





Hi! My name is Cheyenne. I am a member of Crossroads Church and I had the privilege of writing the daily devotions for this study on the life of the Old Testament character David (anchored in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel).

You were created with a purpose and for God's purpose in this time and place. Just like David. Like David, you will experience hills and valleys as you fulfill your purpose. There will be moments of joy and desperation; times of obedience and disobedience. Through it all, if we choose to cling to Jesus and cultivate a strong vertical relationship with Him by staying anchored in His Word and on our knees, we will learn to be resilient and retain balance in our horizontal life. It starts with keeping our focus UP.

Every single lesson of this study has changed me. Marked me. Some filled me a tremendous amount of joy and encouragement. Others reignited my courage to keep fighting the good fight—even when it's hard and seems impossible.

Some lessons wrecked me. Sometimes God used a lesson to tear me down to expose buried sin and shame so it could be confessed and forgiven. Other times a lesson exposed old wounds not completely healed. Wounds I thought had scarred over long ago. And God being God, faithfully restored what was broken.

Before I started writing this study, I'd never studied David's entire life, nor had I read all of 1 & 2 Samuel. I'd studied bits and pieces over the years, sections here and there, but never the whole thing. It was nothing against David, I just didn't feel a connection with him or an attraction to his story. So, when I was asked to write this study, I was excited to learn something new but that was it.

However, a precious friend told me she would pray for me to fall in love with David. I laughed and said okay—expecting nothing to happen. Then about a month in, it happened. *I fell in love with David and was completely undone.* God revealed parallels in his life and mine and incited me to rewrite all my previous work with a new passion. Oh, I had the passion for God's Word and His timeless teaching, and for the wonder He allows us to discover as he unfolds His story. But He added a profound love for the man who chased after His heart, and in the process deepened my love for my Jesus.

Friends, it's my ardent prayer God does the same for you! As you go through this study, I pray He'll ignite an insatiable hunger inside you for His Scriptures so you can fall more in love with your Savior.

*This Study is 8 weeks long and each week contains 5 lessons.* Each lesson has two sections:

***Dig Deep*** is the main part of each lesson. If you end there, that's okay. I encourage you to join me in the ***DIG DEEPER*** section as it builds on what we learned in Dig Deep and provides personal application.

I used the New Living Translation (NLT) throughout this study. If I used another translation/version I noted it in parentheses.

I'm beyond excited to hear how God changes you as you study 1 & 2 Samuel and David's life. And I'm anxious to watch your love for Him grow as your knowledge of Him grows.

Blessings! Xoxo  
Cheyenne

## Meet Cheyenne

Cheyenne is simple Minnesota girl fueled by coffee and a love for people. She's a complete plant nerd and loves being outside in the garden and on, in, or by the lake.

Cheyenne is married to Thad, her best friend and biggest cheerleader; together they have four boys. Though Thad's dad jokes enable her to perfect her eyerolling skills, his perpetual encouragement and support motivate her to pursue her calling to be a writer and aspiring author. Her boys, on the other hand, are her inspiration. Being a mom is one of Cheyenne's greatest joys. She cherishes the ability to pour into them by cheering them on as they go through life, celebrating their unique God-given gifts, and discipling them in their faith.

However, Cheyenne's greatest passion is Jesus and His Word. It's her fervent desire to ignite that same passion in you and help strengthen your resolve to follow Him and apply His Word to your day-to-day life. Cheyenne writes from her heart. She shares her experiences and the lessons God's taught her along the way. She vulnerably shares her highs and lows; victories and struggles in hopes to encourage you to grow your relationship with Jesus.

## Connect with Cheyenne



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## 1 & 2 Samuel Overview

David's story is found in the Old Testament books of 1 & 2 Samuel. 3 other characters also are prominent: Hannah, Samuel, and Saul. Chronologically, the stories are clustered around 1,000 B.C. or 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

The author, although unnamed, is most likely Samuel. 1 Chronicles 29:29 notes that Samuel, along with Nathan and Gad, recorded the "acts of David".

The events that happen in 1 Samuel took place over a period of about 110 years. During this time, we see the birth of Samuel, his call from God and subsequent prophetic ministry, the rise and fall of King Saul, and the anointing and maturity of young David.

First Samuel is set in the land of Israel, where the Hebrews invaded and settled (see Joshua). Numerous other peoples continued to dwell alongside Israel, often disrupting the peace and encouraging the Israelites to stray from their faith.

Much of 1 Samuel follows David's exploits as a young musician, shepherd, and warrior. We witness his underdog victory over Goliath (17:1–58), his deep friendship with Jonathan (18:1–4), and his growing military prowess (18:5–30). He waited patiently for the throne, often pursued and driven into hiding by Saul. The book concludes with Saul's death (31:1–13), which serves as a natural dividing marker between 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel.

There are 2 Key Themes:

*1-God's Providence:* God repeatedly made everyday events work for His purposes. He used Hannah's contentious relationship with Peninnah (1 Samuel 1:1–28), He led Saul to Samuel during Saul's search for lost donkeys (9:1–27), and He caused David to learn of Goliath while taking food to his brothers (17:1–58). These are just a sampling of God's providence at work in this book.

*2-The reversal of the expected, or the reversal of human fortune:* Hannah's barrenness gave way to children (1 Samuel 1:1–28; 2:21); Samuel became prophet instead of Eli's sons (2:12; 3:13); Saul rose to prominence though he was from a lowly tribe; and David was anointed king though he was the youngest son (16:1–13). Normal human patterns were reversed by God so that His plan could be furthered, showing His sovereignty over all.

### 1 Samuel Outline

- The Story of Samuel (1:1–7:17)
- Transition to the Monarchy (8:1–22)
- The Story of Saul (9:1–15:35)
- The Story of Saul and David (16:1–31:13)

### 2 Samuel Outline

- Story of King David (1:1–20:26)
- Epilogue (21:1–24:25)

We believe you'll find yourself in these stories. And we pray, more than anything, that you will get to know yourself and God better as you read and reflect. Enjoy!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 1, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Prayer moves the hand of God*

*"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."—Max Lucado*

Our journey begins with a woman named Hannah. As we enter into her story, she's pouring out inconsolable tears before her God, the result of a deep, unmet longing. Ever been there? Are you experiencing a "barrenness" only God can fill? In your relationships, family, career, finances, marriage, ministry, or \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank)? Yes/No

If so, there's hope. Hannah shows us how to set our faith in motion as she cries out to God.

### **Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11**

This family (Elkanah and his wives) loves God and honors Him by obeying His laws and observing the annual religious sacrifices. Despite their reverence for God, it's clear this is *not* a happy family. This household is a dysfunctional chaotic mess. The natural imbalance of affection from Elkanah to his wives incited intense jealousy in Peninnah, and led her to be adversarial and abusive to Hannah, resulting in strife and a rivalry between the two women.

Did Elkanah try to comfort Hannah in the face of her childlessness before this?

Most likely, but Peninnah's constant aggression and abrasiveness negated any comfort or encouragement he could offer. Plus, his seemingly insensitive remark reveals there's no way he could understand the depth of her pain and how the emptiness of her womb echoed in her heart.

Elkanah wasn't oblivious to the ancient belief that children (the gift of or the withholding of them) were an indicator of a blessing or curse from God.<sup>1</sup> But he had several sons, so in Elkanah's mind, his line would continue. His needs were met. He was content. He just couldn't seem to fathom why children should matter to her in light of their intense mutual love for each other. But to Hannah, no children was a personal tragedy.

Wouldn't you love to sit him down and say, "Dude, listen, listen, listen..."?

During Passover the priest would recount their history from the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to Moses and the first Passover. Interestingly, each of the Patriarchs had barren wives. And each man petitioned God to open his wife's womb and allow her to bear children—to remove her disgrace. And He did...in His timing. To display His power. To birth two nations. To build His Nation.

I believe as Eli read the stories of the Patriarchs, Hannah's mind went to their wives: Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. Women who were barren. Women who understood. Women who felt what she was feeling. Women who could identify with her crushed soul and empathize with her inconsolable tears. Women whose wombs God opened and blessed with sons. Women whose stories displayed God's

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard et al. eds., *New Bible Dictionary Third Edition*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press., 1996), 123.

power and grace. Whose stories increased *her* faith and gave her the *confidence* to bring her request to God. Hannah was painfully aware her family was inept to help her. So, in her isolation, she went to the One who could fill the void—in her womb and her soul. I love how she goes into His presence. How she lays herself bare. Completely open. Vulnerable. How she pours out her deep anguish, like incense. And her tears, like a drink offering.

**Can you identify with Hannah? If so, how?**

No matter what season you're in, what struggles you're having, which obstacles you're trying to maneuver around, there's *someone* in the Scriptures *who's been there*. We can learn a lot about what to do (or not do) by studying their experiences and choices as we work through our situations. How awesome is that?

Friends, God hears us when we pray...and prayer moves the hand of God! When our soul is crushed and change needs to happen, the first place to start is *on your knees*. Petition God over and over again. He is the only One who could fill the void—in our situation and our soul.

**Read John 15:5-8. And write out verse 7.**

**Now read 1 John 5:13-15. Put verse 14 in your own words.**

**Now put these Scriptures together. What did you discover?**

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He places His Spirit inside us, identifying us as His. And when we remain in Christ (faithfully following and obeying Him) and in His Word (daily study and application), the Spirit gives us the mind of Christ so we can understand God's plan and our role in it. He then teaches us God's Truth and Wisdom and helps us align our thoughts and will to His. Which means, like Hannah, we can present our dreams, requests, desires, and needs to God "with an unselfish heart and pure motives"<sup>2</sup> and be confident He will hear us. Just like He heard Hannah.

In 1 Samuel 1:19-23 we read how God heard her plea and gave her a son whom she named Samuel. And after Samuel was weaned, she did as she promised and gave him back to God. And then Hannah did something we all need to remember, she went before the Lord and said thank you with a song of praise!! (1 Samuel 2:1-11)

**What dreams, requests, desires, and needs do you want to bring to God?**

**Have you thanked Him for past answers to your prayers? Yes/No If not, do so now.**

**Suggested Prayer:**

*Lord, Jesus, before I bring my requests to You, forgive me for the times I've tainted my requests with selfish ambition and pride. For when I've chased after my prosperity as opposed to Your heart. Align my will with Yours so I can further Your Kingdom here on earth. Help me make Your Name famous, not mine. Keep me sensitive to pride and eager to turn from it. Please continue to renew my heart and mind as I remain submissive to you. [Take a few moments to pour your heart out to God now. Don't rush it. Take time to linger. Either write out your prayer or make a list of the important points].*

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 9.

## **DIG DEEPER**

Family life is hard. Especially when it's dysfunctional. However, regardless of what kind of family we currently live in or were born into, we get to choose the quality of our faith.

- What's your spiritual heritage?
- Do you have parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles who walk with Christ? Yes/No
- Was their relationship with Him evident in how they lived their life? Yes/No
- Did your family go to church? Yes/No
- Did they bring home what they learned there, to enhance your home and lives? Yes/No
- Was your family open about their faith, or was it "a private matter"? Open/Private
- Were you taught how to read and study your Bible and how to pray? Or did you have to figure it out on your own? Taught/On own
- Did you talk about Biblical principles and how they are vibrantly relevant to your daily life? Yes/No
- When you had questions about what you were reading, could you go to your parents or grandparents with your questions and discuss it? Yes/No

**Tell about your spiritual legacy (or lack of one) and how it influences (or influenced) your faith.**

Highlighting the dysfunction in Elkanah's family foreshadows things to come and provides a glimpse into the family Samuel was born into. We aren't created to have an imbalance of affection whether in marriage, family, employment, or faith. When we have divided loyalties, we're the ones who end up shattered. The division, friction, discord, and dissonance tear us apart and leave us broken and often permanently damaged, scarred, and bitter.

**Take a few moment to take an honest look at your life, family, and faith. Do you have any divided loyalties you need to ask others and God to forgive and get back in the right order? If so, what is it/are they?**

Whatever it is, get after it before the dysfunction, jealousy, and strife tears you and your family apart. Elkanah's family dysfunction stemmed from his polygamy. He had more than one woman jockeying for attention. For us a divided loyalty happens when those *in* our family don't feel loved or respected *more than outside* things such as: careers, hobbies, projects, wealth, materialism, other relationships, substance abuse, our own pleasures, \_\_\_\_\_. It also happens anytime there's an imbalance of affection toward family members.

This may not mirror your present family. But it may be spot-on for the one you were born into. As we look into Samuel's lifetime of faithful service to God over the next few days, his example reminds us our family can influence our faith, but we choose the quality of it.

**Friends, you are in control! You choose what you believe.**

You choose to follow Jesus or to reject Him.

You choose to read, study, and apply the Word.

You choose to pray.

You choose to serve others.

It's your decision to make because, in the end, it's your responsibility not someone else's. Regardless of your family's strong faith or lack thereof, you must decide what you believe and who you are going to follow.

It doesn't matter if your family was regularly in church or never crossed the threshold.  
It doesn't matter if they faithfully followed Christ or they rejected everything about Him.  
It doesn't matter if they had a solid faith or no faith at all.

**You get to choose! And that, my friend, is a beautiful gift to cherish.**

One last thing, family life is hard. Varying personalities, desires, ambitions, interests, maturity levels, outside influences, \_\_\_\_\_ you name it, can make family life messy. Take a few minutes to bring your family before God. The aches, pains, joys, and sorrows. Ask Him, in His grace, to mend, heal, and restore. To protect where protection is needed and to encourage growth where necessary. Praise Him for what's going well and improving. For the blessings, grace, and prosperity. Praying for your family is critical to its functionality and health. And Who better than the Great Physician to keep your family healthy and strong?

## DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID

### WEEK 1, DAY 2

**Today's BIG Idea:** *When you live your life for you...you get smaller. When you live your life for others...the world gets better.*

#### Read 1 Samuel 2:12-26.

Describe Hophni and Phinehas (vs. 12)...

They abused their authority for personal gain and habitually showed contempt for God, His sacrifices, and His people. In Hebrew, "They were sons of Belial" meaning worthless, good for nothing, wicked, hard-hearted, perjurers, promoting rebellion against their leaders or God's authority, son of the Devil<sup>3</sup>

"They knew not the Lord" [know = *yāda'* = to know, learn, perceive, discern, experience, confess, consider, to know people or God relationally<sup>4</sup>].

Hold up. They didn't *know* God? No. They chose not to. But aren't they supposed to be priests? Yes. And as such, they were responsible for any offenses related to the sanctuary and violations connected with the priesthood.

Eli, the High Priest, was aware of their wickedness. But deliberately turned a blind eye to it. He knew his lads were guilty of numerous capital offenses under God's Law. But he refused to discipline them. When the people's complaints became so frequent he could no longer ignore them, he offered a grandfatherly rebuke—citing reports he'd heard, ignoring what he'd witnessed. But his rebuke was too late; their hearts were too hard to listen or care about the warning.

These corrupt leaders did unimaginable damage. But God had the remedy ready. Though 1 Samuel 2:12-26 seems to be about Eli and his sons, I'd like to argue, it's really about Samuel and Hannah.

First, let's contrast Hannah with these men. Hannah's petition was a precious sacrifice freely offered to God while Hophni and Phinehas robbed Him of what others gave. Hannah fulfilled her vow, Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas didn't. Hannah was reverent to God, Hophni and Phinehas were contemptuous.

We see...

- Her grace vs. Eli's callused judgmentalism
- Her joy vs. Eli's sorrow
- Her faith vs. Hophni and Phinehas's determined unbelief

There's no way Hannah could have known how pivotal her faithfulness and sacrifice would be for Israel's future or the role her son would play in the nation's history. But God did. And He blessed her greatly for it.

The same is true for us. Recall a time when God used your "small" faithful sacrifice to do big things?

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<sup>3</sup> Warren Baker, Eugene Carpenter, *Word Study Series: The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament*. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 140.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

Now, let's look to Samuel. Read and fill in the blank with what he was doing:

2:11 \_\_\_\_\_ while Eli's sons committed sins against the priesthood

2:18 \_\_\_\_\_ while Eli's son committed moral sins

2:21 \_\_\_\_\_

2:26 \_\_\_\_\_ while God delivers prophetic judgment on Eli and his sons

3:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Samuel was a prophet, priest, and later, judge. The entire nation revered him. God honored him. And despite being raised in a cesspool of contempt, he was able to resist the seduction of gluttony, lust, and the other evils to serve God and his people faithfully.

Friends, *we are all called to serve* God by serving His people. He gave each of us spirituals gifts to use in our service.

Read the following passages and record what some of these are.

**Romans 12:6-8**

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

**1 Peter 4:10-11**

**What gifts has God given you to serve as part of His body?**

**Where has God called you to use those gifts? Or are you still looking for your niche?**

If you haven't plugged into your church community yet, ask God to help you find your niche—where your gifts would *best* be used. Ask others you trust to pray with and for you as well. Then, start talking to the church staff and leaders to determine where you fit—whether it's within the church or with a ministry they partner with. Wherever Jesus calls you to serve, trust Him. Surrender to Him. And step boldly into your calling. You don't have to lead, but you do need to jump in and use your gifts to serve. If you don't, the body won't be able to function properly because pieces will be missing.

Regardless if you're called to lead, are a current leader, a leader-in-waiting, or are called to support those who lead, you have a *vital* role to engage in now! You are called to pray for your current, rising, and future leaders with fervency and diligence!

In **1 Corinthians 12:12-31** Paul uses the human body as a word picture to describe how the different spiritual gifts are connected to create a functional ministry. **Read verses 22-27. What do you learn?**

Behind-the-scenes gifts and talents are crucial to the functionality of the Church. And when those who are called to fill those roles choose not to serve, it forces others who aren't equipped for those rolls to fill in the gaps. This weakens the ministry as it stretches the current staff and volunteers too thin and prevents them from fulfilling their callings and employing their gifts with excellence. **Examples** of behind-the-scenes gifts, skills, talents are:

Administrative skills	Social media savvy	Accounting expertise
Hospitality	Musical talent	Financial generosity
Tech skills	Organizational skills	Handyman/maintenance

**Suggested Prayer:** *Jesus, thank you for the spiritual gifts you've given me and for including me in Your plan to further Your Kingdom here on Earth. Show me how and where to use my gifts. Help me refine them to serve You and others well...(finish the rest in your words)*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Regardless of where Jesus has you serve, know He has you firmly in His grasp and will guide you each step of the way. Friends, serving yields immeasurable joy! There's *nothing* more exciting than watching God change someone's life. It's such an honor to sit front-and-center witnessing His regeneration power—it's crazy amazing!! A privilege to relish and not take lightly. And the cool part is, as He changes those we serve, He changes us too...there are no words! But there's one thing that can destroy our efforts, taint our victories, and obliterate our witness for Christ—judgmentalism.

**Have you ever been judged unjustly? Yes/No What happened? What was the fall-out?**

**Have you judged anyone harshly before having all the facts? Yes/No What happened once you discovered the details?**

Look back at **1 Samuel 1:9-18**.

**Where is Eli? What's he doing? (9, 12)**

Eli wasn't just the High Priest; he was also the nation's supreme court justice. Part of his job was to sit on the Seat of Judgment and hear disputes that had been kicked up to him from the lower courts and hand down judgment. During the annual festivals it was his full-time position.

His chair was perfectly positioned in a public place so all had access to him and justice, and so he could see what was going on in the Tabernacle in case his assistance as High Priest was needed.

So as Hannah prayed, Eli watched. Growing more incredulous by the minute. He was oblivious to her deep anguish and bitter tears. Instead, he focused on her lips soundlessly moving. "Must you come here drunk?" he [snarled]. "Throw away your wine!" (v. 14)

**Pause for a minute. What's your reaction to this rebuke?**

This unfounded accusation gets my back up! As if Peninnah's backstage ridicule and her husband's private insensitivity weren't enough, now her priest is publicly accusing her of being a wicked woman! There's no love or compassion. No pastoral care or concern. He doesn't even hoist himself off his chair

to see if her eyes are unfocused or to detect alcohol on her breath. Instead, he hollers across the room, "Lady, why are you *here* drunk?"

**Put yourself in Hanna's sandals. How would you respond to this unfounded accusation?**

I'm thankful she answered him and not me. Even when her voice catches between sobs, her sincerity rings true. The grace and refinement that resonated in her words would be void in mine. She demonstrates how our response to a rebuke determines the direction of the outcome. Oh, there's so much to learn from Hannah, isn't there?

Read and record the main point of the following:

**Romans 1:28-2:4**

**Matthew 7:1-5**

**Titus 3:2-7**

Judgmentalism stems from pride and arrogance and gives birth to a critical spirit which:

- Steals our joy and the enjoyment of others
- Causes us to look for the bad in people as opposed to celebrating the good
- Stifles our ability to love and be a positive ambassador for Christ
- Repels potential friendships
- Makes us angry and bitter
- Fuels our insecurities

It doesn't matter if we speak our opinions out loud or harbor them in our heart; the results are the same.

**Read Matthew 7:1-5 What do you learn about judging others?**

We've all sat in the Judgment Seat at one time or another and handed down baseless damning decrees based on assumption. Then I had an aha-moment: I realized I judged out of a place of self-importance, brokenness, and insecurity. You too? That's when I started to regularly ask God to help me do five things:

- To give me His sight to see people through His eyes
- To provide me with His grace to love people with His heart
- To expand the capacity of my heart to love
- To give me His insight and wisdom to best love them
- To help me remember my frailties, sin, and failures and overwhelm me with compassion for others

When we're unsure about ourselves in any way, we tend to have a strong desire for people to be like us so we can feel better about who we are. Friends, we need to stop fooling ourselves. We just aren't that important.

What IS important is Jesus. Period. Who He is. What He did. And the gift he offers.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 1, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG idea:** *The best thing to do with an "elephant in the room," is to escort it out.*

And the Saga continues...Read **1 Samuel 2:27-36**.

**Do you think on some level Eli was expecting his visitor? Yes/No**

There's no right or wrong answer. Just put yourself in Eli's shoes. I think he was. I doubt he was expecting the message he got, but he knew God wasn't going to indefinitely ignore his sons' sins. However, I don't think he was expecting to be condemned or considered his own sins. Isn't that so like us?

**What are God's charges against him and his sons?**

**What's their verdict and impending sentence?**

Hophni and Phinehas had ample time to repent but chose not to. Eli had bountiful opportunities to discipline his sons but spurned his responsibility. And by the time he issued his rebuke, it was too late. Their hearts were already hard with contempt.

Now God had spoken through this unnamed visitor. And what was Eli's response? Nothing. No repentance. No beseeching God. No holy sorrow. Nothing. Only silence. When God calls us out directly or through someone else, we're wise to first, hit our knees with sincere repentance and then, make every effort to right the wrong.

Now considering "Eli was very old" and his sons' sin had irrevocably hardened their hearts, I assume the atrocities committed by Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli's unwillingness to discipline them, had gone on for a long time. Their moral erosion was a slow fade that occurred over decades.

God wasn't oblivious to what these men were doing, but he was patient, giving them time to repent, desiring to remove their sins as far as the east is from the west. He provided Eli countless opportunities to fulfill his responsibilities as a father; to realize he'd made an idol of his sons; to adhere to his mandates as High Priest and judge.

But it never happened. As we saw yesterday, Eli was quick to judge and harsh in his accusations. But when it came to his sons, he was silent and turned a blind eye. Did he pretend the issues weren't there? Make excuses? Justifications for their behavior? I don't know. The text doesn't say.

But I do know this passage provides a vivid example of what NOT to do with an elephant in the room...what not to do when there's an immoral or reprehensible situation in our immediate family or faith family. What's clear is that it's our responsibility to address it or "escort it out of the room."

**Is there an elephant in the room (past or present) you need to face in your immediate or faith family? At work? School? In a relationship? Yes/No**

**Is it your responsibility to bring out into the open? Yes/No (If not, then who is responsible?)**

When we choose to ignore the elephant in the room, our silence feeds it. Causing it to grow and enhancing its strength. And in many cases, due to the neglect and tight spaces, the elephant becomes aggressive, rebellious, and out of control—creating a lot of permanent damage.

Now let's look at this from a different angle.

**Have you ever looked past the atrocities committed by your family members while being quick to slam, shame, or admonish others (Christians and non-Christians alike) for similar or lesser sins?**

**Yes/No**

We all have. Sometimes we can't see our elephant from the inside looking out. We're too close to the situation. But more often than not, we don't see him because we don't want to. We've grown accustomed to his presence and maneuver around him to make ourselves as comfortable as possible. We might even incorporate him into the decorating scheme or treat him like the family pet. But for those on the outside looking in, it's obvious—and concerning.

Ignoring the elephant isn't just foolish; it's dangerous! Here's why: It...

1. Nurses a critical spirit
2. Turns you into a hypocrite
3. Negates your integrity
4. Nullifies your credibility
5. Destroys your witness for Christ

Let me encourage you with something I've learned the hard way. When you find yourself in a situation like this, don't shirk from your responsibility. Take it straight to God and confess your reluctance. Then ask Him for the wisdom and courage needed to confront the situation head-on in a loving, humble, and gentle way. And ask Him to give you the words to speak and to make those involved receptive to those words. And trust Him to do it!

Then get after it. Do it before hearts grow hard and refuse to listen and repent. Before there's any more damage. And be ready to offer grace, love, and any resources needed to facilitate healing and guidance back onto the right path.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Jesus, open my eyes to see if there is an "elephant in my living room." If there is one, give me the courage to see it, identify it, and escort it out the door. Embolden me and strengthen me to do what is right in your eyes. Provide the words and any resources needed. Lord, my elephant is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm afraid... (finish in your words)*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli ignored their hearts. They rejected the promptings of God so long that they became somewhat oblivious to their sin. Many religious leaders of Jesus day were in the same boat. And many people in our day are, with several more joining their ranks every day. You know it, you see it. The hardness of hearts. The bitterness. Anger. Hatred. Resentment. Contempt. Those things break God's heart and shatters ours. If left untreated, we risk committing what the Bible calls, "the unpardonable sin" (or the "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit").

Blasphemy. If it wasn't such a horrific sin, it would be a fun word to say. But blasphemy is a grievous crime, one God takes very seriously. But what *is* blasphemy? Write *your* definition below...

My definition probably looked like yours, but I knew it was incomplete. After looking at various sources, Webster-Merriam stated it best: Blasphemy is:

*1a : the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God*

*b : the act of claiming the attributes of a deity*

*2 : irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable*

As I pondered this, especially considering Hophni and Phinehas's heinous sins, I had to ask, "have I been guilty of blasphemy?"

God has pursued us from the beginning of creation. Desired to have a relationship with us. The Garden of Eden and the Tabernacle were God bringing Heaven to Earth, His reaching out to us *so He could dwell with us*. To do life *with us*. To communicate *with us*. To teach us how to have an abundant and full life. Each of these things were set apart. Consecrated. Holy. As were His people.

And all were desecrated. Defiled. Blasphemed. By His people. And then God was silent. But in His relentless pursuit of us, He didn't give up. He brought Heaven to Earth one more time. He sent His Son *to dwell among us*. (John 1:4)

Jesus is the exact representation of the Father. Not a shadow. Not a copy. He came to teach us how to have a vibrantly relevant relationship with Him and how to have an abundant and full life. When we choose to believe in and follow Him, we're saved. And when we trust Him and are saved, we're indwelt and sealed with His Spirit. The Spirit who is part of the Trinity—our triune God!

Do you know what that makes us?!

- Identified as God's (Ephesians 1:13)
- A new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Justified (made righteous) (Romans 3:24)
- Set free from our sinful nature and the power of sin that leads to death (Colossians 2:11; Romans 8:2)
- Pure, holy and without fault (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; Ephesians 1:4)
- Made right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- One with Christ (Galatians 3:28)
- Blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:4)
- Adopted as God's children (Ephesians 1:5-6)
- Forgiven (Ephesians 1:7)
- God's masterpiece, made complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 2:10)<sup>5</sup>

God gave us His Holy Spirit, to dwell *INSIDE US*, so that we could walk among the lost and introduce them to Christ, making them disciples, encouraging them to mature in the faith, and empowering them to make more disciples.

Friends, because of the Spirit in us, we are united with Christ and have been brought near to God through His blood and hence are under His authority. Our salvation has been bought and paid for at a very high price. We are not our own, but God's. And as God's, we're called to be holy as He is holy.

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<sup>5</sup> *Life Application Study Bible New Living Translation*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007) 2615.

So, what happens when we repeatedly choose to reject God, His statutes, teachings, and laws? When we perpetually ignore His calling and deliberately do our own thing? When we recurrently treat this holy vessel, our body, with contempt?

**Are we guilty of blasphemy for showing blatant “irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable?” Yes/No Explain.**

After much research and study, I don't have a “clear” answer. No specific verse to point to. But many verses together, from Genesis to Revelation lead me to believe we are. Yet, we're not without hope! We can bring our transgressions before God, repent, and be forgiven! We can utilize the power of the Spirit within us to live a life emanating that hope; reflecting Whose we are and Who we are.

Here it is. The final piece to the “blasphemy puzzle.” The piece no one likes to talk about. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—the unforgivable sin.

