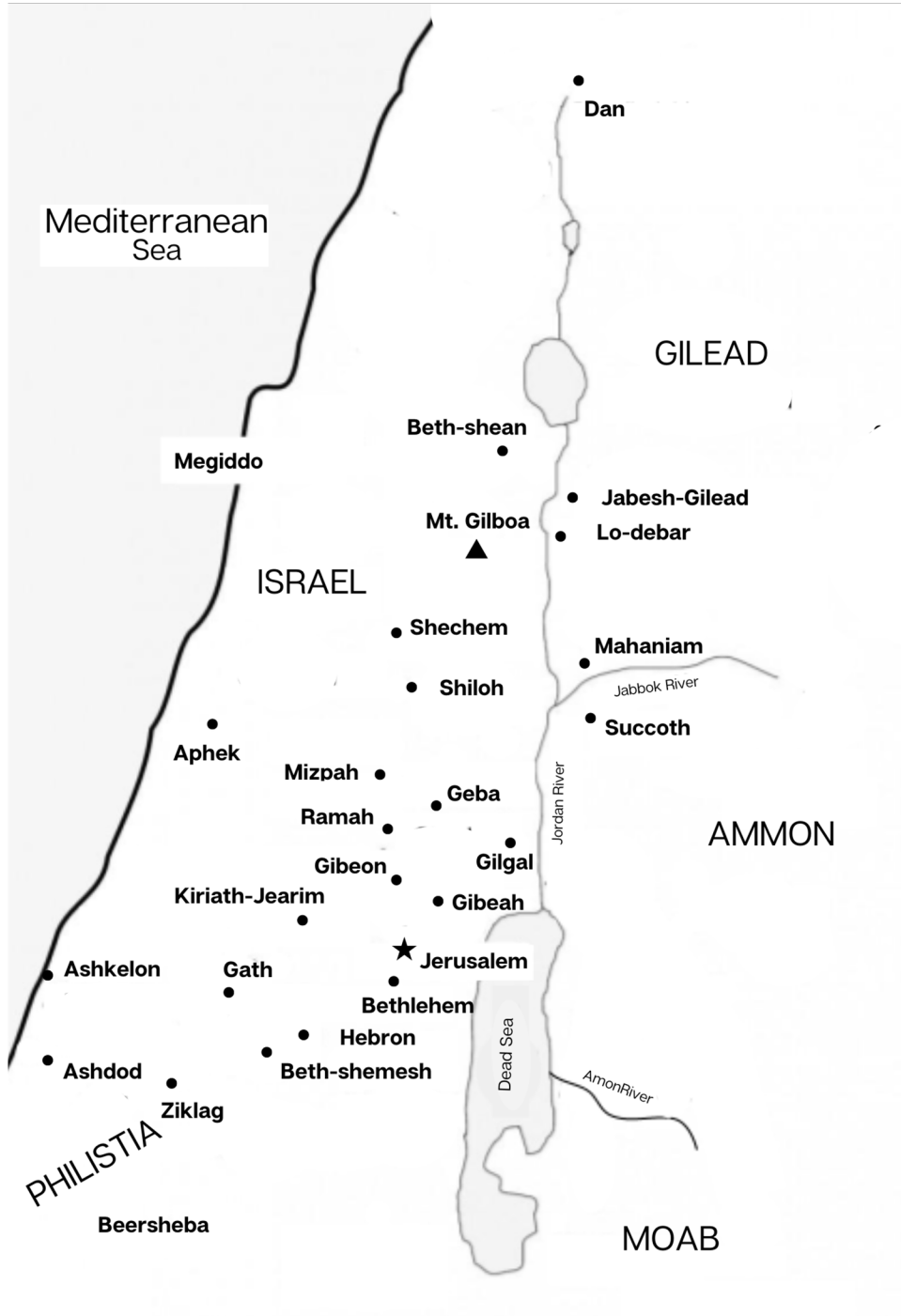
Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. The Amalekite expected a completely different response from David when he gave him the news of Saul's death. Why do you think he assumed that David would be delighted?
2. How would you describe David's reaction to Saul and Jonathan's deaths?
3. Have you ever been like the Amalekite? Have you assumed someone would be delighted when a troublemaker in their life got fired, moved away or was removed from their life in some way? Were you humbled by their surprising reaction?
4. What typical signs of grief do you see portrayed in **2 Samuel 1**?
5. What does David's lament indicate about his true feelings toward Saul and Jonathan?

*"Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness.
It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity,
the price you pay for love.
The only cure for grief is to grieve."*

— Rabbi Earl Grollman

Map



Week Two — 2 Samuel Chapters 2-4

When it comes to the rise and fall of nations and leaders, there is sometimes a *front page* story that's widely publicized and a *back page* story that only *insiders* are privy to.

Brace yourself, because much of 2 Samuel recounts the politics and intrigue that go hand in hand with changes in power — in this case, the change in Israel's leadership.

What the writer of 1 Chronicles summed up with only one verse (read **1 Chronicles 11:3**), the writer of Samuel narrates in 86 verses — thus giving us the privilege of knowing the entire *back page story!*

Day 1: _____

📖 READ 2 Samuel 2:1-11 — David moved to Hebron

At the end of 1 Samuel, David had been living in Philistine territory in the city of Ziklag. Now, with Saul no longer a threat to his life, he was free to move about and even free to move back to Israel if he chose.

- To which city did the Lord instruct David to move (**v.1**)?
- Who moved along with him (**v.2-3**)?

Since David hadn't been in close enough proximity to know all that happened during and after the battle on Mt. Gilboa, he was finally told of the bravery of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, as they rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons for a proper and respectful burial.

- Summarize David's message to these men in one sentence:

Can you put yourself in David's place? Saul had been the cause of his trials and troubles for the better part of a decade. Don't you think he might have been tempted to just be relieved that it was over? Now he could move on with his life!

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them.
Romans 12:14

He didn't *have to* make a statement about Saul's death and he didn't *have to* reach out to Saul's sympathizers. But, David and the men of Jabesh-Gilead had something in common — they had both been blessed by the younger King Saul and perhaps they shared a lingering nostalgia.

Whether this message of blessing was sentimentally or politically motivated, the point was clear — David was extending his hand with an invitation for them to join HIS new leadership.

But there was an alternate idea for leadership on the table...

- Who did Abner, the commander of Saul's army, crown as king over Israel in Mahanaim (v.8)?

You'll notice that the area of Mahanaim is on the other side of the Jordan River. It's unclear as to why Abner set Ish-bosheth up in that location rather than Saul's hometown of Gibeah. What *is* clear is that the Hebrew nation was far from unified, as there were now two kings in two different regions. It would remain that way for a bit longer.

- How long did David reign in Hebron (v.11)? _____

Day 2:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 2:12-32 — An Unusual Civil War

These verses reveal the *back page story* for us. In this moment, the Hebrew nation had two kings — reigning in two areas — each with a commander who fancied himself a king-maker — and each wanting the opposing side to surrender to their leadership.

- Name the location where both commanders met in an effort to determine who would gain control over the nation (v.13).

The text doesn't spell out exactly what was going on, but we can surmise that the intention was to set up a miniature civil war. In an attempt to avert a full-blown civil war — just twelve men from each side would fight it out and see who would be the victor.

It wasn't a terrible idea, as far as efficiency goes, but it didn't work at all! It seems all twenty-four men killed each other fairly quickly and a full scale civil war broke out anyway.

- At v.17, who was winning in this conflict?
- As Abner fled the battle, who was chasing him (v.19)?
- Abner sounded a clear warning to Asahel to stop chasing or arm himself. Why do you think he took the time for this warning?

So, Asahel was killed by Abner, which is noteworthy at this point since he was Joab's brother. That wouldn't be forgotten anytime soon.

In his flight, Abner eventually took his stand among a larger group of Benjaminites, who provided a safer place from which to suggest they all call it a day. And that's what happened. They agreed that nothing more would be accomplished and they all went home.

The truce was short-lived and the war between the house of Saul and the house of David would continue. In this battle, the casualties among Joab and David's men amounted to _____ (v.30); while the casualties for Abner and Ish-bosheth came to _____ (v.31).

Day 3:

READ 2 Samuel 3:1-21— Abner's Attempt at King-making

The text tells us that the house of David was increasing in power compared to the house of Saul. One obvious and practical way for a man's *house* to increase was producing many sons.

List the wives and their firstborn sons who were born to David in Hebron:

1st son _____ born to _____ of Jezreel

2nd son _____ born to _____ of Carmel

3rd son _____ born to _____ of Geshur

4th son _____ born to _____

5th son _____ born to _____

6th son _____ born to _____

There are two episodes in David's life that almost everyone knows — David & Goliath and David & Bathsheba. The former story inspires us while the latter shocks and disappoints us. We wonder how *a man after God's own heart* could carry out such a blatant sin.

Perhaps the growing list of wives might shed a little light. Perhaps a man's unchecked desire for *passion* could eventually lead him to a place he never intended to go.

The events of this chapter also show us where an unchecked desire for *power* may lead. People play all sorts of games in order to position themselves advantageously. Along the way, they leverage people and truth, thus sowing seeds of deception and distrust. But through it all, we're reminded that God is ultimately in control of the affairs of men and nations!

Remember, Abner was either an uncle or a cousin to Saul. That means he was an uncle figure to Ish-bosheth. Even though the people believed Ish-bosheth to be king, it was clearly Abner who called the shots.

- As this whole drama unfolded, what was the accusation leveled against Abner by Ish-bosheth in **v.7**?

For historical understanding, anyone who seized a ruler's woman (wife or concubine) was viewed as attempting to seize his title and power. It's just the way the world operated at that moment of time.

Now, we're not told whether this accusation was true or not, but **v.6** did say that **Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul**, and that statement came right on the heels of David **growing stronger and stronger**, as evidenced by his list of wives and sons. So, we might guess that Abner did indeed seize this concubine Rizpah.

- What was Abner's response to the accusation (**v.8**)?
- What course of action did Abner determine to take (**v.9-10**)?

It's clear that Abner had given up on Ish-bosheth, but he had not given up on power. He saw an opportunity to broker a deal with David, throw Ish-bosheth under the bus, and maybe, just maybe slip into an even more powerful position.

- What is the one thing that David requisitioned from *the house of Saul* in order to consider this proposed covenant (**v.14**)?

The wheels of progress were set in motion:

- Michal was taken from her husband and brought to David. (**v.15**)
- Abner suddenly remembered the promises of the Lord related to David and reminded the *elders of Israel*. (**v.17-18**)
- Abner smoothed everything over with the tribe of *Benjamin* (Saul's tribe), so they would accept David as King. (**v.19**)

And before you know it, Abner came with twenty men to report the unanimous verdict.