**Write *your* definition below.**

**Read Matthew 12:31-32, what do you learn about blasphemy in general and against the Holy Spirit in particular?**

Do you, like me, live in terror of committing this sin? Of being doomed to hell because of one thoughtless mistake. Once I received some wise council: “If you're worried you've committed this sin, you haven't. Only those who've completely turned their backs on God and allowed their hearts to become petrified are guilty of it. They can't hear the voice of the Spirit or feel His promptings for repentance. This grieves Him because He's the *only one* who can lead us to the repentance which results in forgiveness.”

So, as you're reading this with your Bible in arm's reach and actively seeking God and His Truth...you're not guilty of this sin. Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli were. Many of the religious leaders of Jesus's day were. And many people in our day are, with several more joining their ranks every day. You know it, you see it. The hardness of hearts. The bitterness. Anger. Hatred. Resentment. Contempt. How it breaks God's heart and shatters mine. BUT we can step in BEFORE those hearts become petrified.

Empowered by the Spirit in us, we can chisel away at the stone with our prayers, kindness, grace, and love and help them hear the Spirit's promptings to surrender. Then the God of Mercy and Grace will give them a new heart and a new spirit. He'll take out their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart. He'll put His Spirit in them so they will follow His decrees and be careful to obey His regulations. He will give them a heart like David's. Like His.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 1, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *You were created with purpose and for a purpose.*

“There is a reason God has you here on this planet. But, it’s not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.<sup>6</sup>”

### **Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21**

I love how this chapter starts for two reasons. God rejected Hophni and Phinehas, but He had Samuel poised to take their place. It indicates things are about to change! God had a new assignment for Samuel.

**Where does God have you serving right now? What’s your assignment? In your family? Career? Education? Church?**

**Is it where you want to be? Yes/ No...Why or why not?**

God has you there for a reason, or several, such as: To enhance your present skills...to give you time to mature (in life, faith, your industry)...to build a network...to allow you to heal and/or rest...to let you be a light to encourage others...to refine your faith or test you.

You are where you’re at for reasons you’ll never know this side of heaven. All of the above apply or have applied to me over the last 15 years when I first received my calling. I’m thankful for each opportunity, the lessons I learned, and the people I’ve met. In hindsight, I understand why God had me in various places and situations—even, especially, the painful ones. I see now how He’s used those events to shape me into who I am and prepare me for my ministry. It’s no different for you, your situation, or calling.

Charles Swindoll’s profound words breathed encouragement into my heart as I waited for my calling to become my reality: “God has some extremely exciting things in mind for His children. For some it may happen tomorrow. For some it may happen next month or next year or five years down the road. We don’t know when. For some...it could happen today. But the beautiful thing about this adventure called faith is that we can count on Him never to lead us astray. He knows exactly where He’s taking us. Our job is to live in close fellowship with God as we walk our earthly path. In the process of that simple arrangement, God arranges us in His eternal plan...God’s promotions are usually sudden and surprising, so be ready. He watches you as you faithfully carry out your tasks and He says to you, ‘I know where you are, and I know how to find you. You just stay ready and carry out your job.’<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rick Warren. *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 17-18, 23.

If you've already heard and answered your call and are living it out, stay strong and resilient, my friend. Living out our purpose can be exhilarating and exciting as well as painful and costly. Gather prayer support. Stay in God's Word and prayer. Run your race well. And enjoy the ride.

If your purpose seems to have run its course, don't worry. If you're breathing, you can bet God has something new for you. Something your experiences have equipped you for. Keep asking. Be persistent and open. He will reveal it. While you wait, enjoy this season of rest. Focus on Him and growing your faith.

If you're still waiting to hear a whisper, a squeak—anything, if impatience is getting the best of you, be patient. Wait well. Even after I received my call to write, I had to wait, and in some aspects, I'm still waiting. So I get it. I've been there. So trust me when I say—serve the Lord faithfully where you are—even if it's not where you want to be. Like Samuel, Jesus is preparing you. Getting you ready. And when it's time, your calling may not surprise you, but *where* He calls you to serve might.

### **Read Colossians 3:22-25**

#### **What are we instructed to do and why? (vs. 22)**

#### **Who do we really work for? (vs. 23)**

#### **Now flip back to 1 Samuel 3. How many times does the word “call” appear in verses 4-10?**

The Hebrew word for 'call' is *qārā'*, and it means: to call, to declare, to summon, to invite, to be called, to be invoked, to be named.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Which part of that definition most resonates with you? Why?**

For me, it's "to invite." Our calling from God is an invitation to participate in His Plan. To affect our family, neighborhood, workplace, school, community, and world for Him and His glory. To further His Kingdom here on earth. And we get to choose to either accept that invitation or reject it.

So if you aren't where you want to be, submit to Jesus and trust Him and His purpose for having you there. In the mundane and monotony of life, work, school, etc—that's where our character is forged. Where our integrity and grit are established. It's where we learn to cling to our Savior and believe Him and His purpose. It's where we develop a heart like His.

One last thought, in 1 Samuel 3:2, Eli is now blind. His rapidly eroding physical eyesight could reflect his fleeting spiritual insight. Friends, habitual intentional sin does that. It robs us of "a heart that is sensitive to the things of God."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard et al. eds., *New Bible Dictionary Third Edition*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press., 1996), 1009.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

We are responsible for our spiritual eyesight's health. The only way to maintain our sight is to maintain a relationship with Jesus by:

- Studying and applying His Word daily
- Diligent and sincere prayer, daily
- Faithfully serving Him wherever He has you
- Maintaining a tender heart that beats in time with His

Friends, without clear spiritual insight, we will be deaf to God's call when it comes. Stay close to Him like Samuel did. Dig deep into His Word and know Him.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Jesus, thank you for including me in your plans and giving me a purpose. Help me be faithful where you have me and remember it's you I serve not people. I confess at times my attitude stinks. Help me...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

In Samuel's day, God's callings were rare; in our day, we're all created with a purpose and for His purpose. As we dig in to the six phases of Samuel's call we'll see how those phases are mirrored in our own calling, and later in David's. If you're like me, this exercise will do two things:

- Inspire you to look back and see the wonderful things God has done for you with fresh eyes; how He has provided for you, sustained you, encouraged you, brought people along side you at critical moments, etc.
- Help you identify where you are in this continuum

This not only fortifies your resolve to continue following His lead, but it also energizes you to remain faithful where God has you at the present time.

**Look at 1 Samuel 3:1-21 and then let's break it down.**

#### **1. God's Call was Rare (1 Samuel 3:1b)**

As Sam continued to serve under Eli, he most likely assumed he was called to be a priest. But God had something more in mind. Sam's current situation was boot camp for his real calling as priest, prophet, and judge. The lessons he learned here would be applied later in his ministry.

At this time, no prophets were speaking. Over 300 years passed with only a handful of messages from God—when previously He talked frequently with His leaders. What changed? The people stopped talking to God.

**Read Judges 2:6-19. Put the cycle of the judges in order, I'll start.**

- 1 Joshua and his generation died. The next generation didn't *yāda'* the Lord
- God handed them over to their enemies and fought against them
- God sent a judge to rescue them
- The Israelites repented and turned back to God
- The next generation was more wicked than the previous one
- The Israelites abandoned God and worshiped other gods
- The judge died
- The Israelites cried out to God in their distress

God is a gentleman and won't force His ways on us. If we choose to abandon Him, His statutes, and His call to chase after other passions—He'll let us go. But understand when we reject Him, we also reject His blessings, protection, and guidance. He stops healing our brokenness and fighting our enemies. It's all or nothing with Him. Either we're in or we're out. If we're lukewarm, He spits us out of His mouth.

## **2. God's Call is Personal (1 Samuel 3:2-4)**

### **How did God call Samuel? (4, 6, 8, 10)**

Don't you love that? God knows YOUR name too. And when He calls you, you can bet your invitation will be just as personal.

## **3. God's Call is Persistent (1 Samuel 3:5-10)**

**How many times did God *qārā'* Samuel? Why do you think it took him so many times to understand what was happening?**

**Why do you think it took Eli so many times to understand what was happening?**

Samuel never heard God's voice before. Though he longed to hear it, he had no reason to expect it. Eli, on the other hand, *should have been* actively, regularly communicating with God. But wasn't—couldn't.

**Has God ever called you persistently? Yes/No What was it?**

**Did you obey? Yes/No How did it turn out?**

God is relentless when He calls. And often our callings are beyond us, outside of our comfort zone. Instead of saying "no," ask Him to help you see the potential in you that He sees and then the courage make it a reality.

**What did Eli tell Samuel to say when God calls him again? (9)**

When we cling to our Savior, and are constantly seeking Him, it's easier to sense His leading. One thing I pray everyday is, "Lord, give me Your wisdom, insight, perception, and discernment. Make me a vessel ready and available for You to do Your thing. Guide my steps, guard my heart and mind, and give me the endurance to get it done."

## **4. God's Call is Painful (1 Samuel 3:11-17)**

**Why would God's call to Samuel be painful?**

When we're required to deliver messages of doom, despair, and judgment—especially to those we love—it cuts deep. There will be times that are uncomfortable. Hard. Painful.

## **5. God's Call is Perfect (1 Samuel 3:18)**

Once God rejected his sons, Eli probably knew Samuel would replace him as priest. Now, he was certain. Instead of disparaging God's judgment and begrudging the messenger, Eli gave Samuel a final, profound lesson. One last gift.

### **How does Eli respond to God's message to Samuel? (18)**

"Samuel needed to hear Eli's words because they taught him to accept the call of God on his life as perfect and right. God will do what is good in his own eyes. [(NIV)] God's will for his servant is perfect and good in every way.<sup>10</sup>"

## **6. God's Call is Powerful (1 Samuel 3:19-21)**

God was with Samuel through his entire ministry and equipped and enabled him to do his job. Friends, Samuel didn't have to do it alone. But he did have to do it. It's the same for us. God is with us every step of the way. He gives us what we need when we need it. All He wants from us is surrender and the diligence to follow through.

God's call is relentless. But it's NOT endless. If you choose to ignore His invitation, He will find someone else to fill the gap. I pray your response echos Samuel's, "Here I am." And then enjoy the ride! It won't be easy. But it will be worth it.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 35.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 1, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *When we elevate a good thing above a God-thing, it's a bad thing.*

Our blessings are a representation of God's goodness and grace and evidence of His deep love for us. When God blesses us with something—a career, successful business, thriving ministry, financial security, a healthy marriage, a hot spouse, cute kids, a beautiful home, friendships, rock-star athleticism, musical talent, intelligence, etc.—we need to be careful not to allow those good things to displace God's prominence in our lives. To not worship the gift but rather The Giver of that gift.

**What blessing/gift have you elevated above God?**

**Read 1 Samuel 4:1-22**

“The ark symbolized “God’s presence, his purity, his superiority, and his covenant blessing. Anything that damaged, or even threatened potentially to damage the ark, however slightly, was in itself a sort of symbolic threat to these important divine realities. The Israelites were to respect the symbols of the realities as a way of showing respect to the realities themselves.”<sup>11</sup>”

**Would you consider taking the Ark into battle a threat to potentially damage it? Yes/No**

The elders of Israel made a critical mistake. They took the Ark and turned it into an idol. The Ark was a tool to help them visualize heavenly realities as they worshiped the God of Heaven, but instead they turned it into an object to worship—an idol. They elevated this good thing above God and it became a bad thing.

How do I know? There's a crucial sentence in 1 Samuel 4:3, pay particular attention to the pronouns: “Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Shiloh. If we carry *it* into battle with us, *it will save us from our enemies.*” (emphasis mine) It. Not He. Not God. It.

Friends, the elders ignored the raging Goliath-sized elephant in the room to trap a mouse. Meaning, they overlooked the fact that as a nation, they'd abandoned God, His Laws, and His covenant to worship the pagan gods of their enemies. To matters worse, the elders neglected to acknowledge God was their source of power and protection, not the Ark, and thus treated it like a “good luck charm;” an enchanted box full of magical power and good ju-ju.

Let's dig into 1 Samuel 4:1-11 a little more to identify where they went wrong. Then we'll apply those lessons to our life so we don't follow in their footsteps.

**How many Israelite men died in the first defeat?** (vs. 2) (circle one) 40 400 4,000 40,000

**What question did the Elders ask *each other*?** (vs. 3a)

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group) 569.

Their question was spot-on! Had the elders *asked God* their questions, they likely would have received the exact same answer Joshua did when he asked. God answered, *“Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me.* (Joshua 7:11a) And likely had the same opportunity to repent and be forgiven. To purge the blasphemy and idols from their nation and turn back to God. To soundly defeat the Philistines just as Joshua destroyed the Amorites. But they didn’t.

**Who called for the Ark?** (vs. 3b) (circle one) Hophni and Phinehas The soldiers The elders

**Read Deuteronomy 5:8-10. What was God’s third commandment to His people?**

**How many Israelite men died in the second defeat?** (10) 30 300 3,000 30,000 300,000

**Read Judges 2:15. When the Israelites worshiped other gods, God handed them over to their enemies and did what?**

No doubt the elders were remembering the victories God gave their people in times past. However, they missed the key component to those conquests—*those leaders’ hearts chased after God’s first.* Theirs didn’t. So instead of fighting with the Israelites and filling the Philistines with terror, God fought against them and they were crushed. Slaughtered.

But it didn’t have to be that way. And it doesn’t have to be that way for us either.

Everything we have is from God. He gives us the power and ability to achieve our goals, grow our businesses and ministries, and kill it on the mat or the field. He provides our careers, homes, families, and friendships. He gives us our calling to fulfill His purpose here on Earth. “Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father.” (James 1:17) But when we turn those gifts into idols we will live in utter defeat and find ourselves in the biggest mess of our lives.

**What do you learn about our blessings and stewardship of those blessings in these verses?**

**Matthew 6:19-21**

**1 Timothy 6:10**

**1 Timothy 6:17-19**

Now Read **Revelation 2:1-6** to discover what happens when we allow our hearts to wander too long. **In this letter to the church of Ephesus, what were His 2 complaints?** (vs. 4)

**What did He invite them to do?** (vs. 5)

If they continued in the direction they were going in, if they refused to repent, they would cease to be an effective church. Their light would go out. And then Jesus Himself would come and remove their lamp stand—meaning their hearts would become so hard, blasphemous, there’s no way their light would be able to be relit. We, too, are responsible to be a light to pierce the darkness in our communities, workplaces, schools, homes with the Truth of Christ.

**Suggested Prayer:** Precious Jesus, You've done wonderful things for me, my family, friends, and church. I've received blessings I haven't deserved, and often, beyond my imagining. Please help me remember my blessings here on earth are representations of divine realities, treasures in heaven. That those events are integral pieces of my faith story. Help me remember them but not worship them. Forgive me for elevating \_\_\_\_\_ over you, Today I repent and turn back to you. I commit to renewing my relationship with You daily via Bible study, prayer, and serving You well where You have me. I commit to making you my #1 priority and keeping our relationship vigorous. Active. Vibrant. Fresh....(fill in your prayer)

### **DIG DEEPER**

The spiritual darkness the Israelites had grown calloused and accustomed to, was now palpable. Terrifying. Oppressive. The Ark was captured; taken hostage by the enemy. It was the most precious of all the Tabernacle's furnishings. The priests guarded it with their lives. It contained the terms of the Covenant and was a representation of divine realities—God's presence, purity, superiority, and covenant blessing. And now it was gone! But in the end, the it was just a box...made by human hands...and God doesn't belong in a box.

**Read Exodus 25:10-22**

**What was the Ark, (10) and its poles (13) made of? What were they overlaid with? (11, 13)**

**Where were the rings located on the Ark and how often were the poles to be removed? (12, 15)**

**What would the Ark hold inside? (16, 21)**

**What was the name of the Ark's cover, and what was it made of? (17)**

**What was on the Ark's cover, and what was their role? (18, 20)**

Write out verse 22 and underline what was significant about the Ark's cover. (22)

The Ark had to be a sight to behold! This stunning small portable chest was created by human hands according to God's Heavenly pattern to be both powerfully symbolic.

**Wood.** It's structure and framework was wood. Our Savior died on a wooden cross.

**Gold.** That wood was surrounded with gold which symbolized God's rarity, purity, and deity.

**The Atonement cover.** Where God met with His people to reveal divine Truths. It represented His throne in Heaven, where we go for his Truth and Wisdom.

**The two cherubim.** Their job was to guard and watch over the Ark and its contents (The Covenant) just as they guarded and watched over the Garden of Eden and its contents (The Tree of Life). And the Throne Room of God in Heaven and its contents (His glory).

**The feet.** (12) Kept the chest off the ground; protecting it against any damage caused by the rough soil and sharp rocks. Like our sin can't damage the holiness of God.

**Read Isaiah 66:1 with Matthew 5:35. How is the Earth depicted in these verses?**

The Ark was placed in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. The High Priest only had access to it once a year. And only after spending hours purifying himself and the nation through a regiment of cleansing and consecration rituals. If he didn't follow these regulations precisely, he would die.

The Ark was the most precious of all the Tabernacle's furnishings. But in the end, it was just a box. Made by human hands. It wasn't God. He is so MUCH more than that.

**Read Psalm 139 and list what resonates most with you today.**

Our God is ALL-POWERFUL! He is everywhere, all the time, all at once!

He is spirit and must be worshiped in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

He doesn't require human hands to serve His needs—for He has no needs. (Acts 17:25)

He doesn't live in man-made temples. Or boxes. (1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1)

We—you and I—are the temples He chooses to inhabit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; Romans 8:9)

Now, go to Ephesians 1:19-20 and fill in the blank. We are infused with "the incredible greatness of God's power." This is that same power that \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 19b)

Now, let's put all this together. We, like the Israelites, tend to limit what God's power can do in our lives by confining Him to a "man-made box."

Our self-imposed boundaries and limitations affect our effectiveness for Him and His Kingdom here on Earth. They...

- Stifle our spiritual growth and hinder our faith
- Prevent the continual renewal of our heart and mind
- Leave us vulnerable to temptation
- Block our acquiring of spiritual wisdom, insight, perception, and discernment

God has examined our hearts and already knows everything about us—and He still loves us! Despite our sin. Our depravity. Our secrets. Our judgmental hearts. Our pride. Our \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank)

Isn't that amazing? It blows my mind wide open!

But wait, there's more! This same God knows us individually, is with us and pursues us—personally. And knowing all He knows about us, He still accepts us and wants a relationship with us—He invites and allows us to get to know Him! How incredible is that?!

BUT God won't go anywhere or infuse anything with His power unless He's invited. Unless we remove our man-made barriers. Unless we let Him out of the box we put Him in and give Him full authority and free-reign.

As we close out this week, linger in God's presence. Revisit Psalms 139:23-24 and pray David's words and invite God to respond.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 2, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Lives are not changed until hearts are changed.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 5:1-6:12**

Only a few months after capturing the Ark, the Philistines begged to send it back. Their trophy was ‘a curse.’ Thousands were dead, thousands more lay dying. Their cities and villages were in shambles. Their crops and food stores were decimated. And things were only going to get worse if they didn’t get rid of this encumbrance soon. But how? They couldn’t simply deliver it back and say, “Hey, sorry, we messed up. Here’s your box back.” Any move toward the border would be interpreted as a sign of hostility resulting in war—and they were in no position to fight.

Finally, they came up with a plan: Send the Ark back with a guilt offering. If the plague stops and we’re healed, we’ll know it was God who afflicted us—not chance.

#### **What was the guilt offering? (1 Samuel 6:4)**

Several scholars criticize the Philistines for “doing it wrong.” Gold tumors and rats weren’t God’s prescribed guilt offering in His Law. However, *these weren’t His people*. They were His people’s enemies. They didn’t have His laws, statues, or religious regulations. They didn’t believe in Him or know Him. They knew *of* Him, but their knowledge was incomplete and skewed.

**Have you ever been expected to know something those you were with assumed was “common knowledge” but really isn’t? Yes/No If so, explain.**

The sobering truth is we’re guilty of this ourselves when we expect those who don’t know Jesus, don’t believe in Him, and don’t follow His teachings to behave like they do. In our Christian bubble, we assume the world lives as we live, according to what we know, because of Who we know. But they don’t—they can’t, because the Spirit doesn’t live inside them. Therefore, they haven’t been made into a new creation, equipped to live a godly life. They can’t understand the spiritual truths we live by and the promises we hold dear. It’s foolishness to them.

**Read Romans 12:1-2. Why are we to give our bodies to God? (1a) What are they? (1b)**

**What are we not supposed to copy? (2a) How are we to let God transform us? (2b)**

**For what purpose? (2c) And that will is \_\_\_\_\_(2d)**

These are beautiful promises we claim. Guiding principles we live by BECAUSE of the Spirit *in* us. Those who don’t have the Spirit don’t get it. They can’t; no matter how much we want them to. And when we’re dogmatic about them “doing it right,” doing life the way the Spirit teaches us to do it, they have no idea what we’re talking about. And instead of being an ambassador for Christ, we end up repelling those we’re trying to reach.

**Read Romans 5:8. What does Paul remind us?**

Now, let's change our perspective a bit.

In **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**, Paul explained that regardless of who he was with, he looked for common ground and camped there to deliver the message of hope without compromising his faith or witness. Jesus exhibited this same behavior. These men were masters at distinguishing between and separating the sin from the sinner. Of delivering the message of love and salvation without being corrupted by those they were ministering to. It's a fine line to walk, but if we ask, God will give us the wisdom we need and help us navigate with compassion and grace.

Today, if Jesus was walking on the earth as He did in the first century, he'd do the same things he did in the first century world...he'd meet people where they are. He'd schmooze with the disreputable people, he'd go to neighborhoods others wouldn't, he'd talk to outcasts and those on the fringes. Why? Because in order for Him to share the gospel with the lost, He needs to go where the lost are! And so do we. The lost are not going not going to come to us.

**When you first put your faith in Jesus, how much Spiritual knowledge did you have?**

**Have you learned since then? Yes/No**

Before we were saved, we were ignorant about Biblical truths and principles. Even as a young Christian I remember feeling confused when those around me used "church-y" words I didn't understand. When we talk to those who don't know Jesus, we need to remember who we were *before* we met Him. We need to remember our past ignorances and depravity. And we need to remember we're not "better" than they are, we're just saved—by grace. When we keep these things in the forefront of our mind, it's easier to love and reach those who are lost because we're not expecting them "to be Christian" before they *know* Christ.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Jesus, help me see those who don't know you with your eyes and love them with your heart. Speak your words through my mouth. Lord, I trust your calling and guidance. Give me the courage I need to share your truth with \_\_\_\_\_... Let me meet them where they are at, love them, and walk with them so that they can grow closer to you.*

### **DIG DEEPER**

#### **Review 1 Samuel 5:1-5**

The Philistines crushed the Israelites and took the Ark of God to Ashdod as their trophy! **Once in the city, where did they take it and how was it positioned? (2)**

Dagon was the chief god of the Philistine pantheon, and they believed that taking the Ark to his temple signified Dagon defeated the God of Israel and God was now his slave.

Dagon's 20 foot tall statue lying prostrate before the Ark once should have been taken as a severe warning. When it happened a second time along with the decapitation and dismembered, it should have been perceived as a dark omen. The messages were clear—You are defeated! Your god is impotent. I Am God and there is NONE besides Me! But they didn't get it.

Neither did I until I learned decapitating defeated enemies was a common practice in the ancient world. The degradation and removal of one's identity also displayed the superiority and power of the

conqueror while instilling fear in their remaining enemies. And removing the hands of the corpses was used as a viable way to calculate enemy casualties while adding horror of the defeat. When taken together, there was no denying the utter collapse of the ones who failed.

Read the following:

**Exodus 12:12 Who did God execute judgment against?**

**1 Corinthians 10:19-22 What really are the idols/false gods?**

**Philippians 2:9-11 What will happen at Jesus's Name? (10, 11) Where will this happen? (10) To whose glory? (11)**

That's exactly what Dagon did. And his priests missed it, incurring Divine judgment on their nation.

**Review 1 Samuel 4:6-8. What did the Philistines know about 'the gods' of Israel? What were they afraid of?**

**What did God do to the people of Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron? (1 Samuel 5:6, 9, 11b)**

Several ancient manuscripts include rats in this plague. An unnatural stream of rats invading everything would be exactly what the Philistines feared; a plague like the ones God used to decimate Egypt and its gods. Can you imagine? Rats pouring out of their boats, in their home and beds. Rats ravaging their crops and food stores. Rats filling the land with death and destruction.

Why rats? Rats have fleas. And infected fleas transport Bubonic Plague—hence the tumors. Within 1-7 day of being bitten: Flu-like symptoms develop—fever, headaches, vomiting, and swollen lymph nodes close to the bite site(s). The lymph nodes continue to swell until large painful tumors develop. These tumors grow until they break open, giving way to secondary infections.

The infected cities and surrounding villages came to a screeching halt. Their men, incapacitated. Fishing, farming, commerce, terminated. Army personnel, decimated. The stench of sickness and death, inescapable. Secondary diseases, flourishing. Chaos, unimaginable. No wonder the people were terrified to see the Ark approaching.

**Who did the people of Ekron summon? What did they plead for them to do? (11)**

Now before we start clucking our tongues at them for missing the obvious warning signs of God's superiority, power, and sovereignty, let's take a look in the mirror.

**Can you remember a time when the Spirit warned you *not* to do something?** Maybe it was not to have that last drink, to flirt with that person at work, to date that hottie at school, to buy that new something, to say those words burning at the tip of your tongue, to...\_\_\_\_\_. (you fill in the blank).

**Yes/No**

**Read the following verses and record what you learn about God guiding our steps**

**Psalm 32:8**

**Psalm 37:23**

**Proverbs 16:9**

**John 8:12**

I remember plenty of times I saw the caution signs and ignored their warnings. In my stubbornness I refused to listen and ended up in a mess! The flip-side is also true. I can recall how God used the times I listened and obeyed to grow my faith and draw me closer to Him.

Here's a recent example: I received a letter from a realtor who had a client looking for a home in our area. I get these letters regularly, and I usually ignore them and toss them in the recycling. So this one went with the others: recycled! But then I felt the Spirit stir. "Go get that letter." So I pulled it out of the can, wiped off the junk, and asked, "Now what?"

"Call." You've GOT to be kidding me. Who does that?

"Call." That's the craziest thing I've ever heard.

"Call."

OKAY! I called and got voicemail; I left a polite message telling her we had no intention to sell for at least 30+ years and then told her about the homes for sale around us. I wished her luck and hung up, thinking that was that.

I did it. Happy? Then the realtor texted me back. And I responded. And so did she. And so did I. We went back-and-forth for a few days, having a delightful conversation. During that conversation I discovered she goes to my church AND she knows my friends!

A week later, we met for coffee and I felt as though I'd known her my entire life. In a very short time, she's become one of my dearest and most trusted friends and prayer partners. Can you believe it?

**Now, what if I'd ignored the Spirit's prompting that day?**

My point: When God directs us to do or not to do something, it's for our benefit. To either protect us or bless us. And He does this because He loves us and wants what's best for us. Like we talked about last week, all He requires is our obedience and submission to Him and His leading. Why? Because He knows the outcome. He knows what our disobedience will cost us and He doesn't want that for us.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 2, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God answers the mess of life with one word: "grace".*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 6:13-7:17**

Can you picture this vivid scene? A brand new cart with glittering cargo attached to two noisy cows driven by the Hand of God. Incredibly amazing! This is a beautiful picture of God using whatever means necessary to pursue this wayward children, to get their attention, and to guide them back into His arms.

#### **Where did God guide the cows to take the Ark? (1 Samuel 6:13)**

It's no accident God guided the Ark to this quiet little border town. It was one of the cities set aside for the priests and those called to care for the Ark. If anyone were to revere God, His laws, and the Ark, it would be them, right?

Understandably the people were overjoyed when they saw the Ark. Who wouldn't have been? The problem was, they let their emotions trump their logic and dictate their actions. And they paid dearly for it.

#### **What did they do? (1 Samuel 6:14)**

**Read Leviticus 1:3-9. How were herd animals for burnt offerings described:**

#### **Those sacrificed in 1 Samuel 6 were male/female? (circle one)**

**Look back at Leviticus 1:4 and fill in the blanks. "Lay your hand on the animal's head, and the Lord will accept its death \_\_\_\_\_ to purify you making you \_\_\_\_\_."**

God would ONLY accept an offering if it was performed according to His precepts. If it wasn't, it was detestable to Him—an abomination. Blasphemy. Why? Because burnt offerings were a foreshadow of Jesus's death in our place, to purify us and make us right with God. Every time the Israelites performed this sacrifice, they were to be looking to the future, to its fulfillment.

Was their reckless sacrifice of the female cows an oversight? Didn't they know better? Was it an indicator their hearts were still far from God and rebellious? Or was it a foreshadow of "impending divine judgment"?<sup>12</sup> The text doesn't say, but I believe this was both an indicator and a foreshadow because when the 70 men thought they could take "just a peek" inside the Ark—they were struck dead.