- Explain what is so odd about a mere commander making the statement he did in **v.21**.

Day 4:

READ 2 Samuel 3:22-39— Abner was Murdered

It's not very realistic to expect two powerful, or should we say, power hungry commanders to be content serving together. Toss into the mix the unresolved problem that one of them killed the kin of the other, and it's sure to be a disaster.

- The way in which Abner had left David's presence was mentioned in both **v.22** and **v.23** — Abner had gone in _____.
- What do you think Joab expected David to have done?

We saw yesterday that Abner believed he possessed the power to make or break kings. Now we see that Joab believed he could wield power over the power-broker.

- What did Joab and Abishai do to Abner upon his return to Hebron (**v.27, 30**)?
- What was their motivation (**v.27, 30**)?

- What was David’s reaction when he heard the news (v.28-29)?

This is all dreadful enough — the play for power, the distrust, revenge — but there is one more thing that makes it all worse. The location of this act was in **Hebron**, which was a **refuge city**.

- Read **Numbers 35:9-12** to understand the purpose for a city of refuge.
- Read **Joshua 21:13** to understand that Hebron was designated as a city of refuge.

Now, it could be argued that Abner wasn’t in Hebron for the purpose of protection from the war-time killing of Asahel. Still, revenge was uncalled for, and revenge in a refuge city raised the bar to an intolerable level. No wonder David wanted to distance himself from this act.

- What were some of David’s extraordinary actions in mourning for Abner?

- How did the people respond to David’s deep level of mourning for Abner?

*By the hand of my servant David I will save my people
Israel from the hand of the Philistines,
and from the hand of all their enemies. 3:18*

Day 5:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 4:1-12 — The End of Ish-bosheth

- Why do you think that Ish-bosheth became dismayed when he learned that Abner was gone?

- We find a random mention of one of Jonathan’s living relatives in v.4. We are obviously intended to take note of him for the future. What was his name?

The following significant players were killed in chapters 1-4. Put a “**W**” next to the ones who were killed in an *act of war* and an “**M**” next to those who were murdered.

_____ Saul _____ Jonathan _____ Asahel
 _____ Abner _____ Ish-bosheth

- How do you think the punishment for the killers of the “**W**” category should differ from those in the “**M**” category?

- What response were the two sons of Rimmon hoping to get from David?

- What was his actual response to them?

Lessons on Leading

The book of 2 Samuel is, of course, a continuation of the events that happened in 1 Samuel. If you participated in that study with us, you're familiar with the weekly *Lessons on Leading*, which connect the events of these chapters to situations in our own lives where we might find ourselves *in the lead*.

You may be a mother, leading your little tribe; or a teacher, leading your classroom; maybe you lead a ministry or support a leader in ministry; or perhaps you lead employees. If any of these situations apply to you, you'll find useful spiritual lessons in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel.

1. Just because God had determined David to be King over all Israel, it didn't mean it would happen quickly or easily. It took many years between David's anointing and his full recognition as King over Israel. Name two important character traits a person should employ while waiting for a position with more responsibility.

2. Leaders need people to support them, but support people may not always support perfectly. At times, they may actually create more work or heartache for a leader. How can a leader remain *open* to support, knowing it may actually increase their workload?

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Psalm 34:15

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. In the opening words of this lesson, David's life was in transition. He inquired of the Lord as to *what he should do* and, specifically, *where he should go*. Why is this such a good example for us when we are in similar transitions in our lives?
2. The overall sense from David during these years was patience and calm. He didn't seem to be striving for the *full* crown of Israel, but rather trusting in God's timing. What are some ways that you have learned to trust in God's timing in your life? What are some areas that you find challenging to trust in God's timing right now?
3. The two commanders (Abner and Joab), on the other hand, seemed to strive at every turn to make things happen in *their* time and *their* way. It didn't end well for either of them. What have been some negative results of striving in *your* life?
4. David's lack of self-control, as he collected more and more wives, may have led to his ultimate lack of self-control in taking another man's wife (Bathsheba). In what other areas (beside passion) might a Christian need to take note of small compromises that could lead to something larger?
5. Read **Romans 12:14-15**. Explain how David acted in agreement with those verses in the opening chapters of 2 Samuel.

Week Three — 2 Samuel Chapters 5-6

New beginnings are exciting! Take marriages for example — it's a new beginning and an exciting time for a husband and wife. Not every couple is able to move into a fresh, new space to begin their journey, but, if that were possible, it would sure set a positive tone that their new life would be more of a merger than an acquisition.

Since Israel and Judah were operating in relative independence at this moment, David wisely perceived what it might take for all the tribes to happily begin this new journey under his rulership. The location from which he ruled should be fresh and original, thereby inspiring a sense of belonging for all the Hebrews.

Much of the narrative in these two chapters centers around *how* David became Israel's king and *where* he established his throne.

Day 1:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 5:1-16 — A New King and a New City

- Who was involved in anointing and establishing David as King over all Israel (v.1,3)?
- What was the original location from which David reigned (v.1)?
- How long did he reign from that location (v.5)?
- What was the second and permanent location from which David reigned over all Israel (v.5)?

*You shall be shepherd
of my people Israel
and you shall be
prince over Israel.* 5:2

- How long did he reign from that location (v.5)?

In order to establish his throne in a fresh and neutral location, David set his sights on a city from which no one else had reigned. In fact, no Hebrews had even lived in Jerusalem. Since the earliest days, it had been continuously inhabited by the Canaanites.

Here are some interesting tidbits for us to know about **Jerusalem**:

- Earlier in Scripture, it was also called Jebus, or Salem.
- It was occupied as early as Abraham's day. **Genesis 14:18-20** records Abraham offering tithes to Melchizedek, King of Salem.
- Jerusalem lay within the territory originally assigned to Benjamin. (**Joshua 18**)
- The people of Benjamin had never been able to conquer this city, nor drive out its inhabitants. (**Joshua 15:63, Judges 1:21**)

What a perfect opportunity for David to do something original, something heroic, yet something that honored the heritage of Israel's first king — Saul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin.

- Read **1 Chronicles 11:6**, which is a companion passage. Who took up David's challenge to invade the city through the water shaft?

- According to v.9, what title did David use for this city?

- What was the source of David's success (v.10)?

*And David became greater and greater, for the Lord,
the God of Hosts was with him. 5:10*

David continued to grow his family. From **v.14-15**, list the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem:

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. 5:12

Day 2:

READ 2 Samuel 5:17-25 — Taking Care of Military Business

Today's passage was primarily informational — more battles with the Philistines — not unlike previous battles with the Philistines. But there were a couple of noteworthy things that give importance to these verses.

First, delivering Israel from the oppression of the Philistines was important to the Lord:

- Read **1 Samuel 9:15-17**, and explain one of main purposes for which God declared Saul King:

He was not successful in following God.

- Now read **2 Samuel 3:18**, and explain one of the main purposes for which God declared David King:

Understanding God's purposes for the king helps make better sense of finding detailed records of David's battles with the Philistines.

- Read **2 Samuel 8:1**. What do you learn about David's effectiveness in his calling with regard to the Philistines?

So, that summarized David's accomplishment.

The second thing that we should note in today's passage is David's method for victory. Even though he had *become greater* and was successful, we find that he did not rely on his own wisdom and insight in these battles.

- From **v.19**, what do you learn about David's query and the Lord's direction in the first situation with the Philistines?

- From **v.20**, what was the result?

- From **v.23**, what do you learn about David's query and the Lord's direction in the second situation with the Philistines?

- From **v.25**, what was the result?

*The Lord has broken through my enemies before
me like a breaking flood. 5:20*

Day 3:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 6:1-5 — Taking Care of Spiritual Business

Now that Israel's military threat was mostly extinguished, David had the luxury of turning his attention to what might have been lacking in the nation's spiritual life. The greatest need was providing a home, once again, for the Ark of the Covenant, which was still residing in Kirath-jearim (which by David's time was named Baale-judah).

- In whose house had the Ark been residing (v.3)?
- Describe the type of group who went with David to bring the Ark into Jerusalem (v.1).
- Describe the atmosphere as they were heading into Jerusalem with the Ark (v.5).
- Describe specifically how the Ark was being transported (v.3).

Let's back up and review how the Ark got to Abinadab's house in the first place. You may remember, in **1 Samuel 4**, that the Philistines defeated Israel and captured the Ark. Things didn't go well for them while the Ark was in their territory, so they wanted to get rid of it. The priests of the Philistines counseled them to "*prepare a new cart...and send it off*" (1 Samuel 6:7).

- What do you see in today's verses that seems to be following the very same instructions of the priests of the Philistines?

Also, there was one important action that David tended to before each battle with the Philistines (5:19,23), which seems to be missing from this narrative.

- What did David *fail to do* before he endeavored to bring the Ark into Jerusalem?

Day 4: _____

READ 2 Samuel 6:6-13 — A Right Way and a Wrong Way

It's not uncommon for Christians to sincerely want to serve God and honor God, without first taking the time to find out *how* God wants to be served and honored.

- What seemed to be the error that Uzzah made (v.6)?

- What was David's reaction to God's judgement on Uzzah (v.8)?

Can you relate to his frustration? Most of us have a perception that God should be *nice*. He should understand people's intentions and overlook their ignorance. He should always be ready with a second chance. But we rarely allow Him to be just plain *holy*. When He is, we struggle.

The Ark of God was somehow taken to the home of Obed-edom for _____ months. This provided enough time for David to think, search the Scriptures, get counsel from *Israel's priests*, and perhaps, he even remembered to *inquire of God*.

"The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." 6:12

Read **1 Chronicles 15:1-15**, which is a parallel passage to our current text. WOW! David learned a lot about doing God's ministry in God's way during those three months.

- From **v.13**, along with the above **Chronicles** passage, list as many details as you can find about what David learned and why the second attempt to bring the Ark of God was more successful than the first.

Day 5:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 6:14-23 — When Bitterness Prevails

The day that the Ark of God came into Jerusalem must have felt like a mixture of Christmas and the Fourth of July! It was a sort of national picnic with music, celebrating, and free food.

The description of David wearing a *linen ephod* should not be pictured like the *ephod* that a priest would use to inquire of the Lord, but rather like a shorter undergarment that would have given more freedom of movement.

- Describe David's overall countenance that day:

- Where was Michal, as she caught sight of David (**v.16**)?