God offered a chance to reconcile, to break the cycle of irreverence, disobedience, and inadequacy, but was met with shameless idolatry. Their seemingly benign curiosity was nothing more than

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<sup>12</sup> Glen s. Martin *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 53.

blasphemy in disguise; which is why I believe the sacrifice of the cows was both an indicator and a foreshadow.

Don't misunderstand; their celebration was appropriate, as was their joy! Even their sacrifices were fitting—as long as they were in accordance with God's Laws. But their sacrifices reflected their idol worship not their reverence for the Living God. They were evidence they still worshiped the Ark rather than the God whose power it *represented*. In truth, God wasn't interested in their sacrifices; He wanted their hearts and repentance. He desired reconciliation. And His guiding the Ark back to them was Him extending His hand in grace. And they missed it.

And we often miss it too. As 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians we tend to forget *who* God is. We sing with the Psalmist, "How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!" (Psalm 147:5) while treating Him like our buddy, like He's the secret sauce to the good life. We don't let the Psalmist's words penetrate our hearts and minds or feed our soul. We repress the desire to meditate on them and absorb their overwhelming meaning. If we did, we'd fall prostrate before Him, trembling, unable to lift our head.

Dear Believer, Christ's death and resurrection gave us direct access to God, but it didn't change Him or who He is. It changed *us*. Made *us* into a new creation. Made *us* pure and holy as He is holy. If it wasn't for The Spirit in us, we'd die when we entered His presence because of the intensity of His purity. Instead, because of Jesus's perfect atoning sacrifice, we can approach Him with confidence.

So when we're rebelling and God chases us down, pursuing us with His unrelenting love, we must come back to Him on His terms not ours. He happily takes us when we're broken, beaten, battered—a wreck—but we need to come repentant. In complete surrender.

### **What do these verses teach you about repentance?**

**2 Chronicles 7:14**

**Luke 15:3-7**

**Acts 3:19**

**Romans 2:4**

**2 Corinthians 7:10**

**1 John 1:9**

**Suggested Prayer:** *Lord forgive me for the times I've tried to bring you down to my size, for when I've treated you like a buddy or pal. As I come into your presence now, Lord, I come with a submissive repentant heart. I confess...*

## **DIG DEEPER**

God won't be mocked or blasphemed. He won't tolerate irreverence of Himself, His laws, or statues. He was reminding His people and us that we are *not* to come into His presence unconcernedly, with indifference and carelessness. As modern-day believers, we have a more intimate relationship because of the Spirit in us, however, God is not our buddy or our pal. He is The Almighty. The All-powerful, never-changing, Great I Am. The God of the Old Testament is the same God today. He is just as pure and just as holy. Just as magnificent and just as powerful. And we are still to come before Him in humility, brokenness, and with a submissive heart. When we do, do you know what we'll find? His arm open wide ready to hold us close—and it all starts with pouring out.

### **Review 1 Samuel 7:3-17**

After the incident at Beth-Shemesh, the Israelites took the Ark to Kiriath-jearim where it remained until David brought it to Jerusalem 20 years later.

**Read verse 3 and fill in the blanks: Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you want to**

\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ and your images of Ashtoreth. \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_; then he will rescue you from the Philistines."

**How did the people respond; what did they do? (4)**

**Where did Samuel tell the people to gather and why? (5)**

**What did they do there? (6) Compare with James 4:4-10.**

Pouring water out of a vessel onto the ground until the vessel was empty is a symbol of genuine repentance. It represents the pouring out of our sins before God until our "vessel" is dry. This is not a simple, "I'm sorry for all my sins, please forgive me, in Jesus' name, Amen." This is an all-day event of deep spiritual purging and cleansing—of confession, repentance, and rededication to God. With their physical idols destroyed, now they were purging those gods from their hearts and minds, and putting God back in His rightful place.

**Last week we identified good things we elevated above God. Today, we're going deeper, to the innermost places, to confess our "pet sins"—those things you know are wrong but make excuses for. Those things that might be feeding the "elephant in the room" or be the "elephant in the room." When you finish pouring out, invite the Spirit to fill you—to heal and restore you.**

There are few things more beautiful than broken people humbling themselves before God in sincere confession and genuine repentance—finding forgiveness, healing, and freedom. It overwhelms me to tears. Every. Single. Time.

Have you noticed the Enemy's favorite time to attack is when you're exhausted, vulnerable, and burnt out? That his most vicious and hostile attacks come when we are at our weakest? This comes to life when the Philistine advance on the Israelites gathered at Mizpah. These people were mentally, emotionally, and spiritually poured out. They're weak with hunger and thirst and not prepared for battle. And they were absolutely terrified.

**Can you identify with this? Yes/No Explain.**

Now, let's look at this from another angle. The people just confessed their idolatry, apostasy, and blasphemy. They came before God with broken, repentant hearts and poured everything out until there was nothing left. To God, it was the most precious of sacrifices. Holy and pleasing. Exactly what He wanted. Their hearts back in His hands. As each sincere apology poured from their lips, His anger dissolved ushering in forgiveness in its place. Then the Philistines started to advance...

**What did they beg Samuel to do? (8) Contrast that to 1 Samuel 4:3-4.**

**What did Samuel do? (9a) Contrast that to 1 Samuel 6:14.**

**What did God do? (9b) Contrast that with 1 Samuel 4:10, 6:19.**

I love how The Message explains what happens next: While Samuel was offering the sacrifice, the Philistines came within range to fight Israel. **Just then God** thundered, a huge thunderclap exploding among the Philistines. They panicked—mass confusion!—and ran helter-skelter from Israel. Israel poured out of Mizpah and gave chase, killing Philistines right and left, to a point just beyond Beth Car. Samuel took a single rock and set it upright between Mizpah and Shen. He named it “Ebenezer” (Rock of Help), saying, “This marks the place where God helped us. (1 Samuel 7:10-12, emphasis mine)

Isn't that GREAT?!? God fought for His people! Friends, He does the EXACT SAME THING for you! It doesn't matter how long you've rebelled or what you've done—He still pursues you and chases you down. He gives you the opportunity to reconcile. To repent. To fall into His arms. Loved. Treasured. Held. And the He fights for you.

**By the way, where was the Ark through all this? (7:1)**

In closing, look at **1 Samuel 7:15-17**. There's something I don't want you to miss. When Samuel became Israel's last judge at Mizpah, he was a young man, late teens to early 20s at the most.

**Where did Samuel “return home to”? (17) Do you remember the significance of this place? (see 1 Samuel 1:1)**

Samuel's new home was the place of his birth. Hannah got her son back! And she was able to develop a more intimate relationship with him—even as he continued to serve the Lord faithfully! And Samuel was able to care for his aging mother until her death. Don't you just love the sweetness of God? How He mends broken hearts and rewards those who are faithful to Him? How He remembered Hannah not once, but twice?

## DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID

### WEEK 2, DAY 3

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Lower your expectations of earth, and live the life God intended for you.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22**

As we turn from chapter 7 to 8, Samuel's life flashes before our eyes. He's now an old man. And the elders are distressed. Insecure. Worried. "Who will lead us?" Sadly, they didn't go to God with their worries and concerns. Nor did they invite Samuel to lead them in prayer and fasting as they petitioned God for an answer. Instead, they looked around at what everyone else was doing and demanded:

#### **Record verse 5**

The elders were limited in their perspective because they'd put God in a box and eliminated Him from the decision-making process. They refused to see any other options—or more accurately, they saw their opening and took it. They wanted a king. Period. They wanted to be like everyone else—like the pagan nations around them—like the world.

Don't misunderstand, their *desire* for a king wasn't wrong; their *motives* were. They knew God made provisions for a king in the Law; but God knew once they had a king, they would forget He was their true King and protector.

The elders and the people blamed their oppression, defeats, and misfortunes on their lack of a king as opposed to taking responsibility for their wandering hearts and repeated blasphemy, idolatry, and apostasy. They repressed memories of the times they chased after God's heart and He delivered them from their enemies—better than any king ever could. (see yesterday's DIG DEEPER)

At one time or another, we've all given into the temptation to be like everyone else—to following the ways of the world. We've looked at what everyone else is doing to find solutions to our problems instead of taking our concerns, worries, and fears to God and seeking His help and guidance. For example, have you ever found yourself entertaining these kinds of thoughts:

- If I had a spouse (or a *different* spouse) then I would be happy.
- If I had children (or more children) then my life would be complete.
- If I had a house (or new/bigger house) in that neighborhood I would be content.
- If I had a that car/wardrobe/physique I would be like \_\_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_
- If I had a new job/career/boss then I would make more money and be satisfied.

The troubles that preceded those thoughts were legitimate issues as was the need for solutions. But when we neglect God in our problem-solving process, we tend to overlook how our sin contributes to the situation, and we fall prey to the shallow answers the world provides. "Answers" that are more like band-aids rather than permanent fixes.

Dear One, wanting to be like everyone else is indisputably engaging in a friendship with the world. As Christians, we know friendship with the world is wrong—but we may not know why—so instead, we choose to become "frenemies" with the world around us.

## Read James 4:4. What do we learn about friendship with the world?

Sounds harsh, right? Extreme? **Now read John 12:31 and 1 John 5:19.** Who is the ruler of this world?

That brings it into focus, doesn't it? When we put these three verses together, it makes sense why Paul tell us, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world." (Roman 12:2a)

We live in an era of entitlement and self-indulgence. We're inundated with choices and lured to believe the more vast the options, the more happiness is available to us. We have enticements for every delight; entertainments for every taste—with few, if any, restrictions. Statements such as: "You can have it any way you want it;" "you're what matters;" "do whatever feels right to you" are repeated so often we begin to assume they're true, the way it should be.

Our seductive culture paints a beautiful picture of "the good life" while keeping satisfaction and fulfillment just out of reach. It focuses on the superficial and what's attractive to the eye while remaining silent about character development, integrity, virtue, and grit. Friends, our culture is a lie. A Jezebel. A trap set by the Enemy to lure us away from our faith, to make us abandon our calling, to prevent us from producing spiritual fruit.

BUT here's the good news: Jesus has overcome the world! When we accepted His invitation to follow Him—we were identified as His. Children of God. Citizens of Heaven. Heirs with Christ. This world is NOT our home! We're foreigners just passing through.

So when the temptation "to be like everyone else" rears its head: remember the advice found in **Colossians 2:6-10.** Saturate yourself with its encouragement.

Remember, we were created with purpose and for His purpose. We're here on this planet, at this moment, in this generation, in this culture for a reason—to influence it for the Kingdom of God. God appointed you and me to be relevant in our culture and has given us everything we need not to be corrupted by it. This doesn't mean we should isolate ourselves and become Amish. It means we can still wear the current fashions, have the latest hair styles, and enjoy what our modern life offers us—as long as we don't elevate those good things above God and lose our focus. As long as those don't become our pursuit as opposed to God's heart.

We also need to be aware Satan has equally appointed our culture to us; he knows our weaknesses and how to entice us "to want to be like everyone else." But when we determine to cling to our Savior and remain in prayer and His word, Satan's influence loses its potency and effectiveness. Our resolve doesn't happen by accident, though, it takes deliberate daily determination. The enticements of our culture are relentless, but the Spirit in us can and will give us the power and fortitude needed to have the self-control to maintain our integrity.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Lord, help me strengthen my resolve to cling to you and be relevant in my culture and not absorbed by it. Give me the determination to resist the temptation to be like everyone else and seek friendship with the world. Forgive me for when I've given in and turned my back on you...(fill in the rest with your words)*

## **DIG DEEPER**

Wanting to be like everyone else is another form of idolatry—a worship of self, the world its ruler—a rejection of God. If we continue to ignore the warning signs, God will give us what we want...*exactly* what we want. Consequences and all.

### **Review 1 Samuel 8:10-22**

#### **What did God tell Samuel? (9)**

List how a king will reign over them in regard to

**1. Their sons (11-12)**

**2. Their daughters (13)**

**3. Their crops (14-15)**

**4. Their slaves (16a)**

**5. Their livestock (16b-17a)**

**6. They will ALL be his \_\_\_\_\_ (17b)**

**Verse 18 (NLT), fill in the blanks:**

**When that day comes, \_\_\_\_\_ from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord \_\_\_\_\_.**  
**Looking at this list, do you think it would it be worth it to “be like everyone else”?**

The Israelites were so enamored with the “benefits” of a king, they didn’t realize it was a façade. So they rejected Samuel’s warnings and ignored the fine print: A king was another form of slavery—a trip back to Egypt. The lure was too much to resist. And God gave them *exactly* what they asked for.

It reminds me of Jafar in Aladdin. He had control of the genie. He was enthroned as sultan. But he wasn’t satisfied. He wanted more. He wanted absolute power and demanded to be made the most powerful genie in the world. Though the genie tried to read him the fine print, he would hear none of it. He wanted it, and he wanted it NOW! And he got his wish, AND *everything* that went with it—eternal servitude and an itty-bitty living space.

Why is it when we want something for the wrong reasons we're the most obstinate about getting it? And after we get it and the luster dulls, we realize it wasn't what we were expecting it to be. The needs we were hoping it would fulfill were still there, aching, demanding—angry to have been tricked. Now let's change gears.

**Recall a time you brought a problem before God and He fixed it. Was the solution what you expected? Yes/No Explain.**

**What do these tell you about God satisfying our needs?**

**Matthew 6:33**

**2 Corinthians 9:8**

**Philippians 4:19**

**Hebrews 11:6**

When we have a problem—we must take it to God first and let Him have control. He knows our needs and desires. He also knows our futures and how to work things out for our best interests.

Regardless of what the world tells us, we now know it's a lie. The evidence is in the scars we bear—externally and internally. And in some cases, we're still tending to open, festering wounds.

Now is a good time to talk to Jesus. We've talked a lot about our calling, purpose, following God, and all that takes. We've discussed our enticing culture and how to determine not to be absorbed by it. **Spend some time with Him now. Ask Him to reveal where you're being tempted to be like everyone else. Then ask if what you are wanting is wrong or if your motivations are. Then ask how to make it right. And then get after it!**

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 2, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *We have hope because God has a vision and knows where we should go.*

The Israelites wanted a king. They wanted to be like everyone else. So, God gave them *exactly* what *they* wanted.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 9:1-11:15**

Saul was an impressive man. He came from a family of wealth and influence. Add his movie-star good looks and he *looked* like a hero. He “was *the most* handsome man *in Israel*—head and shoulders taller than *anyone* in the land.” (2, emphasis mine) Never mind there’s no mention of his character, leadership abilities, courage, virtue, or spiritual depth. He was *perfect*.

God knew *exactly* what the Israelites were looking for in *their* king, and He found it in Saul. That he didn’t know who Samuel was should have indicated the quality of his faith and heart for God, or lack thereof. But never mind, he was *perfect*.

#### **What did Samuel tell him? Fill in the blanks (1 Samuel 9:20b)**

I am here to tell you \_\_\_\_\_ and your family are \_\_\_\_\_.

Notice Samuel didn’t mention God or Saul being His choice. He said it plainly, “You’re it, Buddy. You’re the one all Israel desires. You’re the one they’ve put *all* their hope in. They are looking to you to satisfy their needs and chase away their fears. To give them prosperity and unity. You’re *their* choice.”

#### **Recall a time you made an impulse purchase. Did the look of the product or packaging influence you to buy it? Yes/No**

Physical attractiveness influences our impulse purchases because the eye buys. If it wasn’t true, companies wouldn’t invest in psychological research and marketing. They’ve learned how to use our attractions to generate an emotional response and expose a “need” we didn’t know we had. They know we all have deep longings and needs, and they want to “fill them.” So, they entice us to put our hope in their products, claims, and promises knowing if we’re attracted to their product and have an emotional attachment to it, we’re unlikely to return it—even if it doesn’t satisfy our needs.

This is what happened with the Israelites and their desire for a king. They were looking for a flesh-and-blood someone to soothe their fears, satisfy their needs, fix their brokenness, and heal their wounds.

Things only God can do.

And we do the same thing when we put *all* our hopes in the things or people of this world—political leaders, new laws, education, a new house, a career, marriage, children, the church/pastors/religious teachers, etc. And later when we discover those hopes were ill-placed the disappointment is crushing. Suffocating. We’re often left confused, dazed.

**Read the following verses and record what you learn about our true hope.**

**Romans 15:13**

**1 Peter 1:3**

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

**Romans 8:23-25**

Isn't it wonderful? Our hope is everlasting! Complete. Perfect. Never void. And it can't be taken away.

**Suggested prayer:** *Jesus, thank you for being my only hope. For providing a secure place to look to and something tangible to cling to. Help me to own it and know it; not look to other things or people to fill my needs. Renew your hope in me and forgive me for...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Saul was the focus of *all Israel's hopes*. On the surface he was perfect: tall, dark, and handsome. He looked like a hero and someone to follow into battle. But looks can't make up for character issues.

### **Review 1 Samuel 10:1-8**

Samuel anointed Saul as God's representative to lead His people. This was not a political act before men, but a sacred act before God. The oil cascading down his head and shoulders *represented* the Spirit coming upon him to help him lead with God's wisdom and purpose. In Saul's case, there was something that needed to happen before the Spirit actually came upon him.

**As Saul turned and started to leave, what did God give him? (9)** \_\_\_\_\_

How beautiful is that? Saul may not have been God's choice, but He still began equipping him to lead His people. And He started with his heart. Just as He does with us.

**What do you learn about the heart and how God equips us in these verses?**

**Proverbs 4:23**

**Jeremiah 17:9**

**Ezekiel 36:26**

**2 Timothy 3:15-17**

**2 Peter 1:3**

**Fill in the blanks for verse 1 Samuel 10:19 (NLT).**

**“But though I have \_\_\_\_\_, you have \_\_\_\_\_ today and have said, ‘No, we want a king instead!’ Now, therefore, \_\_\_\_\_ before the LORD by \_\_\_\_\_.”**

They were about to get what they asked for. A king. Their king. The lots were cast, and Saul was the winner! But when the people turned to congratulate him, they couldn’t find him anywhere.

Remember, the Spirit had yet to come upon Saul, God gave him a new heart first. But I wonder if He was also using this moment to expose Saul’s inner character: Though he *looked* like a hero, he was *actually* a coward.

But in their excitement to get a king, the people chose not to see it because once Saul was found their mouths dropped open in awe at this magnificent specimen of a man. He was *perfect*!

### **Review 1 Samuel 11:1-15**

[Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the people of Gad and Reuben who lived east of the Jordan River. He gouged out the right eye of each of the Israelites living there, and he didn’t allow anyone to come and rescue them. In fact, of all the Israelites east of the Jordan, there wasn’t a single one whose right eye Nahash had not gouged out. But there were 7,000 men who had escaped from the Ammonites, and they had settled in Jabesh-gilead.]<sup>13</sup>

A month after Saul was appointed king, King Nahash stormed into Jabesh-gilead promising peace at the cost of everyone’s right eye. He gave them 7 days to find help, but he assumed no one would come, as they hadn’t in the past. Israel was a “nation,” but it was in complete disarray with no unified military force. Rumor had it they now had a king, but he had yet to see proof of that. So, what was seven days? In the end, the city and its people would be his anyway.

**Have you ever faced an enemy this ugly or known someone who has? Yes/No How did you respond?**

**What happened when Saul heard the message about the plight of the people of Jabesh-gilead? (6)**

The Spirit came upon him, divinely empowering him to lead the people and the army. He filled Saul with a holy anger that mirrored God’s and the wisdom, intelligence, and courage to rescue the town from this monster. This was a pivotal point in Saul’s life: God took this simple plow-boy and turned him into a military, tactical genius—and a king.

**What was Saul’s message and how did he send it out? (7b) What did the Lord do? (7c)**

**How many men came to fight? (8) Circle one. 330 33,000 330,000 3,300,000**

Check out how the NIV describes the battle: “The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.” (11)

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<sup>13</sup> This parenthetical paragraph between ch. 10 and 11 is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls NLT, but not all translations have it.

Riding the victory wave, some men wanted to execute those who scorned Saul after he was acclaimed as king. But neither Saul nor Samuel would hear of it because they knew this victory was God's alone. And Samuel realized God also used it to confirm Saul as king in the people's minds—and Saul's. So, he invited them to join him at Gilgal to renew the kingdom before God and officially coronate him as king. And there was much rejoicing!

What I love about this event is this: even though the Israelites rejected God, God didn't abandon them. And though Saul wasn't His choice, He equipped him to lead His people. Then He filled Saul with His anger and led him into a victorious battle and Saul realized it was God and God alone who did it.

Friends, Jesus does the same thing for us in our seasons of rebellion, when we abandon our calling, and we forget Whose we are and Who we are—He still has us in His sights, in His heart. He still fights for us and we can't be snatched out of His hand!

**What do you learn about God never forsaking us in the following verses?**

**Deuteronomy 31:6-8**

**Isaiah 41:10**

**Isaiah 49:15-16**

**1 Peter 5:7**

**Hebrew 13:5-6**

Now let Paul's words resonate all the way down to your toes:

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed.

We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.

We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God.

We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10, layout mine)

Can I get an AMEN?!?

**Before we close: Look back at Week 1 Day 4, DIG DEEPER and identify how the first few principles of God's callings are exhibited in Saul's call**

**1. God's call was rare:**

**2. God's call is personal:**

**3. God's call is persistent**

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 2, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The humble heart is quick to acknowledge the need for God.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 12**

Israel had *their* king. Saul's stature, striking appearance, and family's prominence fueled the people's imaginations; and the solid military victory confirmed *they'd* found their hero. And Saul, who caught their vision, was ready *to be* their king. Which meant, it was time for Samuel to step down as judge and leader of the nation.

What began as a humble retirement speech suddenly turned into a prophetic oracle full of wisdom and warning. Samuel's passion and love for his God and his people saturated each word. This is his last chance to make a lasting impression, to speak truth, to give warnings, to help them break the cycle of disobedience and defeat—and he makes the best of it.

#### **How long had Samuel served the people of Israel? (verse 2 with 1 Samuel 2:11; 3:19-21)**

The people were led by him for a long, long time. They loved and respected him. Relied on his judgment and prophecies. He was faithful and righteous in his service. Did they assume he was always going to be there? Definitely. But no, he wasn't.

**Have you had a long-time leader you assumed would "always be there" announce his/her departure? Yes/No If so, how did that make you feel?**

**When your exiting leader stepped down did he (she) publicly invite those he served to accuse him of any wrong doing so he could make it right? Yes/No**

Sounds strange doesn't it? Yet, that's exactly what Samuel did. As a lifelong judge, he put himself in the defendant's chair and invited God, the king, and the people to publicly bring any wickedness to light.

**Would you be willing to be so humble and vulnerable? Yes/No Why/why not?**

Evaluations by superiors are uncomfortable and sometimes painful, but we tend to take those better than evaluations from peers and those you serve. Why do you think that's true?

Samuel's actions indicate we're held accountable on three levels<sup>14</sup>:

1. God

- We must fully submit to God in all areas of your life. If we fail to do so we are guaranteed failure on the other two levels.
  - Sin and pride prevent us from
  - Being the kind of spouse, parent, boss, employee, student, child, etc., He needs us to be
  - Being faithful where He has us

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 90.

- Learning what He needs us to learn so He can take us to the next step of fulfilling His purpose in our lives
2. Your leaders and co-leaders

**Read Romans 13:1-5. What do you learn about our leaders and how we should respond to them?**

- Failure to submit to our leaders AND co-leaders—political and professional; in school and church; as volunteers and lay-people; in marriage and in the home; \_\_\_\_\_ — generates failure to serve others well because it...
    - Generates divided loyalties and dysfunction in the group (See DIG DEEPER in Week 1, Day 1);
    - Causes a breakdown of the unity;
    - Confuses people as to who the leader is;
      - Provides ripe ground for Satan to sow seeds of jealousy, bitterness, judgmentalism, and strife.
      - These “seeds” are invasive and prolific. They will destroy the organization, team, project, ministry, business, \_\_\_\_\_ if not yanked out at the root and destroyed
3. Those we serve and our peers
- **Write our Mark 10:45. What did you learn from this verse?**
  - We are repeatedly called to serve others in love. Anything less is unacceptable. And unless we’re submissive to 1 and 2, we can’t do that. Why do you think that is?

Putting ourselves out there is terrifying! Setting ourselves up for criticism, constructive or otherwise, is not to be taken lightly. But we won’t grow or change if we don’t. And sometimes...those evaluations identify the elephant in the room so we can escort it out.

**Suggested prayer:** *Lord, help me remember “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17, NIV). As I submit to those you have put in places of leadership over me, refine me and hone me through their leadership to be used for your glory. And Lord, for those I lead — my children, employees, small groups you facilitate, those you mentor, disciple, teach, etc. — help me serve them with Your love...*

**DIG DEEPER**

Court is still in session. Samuel is exonerated and now it’s the people’s turn in the defendant’s chair — and the charges are stacked against them...

**Review 1 Samuel 12:6-25**

Samuel recounted their history to point out:

- Egypt was an injustice committed against them, an enslavement they didn’t choose. And God rescued them.
- During the period of the judges they experienced multiple enslavements of their own making due to deliberate, willful disobedience followed by God handing them over to their enemies. And when they repented and turned back to Him, He rescued them.

**Looking back on your life, can you identify patterns of enslavement due to your deliberate disobedience? Yes/No Have you been able to break the pattern? Yes/No If so, how has your life changed?**

**If you haven't, do you want the pattern broken? Yes/No If so, what resources do you need for that to happen?**

Once you have those resources identified, get after it. Then take the three warnings Samuel gave to the Israelites and apply them to your life. Read each warning and record what it is

**1. 1 Samuel 12: 14-15 is a series of if/then. What are they?**

**If**

**Then**

**If**

**Then**

**2. 1 Samuel 12:20-22**

**3. 1 Samuel 12:24-25**

Just because Israel now had a king didn't mean the covenant is moot. "God intended for the covenant relationship to continue.<sup>15</sup>" The people *and* their new king were still accountable to its terms, laws, and regulations. And any deviation would result in the same judgment that fell on their ancestors. To show God was serious, and to punish their current wickedness, God punished them for their sins.

**What was their punishment for requesting a king? (18)**

Wheat harvest was during the dry season in May/June. Any rain during this time could damage the crops, but a violent thunderstorm would destroy them. Any stalks not knocked over would rot within days. The entire harvest lost. This is significant as bread was the main staple of their diet, and any loss of an entire harvest would mean the people wouldn't have as much to eat. So, this punishment was farther reaching than just a display of God's awesome power. They would feel the initial repercussions of this for the rest of the year, and most likely for years to come as hungry, poorly nourished bodies are more susceptible to sickness and disease. Hence their plea: "Pray to the LORD your God for us, or we will die!" they all said to Samuel. "For now we have added to our sins by asking for a king." (19)

Friends, when we repent, God forgives us and removes our guilt immediately. But we still have to live with the consequences of our sin—no matter how far reaching they are. But we can still maintain our faith, demonstrate resilience, and thrive as we accept the repercussions of our sin. We'll learn some very valuable lessons of resilience from David later, but for now let me encourage you:

- To accept what those consequences are
- To not succumb to the temptation to feel sorry for yourself
- To honor God and determine to walk in obedience

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 91.

- To learn from our mistakes
- To allow God to heal us and later use our scars for His glory

Samuel wraps up by displaying his pastoral love for his flock. He comforts them, while not shying away from their sin, and reminds them God will not abandon.

**Samuel's pastoral care continues. What two things did Samuel commit to continue doing? (23)**

1.

2.

**In Ephesians 6:18 we are charged to pray in the Spirit. What are the two times we are called to pray? In persistence who are we to pray for?**

**Now turn to 2 Timothy 2:2; Who are we supposed to teach spiritual truths to? What are they to do with these truths?**

**One more, read 1 Peter 2:9-10. Who does Peter say we are?**

When we put these passages together with Samuel's words it's clear we're to pray continuously for other believers and disciple them with God's truth so they can go out and disciple others. Why? Because as God's children we're His holy priests. And as priests, we share in these responsibilities with Samuel.

As we close, let Samuel's final words and warning resonate in your heart: "But be sure to fear the LORD and faithfully serve him. Think of all the wonderful things he has done for you. But if you continue to sin, you and your king will be swept away." (24-25)

**Take a few minutes and look back. Can you see God's fingerprints on your life? In areas, at times that you may have missed in the moment but now are obvious? Describe some or list them out.**

The "big moments" are easier to see, to remember. But when I look for God's fingerprints in the little things, my faith explodes because I can see the kindness of God in fresh new ways. His sweetness. His loving grace. And sometimes His humor. And those memories give me the confidence I need to step out into the unknown—out of the boat and onto the waves, His hand firm in my grasp. Replaying your memories will do the same for you. And believe it or not, some of the most powerful ones are the ones you find before you decided to follow Jesus.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 3, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The bigger your ego, the harder you fall.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 13:1-23**

**When was the last time your pride and impatience got you into trouble? What happened/what was the fallout?**

Saul was God's anointed. God chose Saul with the *people's* criteria. He was the *people's* choice. With his swarthy looks and powerful physique, he was the hero they'd been pining for. But after establishing the monarchy, setting Israel's capitol in Gibeah, and demonstrating his military prowess, his true character started to emerge. At first, it was subtle, but all too soon King Saul became "a real piece of work...he was a selfish, angry, hateful, mean-spirited man."<sup>16</sup> He was more worried about his image and what others thought about him than his faithful obedience to God and His covenant. Saul sacrificed his spiritual character and integrity on the altar of pride in three distinctly different deliberate acts of disobedience; and paid dearly for it. Today we're going to examine the first one.