And David danced before the Lord with all his might.^{6:14}

Remember, Michal was Saul's daughter first. She loved David, she was married to David, she once risked her life for David. Then she was taken from David and given to another man — and taken from her other man and given back to David. Michal was the poster child for *marginalized women*!

- With all this in mind, why do you think she reacted to David's actions in the way she did?

Everyone in and around Jerusalem seemed to be having a happy day, but not Michal. Bitterness can ruin even the best of days. This day was an accomplishment for her husband and a joy for her people, but Michal's bitterness swallowed all of that and erupted in a rebuke fixated on clothing and dancing.

- What was David's unfortunate response to Michal's bitter tirade?

What a sad ending to what should have been a joyful day. I wonder if the notation that Michal had no children was simply an acknowledgment that she and David were *done*. There would be no physical relations from that point on.

We're left then to ponder the impact that our emotions can have on our own attitude and those around us. Seeing life through a lens of bitterness will always lead to a lack of fruitfulness in our lives as well.

In order to let this week's study rest on a high note, simply read and enjoy the prayer of thanksgiving that David appointed to be sung to the Lord by his ministers of music in **1 Chronicles 16:8-36**.

Lessons on Leading

This was David's time — God had finally opened the door for the fulfillment of what was told him years ago — he was now King over all the tribes of Israel. But it was still necessary for David to walk in wisdom and finesse in order to make the most of the opportunity God had given him. There are multiple lessons we can take to heart for our own situations in leading.

1. Do you agree that, people who are suddenly merged together may appreciate, even *crave*, a fresh beginning based in neutrality? Have you considered this? In what ways can you apply this concept in the situations in which you lead?
2. What are your thoughts about David's multiple wives and children? If you're a mother, you probably labeled it '*a mess*'! David seemed to be too busy to properly raise his children. **1 Kings 1:6** described his relationship with one of his sons: "***his father had never crossed him at any time***". What are some strategies for cultivating a Godly family even if you're busy with other pursuits?
3. David led Israel in a time of great rejoicing because he restored the Ark, which must have resulted in restored worship. In what ways could your obedience to God restore worship among those you lead?
4. How can you prepare to deflect bitter comments that may come your way from people like Michal?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. In these chapters, we get a sense of David's great success. In what ways does it inspire you that David continued to *inquire of the Lord* — even in the midst of his success?
2. In what area of your life do you realize that you need to follow David's example and *inquire of the Lord*?
3. It's easy to simply repeat a course of action that produced positive results previously. Why do you think it's important to ask *how* God would have you do something *each time*?
4. We're almost embarrassed watching David simply follow the Philistine's methods for transporting the Ark. In what ways do we Christians sometimes follow the patterns we see in the world and then, like David, find ourselves in trouble, and subsequently angry with God over our own mistakes?
5. If a friend confessed that she felt smothered in bitterness (like Michal) and had difficulty finding joy in *anything* or sharing in other people's joy, how would you counsel her?

Week Four — 2 Samuel Chapters 7-8-9-10

A little time has passed now since the Ark of God was brought into Jerusalem and placed in the tent that David provided. Even though years have passed, the focus is still on the Ark!

These first two chapters form a high point in David's life, actually, in all of the Old Testament. It's called the **Davidic Covenant** and in it we learn so much about the character of our God and what He has in mind for His people and His unfolding plan of redemption!

Day 1:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 7:1-17 — A Throne Forever

- While talking with Nathan, how did David describe both his own home and the home for the Ark (v.2)?

David's home:

The Ark's home:

- What advice did Nathan initially give David (v.3)?
- Summarize what you imagine Nathan's response would have been to David after the Lord spoke all of this chapter to him:

"I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel." 7:8

It's fascinating, that this very encouraging and tender message was spoken to David through a prophet rather than spoken directly to David. Then again, it has often been God's method to speak His message to His prophets who in turn speak to His people — it's God's way.

David's desire was commendable, but God's intention for *him* was to continue to fight the Lord's battles until Israel was firmly established in the promised land. Someone else would build the temple.

"I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you." ^{7:9}

While God was reminding David that He never gave instructions for a house to be built in His name, His message was **personal**, **practical** and **prophetic**.

List the **personal**, even tender, elements that God spoke to David:

V.8 —

V.9 —

List the **prophetic** elements that God spoke to David:

V.12 —

V.13 —

V.16 —

God gave David the **practical** purpose of *shepherding* His people and giving Israel rest from her enemies. God would give to another the **practical** purpose of building a resting place. To Solomon would be given the earthly task and to Jesus would be given the Heavenly task.

"I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more." ^{7:10}

Day 2:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 7:18-29 — Responding to the Lord

When God speaks, the very best response a person could have is to: 1) affirm His words, 2) trust His promises, and then 3) declare His greatness.

In today's passage, that is exactly what David did — and he did it with great eloquence and humility.

"You are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant." 7:28

Note some of the phrases in which you see David's humility expressed:

Note some of the phrases in which you hear David declare God's greatness:

Note some of the phrases in which David affirmed God's promises to him personally:

"You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you." 7:22

Note some of the phrases in which David affirmed God's promises to the nation of Israel:

As God's children, we have also been given personal affirmation and great promises in His Word. This might be a very difficult assignment for some, but consider writing a personal prayer of response to what God has spoken to *you*, using David's prayer as a model.

*"Who am I, O Lord
God, and what is my
house, that you
have brought me
thus far?" 7:18*

Day 3:

📖 READ 2 Samuel 8:1-18 — David Brought Israel Rest

The remaining chapters for this week aren't nearly as inspiring as chapter 7. Today's chapter in particular is more of a military record than anything else, but we will persevere and learn from it since God saw fit to include this passage in the Biblical record.

This record is actually very well placed because God had just affirmed to David that his purpose was to bring peace to Israel and that God Himself would *cut off his enemies before him*.

List the various armies and people groups that David was able to defeat in order to give rest to Israel:

V.1

V.2

V.3

V.5

V.13

And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. 8:6

David didn't lead the nation solo but he surrounded himself with faithful men who helped him shepherd the nation. List them:

Commander of the army: _____

Recorder: _____

Priests: _____ and _____

Overseer of the Cherethites and Pelethites: _____

Day 4: _____

✞ READ 2 Samuel 9:1-13 — A Show of Compassion

Today's reading contains a heart-warming narrative that highlights David's compassion and justice. We just read in the previous chapter, "...and David administered justice and equity to all his people." (8:15). Here is an example of David's *good side* coming to the surface. But we should brace ourselves because, on the heels of this event, we will also find an example of his *bad side*. This reminds us that, like Saul, no king is all *good* or all *bad*. Kings are just like all of the rest of us normal people — they are human!

David's ascension to the throne brought about an entirely new *ruling house*. The typical custom would have been to eradicate any possible remnant of the *former house*, lest a rival try to recover the throne.

- Rather than seeking out any descendants of the *house of Saul* to eliminate them, what was David's motive (v.1,3)?

- Read **1 Samuel 24:20-22**. What was the promise that David made to Saul at that time?

We need to take note of three people of interest in this passage who will surface again in later chapters:

1) The son of Jonathan (v.6): _____

2) The servant of the house of Saul named in v.2: _____

3) The man who Mephibosheth lived with (v.4): _____

The city of Lo-debar was somewhat off the beaten path — a pretty good place for a descendant of a former king to sort of *hide out*.

- What would you guess Mephibosheth's emotions to have been as David summoned him?

- What did David promise to Mephibosheth (v.7)?

There is something interesting, maybe even suspicious about this servant of a former king who has fifteen sons and twenty servants. Usually, in Old Testament times, that was a description of quite a bit of wealth. At this point, we have no further explanation — but we'll tuck that information away for later.

- What was Ziba's response to the king (v.11)?

- To what city did Mephibosheth move (v.13)?

Day 5:

READ 2 Samuel 10:1-19 — Misunderstood Intentions

We would all prefer the world to work in a dependable, reciprocal fashion — if we are kind, compassionate, and understanding — we then want to receive the same treatment from others around us. Unfortunately, that's not always how the world works!

In chapters nine and ten, David was on a roll spreading kindness and sympathy, but it was *not* reciprocated. That put David in the difficult position of deciding how to handle Israel's former antagonist.

- What was David's expressed purpose in sending a delegation to the Ammonites (v.2)?
- How did Hanun's advisors interpret Israel's actions (v.3)?
- Briefly describe the humiliation inflicted on David's servants (v.4).

The remainder of the chapter basically describes the predictable battle that resulted from a misunderstood offense. Perhaps one highlight we are to take from this narrative is the usefulness, skill and courage of Joab.

- List a few positive actions and strategies that you observe from Joab in v.9-14:
- In what way did David continue to bring peace to Israel through this episode?

"Be of good courage...and may the Lord do what seems good to him." 10:12

Lessons on Leading

1. A good leader must be able to say, '*I was wrong.*' Nathan initially told David, "*Go for it — build a house for the Ark.*" When God told him otherwise, he returned to say, "*I was wrong — don't start building after all.*" How is that example relevant in your life? Have you ever had to admit your advice was wrong? What was the outcome? Are you prepared now to admit when you are wrong?
2. Chapter 8 provided a short list of men who helped David lead the nation. It's not always easy to delegate responsibility, but I think we all agree that it pays off. What are some characteristics you should look for in people you choose to help you lead?
3. In chapters 9-10, David leveraged his position and resources to express compassion and sympathy to others. Do you think this is optional for leaders, or part of their responsibility?
4. David was motivated to seek out Mephibosheth because of a promise he had made to Saul. Do you think leaders have any greater responsibility to keep promises? Why or why not?
5. What *lessons in leading* can be learned from Hanun's reaction to David's delegation, who had come to offer sympathy?
6. What lessons can you learn and apply from David's actions in tucking his servants away from the public until their dignity was restored?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. David had a particular ministry in mind for himself — to build a temple for the Ark of God. Do we always get to do the ministry that is in our mind and heart? How do you respond when you realize that God has not opened the door for you to do something you really want to do?
2. David accepted the promises of God without hesitation and then went into his tent and prayed them back to God. In what way is this a good example for us to pray Scripture (promises) back to God? What would be an example of doing just that?
3. Explain how the details in the story of Mephibosheth and King David might be used as an analogy describing you and God.
4. Hanun completely misunderstood David's intentions. Why do you think his advisors saw things the way they did and why do you think Hanun was so willing to accept their advice?
5. In what ways can you learn to slow down and really process what is happening around you in order to avoid misunderstandings like we read between Israel and Ammon?

Week Five — 2 Samuel Chapters 11-12

Are you the sort of gal who has piles of unfinished projects? Maybe you collect supplies, get excited to begin, but then struggle to stay with it until the end. I think that can be a common scenario. Staying on task can require determination and focus.