**Record Deuteronomy 28:25. (If your Bible has a heading for the section this verse is found in, record that too.)**

Saul devised a brilliant military campaign to exterminate the Philistines from Israel, but it rapidly snowballed into an utter failure because he neglected to seek God's guidance first. So, while the Philistines mobilized their extensive army, Saul was in Gilgal trying to corral his men who were scattering like scared rabbits.

**How long did Saul wait for Samuel? (1 Samuel 13:8) (circle one) A few hours   4 Days   7 Days   2 Weeks**

Why Samuel was delayed is unknown. I believe God caused a delay to test Saul's obedience because He's tested me in the same way at various points in my life. As a planner-organizer, I like to know what's coming, what to expect—okay, I like to be in control. But when we follow Jesus, we're to submit and relinquish our control to Him. And He shows us how to do that through various tests while reminding us we can trust Him.

**But Saul lost patience and made a horrific mistake! What did he do? (9)**

**The priests were the only people allowed to sacrifice the burnt offerings under God's Law. If the sacrifice wasn't done according to His procedure, how did God view it? (Dig Deep Week 2, Day 2)**

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 13.

## Do you remember what a burnt offering represented and foreshadowed? (Dig Deep Week 2, Day 2)

Just as Saul was finishing the sacrifice, Samuel arrived, and he was irate! Do you recall back in Week 1, Day 5 when the Israelites used the Ark as a “good-luck charm” in battle? So did Samuel—vividly. Now Saul was repeating the scene with the burnt offering, and Samuel wasn’t having it.

### When Samuel confronted Saul, what was his response? (11a)

Saul’s lame excuses were a smokescreen for his pride, but Samuel saw right through it. Then “Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have been foolish. You have not kept the command which the LORD *your* God gave you. It was *at this time* that the LORD *would have* permanently established your reign over Israel.’” (13, HCSB, emphasis mine)

So it *was* a test! Friends, when things aren’t going according to *our* plan or are taking longer *than we think* it should, this is the time to double-down in our prayers and determination to trust God with our circumstances. To follow David’s advice: “Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.” (Psalm 27:14) I have learned time and again, when I relinquish my control to God, He’ll get me where He needs me to be at just the right time. But if I allow my pride to take over and become impatient; if I think I know what’s best; if I feel compelled to do it myself, I ALWAYS make a mess of things. And sometimes those messes are irreversible. Permanent. Like, Saul’s irreverent disobedience costing him his dynasty and ending his kingdom.

Read verse 14 and fill in the blanks.

But now your kingdom must end, for the LORD has sought out \_\_\_\_\_.  
The LORD \_\_\_\_\_ be the leader of his  
people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.

David was born about 10 years after Saul became king and was about 14 when he killed Goliath. We have no idea how old David was at the time of this event. Samuel doesn’t either—nor does he know who David is for that matter! But GOD DID! He already had him hand-picked. He looked into the deep recesses of his heart and said, THAT boy right there, yup, Him. He’s *my* man!

Friends, God is not kidding. He won’t be mocked, and He doesn’t tolerate pride.

What do these Proverbs teach you about pride?

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 16:5

Proverbs 18:12

Proverbs 21:24

Proverbs 29:23

**Suggested prayer:** *Jesus, thank you for how you love and take care of me. Thank you also for graciously giving me warning signs to identify when my pride is deteriorating my spiritual character and integrity so I can repent and avoid Saul's fate. The areas I'm currently struggling in now are...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Pride and a strong spiritual character cannot co-exist. They cannot occupy the same space. One will eclipse the other. And we choose which way it will go.

### **Review 1 Samuel 13:2-7**

**Where did Saul go with his 2000 men? (2b) Where did Jonathan go with his 1000 men? (2c)**

**Shortly after this, what did Jonathan do and where was this? (3)**

Some scholars criticize Jonathan for this attack, calling it an impulsive act by a young, hot-headed, naive, but good-hearted activist rather than a careful planner<sup>17</sup>. I disagree. First, we don't see those character traits later. Second, the writers of 1 Samuel have been clear to point out when someone was in the wrong, and we don't see that here. Third, we don't know what Saul's orders to Jonathan were before he left for Micmash, 2 miles north of Geba.

What we do know is Gibeah was Saul's headquarters and the new capital city of Israel. Geba was less than two miles northeast of Gibeah, and having "a [hostile enemy's] permanent military installation,"<sup>18</sup> in your backyard is not only bad strategy, but it makes it impossible for other nations to take the new form of government (and the king) seriously. We also know Micmash was in the mountains, which was perfect for guerrilla warfare due to its rugged terrain and plethora of caves. This would have allowed Saul and his men to spread out and control the pass, enabling them to apprehend any fleeing enemies and cut off reinforcements. With Saul to the north, Jonathan to the south and hostile terrain to the east and west, the Philistines were hemmed in. So, the division of the troops along with King Saul's departure to the north likely would have been a diversion to lull the Philistine patrol into lethargy; setting the stage for Jonathan's attack.

It was a genius plan, and it seems plausible as Saul was more surprised by the Philistines' extreme reaction than Jonathan's attack on the garrison. However, in all his strategizing, Saul made a fatal error: he failed to seek God either in the planning or before the attack. This was evidence his pride was beginning to eclipse his spiritual character. So God used the Philistine's show of force to get his attention—but he missed it. And what started as a brilliant campaign to exterminate the Philistines from Israel rapidly snowballed into an utter failure.

**Can you recall a time when your pride got in the way of a "sure victory"? Yes/No Explain.**

As the saga continues, we watch Saul's spiritual character continue to deteriorate. But we don't have to be passive in our observations. We can actively use Saul's example to examine our lives and rebuke any pride threatening to eclipse our spiritual character and harden our heart. Over the next few days,

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Evans., *New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Samuel*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 61.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garrison>

we're going to witness Saul's pride morph into an uncontrollable monster that ended up destroying his legacy, his mind, and his life. But we can learn from his mistakes and stop that from happening to us.

**In 1 Samuel 13:4 Saul's spiritual character continues to ebb away. What did all Israel hear? Did Saul try to correct them? Yes/No**

In the ancient world, it was culturally acceptable for a king to take credit for another man's victory—even his son's. However, what's culturally acceptable isn't necessarily morally right. But Saul was more concerned about his image and what others thought of him than being honorable. So, in his pride, he willingly took credit for victories he didn't win—his son's and God's.

Then later, when Saul's patience and obedience were put to the test with Samuel's delay, we see a noticeable darkness in his soul. What could have been, should have been an act of repentance and restoration resulting in God conquering their enemies was instead a dramatic display of his rapidly deteriorating faith.

The consequences of his pride were two fold:

- His army was reduced to 600 men
- His divine empowerment began to fade in correlation with his spiritual character as evidenced by the recording of Israel's military disadvantage.

The Philistines controlled the use of iron and the blacksmiths to work it. Obviously this "gave them a decided military and economic advantage over Israel,"<sup>19</sup> but this had no bearing on Saul's earlier military successes. So the timing "of this fact implies a weakening in Saul's divine empowerment."<sup>20</sup> Wow! Crazy, isn't it?

**This point seems to be verified by verse 23. Who now had control of the pass at Micmash?**

Saul lost his military advantage and never exterminated the Philistines from Israel. What started as a very promising and genius campaign failed miserably because of pride and disobedience. Up until Saul's sacrilegious act, the battle could have been salvaged and won had he heeded Samuel's final warning: "But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish." (12:24-25) He could have followed the Israelites' example at Mizpah: confess and repent then earnestly call out to God for help, and enjoy a victory guided by God's hand. (7:3-2) But he didn't.

Here's a hard-core truth worthy to reiterate: Pride and a strong spiritual character cannot co-exist. They cannot occupy the same space. One will always eclipse the other. But we choose which way it will go. All along the way God provides opportunities to reverse the darkness. And it's up to us to take advantage of them. Otherwise we will end up like Saul. And over the next two days we will watch Saul's spiritual character erode away until there's nothing left—but a madman.

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<sup>19</sup> Evans ., 91.

<sup>20</sup> Evans., 63.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 3, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Obedience is not a guarantee for an easy life. It is an assurance for God's help.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 14:1-52**

Saul failed his test. His pride was expanding as his spiritual character atrophied. Instead of turning back to God and exercising faith, he clung to self-righteousness. Instead of fearing the Lord, he became preoccupied with his image. Jonathan, on the other hand, didn't suffer from these afflictions. As his father's faith crumbled, Jonathan's became more concrete. As Saul's courage dissolved, his son's became more dauntless.

**Record Deuteronomy 28:7 (If your Bible has a heading for the section this verse is found in, record that, too.)**

Sounds familiar? Compare this to what you recorded yesterday in regards to Saul. Obedience matters, my friend! Oh, how it matters!

**Who went with Jonathan? (1 Samuel 14:1)**

**So, how many men left Saul's camp? (Circle one) 2   12   20   200**

Jonathan didn't have the authority to lead the army into battle, but he *could* trust God and obey the Spirit's tug to do *something*. So he stepped out in faith, made himself available, and trusted God to take care of the rest. "The plan succeeded only because Jonathan had the courage to determine the will of the Lord and to follow it."<sup>21</sup>

**Then what did God do in response to Jonathan's faith and obedience? (15)**

Saul's pride, disobedience, and irreverence activated the Torah's curse in Deuteronomy 28:25 where as "Jonathan's fearless faith activated the Torah's promise of Deuteronomy 28:7!"<sup>22</sup> God left no doubt He was not only leading Jonathan to victory but He was fighting *with* him. And He would have done the same for Saul had he given Him a chance.

It's no different with us and our challenges, obstacles, and difficult situations. When we feel the Spirit's tug to do something, we need to put our faith in action as Jonathan did, get up, and start moving. Asking God to guide our every step. And also like Jonathan, we can ask for reassurance we're going in His direction—and then when we receive confirmation, we must FOLLOW THROUGH! God will fight with us, and in many situations, He'll fight for you. But either way, we first must choose to trust Him and His actions, make ourselves available, and get after it.

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 95.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 94

**Are you outnumbered by “enemies” in your life? A temptation with “more powerful weapons” than yours? Are you “surrounded,” about to be devoured at any moment? Yes/No Explain. What do the following verses encourage you to do?**

**Ephesians 6:10**

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

**1 Peter 5:6-11**

Cling to Jesus, Dear one. Follow Jonathan’s example—be strong and courageous and choose to believe God despite overwhelming odds. God will not fail or abandon you. He will march ahead of you and lead you. He will fight for you against your enemies and give you victory.

Another thing, Satan is not the boss of you! He has no claim on you. Yes, he’s creative in how he tempts us but when we stay in close connection with God, we will feel the Spirit’s leading, promptings, and warning of what to do and what NOT to do. And like Jonathan, we too will have “the courage to determine the will of the Lord and to follow it.”<sup>23</sup>

**Suggested Prayer:** Lord, thank you for people like Jonathan in your Word! Men and women who chose to trust you, determine your will, and then follow through—despite the fear, despite not know all the details. Lord, help me in my unbelief to put my faith into action in my life, and situations...

### **DIG DEEPER**

Surrounded by a ferocious enemy. Outnumbered thousands-to-one. About to be devoured at any moment. What do you do?

Visualize the scene with me. Saul’s failed test and irreverence resulted in some catastrophic consequences. The most immediate were: the fading of his divine empowerment, the scattering of his troops, and the loss of his military advantage. Instead of seeking forgiveness and restoration, he became hypnotized by self-pity and was oblivious to those around him. We do not see him praying, asking God for forgiveness. Nor do we see him consulting with his generals to determine how to break the standoff they were engaged in. Instead he’s cowering in a pomegranate grove outside of Gibeah.

As the scene plays out in my mind, I see Saul aloof, stuck in his own mind alone under a tree—unwilling to talk to anyone and unable to wade through the cowardice invading his soul to determine what to do. Thinking the end of his kingdom was imminent—that he was about to die.

**Have you ever felt “stuck” with no way out? If so, explain. What did you do?**

**Read 1 Samuel 14:19. Describe what happened and what Saul said to the priest?**

What seemed to be positive movement in the right direction, instead provided further evidence of Saul’s decaying faith and spiritual character. I recognize Saul was trying to take advantage of the

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 95.

enemy's confusion. I understand this situation was stressful, chaotic, and intense; but, friends, if there's ever a time to pray, it's during these times. Petitioning the God of Heaven's Armies to guide us through life's minefields isn't only critical to our survival, it also protects us from sinning against Him. The last thing Satan wants us to do is pray because he knows our spiritual armor isn't effective unless it's empowered by prayer. So the next time you think you're too busy to pray, call that thought what it is—A LIE! Throw it back in Satan's face and hit your knees. Because as soon as you say 'amen' and stand up, he's going to be running for cover.

Jonathan's courageous faith generated a mighty victory and reenlisted the recent defectors. But it also emboldened Saul and incited him to impulsively place his men under a foolish oath. On the surface, this oath comes off as valiant and heroic, but beneath that shiny veneer it exposes how his pride was dissolving his ability to lead his troops, displaying his disregard for the well-being of those in his charge, and revealing another prideful act of disobedience.

### **What was the oath Saul placed his men under? (1 Samuel 15:24)**

Words. They're so powerful, aren't they? James teaches us about the importance of taming the tongue by likening it to a rudder on a ship to illustrate how it determines the direction of our lives. (3:1-12) Our words have the power to build up and destroy. To heal and wound. They can soothe the soul or set the world on fire.

### **What does Ephesians 4:29 teach you about our words and how we use them?**

The obvious fallout of Saul's pride and careless, impulsive words was it put his men in danger because they were too weak to fight. Second, it caused his men to sin against God because they were so desperate for nourishment. Third, it almost caused him to kill his son.

But there were other consequences to this pride-filled vow that were more subtle, and more damning. First, Saul proved protecting his image was of primary importance to him. It was more important than his integrity, doing the right thing, or even adhering to the oath. It started with his men eating meat not drained of blood. This was a sin against God because blood represented life and all life belongs to God. And Saul didn't want their sin to tarnish his reputation, so he admonished his men for their sin and commanded them to drain the blood. However, when faced with the sin of his foolish impulsiveness, he was unwilling to admit he was wrong to save his son's life.

Second, this incident caused Jonathan's trust for his father to crack—despite his love for him.

Third, embedded in this oath was another act of prideful disobedience. Look back at the oath you recorded above, "...before *I have full revenge* on my enemies." Saul was taking credit for a victory he didn't win—again. Acting like Jonathan's courageous act was his idea.

### **Now jump to verse 45. Who did Saul's men say won this great victory? Who helped him do it?**

Saul's men *knew* whose victory it was. And they *knew* Saul was too busy cowering in a pomegranate grove to notice his son left camp with his armor bearer. So they called him out on it by taking credit for the victory out of his hands and placing it firmly in Jonathan's. And in an oath to Saul said they'd fight him to the death before any harm came to Jonathan. Oh, the power of words!

Before we close, I want to share something from my heart. 1 Samuel 14:47-52 tells us about Saul's great military successes despite his fading divine empowerment and repeated acts of prideful disobedience. I don't know about you, but this irks me to the point of anger. Admittedly, sometimes it still makes me wonder about God's plan and methods. Why should Saul have any success? He doesn't deserve it! How is that right? Why God? It doesn't seem fair. Then He led me to these next verses.

**Read Matthew 5:45 with Romans 5:6-8 and summarize what you learn.**

Friends, following Jesus doesn't guarantee success just as rejecting Jesus doesn't guarantee failure. We have no idea why God allows the ungodly to be successful, but He does. Remember, we've been created with purpose for His purpose—even the ungodly. When we look through Scripture and history, we see other cases of God using the ungodly for His purpose. One example is Alexander the Great. He was arrogant. Brash. Ruthless. Godless. And a military genius. God enabled him to have victory after victory, "to conquer the world." It's said he fell into a deep depression when he realized there was nothing left to conquer. But God used him to unify the known world and bring it under one common language—Greek. The language of the New Testament. God used Alex to set the stage for Jesus's time on earth and for His message of hope and salvation to spread like wildfire after His resurrection!

Dear one, nothing happens outside of God's plan. Amen? Our responsibility is to be faithful where we are and to follow Jonathan's lead to trust God, be available, and have "the courage to determine the will of the Lord and to follow it."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 95.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 3, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *90% Obedience is 10% Short*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35**

Following Jesus is all or nothing. He's warned us if we're lukewarm, he'll spit us out of His mouth. Therefore, our obedience to Him is also all or nothing. We don't get to pick and choose which laws, regulations, and commands we're going to obey and which we're going to ignore. Nor do we get to select which verses we're going to apply to our lives and which we're going to reject. "Selective obedience is just another form of disobedience<sup>25</sup>," and it leads to our destruction.

#### **What did God tell Saul to do through Samuel? (3)**

#### **What did Saul and his men do? (9)**

#### **What do you think motivated Saul and his men to do this?**

Partial obedience is motivated by sin which is why partial/selective obedience is *complete* disobedience. Dear One, God commands us to do or not do certain things for a reason. His laws and commands are always for our benefit and protection—including this one to Saul. The Amalekites were unimaginably wicked people. They were guerrilla terrorists on par with the modern-day members of ISIS. They attacked and raided the Israelites' towns and villages. Kidnapping and assaulting the people. Stealing their possessions and children. Add in their heinous religious practices, and God knew in order to protect His people physically and spiritually, He needed to completely destroy them, their idols, and their possessions.

But Saul ignored God's command, showing contempt for Him and His authority by:

- Keeping whatever appealed to him—animals and valuables (most of which were idols)
- Letting King Agag live
  - This wasn't to show the king mercy; Agag was a trophy to display Saul's power and "victory"
  - See verse 32: who knows what demoralizing acts he endured at the hands of Saul's men
- Building a monument/image to honor himself—a form of idolatry, worship of self
- Lying about the results of the battle

#### **Record what God said to Samuel. (11)**

**Now look at verse 29 and record what you learn.**

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<sup>25</sup> *Life Application Study Bible New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007) 577.

Our God is omniscient—all-knowing. Saying He was sorry wasn't a statement of error, as God can't make a mistake. It was a statement revealing His favor toward Saul changed because of the choices Saul made. Saul's repeated disobedience and rejection of God didn't surprise Him—but it did grieve Him. It broke His heart to watch Saul worship his image rather than God and to witness his pride hardening his heart to the point of no return. Saul was no longer able to sense the Spirit's presence or leading and was now guilty of the unpardonable sin. (See DIG DEEPER, Week 1, Day 3)

This meant God had no other option but to let Saul go the way he'd chosen and reject him *as king*—not as a man. This isn't what He wanted to do, but it's what He had to do because Saul had continuously refused to repent and turn back to God and to submit to Him as Israel's true King. Saul, the man, was still welcome to seek God; to confess, repent, and restore his relationship with God. But as king, it was over. He ran out of opportunities to get that position and responsibility back. The same thing happens to us when we abuse our authority and responsibilities. Oh, may we learn from Saul's choices so as not to repeat them.

### **When Samuel went to find Saul the next morning, how did Saul greet him? (13)**

Saul was strutting, feeling like a god. Puffed up with his "greatness." He had just finished creating the monument to honor himself, and his ego was in rare form. But to God he was an utter failure, a loser. Saul not only disregarded God's commands, but he also blatantly lied directly to Samuel and indirectly to God Himself. Then he continued to lie—his lies getting bigger with each breath. It was clear he wasn't going to confess to any wrongdoing or disobedience, and it was time for Samuel to deliver God's message and judgment.

**Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23 and fill in the blanks: But Samuel replied, "What is \_\_\_\_\_: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! \_\_\_\_\_, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. \_\_\_\_\_ as witchcraft, and \_\_\_\_\_. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has \_\_\_\_\_."**

Friends, obedience matters! As does a repentant, submissive heart that chases after His. God wants our love and devotion more than He wants our sacrifices. Sacrifices are merely an outward display, a *representation*, of our internal relationship with Him, just as the Ark was a *representation* of God's presence, purity, superiority, and covenant blessing not God Himself.

And like God's call is relentless but not endless, so is He patient. If we continue to reject Him; if we're determined to sugar-coat the sin our lives, we run the risk of following in Saul's footsteps—allowing pride to slowly petrify our hearts. And though it shatters God's heart, He'll let us go the way we choose. But the joyful blessing is, we have the power to reverse the process by claiming and applying God's promise: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26, ESV)

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, I want to follow you completely. Help me to obey you. Help me to keep my eyes focused on you and not be distracted by what's going on around me. Father, give me a new heart and a new spirit so I can truly chase after You.*

## **DIG DEEPER**

Saul's pride created an obsession with his image. Over time he began believing he was bigger and more important than he was. He'd repeatedly claimed victories that were not his, and now we're seeing evidence of him believing his military successes were due to his own efforts rather than by God's hand. We tend to do the same thing in our lives whether it's with our intelligence, grades, thriving careers/ministries, prosperity, athletic prowess, beauty, physique, etc. Our pride begins to bloom in the light of our success and then we forget everything we have is by God's blessing and grace. If not kept in check, we'll put up a "monument" in our honor to "show off" our success so others will think well of us and the image we want to portray. Friends, image building stems from our insecurities and pride—and eventually leads to our downfall.

**What do you learn from these verses?**

**Proverbs 18:12**

**Proverbs 27:2**

**Obadiah 1:3**

**James 4:10**

**1 Peter 5:6**

"Image building is any way we intentionally make ourselves seem different—and usually more—than we really are. Image building is the attempt to make impressions that are bigger than we are. Image building may begin with what is true but enhances that truth until it is a lie.<sup>26</sup>" Friends, when we start to "believe our own press" or think we are better than we are or forget that we are where we are because of the gifts, talents, and abilities God has given us—we are building an image.

This is different from desiring to do what God calls us to do with excellence or looking or being our best. Excelling and success are *good* things—gifts God gives us. But those successes become bad things when we elevate them above our God who gave them to us. Being proud of a job well done is *not* a bad thing either. But allowing it to make us prideful *is*.

The line that separates these things is so easy to miss if we aren't looking for it which is why I'm thankful Jesus gave us His Spirit who can see it with neon-light clarity. If we ask, He'll alert us when we're heading toward the line, approaching it, flirting with it, or have crossed over it. And then, if we ask, He's there to guide us back to the other side.

Beloved image building starts in the heart.

**Do you remember where Saul started to go down the path of self-destruction? (Week 3, Day 1)**

He thought he no longer needed God, so he left God out of the plan to exterminate the Philistines from Israel. This was an excellent campaign. Exactly what should have been done, but his heart was full of pride as opposed to recognizing God was the author of every victory and the sustainer of him and his

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<sup>26</sup> Beth Moore. *Daniel: Lives of Integrity Words of Prophecy*. (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2006) 49.

army. This quickly morphed into his taking credit for battles he didn't win, failing his test of obedience and sacrificing the burnt offering, making a foolish oath that almost caused the murder of his son, and then culminated in showing his contempt for God and his commands. To make matters worse he made a monument to honor himself and lied about the results of the battle. Saul's disobedience morphed into all-out rebellion. And his pride made him insolent and stubborn.

**Read verse 1 Samuel 15:24. What was his excuse for disobedience? What did he ask Samuel to do? (25)**

**What was Samuel's reply? (26)**

Saul was desperate. Terrified Samuel's rejection would destroy his carefully cultivated image. He was so preoccupied with how he appeared to others, I'm not sure he realized the gravity of the situation and all the implications that went with it. Can you picture him on the ground begging Samuel to help him keep up appearances?

**Then as he sits there with a piece of Samuel's robe in his hands, what does Samuel say to him? (28-29)**

**How does Saul respond? (30)**

This scene breaks my heart. I've known a few Sauls in my lifetime, some who are very dear to me.

**Have you too? Yes/No If so, take a few minutes to pray for them, ask the Spirit to intervene and soften their hard hearts so they can establish or reestablish a relationship with Jesus.**

Saul's pride, rebellion, and stubbornness blinded him spiritually. It was only after God rejected him as king he admitted to *any* wrongdoing. But even then, he blamed his actions on the assumed behavior of the people. The insincerity of his admission and lack of repentance were evident in his attempt to brush off his rebellion and contempt. His priority was his image. His invitation to worship was a ruse, and Samuel wasn't fooled for a second. But he relented and went with him. Not out of benevolence or support for Saul, but because he knew his outward rejection of Saul would humiliate him and be a catalyst for the people to lose confidence in him. This would cause chaos and confusion to permeate the nation and throw it into turmoil. And at that moment, there was no one else to lead the nation—God hadn't yet revealed the one who is better than Saul, the man after His own heart.

Sometimes our situations seem hopeless. Scary. Uncertain. We have no idea what tomorrow holds. But, my Friend, that's where our faith has a chance to shine! In our humanity we want to know what's coming, but our faith is revealed (and grows) when we choose to trust Him *in* the unknown.

Let me close with this encouraging quote by Charles Swindoll: "When a man or woman of God fails, nothing of God fails. When a man or woman of God changes, nothing of God changes. When someone dies, nothing of God dies. When our lives are altered by the unexpected, nothing of God is altered or unexpected... 'Before you even utter a word, 'God promises, 'I'm involved in answering. In fact, while you're speaking, I'm involved in bringing to pass the very thing I have planned from the get-go.'"<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 15.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 3, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *When you're full of yourself, God can't fill you. But when you empty yourself, God has a useful vessel.*

Of all of David's story, this is my favorite moment. It overflows with so many beautiful truths, and every time I read it, I fall in love with Jesus all over again.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 16:1-23**

Saul was rejected as king, but God left him on the throne because his purpose was not yet fulfilled.

#### **Look back at 1 Samuel 15:35, how did Samuel respond to Saul's fall from grace?**

#### **Record what God says to Samuel in the first sentence of 1 Samuel 16:1.**

God gave Samuel time to grieve. He caught every tear and treasured every prayer. And then to help him work through his emotions He called him to physical action—to visit Bethlehem, to find and anoint the one who is better than Saul, (15:28) the man after His own heart. (13:14) Don't you love God's tenderness toward the brokenhearted? He knew Samuel was still going to grieve, but in the midst of his grief, God provided hope. Fulfilled His promise. And offered joy. He did what needed to be done to heal the wound in Samuel's heart—and the nations.

#### **These were tumultuous times. Record verse 14 to understand why.**

When God rejected Saul as king, God's Spirit left Saul, leaving a vacuum which God allowed an evil spirit (a demon) to fill as judgment for his continuous rebellion. A spirit that overwhelmed him with depression and fear. A spirit that drove him insane. A spirit Saul could have gotten rid of if he humbled himself before God and repented. But he chose not to.

#### **How did the elders of the town approach Samuel and what did they ask him? (4)**

Their fear reflected Samuel's. He knew their anxiety well. Saul's mental state was inciting problems throughout the nation. The people were on edge. Worried. Afraid. Saul had become murderous, rage-filled, and unpredictable. And God knew all about it. He knew who Saul was, the spirit tormenting him, and the mental distress he suffered from. "After all, Saul was the one God was going to use to shape David's life in the in-between years, between the sheep and the throne, so He knew Saul very well."<sup>28</sup>

Do you have someone in your life who rubs you the wrong way? Has a gift for getting your back up? Or maybe has the power to irritate you just by walking into the room? That person is *your* Saul. And God is using *that* person to expose and remove areas of pride, anger, hurt, etc. To refine you and make you into the best you can be.

As "Iron sharpens iron..." (Proverbs 27:17a)

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<sup>28</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 17.

A dull, nicked, chipped blade is a useless and dangerous blade. It doesn't function properly and can't fulfill the purpose it was created for. To sharpen the blade, you have to drag it across a rough file and/or grinding stone to remove the nicks, dents, scratches, and other impurities before you can hone the edge and restore its functionality.

*"...one man sharpens another."* (Proverbs 27:17b)

**Take a few minutes to *thank* God for your Saul. (I know...) Then ask Him to help you surrender to the refining process and give you the grace needed to deal with that person.**

**Look at verse 5. Samuel performed the \_\_\_\_\_ rite for Jesse and his sons.**

The purpose of this rite was to prepare them to worship God. The external cleansing procedures were *representative* of what they were to do internally—purge the sin and impurities from their hearts. Without it, they would be unclean, unworthy of coming into God's presence. Without it, their sacrifice wouldn't be performed according to His precepts—it would be detestable to Him—an abomination. Blasphemy.

**Now look at verse 11. Where was David?**

Can you picture this? His brothers and father went through the extensive purification ritual—but it was only skin deep. All were rejected. Then David comes running in, his 14-year-old legs pumping as fast as they could. He was breathless. Sweaty. Filthy. Stinky. Sheep dung on his feet and clothes. He wasn't purified. He wasn't consecrated—but *to God*, he was *perfect*. Pure. Exactly who God was looking for. "The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (7b) By God's estimation, David was already consecrated, pure because his heart was untainted, clean, and chasing after His. Never mind he was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes—it didn't matter. What mattered was his heart was unblemished, his integrity solid, and his character strong. He was *perfect*. He was *God's* chosen— "This is the one; anoint him." (12b)

Friends, that's how Jesus sees us. Hot messes and all. On the outside we can look like a train-wreck. We can be filthy and smelly. Like David, we can be the nobody somebody thought to call. He doesn't care. He looks deeper, down into our heart. Our motives. Are we humble? Obedient? Sincerely seeking Him? Willing to be a vessel for Him to use? If so, we're also *perfect*. Exactly who He is looking for.

**What happened after Samuel anointed David? (13)**

**Contrast that with Saul. What did God have to give him first? (1 Samuel 10:9) And then about a month later, what happened? (11:6)**

David's heart was already God's. He was a willing vessel, ready for the Spirit to take over. And He did! Now this filthy, smelly, dung-covered boy was consecrated. Holy. Set apart for a God's sacred use—just as he was. In this private ceremony, David was commissioned for his future as God's chosen king even though Saul was still the legal king and would remain so until his death. In the in-between, God would be preparing David to step into his new responsibilities with confidence and grace.

**And when you're anointed by the Holy Spirit, the same thing happens to you too. Are you a ready vessel? Are you willing to let the Spirit take over?**

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, I am Yours! I want to be your vessel. I want to do things Your way and for You. Help me, Lord. Prepare me for what You want me to accomplish. Give me the confidence I need. I can't wait to see where You're taking me!*

### **DIG DEEPER**

God sent Samuel on a mission—to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king. But the young men before him were passed over, rejected. Can you imagine Samuel's confusion? Have you known you were following God's lead, but then things didn't go the way you thought or expected? Hang tight. God knows what He's doing. In this situation, His "man" wasn't there yet.

#### **What does Samuel ask Jesse? (1 Samuel 16:10)**

'Oh, yeah, well,' he looks at his boys, 'there's the youngest, I guess. But he's nobody. Besides, he's out with the sheep. Not really worth the bother.'

**Have you ever been told you're not "enough"? You don't have what it takes to bring the dream God planted inside you to fruition? Yes/No If so, explain.**

Friends, when God calls us to something it's *always* beyond us. Bigger than we are and out of our reach. On our own, we don't have what it takes. We're NOT enough. But *with* God and *through* God, we're more than conquerors—we *are* enough.

#### **Record Ephesians 3:20. Underline what God is able to accomplish.**

Now let's change gears. Ever wonder what went through David's mind during this pivotal moment in his life? One minute he's faithfully tending his father's sheep. Living the simple life. Then suddenly someone comes running to tell him his father needs him to come now!

Breathless he runs into the house. Smelling of sheep and the outdoors. Then Samuel pours oil on his head and tells him 'You are God's chosen. You will be the next king.'

#### **How do you respond to that?!**

#### **How did David respond? Jump to 1 Samuel 17:15. Where was David?**

There was no feast. No celebration. Samuel left for home. His brothers dispersed. His father went about his day. And David. He went back to the sheep. He remained faithful where he was. (Week 1, Day 4) There was no rubbing his call in his brothers' faces. He didn't race through the streets of Bethlehem with a banner proclaiming he was the new guy. He didn't go shopping for robes, schedule a mani-pedi, or start making regal demands.

This next section is just as beautiful as the anointing because in it we discover *why* God chose David over all the others. My prayer is what is said of David is said of us. The choices he makes will be ours.

The God-centered humility he exhibits, will guide us as we fulfill God's purpose for our lives and provide a foundation for our resilience later.

**Read 1 Samuel 16:15-16. What did Saul's servants realize? What did they suggest?**

There's nothing like praise music to lift mental fog, untangle knots inside, or change your attitude is there? God-centered music has the power to reach us where words can't. To pierce our hurt and soothe our pain. To help us focus on our Savior and remember Whose we are and Who we are.

**What was David's reputation? (18)**

WOW! Not only was David an accomplished musician at 14, but his integrity and character were impeccable. But don't miss how God used this obscure gift, talent, ability to bring David into Saul's world. For Dave it was probably something he did in the quiet moments to pass the boredom while caring for the sheep. "It was nothing serious." He wasn't looking to play in Carnegie Hall or anything. He just loved plucking the strings, creating melody to accompany his prayers. But this "little talent" got him into the throne room. It provided the vantage point he needed to understand what a king's day-to-day life looked like. What behind-the-scenes responsibilities he had and decisions he had to make. All this young man knew was tending sheep, protecting them against dangers, healing what's sick or broken, and finding what was lost. Palace life was not his life. But it would be.

Dear one, you never know how God is going to use the skills and talents you have to further His Kingdom here on earth. You don't know if they're going to be directly or indirectly used in your call, but they will be present. For David, he was not called to be a worship leader. He was called to be king. But his musical talent was his ticket into Saul's presence. For me, it's *not* music—and for *that* give God praise. For you, it could be or could be something totally different.

**Record verse 21. What resonates with you in this verse?**

For me, it's that David began to serve Saul. He knew he was to be the new king. But he also knew Saul was still God's anointed. But what gets me is this: David served him. Faithfully. Not once did he look at Saul and say, "Dude, you're in my chair. Out." Not once was he disrespectful. Not once did he try to pull rank. He was humble. And served him with the same faithfulness he used to serve God.

"And whenever the tormenting spirit from God troubled Saul, David would play the harp. Then Saul would feel better, and the tormenting spirit would go away." (23) Faithful. Tender. Caring. Protecting. Healing. Restoring. All his shepherding skills put into a holy use and refined until the day he used those skills to lead God's People.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 3, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Focus on giants, you stumble. Focus on God, your giants tumble.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 17:1-58**

Saul was the most qualified to meet Goliath. He was the biggest and strongest. He was their leader and king. He was the only one with a sword and armor (aside from Jonathan). But due to his dissolving divine empowerment, his inner-coward was reclaiming center-stage. Goliath was huge. His weapons were formidable. He was loud and intimidating. And Saul was hiding—just like after he was chosen as king and before God's Spirit came on him. (11:6)

Forty days is a long time to live with a constant stream of taunts, insults, and threats coming at you morning after morning, evening after evening. It's a long time to live in fear, with no answers and few options. Nerves would get raw. Tempers short. Tensions high. Morale would bottom-out.

**Can you relate? Yes/No Do you have (have you had) a "Goliath" in your life; a person or situation that's bigger than you; an obstacle you need to get around? Yes/No Explain.**

**How are/were you fighting/not fighting it?**

Pay close attention to David's response to his Goliath. His character, integrity, and faith. Oh how I pray we will follow his example and respond to our Goliaths as he did.

**As soon as the Israelite army saw Goliath what did they do? (24) What did they ask David? (25)**

**Look at verse 26 and fill in the blanks: David asked the soldiers standing nearby, "What will a man get for killing \_\_\_\_\_ and ending his \_\_\_\_\_? Who is this \_\_\_\_\_ anyway, that he is \_\_\_\_\_ to defy the armies of \_\_\_\_\_?"**

Isn't that great? To David, Goliath wasn't a giant. He was a nuisance, a gnat. He was nothing more than a pagan who had been allowed to run his mouth off. He was confident in his God. Knew He was bigger. More powerful. And could squash Goliath like a bug.

His questions not only condemned Goliath; they also rebuked the grown men—the members of God's army. They forgot Whose they were; that God was their Commander. That He'd won bigger battles than this. They had no need to run away in fright but had every reason to stand their ground.

Friends, when we face a Goliath, it's easy to be distracted by the superficial, by what can be seen. The vastness of the issue. The superior weapons. The intimidation tactics. The threats. The worry. And fear overwhelms us. Okay, overwhelms me. The Spirit pointedly rebukes me. He reminds me of Who I am because of Whose I am. Of what God has done for me in the past and that He's in control. Then I ask Him to fill me with peace, wisdom, discernment, and insight. To guide my steps as I determine to keep my eyes on Jesus. Sometimes I need to constantly remind myself God's got my back and choose to believe Him. When I do, He shows me right where to place my feet. And He will do the same for you.

**As David continued to ask questions throughout the camp, what did his oldest brother Eliab say? (28)**

Though he was tall and powerfully built, Eliab's character was lacking. He was cruel and critical, harsh and abusive with his words. His words may have had an extra bite because he was jealous of David and angry God rejected him as the next king. Regardless, in light of verse 29, we see this as further evidence of the condition of his heart and why God passed over him. Our words matter, my friend! They expose what and who we are and reveal what fills our heart.

But David was not deterred. His God had been slandered and mocked. And he wasn't going to stand for it. So, he continued going from man to man to see if *anyone* was willing to stand up to this monster. And he came up with no one.

**What would you be thinking if you were David?**

**Read verse 31. What happened?**

Imagine Saul's surprise when he saw his personal musician asking the questions. David's confidence must have shocked him. A 14-year-old boy was volunteering to fight a tormentor no battle-hardened soldier was brave enough to fight—including him. Did he notice this lad's faith, courage, and confidence surpassed his own? He barely made an attempt to dissuade him, and readily gave in.

**David's confidence was firmly grounded in what God had done for Him. Record verse 37.**

As you jump to verse 41, ask God to help you adopt David's confident faith into your life and situations and to help you remember Goliath's confidence was in his size and strength. In his superior weapons and armor. So, imagine *his* incredulous surprise when he saw this ruddy-faced boy coming at him with a stick. Just like a bully? They're over-confident in themselves, their resources, and power. They assume they cannot lose. They laugh in the face of *perceived* inferiority. And assume they have the upper hand.

We'll always have bullies, those who want to intimidate us. They're in all stages of life, not just childhood. They walk in our schools, universities, workplaces, and homes. They can be peers, family members, teachers, coaches, or bosses. People who hate, slander, and spew venom. People who twist what you say and do until it's no longer recognizable. People who inflict pain out of their pain, insecurity, and fear. But with the Spirit, we can face our Goliaths with confidence and courage and trust God to guide to victory.

**In verse 48 Goliath moved in closer to attack, what did David do? (48)**

He didn't back down. He did his part and let God do the rest. Exactly what we need to do. Friends, Jesus sees you, and He knows your situation. He is in control. Sometimes these circumstances or people are our Saul—there to remove the rough edges and hone us into an efficient weapon for the kingdom. Sometimes they're a Goliath that needs to fall. And more often than not, it's difficult to distinguish which is which. So, we must hit our knees and ask God for wisdom to discern our course of action. If it's a Saul—submit to the refining process. If it's Goliath—trust Him to conquer the situation, because let's face it, He's the only one who can recognize the battle belongs to the Lord of Heaven's Armies—not us.

**Suggested prayer:** *Father God, in the midst of the lies bullies tell us, I thank you for having my back. Lord, that as I approach and encounter the Goliaths in my life, my faith and strength remains in you...*

**DIG DEEPER:** Nothing to prove, ready to be used

A few years after answering God’s call to write, I felt Him leading me toward publishing. So, in obedience I started researching what it entailed and learned I needed to build a platform. You probably heard my groan—this giant scared me. I didn’t want to face him. I had no resources to conquer him. But it was my reality. So, I started to look into what to do and how to do it. I received excellent advice from well-known experts. People who successfully grew their audiences, enjoy successful professional writing careers, and published their books. Their methods were unfamiliar to me, but I could see the value in their advice and “tried it on.” And hated it. It wasn’t me. It didn’t fit. It felt uncomfortable and made me feel uncomfortable.

**Have you had a similar experience? Yes/No Explain.**

This is how I imagine David felt when he tried Saul’s armor on. It was an incredible honor for David to be offered the king’s armor, and Saul was doing his best to help David be safe and successful. He was giving him the tools that worked for him and helped him be triumphant and protected in battle. No doubt David could see the value in the armor, so it made sense for him to try it on and walk around in it. After all, it was unfamiliar to him. But it didn’t fit. It was uncomfortable and made him feel uncomfortable.

**What did David say to Saul? (39)**

David went back to being himself. To who God created him to be. He knew God could use him as he was because He already had. And God gave David success that day. Not because he had a wicked curve-ball, but because he trusted God for the victory and claimed it in His name. Later on, David did have his own armor and sword. Resources to protect him and help him be more successful. But at this moment, he trusted God to use what he had for His glory and so “the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!” (46b)

Here’s the thing: giants *are* scary. They *are* intimidating. But our God *is* more powerful than anything they can throw at us. Look back at your “lion and bear,” moments. In the face of Goliath they may seem to pale in comparison, but the God who gave you victory in those situations is *the same* God today. Also, remember how He grew your faith in those moments, and use that faith to fill you with confidence as *you* run out to meet your Goliath. Yes *you*. This is *your* battle. No one else can fight it for you. Your friends, loved ones, and church staff can envelop you in prayer, love, and support but you’re the one who has to step onto the battlefield. But after you’ve spent time on your knees—pouring out your worries, fears, and concerns, allowing the Spirit to fill you and strengthen you—your footing will be sure when you stand. Your legs will be strong. Your hands trained, ready for battle. You just need to trust Him.

Read Psalm 144:1-11. As you read it, pray it. Underline the truths you're claiming today

Praise the LORD, who is my rock.  
He trains my hands for war  
and gives my fingers skill for battle.  
He is my loving ally and my fortress,  
my tower of safety, my rescuer.

He is my shield, and I take refuge in him  
He makes the nations submit to me.  
O LORD, what are human beings that you should notice them,  
mere mortals that you should think about them?  
For they are like a breath of air;  
their days are like a passing shadow.

Open the heavens, LORD, and come down.  
Touch the mountains so they billow smoke.  
Hurl your lightning bolts and scatter your enemies!  
Shoot your arrows and confuse them!  
Reach down from heaven and rescue me;  
rescue me from deep waters,  
from the power of my enemies.  
Their mouths are full of lies;  
they swear to tell the truth, but they lie instead.

I will sing a new song to you, O God!  
I will sing your praises with a ten-stringed harp.  
For you grant victory to kings!  
You rescued your servant David from the fatal sword.  
Save me!  
Rescue me from the power of my enemies.  
Their mouths are full of lies;  
they swear to tell the truth, but they lie instead.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 4, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The secret of loving is living loved.*

**Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-10; 20:1-42**

I can't think of any friendships recorded in Scripture as intimate and grounded in faith as that of Jonathan and David. Their relationship stands as a holy example of what God intended friendship to be. Even in the midst of adversity, strife, and Saul's bitter jealousy their relationship was unshakable because their commitment to each other stemmed from their commitment to God.

Friends, if we want an intimate friendship that mirrors Jonathan and David's, we need to follow their example and become a friend of God first.

**Read James 2:21-24. Fill in the blanks (23): And so it happened just as the Scriptures say:**

**"Abraham \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ counted him as righteous \_\_\_\_\_." He was even called \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Read John 15:1-17. What do you learn about being a friend of Jesus? What is required of us? (4, 10, 12-14, 17)**

Before we can *be* a friend on a horizontal level, we need to have an intimate (vertical) relationship with Christ. It's through this relationship we learn *how* to be a friend and are enabled to recognize a kindred spirit like Jonathan found in David.

Several years ago, I went through a season of intense loneliness. I didn't have a close friend to talk to, confide in, or pray with. A kindred spirit who'd share my struggles and blessings. Don't misunderstand, I had acquaintances I could laugh and chat with, but those relationships lacked the intimacy I craved. Then God broke through my loneliness and whispered to my heart, "Baby, you aren't alone, I'm here, right where I've always been."

With nowhere else to turn, I immersed myself in intensive Bible Study. I became ravenous for Jesus and His Word. During this season, I clung to Jesus; He became my go-to-guy. I learned to take all my angst, frustrations, fears, joys, excitement to Him *first*. And in the midst of this, He taught me *how* to be a friend, what to and not to expect from a friend, and how to love with a sacrificial love. In my past, I'd looked to my friends to fill my needs, patch what was broken, fill the voids, give me the acceptance I craved, and the love I needed. But God taught me He's the only one who satisfies those needs, and our friendships, intimate or otherwise, come *out of the fullness of who we are in Him*. Since that time, God has blessed me with several true friends. People I pour into because of what He pours into me. In turn, these people love me for me, encourage me, and pray for me. They're some of my greatest supporters in all areas of life.

I'm confident David also felt lonely; tending sheep is an isolating profession. But instead of disparaging his situation, David chose to draw closer to God in his solitude—to chase after His heart. And out of the fullness of that intimate vertical relationship, he was able to recognize a kindred spirit and ready to invest in an intimate horizontal relationship.

The same was true for Jonathan. Although surrounded by servants and subordinates, he was equally as isolated. As heir to the throne, he couldn't have an intimate relationship with any of them—so he, too, chose to immerse himself in a relationship with God. From that vertical relationship, God showed him David's kindred spirit, who David truly was, and the courage to initiate a vibrant friendship.

### **Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4. What happened when David met Jonathan? What did Jonathan give David?**

Through our 21st-Century eyes, Jonathan's actions seem strange and over-the-top. And they were! We see Jonathan giving Dave a generous gift. However, in 1025 BC, this gesture had significant legal implications.

When Jonathan took off his robe and placed it on David, he was transferring his right to throne to David. He further emphasized this by stripping himself of *everything* that identified him as prince and heir to the throne and then placed it all on David: tunic, sword, bow, and belt.

Why would Jonathan behave in such an extreme way shortly after meeting him? We aren't told, but when we look at the Goliath incident focusing on Jonathan rather than David, we get a few clues.

As I studied this encounter, I wondered, "Where's Jonathan?" Though his father was cowering in his tent, that wasn't Jonathan's M.O. We've already seen his courageous faith on two separate occasions. (Week 3, Days 1 & 2) Why didn't he step out onto the battlefield to meet Goliath? He had the faith to do it. Why didn't he take that monster down? Then God shifted my perspective: "He wanted to. But I told him, 'No, this isn't your battle. It belongs to My anointed.'" So, imagine the scene through Jonathan's eyes...

Jonathan wasn't ignorant. He knew how Saul's repeated, prideful disobedience destroyed his path to be king. He would never be king. To his credit, Jonathan completely trusted God and thoroughly submitted to His will. He knew God was the true King of Israel and was in complete control—even with Goliath.

With that in mind, imagine Jonathan's angst as he searched the horizon for God's anointed. "Okay, God, where *is* he? What's taking so long?"

Then a ruddy teenager escorting a donkey laden with food and supplies entered camp. And after hearing the giant's taunts, Jonathan watched him asking questions. As Jonathan watched from the shadows, he prayed. And as he prayed, God revealed David's kindred spirit and identified him as His anointed.

God confirmed this when David ran onto the battlefield with the same confident faith as Jonathan's, proclaimed the same assurance in God's might, and displayed the same courage. Jonathan saw God deliver the enemy, and heard Him whisper, "So, what do you think?"

It's no wonder Jonathan saw a kindred spirit in David and extended his hand in friendship. They recognized each other's intimate relationship with God, and from there God knitted their hearts together for all eternity, creating an immediate bond between them, a bond David was going to need as he walked through the dark valley ahead of him.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 52.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Father, for friendships. Thank you for showing us how to be a friend. Help me to deepen my relationship with you so I can be a good friend to others.*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Intimate friends, kindred spirits, are rare. “Often, we have only one, occasionally two...usually not more than three in our entire lives. There’s something about an intimate friend that causes your souls to be knit together.<sup>30</sup>” And it’s beautiful and unexplainable. Kindred spirits aren’t just close friends you enjoy doing life with. They’re friends who know you better than anyone else, better than you know yourself. Who love you as they love themselves—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

### **Do you have an intimate friend? Yes/No If so, who is it?**

Here are six characteristics of intimate friendship. David and Jonathan have all of these. As you read through these, ask yourself...Do all of these apply to me?

1. *An intimate friendship’s foundation is a mutual love for Jesus* (as discussed above).

Jonathan had every reason to view David as a rival but didn’t. Instead, he submitted to God’s plan for His people and nation. And out of his vertical relationship with God, Jon was able to invite David into one of the most enriching friendships recorded in Scripture.

### **John 14:21-23**

### **1 John 4:7-20**

2. *A kindred Spirit intertwines his/her heart with yours* (1 Samuel 18:3; 19:1; 20:8a, 16-17, 42).

Intimate friends are brothers/sisters with different genetics. You not only do “life” with them, but you do all life with them. The fun parts and the ugly parts. Their joys are your joys, their heartbreaks are also yours. When they weep, your tears mix with theirs. When they celebrate you’re the first to raise a toast. You don’t disappear when things get hard or adversity strikes. Instead, you stand shoulder-to-shoulder, knee-to-knee with them as they fight their Goliath.

### **John 13:34-35**

### **Galatians 6:2 with 10**

3. *An intimate friend loves you with a sacrificial love.* (1 Samuel 18:4; 19:1-3; 20:4)

There’s no keeping score with an intimate friend. If there is a need, you’re ready to help and offer any resources you have. One season it may be you in need, but the next it could be your friend. Whatever you have is theirs and vice-versa. You help each other and don’t count the cost.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

### **Ephesians 5:1-2**

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

4. *A kindred spirit is loyal and has your back* (1 Samuel 19:4-5; 20:8-9, 30-34)

When others gossip and slander your friend behind his/her back, you shut it down. When falsely accused, you set the record straight and defend their honor. When you are attacked for defending your friend, you are angrier by how your friend was unjustly treated than your own pain.

Jonathan's love for David ultimately cost him his relationship with his father. Knowing this was a possibility, he still chose to defend David's honor on two separate occasions. In the first instance he risked being charged with treason for alerting David to his father's murderous plans and then trying to convince Saul he was wrong in his accusations and motives. The second time Saul openly rebuked Jon for his love for David and tried to kill him. But instead of being upset about how his father treated him, he was instinctively irate about his shameful behavior toward David.

**Proverbs 16:28**

**Proverbs 27:10**

**Romans 12:10**

5. *An intimate friend lets you be you* (1 Samuel 20:41)

It doesn't matter what situation your friend is navigating around, mood they're in, or challenges they're facing. When they're broken, you're there to help hold the pieces together—not preach at them or tell them how they're wrong. Instead, when they cry ugly tears, hold them. When they complain, listen. They're angry, let them be mad. You get to see your friend at their worst, and they see you at your worst as well. And yet, you still love each other with fierce loyalty.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

6. *Intimate friends encourage you.* (1 Samuel 23:15-18)

When you are in a valley and the darkness is closing in, your friend comes to find you, lamp in hand, encouraging each and every step until you are on the other side. Or when you are embarking on a new adventure, pursuing your calling, or trying something new—they are cheering for you and help in any way they can. Most importantly, your friend surrounds you in prayer daily.

**Ephesians 4:32**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

Friends, these six characteristics are what defines an intimate relationship. Take a few minutes and reflect on these. Which of these are you good at? Which do you need to work on? Which of these would you like to develop? Ask God to help you work on your relationship skills. And don't be surprised when your earthly relationships flourish!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 4, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Lying to others is a character flaw in us.*

**Read 1 Samuel 18:5-30; 19:8-24; 25:44**

David instantly became a celebrity. A national hero. He was the slayer of giants; the conqueror of enemies. He was successful in everything he did and was quickly advancing in the ranks. He was a member of the king's court, captain of the king's bodyguard, and the prince's BFF. He was an accomplished musician and poet. He was handsome, young, ripped—and humble. David was the hottest guy in town and *blissfully* available. The men respected him. The women sang about him. The little boys pretended to be him. The girls were enraptured by him. Everyone loved him... *except* Saul.

Saul's jealous pride got in the way. He wanted David dead. And he came up with the perfect plan.

**Read 1 Samuel 17:25. What did Saul promise the man who killed Goliath?**

**Now read 1 Samuel 18:17. How does this verse compare with 17:25?**

Deceitful! David had nothing to prove. He'd already done it. But David's respectful decline of Merab's hand revealed his integrity and humility. Unlike Saul, David's popularity didn't make him proud or arrogant. He never skewed his importance or elevated himself, nor did he forget his success came straight from God. This wasn't false modesty, my friend, this was genuine humility—a major facet of David's character and the cornerstone of his resilience.

**What do we learn about boasting from these verses?**

**Proverbs 27:2**

**Jeremiah 9:23-24**

"In the meantime, Saul's daughter Michal had fallen in love with David." (20a) Who could blame her? He was completely swoon-worthy! I can imagine the romantic fantasies that flitted through her mind as she listened to his music pour from the throne room. He was every maiden's dream.

When Saul heard about her affections, he was delighted—his murderous plan had another chance! Never mind Michal was nothing more to him than a pawn, honey for a trap to send David to his death.

All she knew was dad found a way for this poor shepherd boy to earn her hand—100 Philistine foreskins. For a warrior like David, that was child's play. David not only delivered, he delivered twice the required amount! Now it was Michal's turn to be giddy with delight! In her estimation, this was evidence he was just as excited about this marriage as she was.

But in truth, Michal was little more than a political pawn to David. We read "he was pleased to become the king's son-in-law." (26b, NIV) not that he was pleased to take Michal as his wife. No where do we read David loved or even noticed her. Michal was his link to the house of Saul and the fee of entry, the required bride's price, was easy-peasy.

Now, could his affection for her grow and develop into love? Of course! Did it? We're never told.

**Read 1 Samuel 18:28-29. What else was going on in the background of Michal's happily-ever-after?**

As her husband's success continued to compound and his name was becoming more and more famous, Michal was becoming the town darling, the envy of every woman. This beautiful young bride was glowing with satisfaction. But one day the tormenting spirit blind-sided her father and he tried to pin David to the wall—again.

**Review 1 Samuel 19:9-14. How is Michal identified in verse 11?**

**What does Michal tell David and then help him do?**

Her actions in saving David were clever and heroic. A beautiful display of sacrificial love. She had no idea if she'd ever see him again, but saving her friends was essential to her—at least in that moment. However, after David escaped out the window, there's one little detail that pricks at the back of the mind. We know it's there, and once we get it in the right light...

**She put an \_\_\_\_\_ in the bed and covered it with blankets. (13)**

Hold up. David was a man after God's own heart. And graven images were strictly forbidden under God's Law. What was an idol doing in his house? I think it's safe to assume Michal brought it with her, and daddy's influence allowed her to keep it. Did Saul expect the idol to be a tripping hazard for David? Was he expecting God to turn away from David, to remove His presence from him because of an idol in his home, his bedroom? We don't know. But we can speculate.

The mere mention of this man-sized idol implies a few things: Idols were actively worshiped in the house of Saul, regardless of their public worship of God (With the exception of Jonathan, of course). Michal had divided loyalties—religiously speaking. And, Michal didn't have a vertical relationship with God (Unlike Jonathan, there's no mention of her faith or devotion to the Living God)

**Do you remember what idols really are? \_\_\_\_\_ (Week 2, Day 1 DIG DEEPER)**

Today we don't typically worship pagan gods made of stone, wood or metal. For us, idolatry is *anything* that takes the place of God in our lives. It can be the things we have, the way we live our life, our gifts and talents, success, sports, wealth, careers, etc. But when we determine to fix our eyes on Jesus, those horizontal distractions don't have the opportunity to be elevated in His place. (Week 1, Day 5)

**Review John 15:1-17. What does Jesus tell us to do? (4) Why? (4-8, 11) How (10)**

**Read and record the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23**

When we remain in Christ, we are able to live the life He calls to life and are empowered to fulfill His purpose in our lives. And along the way we are able to bear fruit exhibiting the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit. And do you know what's inside that fruit? Seeds of the Gospel to spread to others...and the cycle continues.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Grow your fruit in me, dear Lord! Help me to remain in you so I can benefit from your power. I know one benefit is developing the gifts of your spirit in me. Today, I'm struggling with....*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Lies. They inject poison into our lives and relationships. They infect, rot, and destroy. They're like noxious weeds growing and spreading beyond our control—devouring everyone and everything in their path.

Lies reveal our true colors and loyalties.

**Read the following verses. What do you learn about lies and liars?**

**Deuteronomy 5:20**

**Proverbs 6:16-19**

**Proverbs 12:19-20**

**Proverbs 12:22**

**Proverbs 19:9**

**1 John 2:3-6**

Michal had no trouble deceiving the men Saul sent to capture David. They had no power over her unless her father gave it to them. But when she was called before dad—it was a different story. Fearing her father's volatile temper and being more worried about her pretty little neck than her husband's, she lied. And she lied big.

**When Saul asked why she betrayed him what did she say? (1 Samuel 19:17b)**

"In essence David's wife deliberately walked away from him.<sup>31</sup>" Her lie added gasoline to her father's blazing anger. Regardless of how he misused her to bait his trap for David, he wasn't about to let anyone else do that to her. Then to hear his enemy "threatened her life," it sent him over the edge. His desire to murder his son-in-law intensified.

**What does 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 say about marrying someone who does not share the faith?**

It doesn't work, does it? Michal's idol worship prevented her from forming a vertical relationship with God, which, in turn, prohibited her from forming an unshakably intimate relationship with her husband. (Week 4, Day1) Unlike her brother, she wasn't able to withstand or stand up to her father's fury. So, when push came to shove, her lack of faith and divided religious loyalties leaked into her marriage—revealing her true character. She was her father's daughter through-and-through—selfish to the core and ready with lies and excuses to get out of trouble. She didn't trust God or even consider

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<sup>31</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 63.