During this time in Israel's history, the King's purpose was to subdue their neighbors and usher in a season of peace and safety. That was why kings would go out to battle and that is why the final sentence in verse one sets an ominous tone: *"But David remained at Jerusalem."*

Day 1:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 11:1-5 — Power and Passion

- Who did David send out to battle in his place (v.1)?
- What phrases indicate that David wasn't busy with government responsibilities, but rather, was enjoying leisure instead?

But David remained at Jerusalem! 11:1
- Is there anything that leads you to believe that Bathsheba was culpable in some way with her actions?

The comment that she was purifying herself from *her uncleanness* (meaning her menstrual cycle), tells us two important things: 1) she was **not** pregnant in that moment by her husband since she had just had her cycle; and 2) she was entering into the most ideal time of her cycle to **become** pregnant. And that's exactly what happened.

Uriah had been one of David's mighty men (**2 Samuel 23:39**). The mighty men were a small, notorious group of loyalists, who knew each other well. When Joab read the letter from David, certainly he must have immediately understood all the implications. He knew Uriah — he had probably seen his beautiful wife — Joab knew, in a moment, that his leverage over David for some future benefit or blackmail had just increased exponentially.

- After the military assassination was successful, what became of Bathsheba (**v.26-27**)?

*But the thing that David had done
displeased the Lord.* 11:27

The obvious question we're all pondering is, "*How could a man after God's own heart succumb to adultery, hypocrisy, conspiracy, and murder?*" What just happened? How are we supposed to feel about David? Is he just like Saul? What category do we put him in now?

But, how we feel about David matters very little. The real question remains, "*How did David feel about himself?*"

- Read **Psalm 32:3-4** and note how David described his life and his emotions during this season:

It's not like David collected the wife of his dreams and lived happily ever after. He was miserable. But he later wrote honestly about his sin and misery in the Psalms, so we are blessed to understand how God deals with His people who behave badly and realize it.

Day 3:

We're moving slowly through these two chapters because they are so relevant. We're disappointed in David, and yet, if we take an honest look at our own hearts during certain seasons — we understand.

God is patient with us, but He *will* eventually settle accounts. Chapter 12 was God's chosen time to settle with David, and Nathan was His chosen instrument. He had popped up out of nowhere in chapter 7 as David planned to build a temple for the Ark of God. But that episode made us realize that he was a trusted figure in David's life.

READ 2 Samuel 12:1-14 — Confrontation of Secret Sin

- Why do you think it was wise for Nathan to use a story or a parable when he confronted David?

After David quietly listened to the lengthy story of the poor man and his lamb, and after he was appalled at the injustice and cast his verdict, David was finally *broken* by four small, three-letter words that came out of the mouth of Nathan. Write those words from **v.7**:

Now that David was listening, Nathan was finally able to deliver the message from the Lord:

- Summarize what God said He had already done for David (**v.7-8**):

- Specify David's sins from God's perspective (v.9-10):

- Enumerate God's future judgments for David (v.10-12,14):

In v.13, David agreed with Nathan and with God, "I **have sinned against the LORD.**"

- What type of attitude do you sense David had in this moment?

Nathan assured David that his sin had been *put away*, but that didn't mean that all of the consequences of sin would be put away. The remainder of David's life would be marked by great difficulty.

Nathan turned to leave and David was alone. Perhaps it was during this time of solitude that David wrote what we call, **Psalm 51**. As you close your study today, read **Psalm 51**.

- According to **Psalm 51:17**, what is the most important attitude to have when we are confronted by God?

- According to Psalm **51:1**, what aspects of God's character do we need to lean on when we realize our sin?

*Create in my a clean heart, O God, and renew
a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10*

Day 4:

Psalm 51 is a tremendous comfort that God's mercy is abundant, and through our repentance, we don't need to carry the weight of our sin. But this portion of the chapter is also a sober reminder that God doesn't always lift the weight of consequences. Sometimes, we are allowed to feel the effect of our sin for a long time.

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 12:15-23 — Consequences of Sin

- Explain how David reacted to his child's sickness in one sentence.

- Explain why David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child had died.

When David heard the child was dead, he did something remarkable — he *went into the house of the LORD and worshiped*. One might think that David would be angry with God or bitter, but he actually worshipped the Lord. While he had been fasting and praying, David appealed to the God of *mercy*. But, once the child was gone, it was time to worship the God of *righteousness*.

- Read **Luke 18:1-8**. How does this passage encourage perseverance in prayer and hope for mercy?

- Read **2 Corinthians 12:8-9**. How does this passage encourage acceptance of God's actions and the need to move forward?

Day 5:

Many of us can think of a day we desperately wish could be relived differently. I'm sure David would have made different choices, if given a do-over. But we don't get to relive days and we can't change our past. We can only move forward — and that's not all bad — not with the help of the Lord!

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 12:24-31 — Beloved of the Lord

- Name the child born to David and Bathsheba, who would grow up to eventually inherit the kingship.
- Write the sentence at the end of **v.24** that describes God's attitude toward that son.

That is what the name *Jedidiah* means.

- How does the paragraph about Solomon provide hope for a situation where you have made a bad choice, but now need to move forward?

The final verses return our attention to the main point that began in **11:1** — Israel battling her enemies. David's calling as the Reigning King was to usher in stability and peace. The entire episode with Bathsheba and Uriah was a sort of a parenthetical narrative, which reminds us that David is not God's *ultimate king*. Yes, he was a man after God's own heart. Yes, he did noble things. Yes, he subdued Israel's enemies (as evidenced by this section). But, he was not perfect — he was a *man* — a *man* after God's heart. This should give us courage to be a *woman* — not perfect — but striving to live as a *woman* after God's heart.

Lessons on Leading

1. The seeds of unchecked passion had been sown many years before David laid eyes on Bathsheba. **2 Samuel 5:12-13** told us that God had exalted David's kingdom, but David took more concubines and wives. Was anyone willing to warn David? Would he have listened? How can a leader put themselves in a willing place to heed a warning when indulgences might blossom into sin?
2. A leader's most difficult time is *not* when things are hard — tough times make for dependent and humble people. A leader's most precarious season is in the midst of success, which may breed independence from God. In what way might you be in peril as a leader right now?
3. Leisure is often an enemy of godliness. A *day off* or a *vacation* can be therapeutic. But, in our culture, we have to constantly war against the excesses of leisure. David was to be busy fighting the Lord's battle. What assignment has the Lord given you? How are you staying busy with those tasks?
4. Another enemy of Godliness can be privacy. Leaders can often build a certain amount of secrecy into their lives that can become a menace. Consider how much easier it is for a parent to spend secret time online as opposed to the children. What type of accountability do you have in place for your times of solitude?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Discuss whether David was exclusively to blame for this episode, or whether there was any error in judgement in Bathsheba's actions as well.
2. Share Scriptures that might help us deal with the disappointment and/or disillusionment that accompanies the fall of a leader in the Body of Christ.
3. Chapter 12 said that *the Lord sent Nathan* with a message. Nathan didn't just decide one day that he'd had enough of David's sin. He went in God's time, with God's message, and it required courage. How can Nathan be an example for us when we are tempted to immediately set someone straight?
4. From childhood, people seem to be resistant to admit fault. What does this story teach us about the importance of humility and confession of sins?
5. Read **Philippians 3:12-14**. How do those verses relate to what David faced after his sin? How do those verses encourage you in moving forward?

Week Six — 2 Samuel Chapters 13-15

If we didn't have a written record of the events in last week's lesson, we might be thrown for a loop trying to make sense of the problems in this week's lesson. But the words of Nathan the prophet prepared us when he spoke God's message to David, "*Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house.*"

The first two words in our reading this week are, '*Now Absalom.*' The narrative goes on to introduce other significant players, as well as unbelievable royal drama. But the main threat we are to perceive is David's son, Absalom — his indignation, his schemes, his ambitions, and his treachery.

Day 1:

READ 2 Samuel 13:1-22 — Violence and Silence

We're introduced to four people who are all involved in this tragic drama. From v.1-3, note the relationship of each to King David:

| | |
|---------|------------------------|
| Absalom | _____ <i>son</i> _____ |
| Tamar | _____ |
| Amnon | _____ |
| Jonadab | _____ |

Who was Tamar's father? _____

Our stereotype of royal families is often one of indulgence and entitlement. This isn't always true. I can think of monarchs in my lifetime that were truly servants of their people. But these verses give support to the spoiled-prince personae.

- Read **1 Kings 1:5-6** and explain David's normal mode of parenting.

- List two suggestions you may have given to David that would have restrained Amnon and/or protected Tamar:

After Amnon violated Tamar, rejected her, and sent her away, there were several reactions to what had happened.

- From **v.19**, what was Tamar's understandable reaction?

- From **v.20** and **v.22**, what was Absalom's emotion? Did he take any action?

- From **v.21**, what was David's emotion? Did he take any action?

If you have a history of family abuse, I am truly sorry. No one should have to endure heartache like that. These types of narratives can trigger past hurts, but the objective nature of the story can also help us process senseless trauma.

In this case, no one took appropriate action, no one even mentioned the violation. Naturally, emotions were allowed to fester, and in the next lesson, we'll watch those seeds of anger grow into murder.

Day 2:

Assuming that ascendance to the throne of Israel would follow birth order, Absalom was third in line (**2 Samuel 3:2-3**), behind Amnon and Chileab (who was never mentioned again and likely passed from the scene before these chapters). Now, if you were an ambitious young royal and suddenly saw a clear path to the throne, you might be tempted to leverage the situation in your favor!

READ 2 Samuel 13:23-39 — From Anger to Murder

- How much time lapsed between v.22 and v.23? _____

Do you find it oddly suspicious that, after this length of time, Absalom suddenly wanted to get everyone in his family together for a feast on his turf? Yeah, me too!

- Do you think David was aware that two of his sons were not even speaking to each other? What are the implications if he *did* know? What are the implications if he *didn't* know?
- David didn't like the idea of all of his sons going, but according to v.25, how was David's better judgment overruled?
- What was Absalom's real motivation to invite his brothers to the feast (or at least make sure Amnon came)?

Confessing our sins and receiving God's grace does not mean that the consequences of our sin will be automatically removed.

- Based on what you learned yesterday about Jonadab, why do you think he immediately knew that the messenger was wrong, and Amnon alone was dead?

- Read **2 Samuel 3:3**. Now, why do you think Absalom fled to Geshur (**v.37**)?

- How long did Absalom stay there (**v.38**)? _____

The drama and eventual heartache in a dysfunctional family is a terrible thing to watch. Clearly, in this royal family, there was a lack of parental attention.

Consider these verses and note some of the important elements for raising stable children and creating functional families:

Psalm 51:6

Proverbs 5:23

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13

Hebrews 12:6

Day 3:

, READ 2 Samuel 14:1-20 — Justice Delayed

The previous chapter began with, '**Now Absalom**,' to motivate us to consider his actions — deception and murder. This chapter begins, '**Now Joab**.' You guessed it — we should be considering Joab's motivations and actions in this part of the story.

Joab knew David *very* well — maybe better than anyone. He knew that David was conflicted about Absalom. He probably thought that Absalom was the heir-apparent to David's throne. He knew David was well past the midpoint of his life and wouldn't be king much longer. So we have quite a bit to contemplate in this chapter.

- Read **Leviticus 24:17**. Amnon wasn't killed during a wartime battle, as a result of an accident, or in self-defense. It was clearly murder. What should the penalty for Absalom have been?

But three years went by without any action against Absalom — until Joab began forcing David's hand.

- Why do you think Joab went to all the trouble of securing an actress and giving her a script, rather than just telling the king that he thought it was time to return Absalom to Jerusalem?

- What previous encounter does this woman's confrontation remind you of?

- Based on the nature of the woman's *script*, what may have been David's fear in having Absalom anywhere near his other sons?

There is a saying, "*Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.*" Certainly, David must have suppressed the idea that Absalom was a potential enemy. Who wants to think that of their son? But Joab was an astute judge of character and may have been suspicious enough of Absalom to keep a closer eye on him. After all, at any moment, he may have found himself the commander of Absalom's army!

Day 4:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 14:21-33 — Absalom Returned to Jerusalem

Joab got his request! Absalom was brought to Jerusalem

- What was unique about Absalom's accommodations while in Jerusalem (v.24)?

Father and son were living in the same town, but were in complete relational limbo. Justice had not been served, neither had forgiveness been extended. I guess they just ignored the crime and moved on with their lives.

David was older and enjoyed the respect of the people, but Absalom was younger and knew how to use his good looks and charisma to acquire friends and followers.

*It is not good to be partial to the wicked
or to deprive the righteous of justice.*

Proverbs 18:5

- What were some of Absalom's characteristics (v.25-26)?
- Absalom had been raised to get whatever he wanted. So, when Joab did not come when summoned, what did Absalom arrange (v.30)?
- Why do you think Absalom was bold enough to say that if the king found him guilty, he could simply put him to death (v.32)?
- How did David react to Absalom when they finally met (v.33)?

Day 5:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 15:1-12 — Stealing Hearts

- What modern phrases might we use to describe someone who acts the way Absalom did at the gates of Jerusalem?
- How many years did Absalom spend 'working the crowd' at the gates of Jerusalem (v.7)?

So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. 15:6

Read **2 Samuel 2:1-4**, and **2 Samuel 3:2-3**.

- Why do you think it was significant for Absalom to travel to Hebron and declare himself King from that location?

V.12 says, “*and the people with Absalom kept increasing.*” Gathering a like-minded mob isn’t difficult — and mobs can get ugly. David knew that support for Absalom was increasing, so his actions in the next passage could be viewed as either *heroic* — protecting Jerusalem from violence, or *cowardly* — simply walking away and abdicating the throne without protest.

📖 READ 2 Samuel 15:13-37 — Stealing the Throne

- What was one of the purposes for which David sent the priests back into Jerusalem (**v.24-28**)?
- It must have been a tough blow when David learned that his trusted advisor, Ahithophel, turned to Absalom’s side. How did David choose to turn that act of treason into an advantage (**v.31**)?
- Name the man who David sent to Absalom to act as a double-agent (**v.32**).

Well, this is a crazy place to end week six. People are leaving Jerusalem with David and entering with Absalom. David himself, seems to be a mixed bag of emotions, and for good reason. Many of the problems he’s facing in this moment are self-inflicted. We’ll find out how Absalom’s reign works out for him next week.

Lessons on Leading

Many of our *lessons on leading* this week speak to leadership within the family. I do think that the same principles can apply to the classroom, the office, or wherever you happen to find yourself in the lead.

1. What actions could have (and should have) been taken in the formative years of David's children to shape their character?
What actions are YOU taking in your children's formative years to shape their character?
2. The text says that Absalom begged David for all his brothers to come to his feast at sheep-shearing time. Some translations say he pressed him, or urged him. How can a leader (parent) hold onto their better judgment when children begin their constant nagging for things to go their way?
3. David seemed out of touch with his kingdom while Absalom was stealing the hearts of the people. We see in this a warning that detachment creates a vacuum which someone WILL fill! Are there any vacuums in your leadership that you need to close?
4. How can a leader use friends, relatives, etc. in positive ways to help them oversee without appearing to create spies?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. To what extent do you think the family problems David faced were due to children born to multiple wives?
2. When a family's trouble comes from the outside — like a house fire, or a freak accident — it tends to draw them together to depend on one another. When a family's trouble comes from the inside — like abuse, or stuffed emotions — it tends to alienate them from one another. Biblically, what should be the first step when inside trouble is first detected?
3. It is a rare (but wise) parent who will allow their children to face impartial justice for their actions. What are the positive aspects of allowing children to face the penalty for their actions?
4. Have you experienced a situation where an offense was never dealt with? Where everyone just seemed to move forward without resolving it? What Scriptures would have given guidance to improve that situation?
5. Life and ministry seemed like it was completely unraveling when David left Jerusalem in chapter 15. Yet, he considered the future and positioned some men for future possibilities. How might you encourage a friend to look toward the future — what God might do — when her life seems to be unraveling in the present?

Week Seven — 2 Samuel Chapters 16-17-18

We now continue the saga of the day that David left Jerusalem. Since the first words are, ‘*When David,*’ we’re given a clue that David’s personal encounters take center stage for this portion of the narrative.

Day 1:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 16:1-14 — Cunning and Cursing

These fourteen verses recount the interaction of David with two particular men as he was leaving Jerusalem. The first was Ziba with his *cunning*, and then Shimei with his *cursing*. It seems that political instability always brings a certain amount of drama to the surface.

Review the story of Ziba and Mephibosheth by reading **2 Samuel 9**.

- Did you see anything in that original exchange that would cause you to believe that Mephibosheth would ever become ungrateful to David for sparing his life?

- Since Ziba was set up as Mephibosheth’s servant, does it seem realistic that he would be able to take this master’s donkeys and food and wine to present to David, when his master was supposedly going over to Absalom’s side? What do you think may have been going on there?

- David seemed to take Ziba’s story at face value. What did he gift him?

While David was still smarting from the supposed transfer of Mephibosheth's loyalty, he encountered another assault from the family of the house of Saul.

- What was the name of the man who cursed David (v.5)?
- Do you think that his accusations in v.8 had any merit? Why or why not?

Even though David restrained Abishai from doing harm to Shimei, it had to have been a comfort to have someone willing to defend him, to know that someone still believed in him.

*Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying,
a curse that is causeless does not alight.*

Proverbs 26:2

At the close of the chapter, David's group arrived at the Jordan — exhausted, but then refreshed. Perhaps the refreshing came, in part, because David turned to the Lord in his distress.

- Read **Psalm 3**, which was written at this occasion. Note the ways in which David's confidence in the Lord created comfort in his difficult situation.

Day 2:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 16:15-23 — Establishing Dominance

Today's reading is very short and to the point. It's also quite graphic and offensive. Absalom finally arrived in Jerusalem and began to take inventory of his allies.

- Name the friend of David, in **v.16**, who was willing to pose as a double agent.
- Who do you think Hushai was really referring to, as he expressed his loyalty in **v.18**?
- What reasoning did he give to explain his transfer of service to Absalom in **v.19**?

We almost get the sense that Absalom wasn't sure what a king was to do first, now that he was in Jerusalem. But Ahithophel knew — he had an agenda — and his plan was to create a display of dominance that Israel would notice. He wanted everyone to know that all that had belonged to David, now belonged to Absalom.

There is nothing about these actions that sit well with us. It offends us as women, it offends us morally, and even culturally. And to be sure, it offended God too.

- Considering David's past, in what way is it sadly ironic that Absalom proved his dominance *on the roof* of the palace?

Day 3:

📖 READ 2 Samuel 17:1-29 — Courage to be an Operative

- How did 2 Samuel 16:23 describe Ahithophel's advice?
- Do you think his advice in chapter 17 would have been good for Absalom to have followed? Why or why not?

- What do you think may have caused Absalom to check in with Hushai for his advice?

For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men. 17:10

- Including Hushai, list all of the people who courageously risked their lives to become informants or helpers for David and his people. (v.15, 17, 18, 19):
- Which one of the above impresses you in particular and why?

Day 4:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 18:1-18 — A Fight in the Forest

Hushai's advice to Absalom had worked like a charm. In the time it took to gather *all Israel from Dan to Beersheba* for Absalom's team, David was able to rest, regroup, and create a strategy of his own.

Even though two armies were about to march against each other, there were really only two men who mattered — David and Absalom. If David was killed, the battle would be over and Absalom would be King. If Absalom were killed (or captured), the revolution would be over, everyone would go home, and things would hopefully return to normal.

- Since there was so much at stake in this battle, what was the advice of the commanders concerning David (v.3)?

- Since Absalom was the root cause of all their current problems, how do you think David's army may have felt about his instruction in v.5 to *deal gently with the young man*?

We can now understand the wisdom in David fleeing from Jerusalem. Had he stayed, Absalom could have eventually waged a successful siege on the city — but this battle in the forest served as an ideal way to let the thicket do some of the hard work in the battle.

- How many men from Israel were killed in that one day's battle?

A long, full, head of hair wasn't exactly ideal for slipping through pokey branches; neither was a mule a suitable way to traverse a forest. We can easily see that Absalom was more accustomed to looking good than fighting well — and it was his undoing.

*Pride goes before
destruction, and a
haughty spirit
before a fall.*
Proverbs 16:18

- Who eventually was responsible for killing Absalom (v.14-15)?

- What happened to the battle once Absalom had been killed?

Day 5: _____

READ 2 Samuel 18:19-33 — Stealing Hearts

Ahimaaz had become personally invested in David's cause from the beginning. Remember, it was he and Jonathan whom David had named to carry a message from double-agent Hushai. It's easy to see why Ahimaaz now wanted to carry the good news that David's enemy had been defeated.

- Why do you think Joab wanted to restrain Ahimaaz from carrying the news of Absalom's death to David (v.20)?

- Why do you think David assumed that Ahimaaz would be running with good news (v.27)?