Him. “Her lack of faith in the Lord eventually led to her downfall<sup>32</sup>,” and she became an angry, bitter, hate-filled woman with a sharp tongue.

Friends, there is a lot to learn from Michal—about what NOT to do. Could David have loved her? Of course. He wasn’t a cold-hearted snake. But I do believe he married her for the wrong reasons. Selfish reasons. Though her actions were heroic and selfless on the surface, her lies obliterated her integrity and exposed her true loyalties—and eventually destroyed her life.

**How do you think things would have been different had she trusted God rather than the fear of her father?**

**Have you ever been overwhelmed by fear? Yes/No**

**Afraid to stand up for someone for fear of harm by the one standing before you? Yes/No**

I think we all have. Fear can suffocate us and keep us from doing the right thing. It can hold us back from living our calling and being who He needs us to be. There are over 365 verses in Scripture to combat fear—one for each day of the year. Coincidence? I don’t think so. Fear is Satan’s favorite tactic to make believers question who we are. To make us doubt God.

These are some of my favorite verses to combat fear. How can you apply them to your circumstances?

**Psalm 34:4**

**Psalm 56:3-4**

**Proverbs 29:25**

**John 14:27**

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 139.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 4, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Pursuing God or dodging trains? The choice is yours.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 21-22**

Saul's pride incited an intense jealousy of David. His jealousy quickly turned to illogical fear when he realized God was with David and had turned away from him. Not too long after that, Saul's fear became more acute as he witnessed God continue to give David overwhelmingly success in *everything* he did and the nation's ceaseless fawning over him. Finally, his terror, coupled with his wild imagination gave birth to paranoia as God repeatedly blessed David. And his daughter's intense love for David grew. That was when he determined to be David's enemy for the rest of his life.

The tormenting spirit aggressively fed the flames of Saul's burning anger and fallacious fear until he was completely irrational and consumed with madness. So, when his enemy "threatened" his little girl and escaped into the night, Saul snapped.

David slipped out the window under the cover of darkness with a madman at his heels. For a young man who was successful in everything he did, his world was rapidly coming apart at the seams and at no fault of his own. Can you imagine his confusion? Hurt? Anger? Insecurity? He was a fugitive on the run, leaving behind: a prominent position in the king's army, the love and respect of the nation, his wife, the daughter of his pursuer, Samuel, his mentor, and his good friend.

One-by-one God was removing every horizontal support David had to lean on until there was nothing left but him and God. From the safe distance of 3000+ years and a few continents, we're able to see how during this season of adversity and tribulation, God taught David resilience, how to trust Him *completely* in everything, and that He's David's go-to guy. But we need to remember as we're nestled in our armchair or sofa reading *about* these events, it was David's sandals in the dirt as he ran from location to location, sweat dripping from his body. The smell of exertion and fear following behind him as a crazed lunatic chased him down—thirsting for his blood. We need to remember he's *living* these events moment-by-moment, day-by-day. Just like we live our lives. We can flip back pages and cluck our tongues and say, see...you should have remembered this. You lost your focus here. Forgot your history there. But don't get lost in those temptations. *Live* these events with David. Compare your choices to his. Learn from his wise decisions as well as his mistakes. Friends, that's how these events will become vibrantly relevant to you and be applied to your daily life. It's how David's story will help guide your decisions and dictate your reactions when adversity falls on you in the future. Or help you navigate in your present season of tribulation.

**Have you been unjustly accused of wickedness when in reality you were innocent? Yes/No If so, how did you respond?**

**Has your faithfulness ever cost you because someone was jealous of your success? Yes/No If so, what did you do?**

David did the only thing he could do. He ran. First to Samuel in Ramah. But Saul found out and followed. Then he went back to Gibeah to confirm Saul's murderous intentions and say goodbye to

Jonathan. (Interesting he never went to see Michal. Did he find out she betrayed him? We aren't told.) Now he is in Nob to see Ahimelech the priest.

**Read 1 Samuel 21:1-3. Ahimelech was terrified when he saw David alone. How did David answer his questions?**

David lied. He was vague and evasive, but his words were false. Could it be because he'd told his story to Samuel and Saul found him? (19:18-24) Possibly. Could it be because he saw Doeg and didn't want to reveal too much? Probably. Regardless, he lied. In the moment, it was harmless. An evasive measure to protect himself and maybe even Ahimelech from knowing too much. But the truth is, in his panic he didn't stop to pray, to seek God's guidance and wisdom. He was too busy looking out horizontally for help instead of looking up (vertically) and trusting God for his life and future. Oh, we can relate, can't we? We've all been guilty of this a time or twenty.

After David left the priest, he thought he would hide among his enemy. You know the saying, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'? But God blocked that avenue to him too, as the Philistines were less than thrilled about his being there—after all, David had recently killed their hometown hero. "So David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam." (22:1)

How long he was there alone with God we aren't told, but it was there God started to reshape him. To prepare him to lead His holy nation. He entered that cave broken. He'd lost everything—including his self-respect. All he had left was his life. David hit rock-bottom and had nowhere to look but up. And that's exactly the way God wanted it. It was there he was going to learn to rely 100% on God. To lead the lost, the broken—the outlaws. To unite the rebels, the discontent, and the outsiders. "There [David] commanded a group of mavericks because God wanted him to become a maverick king.<sup>33</sup>" Soon God brought "his brothers and all his other relatives" to join him there. (2)

**Read 1 Samuel 22:3-4. Where did David take his parents for safe keeping? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Now go to Matthew 1:5-6. Who was David's great-grandmother? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Now flip back to Ruth 1:3-4. Where was she from? \_\_\_\_\_**

Don't you just love how God does that?

With his aged parents safe, David and his new band of outlaws left the stronghold of the cave and went to Judah on the advice of a godly prophet. And Saul got the news, mounted up, and headed out. As he waited for his scouts to report any sightings of his enemy, Saul started raving and accusing his officers of taking bribes from David, and conspiring against him with David and Jonathan to kill him and steal the throne.

**Read 1 Samuel 22:9-15. Who was standing there? Where was he from? What did he say? (9-10)**

**How did Saul respond to this report? (11-12)**

**What did Saul accuse Ahimelech of? (13)**

**How did Ahimelech respond to these accusations? (14-15)**

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 75.

Saul didn't hear the priest's defense beyond his accurate recounting of David's faithfulness and honor. Doeg ratted David out and threw Ahimelech under the bus in an effort to win Saul's favor. He had to know his report would send Saul to a whole new level of crazy. But the Edomites were known for their vengeful, malicious, and blood-thirsty ways. And the consequences of David's lie are now realized. 85 innocent men, wives, children, and livestock all died that day at the willing hands of Doeg. Saul's mental and emotional stability were no longer in question. He had completely lost touch with reality and wouldn't listen to reason. The nation, once uneasy, is now gripped by terror because of this tyrant.

Friends, the contrast between David and Saul is sharp. When we look at these men side-by-side we are faced with a choice: Which path are we going to choose?

Do we allow ourselves to be filled with pride, or do we humble ourselves before God?  
Do we choose the path of self-reliance and disobedience, or do we chase after His heart?  
Are we going to be friends with the world or a friend of God's?  
It's our choice. There is no third option.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, I humble myself before You. You are my rock, my go-to. Help me remember to rely on You. To obey Your words, Your commands. When others leave me, and when I feel so alone, thank you, Father, for being my friend. For never leaving me. Today, I'm struggling with...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

I'm not sure if Ahimelech completely believed David, but as he discerned this young man's distress and heard the growling of his stomach, his compassionate heart won out.

**What did Ahimelech do for David? (1 Samuel 21:6, 8-9)**

**Read Matthew 12:1-8. What lesson was Jesus teaching referring to this event in David's life? (7-8)**

Compassion.

Webster-Merriam defines compassion as: *a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.*<sup>34</sup> Isn't that beautiful? Friends, we're also called to live a life of compassion toward others. To set aside our needs, challenges, hardships, pains, and help others.

**Read these verses and record what you learn about our call to be compassionate**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

**Galatians 6:2**

**Ephesians 4:32**

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion>

## Colossians 3:12-13

With those passages as our foundation, go to **Mark 6:30-44**. First, allow me to set up the scene for you. Jesus had given the disciples His authority to cast out demons, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Then he sent them out two-by-two to minister in the towns and villages around them. When all met up again, they shared their experiences and continued ministering to the people with Jesus day-in-and-day-out with barely any time to sleep and no time to eat. They were all running on fumes. Then Jesus learned his cousin, John the Baptist, had just been beheaded. Exhausted, weary, and heartbroken, he suggested he and his disciples should go to the other side of the lake for some down-time and solitude.

**Now read this passage in Mark and fill in the blanks for verse 34: Jesus saw the \_\_\_\_\_ as he stepped from the boat, and he had \_\_\_\_\_ because they were like \_\_\_\_\_. So, he began teaching them many things.**

**Now look at Mark 6:45-46. What did Jesus do after He sent everyone home?**

Jesus had deep human needs when he crossed that lake. His eyes were probably still wet with tears as he grieved the loss of his cousin. His stomach was growling. And weariness weighed on his shoulders. But the sight of those lost, broken, and hurting souls gripped His heart. He temporarily put His needs to the side to seize the moment to teach them about the Kingdom of God. THEN He took care of his needs. Compassion.

**Recall a time you received compassion from someone. How has that memory affected you through your life?**

**Now recall how God has been compassionate to you.**

Without compassion it's impossible to tell others about Christ, because we won't be able to see their needs. Their brokenness and distress won't evoke our desire to alleviate it. But when we remember while we were still sinners, He died for us, when we remember His compassion to us and ask Him to give us His heart to love as he loves—our actions will mirror those of our Savior.

Do you struggle to have compassion for others? That could be a sign of judgmentalism (Week 1, Day 2) or a hard heart (Week 1, Day 3) or both. Confess both of these to God and ask Him to renew your heart, to give you a heart of flesh.

If you have a compassionate heart and don't know how to use it, ask God to show you where to plug in. (Week 1, Day 4)

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 4, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Obeying God doesn't make life easy, it makes it better.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 23, 24, 26**

Adversity is agonizing, particularly when it's unjustified and the motive behind the attacks is unknown. Ceaseless strikes against our integrity, character, and reputation wearing us down, especially when they're laden with lies and false accusations. After a few days, it gets old. Exhausting. Each attack shreds us more and more until there's little to nothing left. After a few weeks, we have to continuously remind ourselves of the truth. After a month, we have to fight to keep our head above water.

But sooner or later, we *will* hit rock bottom with nowhere to look but up. This is right where God needs us to be because from there, He replaces our inadequacies with His fullness, enabling us to fulfill His purpose in our lives. It's there we learn to rely on Him 100%. To cling to Him. To believe Him.

David's life as a fugitive lasted *years*—not weeks, or months, 10-15 years! That's a long time to live with a madman hunting you down, waiting for one vulnerable moment to permanently destroy you. But it wasn't just Saul who was after David, he had 3,000 of his elite troops tracking David's every move, not to mention spies looking to win his favor or be paid for their information.

***Live this with David. If you had an opportunity to make it all stop; to finish off your enemy once-and-for-all, would you be tempted? Yes/No Why or why not***

#### **Read 1 Samuel 24:3. What are you thinking?**

This moment humanizes the whole situation, doesn't it? It takes the mystique out of the kingship and reminds us Saul is a man like everyone else, with the same frailties and needs. Imagine Saul and his men crawling over rocks in search of David and his band of renegades when all of a sudden, he *has to* pull over. We can relate to this on the most basic level and understand the incredibly vulnerable situation Saul was in. David's men knew it too. They saw it as a sign God had delivered Saul into David's hand. But it was more like a test. (Remember the test God gave Saul to test his patience and obedience? (Week 3, Day 1))

David agreed with his men—at first—so stealthily, he crept forward. I believe as David silently picked his way through the cave, he fully intended to kill Saul. To end it. To be free. But as he advanced, the Spirit stopped him. Instead, he cut off a piece of Saul's robe, as opposed to his neck. Even that struck his conscious with a mighty blow.

#### **Read verses 5-7a. Repentant, what did David tell his men?**

To our 21st century minds, cutting off a piece of Saul's robe seems more like a schoolboy prank, rather than an attack. Definitely not worthy of David's intense guilt. Definitely not requiring repentance.

**Look back at Day One of this week, what did it mean when Jonathan removed his robe and placed it on David?**

**With that, read Numbers 15:37-41. What was on the hem of the Israelite's clothing? (38) What were they to remind the people of? (39-40)**

Now, let's put these things together. When David took a piece of Saul's robe, he was in essence claiming the kingdom for himself as opposed to letting God deliver it into his hands—in His timing. When David removed the tassels from the bottom of the robe, he was acting in irreverent disobedience, out of his own selfish desires. He was taking the situation into his hands as opposed to letting God be God. So, David didn't just dishonor God's anointed, He showed irreverence to God Himself. Friends, David's guilt was justified.

Before his life on the run, David was already known as a man after God's heart. During his time in the cave, he drew even closer to God, and in the process, he became keenly aware of the Spirit's activity in his life. Likewise, the closer we walk with God, the more our conscious gets bothered by the little things—taking a pen from the office, snapping at the people around us, our swearing—so we have to apologize, make it right, fix what we broke, and allow God to fix us. In this, our integrity is refined and our witness for Jesus is polished. Our clean, godly lifestyle speaks for itself, as does our character and integrity. We don't have to preach to every cubicle or be in people's faces about their faith or lack thereof. Our choices will speak for themselves and open the door for authentic conversation, opportunities to share what Jesus has done for us.

The remaining verses of this chapter are worth rereading. David's tactful words to Saul display his innocence in contrast to Saul's rebellion against God. David's actions in sparing Saul's life display his character and integrity.

**Read 1 Samuel 24:8-9. Fill in the blanks: After that, David got up, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David \_\_\_\_\_ and said to Saul, "Why do you listen to \_\_\_\_\_ who say, 'Look, David intends to harm you'?"**

This seems odd doesn't it?

**Read 1 Samuel 26:17-18. What 3 questions does David ask Saul after sparing his life a second time?**

Saul had been wrong. In his sin, rebellion, jealousy, and pride, he had become paranoid. Created his own reality. Twisted truth to fit that reality, thus making it a lie. He refused to hear the truth or reason from anyone, including the priests. It was David's responsibility to lay out facts, proclaim his innocence, and prove what he said was true.

Friend, when we've been wronged, we share in that responsibility. It doesn't matter if we like confrontation or not. It doesn't matter how scary our enemy is. We need to face our Goliath in the Name of Jesus Christ. We can't control what our enemies chooses to believe, what reality they choose to adhere to. BUT we do need to make sure they know what the facts are. "Live and let live" doesn't work, it's a lie that lures us into complacency. Satan will continue polluting the hearts and minds of those against us while subtly corrupting our hearts and minds. If we aren't careful, if we don't guard our heart, the hurt our enemies continue to inflict on us will make us bitter, resentful, and angry—cause our hearts to grow cynical. Cold. Hard.

**Read 1 Samuel 24:12. Who did David petition to judge between himself and Saul and avenge the wrong done? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Read Romans 12:18-21. What are we command to do in our adversity and tribulation? Who's got our back?**

**What is the promise recorded in Proverbs 16:7?**

Friends, we *are not* responsible to change people, their perception, or the truth they choose to believe. Nor are we *able* to. That's God's job. Our job is to declare the truth in love and be at peace with our enemies. By the way, look back at Proverbs 16:7, nowhere are we told obeying God and doing the right thing is easy. So, when events like this one between David and Saul happen, hit your knees. Ask Him to guide you, your steps, and your words. Ask for Him to empower you through the power of His Spirit to follow His will. To protect you from defiling yourself and doing anything that will weigh on your conscious for the rest of your life. Remember, we're to "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16, ESV) God promises to take care of the wrong that's done to us—and His promises are true.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Father, I do not have to change people's beliefs. When I face my Goliath, guide my steps, give me the words You want me to speak. Give me power to follow your will and protect me from doing something I'll later regret. Today, I give you...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

When we've been hurt or wronged, we need to forgive our enemies; even when we don't know what the motives behind those actions are. We are called to return good for evil. Honor God. And not sacrifice our integrity on the altar of pride and vengeance.

**What do you learn from these verses?**

**Matthew 5:43-48**

**Romans 12:14**

**1 Peter 3:8-12**

**Luke 23:34**

**Now review 1 Samuel 24:12-22.**

**When David finished speaking, what was Saul's response? (16-19)**

David chose not to compromise his morals, integrity, or character in killing Saul. As Saul stood there with the torn corner of his robe in his hands, looking at David—he couldn't deny David was the better man. The evidence was overwhelming. When we act honorably and righteous in the face of adversity, our enemies will eventually have to face their sin and see it for what it is in light of the truth.

David further emphasized his benevolence by agreeing to Saul's request (20-21), a request Saul had no right to ask. David knew that. But his sincere oath to Saul revealed his heart's tenderness. Did he trust Saul? No. Did he like him? Doubtful. He did choose to love and forgive. Not for Saul's sake, but his own.

**What's at stake when we withhold forgiveness from others? What are we opening ourselves to?**

**Matthew 6:14-15**

**2 Corinthians 2:10-11**

**Ephesians 4:31-32**

When we harbor unforgiveness, we relive the injustices committed against us over and over again as opposed to letting them heal. This opens us up to Satan's schemes. He creates a toxic concoction of anger, malice, bitterness, and hatred. Then, he pours that poison into our gaping wounds...to petrify our hearts and to make us numb to the Spirit's prodding.

Then, in our self-righteousness and pride, we cling to our resentment, sacrifice our intimacy with God, and chase our desires for vengeance rather than Him.

OH! NOT TODAY SATAN!

Friends, when we take vengeance in our hands—it destroys us. Forgiveness does not make the sin committed against us okay, it makes us okay—better than okay. It makes us whole.

If you're in a situation where you need to forgive and are struggling with the desire to do it—ask God to help you! Not just to forgive but to *want* to forgive. Ask Him to give you His eyes to see your enemies as they really are. For the ability to look past their wickedness to their own hurt, sin, insecurities, and brokenness. Ask Him to give you compassion, to keep your heart tender, and to help you remember: But for the grace of God...so I would be.

As we close, let's consider Stephen's words as he was stoned for preaching the Truth of the Gospel. "As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees, shouting, "*Lord, don't charge them with this sin!*" And with that, he died." (Acts 7:59-60, emphasis mine) Forgiveness. Grace. Even as he died a brutal death. Did his forgiveness make his murder okay? NO WAY! But as he stepped into the arms of his Savior, he was more than okay. He was righteous and pure. Untarnished.

When you're tempted to take vengeance in your hands, learn from David...don't. That belongs to God alone. Instead, choose to forgive. You won't regret it. Because out of that forgiveness you will be enabled to repay evil with good. Not to put your enemy to shame, but to show the love of Christ in you. Because let's face it, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And when we became His, He made us new. And our enemies need to see that newness in us so they can say, "May the LORD reward you with good for what you have done for me this day." (19b)

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 4, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Realities of personal circumstances affect reactions.*

#### **Read 1 Samuel 25**

Is there anything more unpredictable than 'hangry' people? There's something about raw hunger that short-circuits the brain, breaking the connection between rational control and over-the-top rage. Add in incessant stress, crude insults, and a slap-in-the-face injustice—you'd better run for cover.

That was David in this chapter. After he'd exhibited exceptional wisdom and patience in dealing with Saul, he snapped with Nabal. All rational thinking stopped. He became blind with rage, strapped on his sword, gathered 400 of his men, and went out to spill A LOT of blood. Abigail's sensibility and wise actions, stopped him. Had she not intercepted him, David would have been guilty of mass murder.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 25:5-9, 14-17. What did David's men do for Nabal? How had they treated his shepherds?**

Remember David was a shepherd. Therefore, he knew all the customs around this profession, including that it was common for the owner of the animals "to set aside a portion of the profit he made and give it to those who had protected his shepherds while they were out in the field...it was a way of showing gratitude for a job well done. In other words, David wasn't looking for a hand-out. He was combining his skills as a shepherd and a warrior to feed his men and their families. So when it was time to shear the sheep, David followed custom and sent messengers to offer Nabal a blessing and request any provisions he was able to share in remittance for their protective service. To be fair, a large part of Nabal's prosperity was due to their vigilance.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 25:2-5 How is Nabal described? What does he own? What is his character?**

#### **Now describe Abigail.**

Nabal was an evil man. Crude. Cruel. Harsh. Stingy. Selfish. Deceptive. He wasn't respected by anyone—including his wife. Even his servants called him wicked, worthless, a scoundrel, a son of Satan, but not to his face, of course.

Nabal's name means 'fool.' Merriam-Webster defines a fool as: a person lacking in judgment or prudence. However, God's definition is a little different. It's a person who "says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 14:1a) He's corrupt, does abominable deeds, and does nothing good. (1b) Well, Nabal certainly lived up to his name. To matters worse, he was unapproachable. Wouldn't listen to reason. Didn't appreciate what others did for him. Didn't value his wife or servants. And he was selfish.

So, why would David choose to protect his flocks and shepherds? Because he was a man of substantial means. He had a lot of everything—cash, sheep, goats, and land. He was over-the-top wealthy. He could afford to pay them well. But no. Nabal was a fool. All he cared about was himself. In his

arrogance and greed he not only refused to show any gratitude for their service, “he screamed insults at them.” (14) And David got hot! He lost control. And went out to destroy Nabal and his household. Friends, there’s so much power in gratitude! Saying a sincere “thank you” is so simple, and yet it means so much! Everyone likes to know their efforts—big and small—are appreciated and valued.

**After Abigail learned of the hedge of protection David and his men created for the shepherds and Nabal’s shameless behavior, she wasted no time doing what needed to be done. What did she do? (18-19)**

Brilliant! Abigail is one of my Bible heroes. She “was wise. Her decisions made good sense. She was not governed by her emotions but by good logical thinking. She was a keen-thinking, intelligent woman. And if that weren’t enough, she was good-looking.<sup>35</sup>” Wow, what an epithet! And this is precisely why the servant went to her. Nabal was hard-headed and unapproachable. She wasn’t. Though women at this time weren’t sought after for advice or wise council, she was. And it’s not hard to see why.

None of her actions were behind her husband’s back, but they were done without his knowledge. If she went to him, he would have forbidden her to do anything. She also knew Nabal was too pig-headed to understand what would happen if she didn’t intervene—he would be dead in the morning along with the rest of his household. Did she act out of love and devotion to her husband? Hardly. She did it because she was determined to do the right thing for those in her care...and David.

Imagine David double-timing it to their door, vengeance in his heart and revenge on his mind. Then suddenly a gorgeous woman slips off a heavily laden donkey and falls to his feet, bowing low to the ground. He was stunned silent by her beauty but it was her words that changed his heart. Had it not been for her, his life would have gone in a distinctly different direction. And to be honest, I’m not sure he would have been the king or the man we all revere.

**Proverbs 1:7**

**James 3:17**

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, thank you for allowing David to listen to Abigail’s wisdom, and help me to do the same. Instead of getting myself further into trouble, let me listen!*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Read verses 1 Samuel 25:23-31 *carefully*. Abigail’s wisdom and tact is worth studying. We can learn so much from her humility, sensibility, and wise choice of words—words of truth, not flattery. Words that reminded David of who he was and Whose he was.

**Who did Abigail blame for the situation they were in? (24)** \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 96.

She knew if she'd been present, the whole debacle would have been avoided. She wasn't blind to the kind of man her husband was, but she didn't attack his character or slander him—a true sign of her integrity and virtue. However, she did speak the truth.

### How did she describe Nabal? (25)

Next, Abigail pointed out David's sinful intentions with respect and without accusation. In the process, she revealed her faith and gave God credit for restraining David from murderous vengeance. She may have intercepted David, but she was aware her success relied on God. Then she said:

**Fill in the blanks: "let \_\_\_\_\_ and those who try to harm you \_\_\_\_\_ Nabal is." (26b)**

In essence, Abigail took the vengeance David was clutching in his hands and placed it in God's. Then to fill the void, she offered her gift of food. What a woman! She honestly stated this was her gift, not her husband's—in case it wasn't adequate payment for the kindness David showed to the shepherds.

**Read verse 28. Fill in the blanks. "\_\_\_\_\_ will surely reward you with a \_\_\_\_\_, for you are fighting \_\_\_\_\_. And you have \_\_\_\_\_ throughout your entire life."**

Meaning: David, you've been wise and discerning to this point. *Don't destroy your reputation, integrity, and character on a foolish man like Nabal. He's not worth it!* I know you're better than this, and so do you. Let me remind you of Whose you are, all that God has done for you, and what He's promised you.

### List out what Abigail reminded David of? (29-30)

Abigail's sensibilities allowed her to *foresee the lasting effects* this act of vengeance would have on David and his men. Her goal was to protect him from tarnishing his conscience and kingship with foolish rage. Then she makes her only request: "And when the LORD has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!" When you become king, *please remember my gift and refrain from any form of revenge on my home or people.*

### Imagine you're David, how would you respond to Abigail's words?

### What did David say to Abigail? (32-35)

When Abigail got home, she went to tell Nabal everything that happened, but once she realized he was completely intoxicated, she *wisely opted to wait until morning*. Under the influence of alcohol it's very possible Nabal was even more pigheaded and foolish than when he was sober. And considering his cruel nature, it's also possible he was violent or abusive when drunk.

Can you imagine how quickly he sobered up as Abigail recounted the previous day's events—including the detail of the 401 men who would have killed him had she not interceded? We aren't told what his reaction was only that it resulted in a stroke which ended up killing him. God gave David (and us) a lesson on vengeance that day—that it's His and His alone.

And because every great story needs a happy ending, **look at verses 39-42**. How awesome is that?!

**What do you learn about wisdom and tact in these verses?**

**Proverbs 12:15**

**Proverbs 15:2**

**Proverbs 28:26**

**Ephesians 4:29**

**Ephesians 5:15-20**

As Believers, it's our responsibility to employ Abigail's wisdom, tact, and sensibility to lovingly intercept fellow Christians from tarnishing or destroying their witness, reputation, character, and integrity with foolish vengeance. And, friend, "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking." (James 1:5)

The flip-side is also true...in our culture people are easily offended and tend to act and react without thinking—often with violence and/or destructive words. Most of the time we're able to take their foolish behavior in stride, shrugging it off as an irritation. But other times, in our humanity, in our current state of exhaustion, hunger, stress, grief \_\_\_\_\_ we snap. We lose our minds and self-control. And when our Brothers and Sisters come alongside us to be an Abigail, we need to stop and listen—no matter how right we think we are. Their interception could save us from rather stupid behavior and a lifetime of anguish and regret.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 5, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God's way is the best way.*

**Read 1 Samuel 27, 29, 30**

**Have you ever had a spiritual high? Yes/No Explain**

Spiritual highs are amazing, aren't they? They give us a taste of heaven while our feet remain on earth—but only a taste. These mountaintop experiences are *part* of our spiritual journey, same as our seasons in the valley (or cave). Which means, we can enjoy the view, but we need to keep moving forward. Our choices will determine whether or not we retain our footing or plunge head-first into the valley.

When we're on the mountain's pinnacle, we have a spectacular view! But that view can be dangerous if we look *out*, horizontally, and forget to look *up*, vertically. We cannot start looking at the enemies coming for us and lose sight of God, our holy perspective, our spiritual footing. We cannot become over-confident in our vantage point and become arrogant and prideful. We cannot forget the good things God has done for us and become self-reliant.

Friends, our mountain top experiences are tests to reveal the quality of our faith. Jesus knows it's easier to cling to Him in the valley when our circumstances are beyond us than when we're on top and things are going well. He knows when we feel secure, we tend to loosen our grip and look out on the horizon, taking our eyes off God. Then, we forget who we are because of Whose we are. He wants to teach us a better way. To not get distracted by fear, worry, and doubt; lose our footing; and take a header into the valley.

That's David in these three chapters. He was at the pinnacle. He'd just spared Saul's life not once but twice and, thanks to Abigail, he avoided murdering Nabal. As he looked across the horizon, the weariness of 10+ years of running from Saul began to weigh on him. He got distracted. He lost his focus and footing, and plunged into 16 months of darkness, disobedience, and desolation.

**Record 1 Samuel 27:1.**

*"David kept thinking to himself..."* Do you see the horizontal view? David's thinking to himself wasn't the problem. His mistake was, he got distracted by fear, worry, and doubt, and didn't go to God and ask for wisdom and direction.

**Record Proverbs 28:26** (you read this last week. Today, I want you to record it.)

*"Someday Saul is going to get me..."* That's fear talking. Pessimism. Angst. Another thing about a horizontal view, our mind-set becomes self-focused and fear-filled. We get spiritual amnesia and forget the good things God has done and the promises He's kept. We lose hope and feel sorry for ourselves. For David, he forgot God anointed him to be king, despite multiple people reminding him —Samuel, Jonathan, Abigail, and even Saul! He forgot about God's protection and guidance during this season.

**Record Isaiah 41:10**

*“The best thing I can do is escape to the Philistines. Then Saul will stop hunting for me in Israelite territory,”* Hold up! What? The Philistines were Israel’s primary enemy at this time. How many times have we seen them mentioned to date? But David didn’t just go to any Philistine territory.