- Why do you think Ahimaaz gave a vague answer to the king about a *great commotion* (v.29), rather than tell him about Absalom?

- Why do you think the Cushite was able to winningly announce the report of Absalom (v.32)?

David's response might be as expected. This was the third son he had lost in the last six chapters. Absalom's death must have produced a variety of complicated emotions and questions. What could David have done differently in his formative years? What should he have done differently after the incident with Tamar? What action should he have taken after the murder of Amnon? Should he have reached out to try to repair their relationship? Should he have kept Absalom banished? Should he have drawn him in closer?

I'm sure that, like most parents, David spent time rolling over all of the possibilities that would have produced a different outcome. There is certainly a necessity for a parent to grieve. But David wasn't just another parent — he was also the king. As a leader, it was necessary that he would *lead*.

In this lesson, we've pointed out all of the friends who supported David through this trial — some at great peril to their own lives. They deserved an acknowledgement of a job well done in bringing the conflict to an end. But no such affirmation was given. Everyone was forced to sulk away to their own home as if their heroic contributions were nullified simply because Absalom was dead.

Absalom did not defeat David, but David came very close to defeating himself in this moment. It will take another act of friendship in the coming lesson to get him out of this funk!

Lessons on Leading

1. Are you impressed with all of the decisions and directions David issued as he was leaving Jerusalem? We've found plenty to fault him for in these recent lessons, but, on this day, he was both protecting his people and seeking ways to subvert his son's plans. A good leader keeps a cool head and considers the impact their decisions will have on others. How can you practice these traits in your current situation?
2. It's been said, "*Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster.*" Absalom's anger was initially ignited because of the rape of his sister Tamar. Did he forget that incident while he was himself raping the concubines of David? It can be easy, especially for someone in charge, to fall into the monster trap. Who has the freedom in your life to point out any hypocrisy that may be developing?
3. It's not easy for a leader to accept advice from those they lead. David's commanders requested that he stay out of the battle. A prideful David may not have complied with their request, but the wise David leaned on their understanding, realizing that their perspective was probably true. Do you have someone to give you a better perspective from time to time?
4. It is a difficult truth that leaders must find strength from the Lord to continue in the face of pain, grief or discouragement. How can a leader be mindful of the contributions of others around them when they are hurting?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. **Loyalty** is a priceless gift within friendships that's often not fully tested until a time of conflict. Ahithophel turned against David, while Hushai remained loyal. What other examples of loyalty come to mind from the Scriptures?
2. **Courage** is another trait that shows its true depth under trial. Hushai, in particular, showed great courage in giving his advice to Absalom. How can a Christian grow in courage in small ways to meet more difficult challenges?
3. David had to endure ridicule and cursing when he fled Jerusalem. Read **Colossians 3:23-25**. How can the Apostle Paul's words comfort you when someone is saying unnecessary or even hurtful things?
4. **Lamentations 3:37** says, "*Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?*" How is that truth relevant to the events of these chapters?
5. It is a very sad situation when children make their parent's life miserable (as did Absalom) — but it seems to be quite common. In what ways might you support a friend who is in the midst of this delicate situation? (Give some Scriptures.)

- David did not seem defensive. What *was* his response and what action did he take (v.8)?

WOW! What a speech! Did you notice the absence of softness? The lack of acknowledging pain? No therapy whatsoever? Joab got right to the point, and like a cold pail of water, he shocked David into hearing the message he *needed* to hear.

Joab wasn't a perfect friend — he had, in fact, just killed Absalom — but the truth is, David was behaving badly in this moment.

Of course David was hurting, but he had allowed his grief and his pain to blind him from everyone else. He was about to lose himself *and* the kingdom God had given him — if not for a friend, courageous enough to deliver a razor sharp message when it was needed.

Here are some thoughts to consider from these verses:

- Do you have someone in your life that can tell you the painful truth when you need to hear it?

- And if someone were to speak that directly to you, how would you respond? Would you defend your behavior? Or would you listen to their perspective?

*Better is open rebuke than hidden love.
Faithful are the wounds of a friend.
Proverbs 27:5-6*

Day 2:

David, “*taking his seat in the gate,*” gave a public signal that he was ready to bury the past and resume leadership. You might remember that, in order to steal the affections of the people, Absalom had spent the previous four years in this same posture, “*rising early and standing beside the way of the gate*” (15:2).

This was a slightly different situation because David was not in the gate of Jerusalem — he was still in Mahaniam — but hoping for an invitation to return to his city and his rightful throne.

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 19:9-15 — A Master Diplomat

While David had positioned himself in the city gate, the people had lost unity and basically positioned themselves in their own homes. They were divided, confused, embarrassed, and bewildered as to what had just happened. But David was working his plan.

- In **v.11**, to whom did David appeal get the leaders of Judah moving toward the country’s unification and his personal return?
- Why might *their* voice have been more influential than others?
- In **v.13**, to whom did David send a personal message?

Review David’s family connections by reading **1 Chronicles 2:13-17**.

- What was the family relationship between Joab and Amasa?

Review Amasa's resume by reading **2 Samuel 17:25**.

- What position had Amasa taken in Absalom's army when David and his loyal followers fled from Jerusalem?
- Now that Absalom was dead, in **v.13** of our current text, what position did David seem to be offering to Amasa again?

Doesn't that seem odd? One can't help but wonder where that left Joab. Did David forget he already had a commander? Was this a vindictive move on David's part? Did he find out that Joab had been responsible for Absalom's death?

Maybe! But David is actually a master diplomat. I think he knew that, if he could get both the *priesthood* and the *army* on board with his invitation for reunification, everyone else would quickly follow.

- From **v.14**, state the level of success his message had on Judah in one sentence.

So the king came back to the Jordan, and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring the king over the Jordan. 19:15

Day 3: _____

Whether it's a matter of civil war, or merely a deep separation of leadership, people are sometimes required to *pick sides*. Some make decisions to protect their own interests, some just follow the most popular guy in the moment, while others say and do things in haste that they later regret.

Today's lesson highlights three different situations in which people felt the need to have words with the king to explain themselves. We will learn SO much from David's response to each of them.

🌀 READ 2 Samuel 19:16-23 — An Apology from Shimei

Read **2 Samuel 16:5-13** from last week to refresh yourself on David's previous encounter with Shimei.

- To which tribe did Shimei belong?
- Since King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, what effect might an entourage of a thousand men of Benjamin have had on David?
- What was Abishai's response to Shimei, and how did it compare to their first encounter?
- What was David's response to Shimei and how did it compare to their first encounter?
- What was the king's promise to Shimei (**v.23**)?

🌀 READ 2 Samuel 19:24-30 — A Perplexing Matter between Ziba and Mephibosheth

Ziba was also at the front of the pack with Shimei as they “*rushed down to the Jordan before the king.*” (I’m not sure about you, but to me, this seems suspicious.)

Read **2 Samuel 16:1-4** to refresh yourself on David’s recent encounter with Ziba. (Optionally, read **2 Samuel 9** to refresh yourself on David’s first encounter with Ziba.)

- In **v.24**, who else came down to meet the king?
- What do you think his unkempt appearance may have suggested?
- What was the reason Mephibosheth gave for not accompanying David’s household out of Jerusalem?
- State David’s ultimate decision about the land belonging to Mephibosheth.

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.
Proverbs 18:17

Some situations are just not worth the time it takes to unravel them. Mephibosheth appears the victim and Ziba does seem suspicious, but it would have taken time to corroborate either of their stories — time David didn’t have. His decision to split the property and move on to more important issues seems very wise to me...What do you think?

READ 2 Samuel 19:31-43 — A Generous Return for Barzillai

Read 2 Samuel 17:27-29 to refresh yourself on David's most recent encounter with Barzillai.

- Briefly describe how Barzillai had been a true friend to David and a great supporter in his time of need.

- Since he obviously felt he was too old to make another move in his lifetime, what do you think may have been his motive in meeting with David at this point (v.37)?

It's unclear whether Barzillai offered Chimham because he possessed a useful skillset that might bless David, or because David possessed a useful position of power from which to bless Chimham.

If the former was true, Barzillai was merely continuing his habit of generosity. If the latter, he was hoping for a return on his previous generosity.

- Is it ever bad manners, or unbiblical, to ask favors of others whom you have served? What might be acceptable boundaries?

Write one sentence that describes the work that lied ahead for David, based on the dialog in v.41-43.

Day 4:

✞ READ 2 Samuel 20:1-13 — A Set Back for Unification

Tensions between *north* and *south*, between the *House of Saul* and the *House of David*, between *Israel* and *Judah*, had been simmering for years. Like any smoldering pile, it only takes one gust of wind to fan into flame the original fire.

- Name the ringleader, whose voice had reignited old divisions in the nation (v.1):

The result (v.2) was that Israel now followed _____

while Judah followed _____

Before David dealt with this new subversion caused by Sheba, he dealt with a war crime closer to home — the victims of Absalom's demonstration of dominance (his rape of David's concubines).

- What would you describe as positive and sensitive aspects of how David established care for the women?
- What do you see as unacceptable in how they were treated?

Now that Amasa became David's new commander, he was handed his first assignment, as his big opportunity to serve his king.

- What was his one task assigned from David (v.4)?
- How did he fail in this task (v.5)?

Amasa's failure opens a few possibilities — he may have been a slow-poke, or worse, a terrible commander — or he could have been turning to join forces with Sheba. No one really knew at the time.

- **V.8** says that Amasa "*came out to meet*" the troops. Does that seem like the actions of someone who is not to be trusted?

In a graphic narrative, we read that *Joab struck again!* This is now the third family member or commander that he's killed while in service to the king, and we're left to sort out which were legitimate and which were murder.

- What elements trouble you in **v.9-10** as Joab and Amasa greet one another?
- Can you identify any crime on Amasa's part that was deserving of death?
- Can you think of any motive on Joab's part for having Amasa out of the way?
- What type of emotions do you think the author intended for us when he said, "*Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the highway?*"

Day 5:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 20:14:26 — Limiting Collateral Damage

The relatively short-lived uprising instigated by Sheba came to an abrupt and surprising end — all because of the courage of a woman with wisdom and diplomacy.

- Joab met up with Sheba and his followers in the town of Abel. What did he decide would be the best way to flush them out (v.15)?
- What effect would those actions have had on the entire city?
- What were some of the phrases that the wise woman used in order to appeal to Joab and avert a disaster for her city?
- Describe their mutual agreement regarding Sheba in v.21.

Well, the king had been reinstated, Sheba had been dealt with, the town had been spared, one more of David's relatives was murdered, and Joab went back to serve the king as if nothing had happened.

We love tidy endings and this is not one of them. One thing that *is* satisfactory though is realizing that the Bible narratives do not cut and paste, or sugar coat — they tell the truth. And the truth in every chapter reminds us of our need for a more perfect King and a more peaceful Kingdom!

Lessons on Leading

1. Both David and Joab were leaders in their own right. Perhaps the fact that Joab *was* a leader enabled him to speak frankly. Do you have someone with whom you can speak frankly? I don't mean a complain fest, rather a sharing of different but useful perspectives. If you don't, pray that God would send such a person into your life — but be warned — you may not like them immediately!
2. The olive branch that David extended in **chapter 19** to both the religious leaders (**v.11**) and the military leaders (**v.13**) was a stroke of genius in terms of gathering support for his return. In what ways might a leader (like a mother) take time to gather support before a big adjustment so that others will want to '*meet you in the middle*' (as they met David at Gilgal in **v.15**)?
3. It's a trap for a leader to be drawn into the nitty-gritty drama between people (like Ziba and Mephibosheth). Sometimes we just need to quickly move on. Read **Proverbs 18:18** and consider how it relates to our text and how it might be useful in your life.
4. Leading well is definitely not the same as dominating. Consider two examples of domination in these chapters and two examples of humble, servant leadership.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Read **2 Samuel 12:10-12**. Those words had to have fanned an inferno of guilt and regret in David's heart, which led to his dark prison of depression. Name one Scripture or word of comfort you might be able to offer someone who believes they are reaping what they have sown.
2. Forgiving an ugliness directed toward you in an emotionally stable time is one thing — forgiving an assault when you were already unraveling from pain or grief might feel impossible. What is your assessment of David's handling of Shimei? What do *you* lean on in order to forgive when it's difficult?
3. Compare Shimei's confession of wrongdoing in **2 Samuel 19:20** with David's confession in **2 Samuel 12:13**. What three words are identical in both? How might someone's understanding of their own sin affect their ability to forgive someone else's?
4. We praised Joab for speaking truth to David. We then condemned him for acting as judge, jury, and executioner with Amasa. What lessons can be learned about a person's greatest strength also becoming their greatest weakness?
5. How can you avoid jumping to conclusions that may cause irreparable damage in relationships?

Week Nine — 2 Samuel Chapters 21-22

Day 1:

The last line of the previous week's study reminded us that we are yearning for a more perfect King and a more peaceful Kingdom. The Biblical narrative will continue in brokenness and complications until our perfect King of Peace — our Prince of Peace — Jesus the Messiah, arrives in the New Testament and returns again at the end of this age.

The final chapters in 2 Samuel present some real difficulties and probably offer more questions than answers. But we're determined to study the whole book and we're confident that God has morsels of understanding waiting for us, even in the difficult passages.

The chronological narrative ended with the last words of chapter 20 and will resume in 1 Kings. This leaves us an epilogue of four chapters in Samuel which contain some random topics. But we are about to discover they aren't as random as they might appear.

In these chapters, we'll find six distinct sections, which are arranged concentrically.

- ◆ The first section deals with a drought, the last with a plague.
- ◆ The second and fifth tell us of David's heroes.
- ◆ The middle two are psalms of David. ²

There is a name for this common type of format in Hebrew literature — it's called a *chiasm* — which is a mirror-image. The focal point of the *chiasm* is the middle section, where we hear David offering praise to God for His divine help throughout the king's life.

But there is another purpose for this *chiasm* and that is to direct our gaze at the future by informing us of the events leading to the purchase of land on which Solomon would build the temple.

I usually like to keep these study guides as devotional as possible, and not drag us into too much *scholarly* stuff, but I do think that a simple chart (on the next page) of these mirror-images will provide us with a useful roadmap for our final two weeks of study.

- In **v.3**, who did David ask for advice in order to right the wrong?
- In **v.5-6**, what was their answer?
- Because the Gibeonites suggested a certain course of action, does that necessarily mean that is what the Lord wanted done? Why or why not?
- Read **Deuteronomy 24:16**. What problem does this present?
- Why was Mephibosheth spared in this scheme (**v.7**)?

There are so many aspects of this account that present challenges for us. When we fall into confusing territory, it's good for us to lean on what we *do* know, rather than what we don't.

Here is what we do know:

- ◆ God takes covenants very seriously — especially national ones.
- ◆ God does not intend for children to be punished for the sins of their parents.
- ◆ Situations do arise that require atonement — for example our own personal sin.
- ◆ Perfect atonement will never be possible until God makes a way through the Coming Righteous King — our Messiah

The one satisfactory piece of this puzzle is the personal piece. At least this dreadful account brought attention to the plight of real people — a real mother who was grieving for her real son. Sometimes putting a face to pain and suffering draws compassion to the surface.

- What act of compassion did David tend to that maybe should have been taken care of sooner (v.13-14)?

Day 3:

READ 2 Samuel 21:15-22 — Israel's Heros

The second segment of events in this epilogue recount various battles with the Philistines. Four different conflicts seem to be mentioned. Since chronology wasn't always important to the Old Testament writers, we're not sure of the order, but it's clear these were all battles that happened once David was King.

- List some common denominators of how the men among the Philistines were described.

Name the listed *hero* in each of the four accounts:

V.17 _____ V.18 _____

V.19 _____ V.21 _____

*"You come to me with a sword and a spear,
but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts,
the God of the armies of Israel." 1 Samuel 17:45*

- Read **1 Samuel 17:23-24**. In those days, when David was still a youth, how many men of Israel were willing to battle a giant?
- What conclusions do you think the author might be leading us to draw regarding the contrast of courage during David's reign?

Day 4: _____

Arriving at the focal point of the *chiasm*, and finding a psalm of praise and thanksgiving, brings a welcome reprieve from the difficulty of the surrounding passages.

This psalm is almost identical to **Psalm 18**. We'll spend our final two days this week unpacking this passage in order to appreciate its significance in David's life and its relevance in ours.

READ 2 Samuel 22:1-25— God is Greater than Life's Problems

David is both speaking *about* God, and speaking *to* God. In *our* prayers, it's okay to do the same — talk *about* God and talk *to* God.

- In **v.2-4**, count the number of times that David personalized his thoughts by using the pronoun '*my*'.

How many times? _____

- In those same verses, list the various *nouns* that David used to help him describe God's faithfulness. (i.e., *rock*)

David expressed his desperate situation and his emotions in poetic words in **v.5-6**. In modern language, we might say he was *stressed out*. In our lives, we also get *stressed out* because of our problems, but our stress gets unmanageable when we forget Who to turn to with our problems. David knew where to turn.

- Write a simple sentence that explains what David did in the midst of his stressful times (**v.7**).

V.8-16 The main theme of this psalm is God's faithfulness to rescue David. Before the personal rescue, first David described God's command over the Heavens and the Earth, everything that is not so personal.

- Why might David have inserted this section that was so far outside the realm of his personal challenges?

- How might these verses embolden *you* to reach out for God's help?

V.17-20 return to a very personal account of God's intervention.

- In **v.18**, what phrases did David use to describe his enemies?

- In these verses, David took no credit for getting out from under his problems (his enemies). In fact, how many times did he credit God by using the pronoun 'He?' _____

Through this song of praise, David was clearly drawing a comparison between God's command over His physical creation AND His command over the affairs of His human creation.

In **v.21-25**, David expressed the kind of relationship between God and His people that would enable Him to intervene in their lives. David was not promoting sinless perfection with his words, but was merely describing the characteristics of a person devoted to living a Godly life by paying attention to God's Word.

- Write the phrase that resonates most with you and explain why.

Day 5:

READ 2 Samuel 22:26-51 — God is Worthy of a Devoted Life

I think the last half of this psalm is so beautiful and inspiring. Maybe you noticed some phrases that could be lifted out of the context to stand on their own because they simply describe God's character.

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- List one phrase from this section that is true of God regardless of the context, but simply because it describes His character.

- State the reasons why the above phrase appeals to you.

Compare **v.33** with **v.24**, and also compare **v.37** with **v.22**.

- How do the latter verses give understanding to the former ones, regarding *keeping the ways of the Lord* and a *blameless* life?

David personalized his psalm multiple times by using the pronouns *I*, *me*, and *my*. Use the space below to write 3-4 lines of a personalized prayer in a similar format to share with your group.

Lessons on Leading

1. Sometimes we inherit preexisting problems — like David did with Saul’s dealings with the Gibeonites. Figuring out *if* something can be done and *what* might be done can take discernment. How can patience and wise counsel benefit a leader in these situations?
2. The broken covenant with the Gibeonites was a difficult passage that raised two new questions for every one it answered. We concluded, “*When you don’t know the answers, lean on what you do know*”. In what other areas of a leader’s life might that be useful advice?
3. Leaders should inspire courage. When David was just a youth, he seemed to be the only one brave enough to face Goliath. After leading the nation for many years, he had *reproduced himself* — several men were willing to fight difficult battles for the honor of their country. Assuming you have learned courage — how are you attempting to *reproduce yourself* among those you lead?
4. Being a leader doesn’t mean you can fix every problem in your life or the lives of people around you. In chapter 22, David credited God for getting him through problems that he wasn’t able to handle. How does this inspire you to make sure those you lead know that you are relying on God and not exclusively on yourself?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Reading about the bodies of Saul's innocent sons hanging to atone for the breaking of a covenant seems unjust and revolting to most readers. Perhaps that was the intention — to prepare us that the coming atonement is not a tidy doctrine, but a bloody affair in which the innocent pay for the guilty. How might this story enliven your appreciation for Jesus, God's innocent Son, who paid the ultimate price of atonement for your sins?
2. In **2 Samuel 22**, we find both general and personal ways of talking to the Lord: **v.31** "*He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him*" and **v.33** "*This God is my strong refuge.*" What is the benefit of including personal phrases in your prayers?
3. We sometimes either forget to pray when we get stressed out, or we resist praying for some reason. Find one go-to verse that would remind you, or a friend, of God's willingness to listen and to act when we call on Him.
4. David's psalm began, "*The Lord is my rock...*" Read the beginning of Moses' prayer in **Deuteronomy 32:4**, and also Hannah's prayer in **1 Samuel 2:2**. Why is this concept such a common metaphor? How has God been a *rock* for you?

*"The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock,
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation!"*
1 Samuel 22:47

Week Ten — 2 Samuel Chapters 23-24

Here we are at our final week in 2 Samuel and we're picking up our study right at the central point of the epilogue. After a psalm of David in chapter 22, we have an oracle of David in chapter 23.