Where did he go? \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Samuel 27:2b)

Whose hometown was this? \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Samuel 17:4)

It gets better. Who did he join forces with? \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Samuel 27:2a)

This man was Israel’s arch-enemy! He was a sadist! The most vicious Philistine ruler of the time. On the surface hiding among the enemy appears to be a good military tactic. But the consequences are devastating—and lasting.

Friends, we can’t be friendly with the Enemy without being influenced by him, without compromising our faith, morals, and integrity. Without losing our identity. “What a picture this is of a Christian who deliberately opts for carnality... David, at this point in his life, is a clear illustration of a man who is a believer on the inside, but on the outside he looks just like a nonbeliever because of the way he’s living his life.”<sup>36</sup>

Do you remember what **James 4:4** says about being friends with the world? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. What does Paul say about partnering with the world?**

*“...and I will finally be safe.”* This is doubt speaking. Unbelief. David had forgotten how God sustained and protected him, and that his safety was in God’s hands, not his. Spiritually speaking, David’s horizontal outlook blinded him. He lost sight of God’s faithfulness, and that he was secure in His grasp.

**David forgot his own story to date. Read Psalm 138:7-8. What does David proclaim?**

**Read James 1:2-4. Fill in the blanks: Dear brothers and sisters, when \_\_\_\_\_ come your way, consider it an \_\_\_\_\_. For you know that when your \_\_\_\_\_, your \_\_\_\_\_ has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for \_\_\_\_\_ your endurance \_\_\_\_\_, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.**

**Continue reading James 1:5-8 how are doubters described? What can they expect from God?**

David bailed before his endurance had a chance to grow. Friends, we’re going to have trials. Tribulations. Hardships. Seasons in the valley. But *how* we get into the valley significantly influences our time there—and how we come out of it. If God leads us there and we keep a firm grasp on His hand—though painful, we’ll be better when we come out the other side. However, if we deliberately opt for carnality, we’re going to come out beaten-up, scarred, and broken. We’ll be lost and unsure of who we are or where we belong. Don’t believe me? Ask David.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Lord, I’m looking up to You now to grow me, provide for me, keep me safe. Help me reach the other side. Today, I’m struggling with...*

## **DIG DEEPER**

When we deliberately opt for carnality, the consequences are far-reaching. The initial effects may be reaffirming and positive—like David’s relief from the stress of staying just ahead of Saul’s spear, but the ease he felt was actually a by-product of something more deadly. Like carbon monoxide poisoning, it was lulling him into a deadly complacency. Dear one, it’s *no* different for us. Relate these chapters to your life and situations. You can learn from them for the future.

### **1. When you live a carnal life, you drag others with you**

**Read 1 Samuel 27:2-3. Who did David take with him to Gath?**

David didn’t go alone. He went with a village—literally. He was their leader, and had been for about 10 years. He trained these men, fought with them, ate with them, did life with them. Where they went, so did their families. Therefore, David’s choices *directly* affected them. He was responsible for these people and their safety. But he was too myopic to see it.

When we opt for carnality, it affects everyone around us. You may be thinking, “Come on, that’s not true. It’s my decision. My consequences. End of story.” Not quite. It’s your decision, but the consequences are not your own. Take a moment and think about families you’ve know who’ve been torn apart by one person’s alcoholism, gambling, porn addiction, substance abuse, love of money, materialism, one-night-stand, \_\_\_\_\_. Now the extended families, communities, co-workers, and churches. See what I mean?

This became real to David 16 months after his arrival in Gath. **What happened? (1 Samuel 30:1-2)**

Imagine the terror these women and their children endured and the trauma they had to live with after. No one was killed, but we have no idea if anyone was injured, beaten, raped, etc. This was an unintended, unforeseen consequence. It resulted from David’s horizontal perceptiveness.

**The results: Read on in chapter 30:3-6. What were David’s men about to do to him?**

When our choices cause deep distress, pain, and loss for those we dragged with us—they will resent us or the destruction that inevitably falls on them because of our choices.

Where was God? Not one of their loved ones died. Nor did they lose their possessions and become destitute. Their homes were destroyed, which meant it was time to regroup and relocate.

### **2. When you live a carnal life, you submit to the Enemy’s authority and start to lose your identity**

Look at 1 Samuel 27:5, NIV (emphasis mine): Then David said to Achish, “*If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?*” David was an Israelite! The anointed Israelite king! And he was being subservient to this godless king, the arch-enemy of his people.

**Read verse 6. How did Achish respond?**

**Now read 1 Samuel 29:3. What was Achish’s commendation for David?**

Did your eye just twitch? Mine too. David went from hiding out to moving in. He and his people made Ziklag their home. Nowhere do we see them worship God or seek His protection and guidance. They were too busy looking out to look up. Remember, the slow erosion happened over 16 months.

**The results: Read 1 Samuel 29:1-2. Who were the Philistines going to fight? Where was David?**

When we submit to the Enemy, we actually fight his battles. And often against those we love. In the process, our identity fades and we forget who we are because of Whose we are. We're not sure where our place is because the things of God make us uncomfortable, but so does our carnality. This leads to constant internal strife that's difficult to get free of. Our identity and integrity lies in the balance.

**Where is God? Read 1 Samuel 29:3-11. After the commanders rejected David, where did they go?**

God protected David. From having to cross swords with *the same people* men would soon be leading. From engaging in the battle that led to Saul and Jonathan's deaths. As David went back to Ziklag dejected, rejected, and more than a little miffed—God has his back. He protected him from a lifetime of misery, regret, and anguish. Imagine if he had to fight against his countrymen. Against Jonathan or Saul. The implications are staggering.

**3. When you live a carnal life, you live life of compromise and duplicity**

**Read 1 Samuel 27:8-11. What was David doing? What was he going home to tell Achish?**

David was attacking "the enemies of Israel, but they were not enemies of the Philistines. Still, they were not their allies either.<sup>36</sup>" On the surface this isn't a big deal, but these raids weren't God ordained. They were done in the flesh.

David slaughtered everyone in the villages he attacked—to cover his tracks, to hide what he was doing. He *repeatedly lied* about where he'd raided—thus chiseled away his integrity.

**The results: Review 1 Samuel 29:3-11. Why didn't the Philistines commanders reject David?**

Makes sense, doesn't it? The problem with compromise and duplicity, is we can't be trusted—by others or ourselves. No one knows who we are, and neither do we. We forget who we *really* are while living a double life and keeping everything veiled that we lose our convictions and what we stand for—and we forget our calling. After a while, the lies are truth to us and we forget who knows what. In many respects, that would be much more stressful than running from Saul's sword.

Finally, David figured it out. He lifted his head above the fog, looked up, and "found strength in the LORD his God." (30:6b) God gave them victory over the Amalekites. They recovered everything stolen.

**The result: Read 1 Samuel 30:23-25. Where were David's Eyes?**

He looked up. Repented. Remembered who he was because of Whose he was. And returned to being the leader these men had come to depend on—A MAN after God's own heart...and in the process, demonstrated great resilience.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 114.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 5, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** Your decisions today impact the legacy you will leave tomorrow.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 28 & 31**

What kind of legacy will you leave? How would your epitaph read? If your eulogy was delivered today, what would be said? Would it be what you want it to be? What would you change? Why? How?

Living Forward by Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy is a step-by-step approach to planning out the kind of life you want to live. The premise of the book is to help us create a well thought out plan to live life on purpose for God's purpose, rather than stumbling through, hoping and praying everything works out. Our plan morphs and changes over time as God changes our minds and direction, but it helps us focus so we're not blown and tossed by the wind. Our plan also helps us make the most of this life and enables us to have a greater impact for the Kingdom—as opposed to wasting it on disobedience, building our own image, and prideful selfish ambitions as Saul did.

The first step of the plan is to start at the end. Makes sense, right? We start at the end when we plan out our career goals, education, vacations, and other projects—why not our life?

“What outcomes do you want? The end determines everything else—the characters you include in your story, the role they play in your life (and you in theirs), the projects you initiate, and the way you conduct your affairs...Our legacy comprises the spiritual, intellectual, relational, vocational, and social capital we pass on. It's the sum total of the beliefs you embrace, the values you live by, the love you express, and the service you render to others. It's the you-shaped stamp you leave when you go.<sup>37</sup>”

**With this in mind, what kind of legacy do you want to leave?**

**Life is short! But it's not without purpose. What does God tell us about the brevity of our time here?**

**Psalm 90:12**

**Ephesians 5:15-16**

**James 4:13-17**

How I wish Saul would have considered his legacy. Would have thought about the epitaph that would be attached to him for all eternity. But he didn't. *He chose* a different path and wasted his life. Though God rejected him as king, He still loved the man and provided multiple opportunities for him to change

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<sup>37</sup> Micheal Hyatt & Daniel Harkavy: *Living Forward A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016) 59, 61.

direction, to repent, but Saul blew them all off. He *deliberately chose* compromise, bitterness, and jealousy. He *deliberately chose* to reject God and be His enemy. It didn't have to be that way! That's what makes his life so incredibly sad and tragic—it's why my heart is heavy with grief as I write this. As I stated earlier, I've known a few Sauls in my life. And some are very precious to me.

Friends, we must *determine* NOT to follow in his footsteps and allow our legacy to mirror his. God has so much more for us than that. Like Saul, we'll be miserable and miss out if we *choose to* thumb our noses at Him and do our own thing.

Had Saul had a plan...had he considered his legacy...had he obeyed God—imagine the kind of man he could have been! The king. The mentor. The role-model. But instead, *he chose* another way. When David spared his life the first time, Saul echoed Samuel's words, "You are a better man than I am," (15:28, 24:17) The second time David spared him, Saul uttered his own epitaph. "I have played the fool." (26:21c, KJV) The tragedy is, he was right. In fact, his entire kingship—all 40 years of it—is riddled with foolishness.

Friends, we need to be intentional about the legacy we leave behind and the *choices* we make. If we don't, we will follow in Saul's footsteps. We will play the fool.

Using Saul's life as our guide, let's look at the tell-tale signs we're *choosing* the same path he did:

- We ignore the advice, rebukes, wisdom, and guidance of godly mentors and friends
- We stop praying and studying God's Word and start building our image instead
- We lie to save face (ours) or to cover up/rationalize our disobedience
- We harbor jealousy, bitterness, and unforgiveness in our hearts
- We worship 'idols'—elevating a good thing over God
- We ignore the Spirit's prodding—hardening our heart and committing the unforgivable sin
- We fight against God and become His enemy
- We turn from God and dabble in witchcraft, spiritism, and divination, even as entertainment

All of these things are sin. Deliberate sin. *Choices we make*. They grieve God's heart because they're an active rejection of Him and the blessings He has to offer. Saul knew God, but he chose to live his life as though He didn't exist—like a fool—and in the process, Saul committed spiritual suicide.

**We have seen some of these verses before. But they bear repeating in light of the list above.**

**What kind of life does God offer us?**

**Jeremiah 29:11**

**Matthew 6:33**

**John 10:10**

## 1 Corinthians 2:9

Have enough yet? I could keep going. There are hundreds of verses like this in Scripture we could explore. There's so much God has to offer us. Blessings. Hope. Joy. An abundant life. But enjoying those things *with* Him, is our *choice*. We have to decide if we're going to chase after His heart or play the fool. And if you discovered you've stepped on The Path of Saul, since you're still breathing, you have this opportunity to turn around, to repent and submit to God again. To be resilient. And that, my friend, is a beautiful thing.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, thank you for the opportunity to turn from my current path and get onto Your righteous road! Remind me of the things I need to change so I am not on Saul's path. Please help me with these things today...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Saul lived a fool's life. And then he died a coward's death. His death, like his life, didn't have to be that way—it was his *choice*. As he faced death, he reinforced who he really was, the condition of his heart, and his godlessness. But even in this horrific and tragic moment, there are some treasures to glean, lessons to learn, and warnings to heed.

### **Review 1 Samuel 31:1-13**

Can you picture this pathetic scene? The Philistines mercilessly attacked. Thousands of Israelite soldiers were slaughtered as they retreated—including the faithful and courageous Jonathan, David's most intimate friend. That tragedy alone is enough to make us want to stop reading and weep for the loss of this amazing man. But there's no time, the melodrama continues.

Imagine Saul's disbelief (and grief) as Samuel's prophecy came true before his eyes—his army was being routed; his men's bodies canvassed the ground; his sons lifeless before him; his turn coming up next. (1 Samuel 28:16-19) Then an arrow is driven into his abdomen—a fatal wound. And other arrows pierced his body in various locations. Defenseless, he watched the enemy advance as visions of sadistic humiliation and torture flooded his mind. As he laid there in excruciating pain, bleeding to death, knowing the end was near, he decided to take his death into his own hands—and leave God out of it. Just as he did in life.

### **Read 1 Samuel 31:4a with 1 Chronicles 10:4. What did he command his armor bearer to do?**

Even in the face of death, Saul's primary concern was his image. In his selfishness, he thrust his armor bearer into a horrible moral dilemma—to kill the king or let him die a humiliating death. Thankfully, he made the right decision and refused to kill Saul. He chose to obey God's laws rather than man's command.

Dear one, when we're placed in these situations, our obedience is critical! As we've already discussed, our spiritual character is built over time. Bit-by-bit. *Choice-by-choice*. One weak spot, and the whole thing can come down. Our consistent obedience gives us the strength and fortitude we need to stand up to temptation and resist the desire to compromise and take the easy way out—as Saul did.

### **Read 1 Samuel 31:7. What happened to the towns and villages?**

Had Saul trusted God and included Him in his planning, he would have exterminated the Philistines from the land a long time ago, and this whole tragic scene never would have been. But he didn't. Instead, *he chose* prideful disobedience and embarked on a downward spiral of self-destruction.

When we play the fool and live a life of compromise, we're unable to stand our ground and maintain our spiritual integrity. We open the door for the Enemy to invade and takeover, displacing our hope with fear and confidence with insecurity. But it doesn't have to be this way. We have the opportunity to make different *choices*.

### **Read 1 Samuel 25:1. What happened when Samuel died?**

#### **Compare that to Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31:11-13.**

After Saul's and his sons' bodies had been desecrated and put on display, only a small band of mighty warriors came to cut them down, carry them home, bury them, and mourn them. This makes my heart clench and my mind scream: IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY!

The nations' dream of being like everyone else turned out to be a nightmare. What we'd known from the beginning—their troubles and misfortunes were not due to a lack of a king but rather their disobedience and sin—finally hit home. They finally began to see their ways are not better than God's ways. Though Saul looked the part, he didn't have what it took to deliver.

- Saul was tall, head and shoulders above everyone else. But to God, he was deficient, lacking.
- Saul was attractive, the most handsome of his generation. But his sin, jealousy, and bitterness made him hideous.
- Saul was strong. But faithless and spiritually weak.
- Saul looked like a hero. But apart from God, he had a coward's heart.
- Saul was wealthy. But lacking in character, he was spiritually and morally destitute.
- Saul was a natural leader. But lacked the respect and favor of those he led.

But God was still in control the whole time. He never leaves a vacuum. Like He had Samuel poised to take the place of Phinehas and Hophni, He had David groomed and ready to take Saul's place. He may have been sorry He made Saul king over Israel and torn the kingdom from his hands—but He already had His eyes on his replacement. A man who was better than Saul—a man after His own heart.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 5, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *For those who follow the Lord, a gut check can be a very good thing.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 1:1-27**

Little did David know, God orchestrated the destruction of their village in the heart of Philistine country to provide an excuse for them to leave Philistia and return to their *real* home—Israel.

David and his men had been home for two days enjoying the sweetness of family reunions and trying to piece life back together in the charred-out ruins of their homes. On the third day, a stranger arrived.

#### **Read 2 Samuel 1:2-4. How was this man described? What does he tell David?**

These were the signs of mourning. In light of the remainder of the chapter, however, the authenticity of this man's grief is uncertain. Did David suspect the validity of his emotion? Did he sense something was off? We aren't told. Remember, David is hearing the news for the first time, whereas we have a front-row seat to the tragedy. For the first time, we see a decisive strength in David. We see the king emerge.

#### **Record David's question in verse 5.**

#### **Now read Proverbs 14:15 and 25:2 and tell how they relate to his question.**

This isn't a "say it ain't so" moment. Yes, the man's news would have broken David on a level most of us have no desire to explore. But David was looking for details to prove this man's story. He doesn't know this man from Adam. And he's a foreigner. An Amalekite, no less. I imagine David's gut was telling him things are not quite what they seem. He was trying to determine what was "off."

Have you ever had a "gut feeling" something wasn't right, and then been glad you listened to it? I'm not talking about when fear has you in its grip. This is more of a rational, internal warning. As one who often gets "a gut feeling," I encourage you to pray about it and then follow it, unless God redirects you. More often than not, my gut feelings have been the Spirit heightening my senses to protect me, to tell me to go in different direction, to use caution, or to help me know when something is false.

#### **Read the man's account of the battle (verses 6-10). Compare it to 1 Samuel 31:1-6. What do you discover?**

Makes you wonder what his end game was, doesn't it? He claimed to be part of the Israelite camp, but his blatant lies and possession of Saul's crown and armband suggest he's really a battlefield scavenger looking to gain David's favor. His brazen behavior reveals he's an opportunist looking for a significant personal reward. He greatly misjudged David, his character and integrity, and his love for Saul as God's anointed. He didn't know David himself had not harmed his rival despite two prime opportunities to do so. Nor did he realize if David had chosen to reward him, he would have been equally guilty of Saul's "murder." Furthermore, he didn't take into account, that though David was in Philistine country, he was still an Israelite—his enemy.

## **Read 2 Samuel 1:11-12, 17-27 How did David respond to Saul's and Jonathan's deaths?**

Anguish. Deep anguish. Their emotions were raw. Genuine. Appropriate. And...unveiled. David had good memories of Saul. He could remember the time when the man loved him. He knew first-hand how Saul suffered from the tormenting spirit. And when Saul's love turned to hate, and he fled from the tip of his spear, he could sense the man's brokenness. In truth, David loved Saul. He may not have liked or trusted him, but he did choose to love him.

David would never have another man like Jonathan in his life again. His most intimate friend. The one whose heart was intertwined with his. The one who was closer than a brother, whose love he enjoyed more than any other. No, their relationship wasn't tainted by homosexuality. It reflects the social reality of the day: "Women were not men's social peers, and men would never be expected to have women—even their own wives—as best friends or close confidants. Wives were partners in sexual fulfillment, procreation, and child rearing, but a man's closest friends were other men."<sup>38</sup> So, Jonathan's death would have literally shredded David. He would never be the same again. Those scars, and the ache, would always be there. There would always be a sense of emptiness, grief, and loss.

### **Has anyone close to you died? Yes/No What are you doing with that pain?**

Regardless of how this beloved person died, the fact is, they're gone. The pain is real. Excruciating. Lasting. Over time, it eases, becomes less debilitating. But it never goes away. So, what *are* you doing with that pain? In David's day, they mourned from the depths of their soul, allowing grief to explode in a torrent of tears and anguish. Today, we sit stoically in our pews or chairs and dab the corners of eyes with a tissue or two, tuck our anguish away, and pretend we're fine. But we're not. 'Gotta be strong.' 'Gotta hide the emotion because we can't show weakness.' Oh, how that breaks my heart! Showing grief is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength and security. It's healthy to weep, hurt, ache, and miss our precious one fiercely. Friends, welcome the tears—even if it's an ugly cry or 20 ugly cries. It cleanses the heart and soul of the bitterness associated with our pain.

### **Read 2 Samuel 1:14-16. What did David ask the man? What was his sentence? Why?**

This was not an act of revenge. This was the soon-to-be-king acting as king and judge in accordance to God's laws.

### **Read these passages and record how this knowledge guided David's judgment. Exodus 21:23-25 with Deuteronomy 19:21**

### **Exodus 17:14-16 with Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 15:17-18**

Both times David spared Saul's life, we see his hard-and-fast belief: Saul was God's anointed king of Israel. He put him on the throne, and He alone would remove him from it. (1 Samuel 24:6, 26:9 and 11) As God's next anointed king, that belief had a personal connotation to it, but the fact is—he was right.

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<sup>38</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009),206.

Imagine what society would be like if assassinating the king was customary...the nation would be in constant chaos! David knew the punishment for sins was to be administered by God alone; that vengeance was His. All he had to do was look at his wife Abigail to remember that lesson in living color.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Lord for giving David discernment and integrity. Help me have the same qualities! Guide my thoughts today. Sometimes I struggle with..... Change my thoughts to be Yours...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Saul was dead by his own hand. Jonathan and two of his brothers were dead by the hands of the Philistines. An unstable country just became even more unbalanced. But thanks to God's steadying hand, it didn't go completely off-kilter. Little-by-little He helped them find their equilibrium. And it started with David.

Check out **2 Samuel 2:1** (emphasis mine):

After this, *David asked the LORD*, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?"

"Yes," the LORD replied.

*Then David asked*, "Which town should I go to?"

"To Hebron," the LORD answered.

David didn't assume the throne. He didn't dry his eyes, pack up his wives, gather his belonging, and take over the kingdom. Instead, he hit his knees, the memory of his anointing fresh in his mind, the oil cascading over his head and shoulders. Samuel's whisper, "You will be the next king." His father. His brothers. The sheep. Back in the moment, he asks, "Is it time now, Lord? Lead me. Guide me. Tell me what to do." And God replies, "Yes, my son. It's time."

As David and his people pack up and move to Hebron, let's take this opportunity to look back.

When there's a major transition in our lives—graduation, wedding, retirement—we often have a video presentation in the background to remember where we've been, who we were, and what we'd accomplished up to that point. Why do we do this? To identify God's fingerprints on our lives and successes. To highlight His guidance in times of uncertainty and tribulation. To relive His extravagant blessings, grace, and love—especially when we didn't deserve it. To give thanks for His forgiveness and redemption. In short, we remember to be cognizant of who Jesus was in our past— and as Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever—to build on that foundation and have the assurance he will be the same Jesus in our future.

**Before we reminisce with David, take a few minutes and reminisce with God about your life to date. Give thanks. Ask for support and direction for your future. But more than anything, remember. See His fingerprints and feel His love, protection, and grace.**

David was about 30 years old when he left Ziklag and traveled northeast to Hebron. And though there's joy in claiming the throne in Judah, his heart was still broken. Shredded. Raw. He was a man in mourning. I imagine his mind replayed memories of the past 30 years. Events and circumstance that had him here, on this road, at this moment—leaving the heart of Philistine country and going home.

David was:

- A faithful young shepherd. Tending, mending, rescuing his charge. Carrying the weak or lame until they were strong enough to walk on their own. Battling lions and bears for the lives of his sheep—extracting them from the enemy’s jaws. Searching for the lost lambs—risking life and limb to bring them to safety. Playing them music to soothe their fears. And all the while making the best use of his solitude to learn more about God. To praise Him. To seek Him. To chase after his heart.
- A young king-to-be. Externally unconsecrated, reeking of the sheep and the outdoors—yet his heart was pure and perfect to God. The oil marking him as holy. Set apart. Chosen. And the Spirit settling on him, filling him with power. Oh, that memory never gets old.
- A court musician. Witnessing the effect of a life apart from God. A life wasted. The constant torture of a malicious demon.
- A giant-slayer. While all the men ran, he stood his ground. Declaring the battle was God’s alone and trusting Him for victory. His confident faith providing future generations the courage needed to face their Goliaths with God alone.
- A kindred spirit. Oh, Jonathan. How his heart must have bled as he remembered his faithful friend. The one who recognized him for who he was—the next king—and whole-heartedly honored it, submitting to God’s will. Instead of resenting and hating him, Jonathan knit his heart with his own. Jonathan interceded with his father for his sake and almost lost his life for it. And then the boy. The arrows. The tears. Never knowing if they would see each other again. Then, later, Jonathan found him in the cave to encourage him in faith and friendship. How David’s mind must have lingered on the memories of his beloved friend.
- A fugitive. All his support gone, he had nowhere to look but up. There he found a relationship with God he never knew existed. A faith he never knew possible. It was there God began to rebuild him into the man He needed to rule His people and govern His nation.
- A maverick leader of a band of renegades. How he loved these men and their families! They would never be as intimate as Jonathan, but they would always be dear. They had proven to be courageous and faithful. They would be the heart and soul of his new army...his mighty men. But through this motley crew of outlaws and outcasts God taught him how to unite and lead a wild bunch well. To be a servant leader who governs with grace, love, and humility. To give them a common goal and a common cause. To create a brotherhood, a family, a deep bond. How to earn the people’s respect, loyalty, and love.
- Grateful to the mayor of Ziklag. Days blurred into months as he fell into a stupor. Even when he was faithless, God was faithful. He protected him and his people. He preserved his wives and the families of his men when they tried to join forces with the Philistines against the Israelites. And he protected David from fighting in a battle against his brethren, the very people he would rule over. God prevented him from sharing in the guilt of Saul’s and Jon’s deaths.

**40 years later, David identified God’s fingerprints on his life. Read Psalm 78:70-72 and record them.**

Saul didn’t have a plan for his life. He gave no consideration to his legacy and hence his epitaph reads: “I have played the fool.” But David did have a plan, despite “a few temporary excursions of the flesh,”<sup>39</sup> and despite the tragedy of his last 20 years here on earth. Hence, he’s known as man of resilience. A man after God’s heart.

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 130.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 5, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *We don't have to like our leaders, but we do have to respect and pray for them. Not because they deserve it, but because God says so.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 2:1-11 and 2 Samuel 3:2-5**

After a 16-month stupor, David had a fresh encounter with God and resubmitted to His leadership in his life. This is evidenced by him seeking God's guidance as to whether or not it was time for him to go back to Judah and start his reign. These first few chapters of 2 Samuel don't offer much personal application, but they're still fascinating. They provide critical information and help us understand the beginning of David's reign in Judah and how he earned the entire nation's love and respect before he was crowned king over all of Israel. They also outline the civil war that follows Saul's death, confirming the end of his dynasty and reaffirming David's. (We will explore tomorrow.)

#### **Read 2 Samuel 2:1-7**

In the wake of Saul's death, there was chaos. A fractured nation was starting to crack. Loyalties were divided. And there was power to be had. "Saul had left sons and men of power over his army who were capable of asserting their authority, and who had the backing of those who had supported Saul."<sup>40</sup> These relatives refused to submit to David's God-given authority and continued to stake their claim to the throne over the northern tribes of Israel.

Even when Saul was king, the nation was divided into two regions: Judah to the south with its two Israelite tribes and Israel to the north with the remaining 10 tribes. This division was further emphasized and complicated by the Philistines' occupancy and strong military hold over Israel's central regions. Those to the south supported David. While those to the north supported the house of Saul.

#### **Where did God send David? (1)**

This is no insignificant city.

- It's the burial place of Adam and Eve and the Jewish Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- It's where the spies cut clusters of grapes when scouting the Promised Land for Moses
- It was as a Levitical city—a home for the priests, direct decedents of Aaron
  - Therefore, they knew David was God's anointed and supported him and his kingship
- It was a city of refuge
  - Where those falsely accused of murder or guilty of manslaughter could find protection
  - This was crucial for David as he was accused of murdering Saul
- It was located in the territory allotted to the tribe of Judah
  - David was a Judahite—these were his people
  - They'd also supported him and showed him kindness while he was running from Saul

In short, Hebron is where David would find his greatest support to launch his reign over the entire nation.

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<sup>40</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin. 1&2 Samuel: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1988), 183.

### **Who came to anoint David as king? (4)**

Like Saul, this was David's political coronation; a public proclamation of what God blessed in private. We can liken it to the presidential election giving the candidate the Oval Office, whereas the inauguration gives him the keys.

Although embraced as Judah's king, the rest of Israel rejected David. He would not realize the complete fulfillment of his calling for another 7 1/2 years! Not once do we hear him complain or grow impatient. Instead, David made Hebron his home and faithfully served God there, until it was time to move to the next phase. This is a beautiful example of humility and submission to God's plan, timing, and purpose.

**Choosing to be humble has many rewards. List those identified in these verses.**

**Psalm 25:8-10**

**Proverbs 22:4**

**1 Peter 5:6-7**

**Look at 2 Samuel 2:4-7.** David sent a heartfelt message thanking the men who'd buried Saul.  
**Where were they from? (4b)**

**What blessing did he offer? (5-6)**

**What request (not demand) did he make of them? (7)**

**Now, look back at Week 2, Day 4. (DIG DEEPER) Why were these men so loyal to Saul?**

They showed their gratitude for Saul's kindness in rescuing them from Nahash's sadism by risking their lives to travel through the night to give Saul and his boys a proper burial. Their story was well-known as it catapulted Saul's reign as king. Therefore, David was aware their loyalty to Saul was bone-deep. And in light of Saul's death, he humbly asked them to transfer their loyalty to him in an effort to extend his support beyond the borders of Judah.

Jump to **2 Samuel 2:8-11**

**Who is Abner? (8)**

He was also Saul's first cousin. He was a competent and formidable commander whom David served under at one time. And later, after Abner became his adversary, David still revered him. Abner had a brilliant mind for military strategy and was well respected by his men—and David's. After Saul's death, he was the glue that kept Israel together despite weaknesses of Ishbosheth. He's credited with driving out the Philistines and leading the 10-tribe confederacy until Ishbosheth began his reign.