It seems that the first summarized his younger life — especially the problems he encountered with enemies and God's gracious provision for all his needs. The second, an oracle, is more like a final testimony of God's purposes and grace in David's life.

Day 1:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 23:1-7 — An Everlasting Covenant

- From **v.1**, list the identities that David used to describe himself.

David made sure we understand that what he was about to convey was from the Lord. In **v.2**, he restated four times, in four ways, that this was God's message.

- From **v.3-4**, list some of the metaphors that describe the benefits of a *just ruler*.

Note the contrast in **v.6-7** that describes worthless men.

- In what ways do you think King David's rulership brought benefits to the people of Israel?

David was clearly reflecting back on God's previous promise and covenant. In fact, the remainder of this book rests and builds upon that covenant.

- What adjective did David use to describe the covenant God made with him in v.5? _____ covenant.

David had always known that his throne and his kingdom was an imperfect precursor to a more glorious Kingdom to come. When God told him that his throne would be established forever, he knew that didn't mean he would personally live forever. David put his hope in a future Ruler who would be an extension of the *everlasting covenant* that God began with David.

Review the **Davidic Covenant** that God spoke to David by reading **2 Samuel 7:8-16**.

- From v.13 of that passage, what did God promise?

In some ways, the final sections of this epilogue prepare us, as the reader, for the fulfillment of that promise...so stay tuned!

*"Your house and your kingdom shall be
made sure forever before me.
Your throne shall be established forever."
2 Samuel 7:16*

Day 2:

✞ READ 2 Samuel 23:8-39 — Mighty Men of Valor

We have focused a lot on David as a leader — and he *was* God’s chosen leader for Israel. But, no man succeeds alone. The remainder of this chapter gives credit to courageous and mighty men who supported David’s leadership and contributed to the well-being of Israel.

There are two significant categories mentioned — *The Three* (v.8) and *The Thirty* (v.18). We’re not exactly sure whether these groups had special job descriptions, or whether they were the equivalent of our *Congressional Medal of Honors*. Perhaps there were more than three and more than thirty, but only that exact number at any given time — as one perished, another was inducted into the position.

Tucked in the middle of names and exploits in v.13-17, we find an example of the love and loyalty that these men had toward David. This episode may have occurred when David was fleeing from Saul or during one of the Philistine attacks.

- What was the significance of Bethlehem in David’s life? (Check out **1 Samuel 17:12** for a reminder.)
- What childhood taste was David longing for in this stressful time?

You’ve probably discovered that certain foods, drinks, or smells conjure up memories from childhood or from a happier time in life. David didn’t seem to be asking anyone to actually bring him water from Bethlehem, and it may not have occurred to him that someone would actually do it — but they did.

- Once the three mighty men risked their lives to bring David water, what did he do with it?

That might seem thoughtless to you, but the gift represented something too costly to merely drink. David didn't just dispose of the water in an ungrateful manner — he *poured it out to the Lord* as a drink offering.

The context seems to highlight the idea that the water represented a precious gift, brought to him at the risk of his men's lives. Therefore, turning around and offering it to the Lord was the highest thanks he could give them.

- Who was chief of *The Thirty* (v.18)?
- Whose was the final name listed among *The Thirty* (v.39)
- Since the order of names wasn't alphabetical or chronological, what possible message might we be encouraged to consider, by ending the list with Uriah?

Day 3: _____

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 24:1-9 — David's Census

Our final chapter is another passage with more questions than answers. One main takeaway from this episode is the historical connector between David's desire to build a house for the Lord and Solomon's actual building of the temple.

But then, there are questions...

- ◆ Was it David's pride that went off the rails and caused him to pursue a military headcount (v.2) *"that I may know the number of the people"*?
- ◆ Did David get to the point of relying on military rather than God?
- ◆ Who was behind this, God or Satan? (1 Chronicles 21 says that *"Satan stood against Israel and incited David"*)

Referring back to the chart on p.95 will remind you that the beginning and ending sections of this epilogue tell two stories of two kings who did not follow God's design in their leadership decisions. The opening episode was Saul's failure, while the closing story was David's. The former caused a drought and the latter a plague.

Saul's failure to honor a covenant is easy enough for us to understand, but what was up with this taboo about taking a census? Was it really that big of a deal to count people? Start by reading **Exodus 30:11-16**.

- What instruction was given in the Law for numbering the people?

We get the sense that ignoring the technicalities of ransom money wasn't the only aspect that displeased the Lord.

- In **v.2b**, what possible motive is hinted at on David's part?

- How does the statement in **v.1** lead you to believe that David's actions may have symbolized the attitude of the whole nation?

- In **v.3**, how did Joab's reply suggest that these motives had become either fearful or prideful?

Another interesting phrase from Joab is, “...*while the eyes of my lord the king still see it,*” which might suggest that another motive was ordering the kingdom for Solomon to come into power.

- What was the final tally of fighting men (v.9)?

Israel _____ Judah _____

Day 4:

📖 READ 2 Samuel 24:10-17 — Judgment on David’s Disobedience

Since it had taken over nine months for Joab to complete the head count, there was plenty of opportunity for David to reflect on his motives for the census and think better of it.

- Describe David’s change of heart in v.10.

- What was his request of the Lord?

- What was God’s response via Gad the prophet (v.12-14)?

- Which of the penalties for disobedience did David choose?

- Where was the plague located when God gave instructions for the angel to stop the plague (v.16)?

David seemed completely broken over the consequences of his sin. He realized that innocent people had suffered because of his pride. Joab had tried his best to warn David, but pride can have a way of blinding us and deafening us — even to our closest counselors.

Day 5:

🔗 READ 2 Samuel 24:18-25 — David Builds an Altar

It must have been a welcome relief for David to hear Gad offer him something TO DO in order to make recompense for his former bad decisions.

- What were Gad's instructions (v.18)?

We don't know much about Araunah, as he seems to be a regular guy. But his generous offer of his *possessions* for the king's use stands in contrast to the king's mistake of counting his *possessions* — which was what brought them to this point in the first place.

However, David had an attitude change through this trial...

- What was his response to Araunah's generous offer (v.24)?

I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing 24:24

It was fitting that atonement should cost David something. Many people lost their lives while David's life had been spared. It is at least satisfying to us to hear his humbled heart shine through once more.

David played the part of priest and offered sacrifices to God. Through these peace offerings, David once again was able to enjoy the presence of the Lord and the Lord heeded the prayers for the land.

Compare these interesting tags at the end of our bookend stories of this epilogue:

2 Samuel 21:14 *"and after that God _____ to the
_____ for the _____."*

2 Samuel 24:25 *"so the Lord _____ to the _____
for the _____."*

The Temple of the Lord — We find a parallel passage in **1 Chronicles 21:18-22:1**, which tells us that this site, on which David offered peace offerings to the Lord, would be the exact site where Solomon would build a house for the Lord — a temple for the Ark of God. Solomon would fulfill the promise that God gave to David that his own son would build a house for the Lord.

And so the books of Samuel end with a promise — a promise that God's Unfolding Plan of Redemption would still move forward — a promise that when people prove faithless, God remains faithful — a promise that God's discipline does not last forever.

Even though I titled the study of 2 Samuel *The Reigning King* and highlighted the earthly reign of King David, we end by reminding ourselves where we started — no earthly king would rule perfectly and no earthly king would bring lasting peace.

Jesus Christ is our perfect King who actually does bring peace into the spirits of those who love him and believe in Him. And one day, when He returns to the earth, He will bring lasting peace as he establishes a new heaven and a new earth.

Come Lord Jesus, Come! Amen!

Lessons on Leading

1. The main point of David's oracle was God's grace, but a strong secondary point was the blessing that an honorable leader is to the people they lead — enabling them to flourish! What comes to your mind when you consider *your* leadership and the effect it has on those who look up to you?
2. Leaders need leaders in order to lead well. In the same way that David had three and thirty, Jesus had three and twelve. What does your *inner circle* look like? Do you have a handful of close friends who help you fulfill your calling? If not, what action do you think might be helpful?
3. Another way to appreciate the need for support is to consider a sports team — the quarterback can only win in proportion to the proficiency of the rest of the team. The leader who appreciates the contributions of teammates will be more likely to succeed. Discuss how this applies to your own life.
4. As a leader, what might be the equivalent, in your world, of *counting the fighting men*?
5. Joab tried to warn David that he (and perhaps all of Israel along with him) were treading in dangerous territory. David did not listen and, as a leader, he was held responsible for ignoring God's instructions. Consider and discuss the uncomfortable truth that sometimes people suffer for bad decisions made by their leaders.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Read **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**. What parallels do you see between David's oracle in 2 Samuel and Paul's words to the Corinthians? What parallels might these sentiments have to your own life?
2. David poured out the Bethlehem water to the Lord as a sacrifice of praise. What is precious in your life that you might offer to the Lord in a similar way?
3. In our culture, there seems to be a prevailing attitude that *actions* and *consequences* can be separated — that there is a way around just about anything. How does the end of 2 Samuel remind us that actions DO indeed carry consequences? How can you make good use of this concept among those you influence?
4. David's choice of accepting the plague as punishment indicated that he still believed in a God of mercy. Why is mercy such an important attribute of God to consider and to lean upon?
5. What themes in 2 Samuel has the Lord brought to the surface that have had an impact of your spiritual life?
6. How has the entire study of 1 & 2 Samuel made God's story of redemption more vivid for you?

REFERENCES

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Women of the Word Bible Studies

The following WOW Bible Studies written by Sue LeBoutillier are available through the **Calvary Chapel Ontario bookstore**, and through our online store at www.ccontario.com.

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- **Exodus** — Divine Deliverance, From Egypt to Sinai
- **Numbers** — The Wilderness Way, From Sinai to the Jordan
- **Joshua** — The Path of Promise, From the Jordan into Canaan
- **Judges** — A Time of Turning
- **Ruth** — Walking with My Redeemer
- **1 Samuel** — The Coming King
- **2 Samuel** — The Reigning King
- **1 Kings (Part One)** — Solomon and the House of the Lord
- **Jonah** — The Call of Compassion

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- **Simply Jesus** — The “I AMs” of Christ in the Gospel of John
- **Acts** — Walking in the Spirit, The First Days of the Last Days
- **Galatians** — Finding Grace in a Demanding World
- **Philippians** — Finding Joy in a Disjointed World
- **Colossians** — Finding Stability in a Changing World
- **Titus** — While We Wait
- **James** — Real Faith for Daily Life
- **1 & 2 Peter** — Hope, Holiness and Humility in a Hostile World
- **1,2,3 John** — Light, Love and Logic, Lessons from the Apostle John