Spiritually, he was a godless man. He believed in God, but showed no reverence or consideration for him unless it was convenient and fit into his plans. Abner was a man after his own heart and pleasures.

Conditional cooperation with God is the same as partial obedience—it’s enmity with God. (Week 3, Day 3). It’s easy to follow and obey God’s Word when it fits into our plans and agenda. And when we’re desperate, we can pluck a verse out of context to validate our actions. But our faithfulness to Him is verified when His Word is contrary to what we want, and we choose to submit to Him instead of pursuing our own desires.

### **Who is Ishbosheth? (10)**

Despite being Saul’s fourth son, it’s doubtful he was a soldier. He lacked courage and the fortitude to immediately take the throne after his father’s death or lead his troops into battle. Instead, he hid in Abner’s shadow, and thus was incapable of earning the man’s respect. Ishbosheth was a weak and easily intimidated man who lacked the skill and wisdom to lead anyone including himself.

We’ve all had leaders like this. People who’ve been elevated to a position of power and leadership because of their connections rather than their qualifications. As Believers, it’s our responsibility to

- Pray for them and their leadership.
- Submit to their leadership as God ultimately placed them in that position for His purpose
- Be faithful where we are. (Week 1, Day 4)

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, thank you for the leaders in my church, my community, my nation. Sometimes it’s hard to remember to pray for them, but they need You as much as I do. I want to be faithful to you! Here’s some things I’d like to work on...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

#### **Read 2 Samuel 3:1-5**

#### **Who was whose son?**

This basic genealogy hints at David’s Achilles Heel and troubles to come. David was a man of intense and extreme passion. “Whatever he did, he did it with all his heart. When he fought, he fought to the bitter end, completely vanquished the enemy. When he loved, he loved with all his heart, and numerous wives and concubines were examples of this passion.<sup>41</sup>” These six, were just the tip of the iceberg. David’s family size was staggering. But it was his refusal to control his sexual impulses “that led him to uncontrollable desires.”<sup>42</sup> In the end, this led him to die as a broken man with a broken heart.

#### **What do these verses teach us about self-control in *all* areas of our life?**

#### **Galatians 5:16-17**

#### **Titus 2:11-14**

#### **1 Peter 4:7**

#### **2 Peter 1:5-7**

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 138.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

From the time of the Patriarchs: Abraham with Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16, 21), Jacob with Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29-30); and later, Elkanah with Peninnah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1) polygamy has led to nothing but a mess of chaos, dysfunction, and drama.

When God told Adam and Eve, “the two should become *one*,” He meant: when *one* man and *one* woman consummate their marriage, they’re joined together heart, mind, body, and soul. They become *one* unit devoted to *each other*. Separate from their parents, siblings, or extended family, though those relationships continue.

In the case of polygamy, this isn’t able to happen.

When two pieces are created to make one autonomous entity, and you try to squeeze three or more into the mix, things just don’t click together. There’s always going to be a shifting, an unsettling, about the arrangement. Sometimes, there’s a harmonious balance, but even then, there’s underlying discord.

Polygamy causes division in the household because there’s a natural imbalance of affection. This imbalance intrinsically leads to jealousy, which causes one wife to be adversarial or just down-right abusive to the other(s) resulting in rivalry between the women. But it doesn’t stop there. The troubles between the wives spread like cancer, infecting their respective children who want to protect their mother and begrudge her unmet needs. They tend to retaliate against the direct threat (the other wife/wives and her children) and resent their father.

Though God didn’t forbid polygamy, He did discourage it. And it’s not hard to see why when over and over again we see how polygamy brings so much strife that routinely leads to sin and destruction. As we close, let’s look at some reasons why polygamy was practiced despite its propensity for trouble.

Children were viewed as a symbol of God’s blessing for a righteous life. More children meant more blessings! Sons were a sign of prosperity and the father’s virility and masculinity. Sons also carried on the family line to the next generation. For David, multiple sons ensured his line would retain the throne—humanly speaking.

Multiple wives were a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Wives were often given to men to join households or solidify an alliance between nations. Marriage to a wealthy family could keep a woman’s family from becoming destitute.

There are other factors to take into consideration. Girls, let’s face it, we can only produce so many children in our lifetime! Poor or unbalanced nutrition, disease, illnesses, and parasites often prevented pregnancy and increased chances of miscarriage. Children were nursed longer (3-5 years) which kept hormones elevated and hindered conception. Having children was risky business, and many women died while giving birth. Infant mortality rates were much higher than today. Illnesses, diseases, and accidents claimed the lives of many children and adults while leaving others maimed or crippled for life. Infanticide was a reality for deformed or sickly babies. Or even if the child was simply unwanted.

Thank goodness we don’t live in this world anymore!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 5, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God never said the journey would be easy, but he did say the arrival would be worth it.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 2:12-32 and 3:1, 6-38**

After Saul's death, the nation's division became even more pronounced. With David enthroned in Judah and Saul's remaining family grappling for power in the north—the nation plunged into an intense civil war that lasted 7 1/2 years. However, King Ishbosheth wasn't David's rival. That honor belonged to Abner, Saul's cousin and chief commander of his army. But after a while, Abner started to see which way the wind was blowing because "as time passed David became stronger and stronger, while Saul's dynasty became weaker and weaker." (2 Samuel 3:1b)

#### **Look at 2 Samuel 2:12-32.**

#### **Who was Asahel? (18) Describe him and explain what he was doing. (19-23)**

Perseverance is an admirable trait. But Asahel's actions didn't display perseverance, they exhibited stubbornness. No one ordered him to go after Abner. And unlike David, he didn't ask for God's direction or blessing in his pursuit. Asahel chased Abner down for his own glory. He was so overconfident in his agility and speed he didn't consider he was no match for Abner's fighting ability or experience. On the contrary, Abner knew if Asahel continued to pursue him, Abner would end up dead, and he didn't want that. So, Abner repeatedly told him to turn back, or at least, to get better weapons to face him with. Asahel refused to listen, and his stubborn selfish ambition led to his destruction.

#### **What does James 3:13-17 have to say about selfish ambition?**

Friends, this is a lesson best learned from the page rather than from life. When we have a dream, goal, desire, or ambition, we need to bring it before God to determine if it aligns with His purpose for us or if it's a distraction from the Enemy to keep us from our purpose. If we choose to stubbornly pursue our self-imposed action for our glory, God will graciously give us *plenty* of chances to turn back. If we persist, our selfish ambition will lead to our destruction...and will often damage others as well. (see Day 1 of this week)

Asahel's death naturally led to his bothers' desire for revenge. His demise was the spark that landed on years of dry tinder and ignited into a raging and bloody civil war.

#### **Jump to 2 Samuel 3:6-7. What did Ishbosheth accuse Abner of?**

This was no small accusation. Sleeping with any of the king's wives or concubines was a treasonous crime, punishable by death. If the accusations were true, the implication was Abner's action was a move to unseat Ishbosheth and claim the throne for himself. However, there's a lot of disagreement among the scholars as to whether or not Abner actually had intentions to take the throne. So, I will present both sides and let you decide.

Abner was the true authority of Israel. He was the one running the show. Ishbosheth was nothing more than a weak-willed, impotent, figure-head who was intimidated by him. The only reason he was king

was because of Abner's quick actions to get him to safety and declare him king. The people gave Ishbosheth their allegiance *because* of Abner's skilled leadership and courageous acts to keep them safe. Abner was tired of being in the background and decided it was time for him to be in control. Ishbosheth was not only intimidated by Abner but was terrified of him. And as the war raged on, Ishbosheth watched Abner's power grow and grow. If he didn't do something fast, he would be too great to control or take down. Abner would kill him and steal the throne. Militarily speaking, he was no match for the brute. But he had seen him flirting with one of his father's old concubines... Either is plausible. Regardless, the accusation was enough to instigate Abner's immediate defection and vow to deliver all of Israel into David's hands—which obviously he had the power to do.

I believe Abner had been watching the steady and rapid decline of Saul's dynasty and the unstoppable and continuous rise of David's. It didn't take a genius to realize Ishbosheth's days as king were numbered, that God was going to make David king over all Israel soon. And Abner had done all he could to protect the House of Saul—his sworn duty. If he had slept with the woman, I doubt it was a play for the throne—that would have been suicidal. It would have been for other reason, but considering she was Saul's concubine, not Ishbosheth's, he probably didn't see the harm. His response to Ishbosheth seemed extreme, but in his eyes, it was an insult that cut deep after all he'd done for this man over the last 7 years while managing his fear and anxiety. When you put it all together—the kingdom falling apart, the losing battles, the Philistines, the bloody civil war, the insult—the hurt gave way to anger, and he snapped.

That being said, if Abner was making a play for the throne, Ishbosheth had every right to accuse him. The problem was, he didn't have the boldness to stand his ground or the backbone to follow through with the consequences of his accusation. Friends, when we *know* something is wrong and are convinced God is calling us to bring it out into the light, we need to stand firm in our convictions. Regardless of social norms. Regardless of outside pressures to back down.

**What do these verses teach us about standing firm?**

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

**1 Corinthians 16:13-14**

**Ephesians 6:10-12**

**Suggested Prayer:** *Lord, sometimes it's hard to stand up for what is right! Sometimes it's hard to know what is right and what is almost right. Give me discernment today to know the difference and the will and tools to stand up for what is important to You.*

**DIG DEEPER**

**Review 2 Samuel 3:12-16, 22-27**

These two passages seem unrelated. However, they are connected, because they illustrate how the innocent are affected by our sin.

**First, Michal.** Remember, women during this time had no voice and no choice. When she married David, it was for love—on her end. But her father devalued her by using her and her love as honey for a trap to ensnare her beloved. David debased her by treating her as a political pawn. (Week 4, Day 2)

Sometime after David fled through the window, Saul forced her to illegally marry another man. Was her presence a constant reminder of his failure to kill David? Was marrying her to another man a way to “hurt” David since he couldn’t get his hands on him? Was Saul saying, “You’re dead to me”?

**Read 2 Samuel 3:14 and fill in the blanks: David then sent this message to Ishbosheth, Saul’s son: “ \_\_\_\_\_ my wife Michal, for \_\_\_\_\_ with the lives of 100 Philistines.”**

Oh, hold up there, Prince Charming. There’s no mention of love. No comment about missing her. Michal had been separated from him for over 20 years! It had been over 7 years since Saul’s death and David being crowned king in Hebron. Not once had David sought out his first wife or tried to reunite with her, because she was still nothing more than a commodity. A political pawn. His connection to the House of Saul. Now that he was making a play for Israel’s throne, she mattered, only because her presence could earn him favor from those who still supported Saul. In his demanding her back, he never considered the man she was now with.

Michal had been jostled, shredded, and treated like a disposable object by both her father and her first husband. Though we have no record of her loving Palti, his trail of tears demonstrated his deep love for her. Interesting though, as she was torn from his home, there’s no record of a single tear from her eyes.

**Second, Palti.** He was caught in the tangled mess of one man’s jealous rage and another man’s ambitions. He was the unfortunate victim in this. Picture him following behind Michal, weeping and wailing, begging them not to take her. Saul’s jealousy and David’s selfishness destroyed him.

**Third, Abner.** He was killed out revenge for a killing done in self-defense. To make matters worse, he was sent away in safety from David’s table and then tricked to come back by Joab so he could kill him.

**Where was Abner when he was killed? (2 Samuel 3:20) \_\_\_\_\_**

If there was any place for him to be safe from a revenge killing it would be there, in a city of refuge. But revenge wasn’t Joab’s only motive. Abner was the chief commander of Saul’s army. Remember, this was the same position Joab held under David. Joab knew Abner was a better man than he was. Was he a better commander? Who knows? But it’s assumed that in exchange for Abner’s delivering the leadership of Israel peacefully into David’s hands, David would make him chief commander of his entire army. Therefore, Joab killed him to retain his prestigious position of power.

Joab was a self-centered, ruthless, and violent man. He harbored hatred and bitterness in his heart and allowed it to consume him. His fearlessness is what helped make him such an excellent commander and a brilliant strategist, but he had no regard for the innocent. He didn’t care who he hurt in pursuit of his goals. And *his* goals were what mattered to him. As we saw with Abner, murder and treachery were acceptable tactics to get what he wanted. He was loyal as long as it suited his needs. He didn’t follow God or his standards. He followed his own, not once acknowledging his successes were due to God’s blessing over David rather than his one military genius.

As we close, **look at 2 Samuel 3:31-39**. Bravo, David! He called a spade a spade and forced Joab to mourn Abner's murder. And recognizing he didn't have power to punish Joab and his brother, he petitioned God to avenge Abner's death. David's mourning was authentic, real, and multi-faceted.

**Read verses 36-37. Record verse 36.**

God would soon use this tragedy to unite the nation under David. He would build on the work Abner began and begin mending the fissures in the nation—making it whole.

God is a master at using tragic situations to further this plan, to heal the broken, to display His various attributes—to heal us. We just need to invite Him to take over our painful situations, like David did. To open the door to His joy, even while we grieve. To cling to His hope, even while we ache. To saturate ourselves in His presence, even while we feel alone.

*Psalm 30 (emphasis mine)*  
*I will exalt you, LORD, for you rescued me.*  
*You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.*  
*O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,*  
*and you restored my health.*  
*You brought me up from the grave, O LORD.*  
*You kept me from falling into the pit of death.*

***Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!***

***Praise his holy name.***

*For his anger lasts only a moment,*  
*but his favor lasts a lifetime!*

***Weeping may last through the night,***  
***but joy comes with the morning.***

*When I was prosperous, I said,*  
*"Nothing can stop me now!"*  
*Your favor, O LORD, made me as secure as a mountain.*  
*Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.*

*I cried out to you, O LORD.*  
*I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,*  
*"What will you gain if I die,*  
*if I sink into the grave?*  
*Can my dust praise you?*  
*Can it tell of your faithfulness?*  
*Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me.*  
*Help me, O LORD."*

***You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.***  
***You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,***  
***that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.***  
***O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever!***

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 6, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God's ways are not our ways. But they work. Always.*

**Read 2 Samuel 4-5. Look at 2 Samuel 5:6-16.**

**Where was David going? And who was he going to fight? (6a)**

**How do these verses describe Jerusalem, aka Zion, aka The City of David??**

**2 Chronicles 6:6**

**Psalms 122:3-5**

**Psalms 125:2**

**Zechariah 8:3**

There were a few reasons Jerusalem was ideal as a new capitol city. First, it has a strategic geographic location. It sits high in the mountains of Judah on a not-so-flat plateau, which provides a fantastic vantage point. Plus, the deep ravines on the South, West, and East, coupled with the multi-layered walls make it into a nearly impregnable fortress.

Second, it was neutral territory between Judah and Israel. Although it rested in the heart of Benjamin's land (the smallest of the tribes), it was not yet conquered. This would prevent any jealousy and animosity among tribes now and in the future.

The Jebusites felt invincible behind their walls, and brazenly threw insults at David and his men. Their false sense of security was why they were defeated. They weren't diligent in guarding their fortress and left some gaping vulnerabilities.

Friend, want some good news? Or a joy-filled reminder? When we follow Christ, we are secure! We're held fast in his grip and *nothing* and *no one* can snatch us from His hand. We never have to be afraid we have a false sense of security.

**What do these verses tell us about our security in Christ?**

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

**1 Peter 1:5**

**Hebrews 7:25**

**Now, back to 2 Samuel 5. How did David and his men get into the city? (8)**

Don't you love that? It makes me smile every time because I can look back and remember times God has called me to do something, and I had no idea how to attack it. It seemed unapproachable. Inaccessible. Indomitable. I didn't have the resources to start an assault let alone achieve the victory, through conventional means anyway. But then God showed me a back-door, a secret passage. At first,

it seemed strange. “Are you sure about that?” “Yup, up you go.” And what do you know, it worked! Friends, our God is The God of the impossible. And following Him is an adventure. His ways are not our ways, and I am so thankful for that!

David and his men still had to fight the battle to conquer the city and claim it. They had to do the work. And God was with them every step of the way. Just as He was when they conquered the Philistines in **2 Samuel 5:17-21 and 22-25**.

Once David was king over all Israel, his first priority was to exterminate their enemies from within their borders. He knew that as long as his people lived in fear of savage raiders or other malicious enemies, they wouldn’t be willing or able to engage their efforts in unifying the nation politically. That needed to happen before he could start embarking on his primary goal—unifying the nation spiritually. He envisioned a nation where idols didn’t exist and every last person followed the Lord. The Philistines were kind enough to give him his first opportunity to accomplish all of this.

### **What did the Philistines do once they heard David was crowned king over all Israel? (17)**

David was once their ally, a resident in Gath and later Ziklag. Just as the commanders feared, he was now their enemy. I imagine many of them felt betrayed while others saw it as inevitable.

### **While in the stronghold, what did David do? (19a) What did God tell him (19b)**

### **After the victory, what did David and his men do? (21) Why do you think they did this?**

Idols were often made of precious metals and decorated with rare gems, and thus exceptionally valuable. When Saul defeated the Amalekites, (Week 3 Day 3) he also took the idols—as plunder, wealth to be gathered. But David’s goal was to destroy each and every idol. To remove all idolatry from the country and lead his people back to God. So, allowing these idols to be picked up by battlefield scavengers and sold throughout the country would negate his mission.

Undaunted, the Philistines came back—again. And spread out across the valley—again. And again, David asked God what to do.

### **Read 2 Samuel 5:23-24. How did God respond?**

Do you have goosebumps? I do! Can you imagine? The Lord of Heaven’s Armies was leading His Army into battle ahead of His anointed and his army! And God allowed David and his men to hear His angels’ feet marching over the tops of the poplar trees! Friends, there was a war raging on the ground of this planet *and* in the spiritual realm, and David got to experience both at the same time! AMAZING!

Don’t think for a moment that our battles are fought on only this plane. Remember, God has a plan for your life—so does Satan. And if you’re feeling attacked, it’s because you are making him nervous or down-right scared! You’re a threat. An enemy who must be stopped. So, be like David, and hit your knees, suit up, and stand your ground. (Ephesians 6)

When Satan attacks, I pray fervently and ask others to pray with and for me. When I say, AMEN I stand up and tell him to run for cover, because I’m coming after him. If he was afraid of me before—just wait. I have the Lord of Heaven’s Armies on my side fighting with and for me. And so do you! Amen!

On the other hand, if you're not feeling attacked—you may need to ask why? Not that you want to be looking for trouble, but the truth is, Satan isn't going to bother with you if you're not a threat to him or his plans. You can believe in Jesus. You can go to church. You can read your Bible. You can even pray. But if you aren't following Jesus, plugged in, and actively engaging in His work here on earth you are no threat to him. Not worth his time.

I say, let's make the Enemy run scared. Let's be a threat. We are soldiers of the Cross, not armchair quarterbacks. We have a message burning in our heart. A message that changes the lives and futures of those in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, our communities. But unless we share it, it can do nothing. We need to live it. Pass it on. And encourage others in the faith.

In the age of self-indulgence and fleshly pleasures—Satan has many trapped in bondage. But we have a Jesus who can break every chain and set the captives free. We have a Jesus who can remake and renew those broken lives. Oh yes, Satan, you better run! Because you have already been defeated. By the power of Jesus' Name, you are defeated! By His blood you are defeated! And victory has a Name, and it's Jesus!

**Suggested prayer:** *Thank you, Lord, for loosening my chains and setting me free. Thank you for giving me courage. I'm thankful You've gone before me to fight my battles. I need help with a few down here...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Ishbosheth's courage failed. (ESV). He lost all heart. (KJV) He gave up. (CSB) Because he placed all his courage and his identity in another person rather than God. He looked to Abner to fill him with confidence and assurance—not God. So, when Abner died, Ishbosheth was left with nothing. No direction. No protection. No hope. Nothing. Ever been there? Or know someone who has?

### **What happened when Ishbosheth found out about Abner's death? (2 Samuel 4:1)**

This is so devastating! Unlike when David hit bottom in the cave and had nowhere to look but up, and he did, Ishbosheth hit bottom and kept his gaze horizontal, drew into himself, and fed on fear. No wonder all of Israel was alarmed, (NIV) disturbed (NASB) dismayed, (ESV) troubled, (KJV)—terrified. (CEV) They were aware of Ishbosheth's impotence, but were confident with Abner's behind-the-scenes leadership. With Abner gone, Ishbosheth was their only leader, and he was incapable of being the leader they needed. They were vulnerable to the savagery of the Philistines and any other enemies who wanted to devour them.

Have you ever seen this play out in today's world? Maybe a friend or a loved one has put their identity and confidence in self-worth, their significant other, wealth, career, business, ministry, athleticism, children, etc. Then something happens—a divorce or death, bankruptcy, the business fails, an injury, estrangement...and they have nothing left. They're a shell of their former self. They become despondent, anxious, and paranoid. Vulnerable to the savagery of the world. They turn to excessive self-indulgences or substance abuse to dull the pain. If they look to God at all, it's to shake their fist at Him, blaming Him for their misery. When in truth, they'd rejected Him and wanted nothing to do with Him in the past, so He let them go their own way. It's sad because it doesn't have to be this way!

When we put our identity, self-worth, and confidence in Christ, it's eternal, unchanging, and can't be taken from us. NO MATTER WHAT happens in our lives!

## **What do these verses tell you about our identity in Christ in times of trouble?**

**Romans 8:15-17**

**Romans 8:35-38**

Nothing can separate us from God! NOTHING! We are His, NO MATTER WHAT! If you're in a cave, look up! If you're in a valley, look up. If you feel lost and afraid, LOOK UP! He's there! He's right there! Look up and reach up, Dear One! He will lift you up.

Ishbosheth didn't look up. He looked out, fearing David would soon be storming the gates. But his enemies were much closer to home.

### **Who killed Ishbosheth? (2 Samuel 4:2, 5) When and how did they murder him? (7)**

These men had access to Ishbosheth. He trusted them. Despite their elevated position as warriors and raiders, they were cowards. Opportunists just like the man who brought David news of Saul and Jonathan's deaths, they misjudged David's character and shared the Amalekite's fate. (Week 5, Day 3)

David's reasons for not killing Ishbosheth were not his reasons for sparing Saul. Ishbosheth was not God's anointed. Saul was. But David trusted God to fulfill His promise in His timing and he didn't want his murder of Ishbosheth to be a wedge between him, God, and those who still supported the House of Saul. Also, he made a vow to Saul.

### **Read 1 Samuel 24:20-22. What was his vow? Record it below.**

David called Ishbosheth innocent, righteous. (ESV) He wasn't an evil man, he was just spineless. Not the kind of man God needed to unite and lead his motley tribes of Israel. That was David:

- The shepherd boy who killed giants with a strap of leather and a rock, believing if he did his part God would take care of the rest
- The outrageously victorious soldier under Saul and Abner who could not be defeated
- The renegade leader who cut his teeth on a band of outlaws and outcasts
- The fugitive who had his rival in his power but spared his life—twice
- The sinner who learned the importance of repentance and resilience
- The maverick king God developed in the cave
- The man after his own heart

Thankfully, the elders of Israel realized this too.

### **When was the last time the elders gathered together as a large group? What was the topic of conversation? (Week 2, Day 3)**

And here they are again with a crown in their hands. "So there at Hebron, King David made a covenant before the LORD with all the elders of Israel. And they anointed him king of Israel." (2 Samuel 5:3)

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 6, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Obedience is an assurance of God's help.*

When God gives us specifics about how to do something, our obedience matters—down to the last detail. Those details are important, regardless of how insignificant they may seem. If we are going to be people who chase after God's heart, we need to care about what God cares about, details and all.

**Read 2 Samuel 6:1-11 with 1 Chronicles 13 and 2 Samuel 6:12-15 with 1 Chronicles 15-16**

**Read Acts 13:22. What is God's epithet for David? Fill in the last phrase: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. \_\_\_\_\_.'**

David's heart beat in time with God's. The things God cared about, he cared about. God's priorities were his priorities. When God said do this, David did. When God said go there, David went. That, my friend, is what it means to be a person after God's heart.

**Look back at yesterday's lesson. What was David's primary goal?**

In David's time, until Pentecost actually, there was a central place of worship—the tabernacle. Under Saul's rule, the tabernacle, the worship of God, and the things of God, were neglected. Ignored. Forgotten. In fact, the most holy piece of furniture, the central component of their worship, was still separated from the other holy objects and the Tabernacle. (Week 1, Day 5 with Week 2, Day 2) The Ark of the Covenant had been in Kiriath-jearim since before Saul was born and remained there through Saul's reign. Putting God's tabernacle back in order to worship Him wasn't his priority or concern. As a result, the people's faith was slowly fading as their hearts drifted further and further away from God.

But there's a new king in town and getting the Ark back into its prominent place of worship *was* his priority and concern *because* it was God's priority and concern.

**Now back to 2 Samuel 6:1-11 with 1 Chronicles 13**

David did everything right. He consulted with his advisers, the generals and captains of his army, the people, and God. And all were in agreement it was time to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. He was correct in inviting the people to participate in this great celebration to welcome God home—into their capitol, their nation, their tabernacle, and their hearts. Where he went wrong was in the method of how he tried to bring the Ark back.

**How did they bring the ark back (2 Samuel 6:3 and 1 Chronicles 13:7)**

**What was the result? (2 Samuel 6:6-7 and 1 Chronicles 13:10)**

Okay, let's pause a minute and do a quick review.

**Read 1 Samuel 6:7-8. What were the Philistine elders' instructions for giving the Ark back to the Israelites? Be specific. (Week 2, Day 1)**

**Read Exodus 25:13-15. How was the Ark to be transported? (Week 1, Day 5)**

**Read Numbers 4:4-15. How was the Ark to be prepared for transport and by whom? How was it to be carried? Again, be specific. (5-6)**

**Now back to 2 Samuel 6:1-11 with 1 Chronicles 13. How did David respond to Uzzah's death? (2 Samuel 6:8 and 1 Chronicles 13:11)**

I appreciate this display of David's humanity because it gives us hope. Remember his epithet in Acts 13:22? Even as a man after God's heart, David was still imperfect and sinful. He still made mistakes. But what earned him these words of commendation was he took responsibility for his mistakes and learned from them. He looked at God's principles and precepts, evaluated his life, determined where he erred, and made adjustments to get back in alignment with who God called him to be. He didn't stumble along or fall forward—no, he demonstrated resilience in action. When he fell on his face, he purposefully picked himself up. Admitted his sin. Repented. Made things right. Adjusted his course. And kept going—chasing after God's heart.

I don't know about you, but I needed to hear that because I make mistakes! Often! But by following David's example, I can still chase after God's heart by studying His Word, learning and applying His principles and precepts, caring about what He cares about, going where He tells me to go, and doing what He tells me to do. When I get off track, I can evaluate where I went wrong, make adjustments, and get back to being who He's called me to be. The same goes for you.

**After David's anger subsided, what was his response? (2 Samuel 6:9 and 1 Chronicles 13:12)**

Either David was looking for a practical, efficient way to move the Ark down the steep hillside, or he talked to Eleazar to determine how the Ark was transported into his care. Regardless of how he got his information and came up with his plan, David didn't do his homework to determine how *God required* the Ark to be transported. As king, it was his responsibility to know. (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

In his negligence, David learned some valuable lessons:

- God's people are called to live by a different standard than those who reject Him
- God is completely loving *and* completely just
- As God's chosen people we're responsible for God's principles and precepts—ignorance is not an excuse
- When God gets specific about how to do something, the details matter.

Like David, I've learned this the hard way, the painfully hard way. I was confident I was doing what God called me to do. I was certain I was doing the right thing. But *nothing* was working out! In fact, I was losing ground. And I was miserable! In desperation I called out to Jesus, "What's going on?" "Did you check out My Word? I've already written to you about that." "About this?? No offense, Jesus, but this is the 21st-century." "Check it out, it's there." And of course, He was right, it was.

Friends, God's Word is vibrantly relevant to our day-to-day lives, our goals, our plans, our purposes. Every principle and precept is there. Ignorance is not an excuse. We have His Holy Instruction Book, His Word, but it doesn't do us any good if we don't read it, apply it, use it. Staying anchored in God's Word is what Jesus meant by remaining in Him in John 15. When we walk in obedience, He gives us

unspeakable joy. But when we opt for indifference and ignorance, we're miserable. And like the details of the ring and the poles and the shoulder for carrying the Ark mattered, the details in our obedience matter, too.

"Let me tell you something. If the Lord cared enough to write about it and cared enough to preserve it, He cares enough about the details to have you and me pull it off precisely His way.<sup>43</sup>"

After three months of intensive cramming and preparation, David got it right and brought the Ark into Jerusalem! **1 Chronicles chapters 15-16** describe the preparation and celebration in such beautiful detail it brings us right into the heart of the moment.

### **Read 1 Chronicles 15:26. What was God's response to moving the Ark to Jerusalem?**

When we do God's things God's way—down to the last detail—He helps us too. And like David, we too, will be unbridled in our joy-filled thankfulness.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Pray Psalm 19: 7-9 for yourself. Mean it. Make it personal.*

*The instructions of the LORD are perfect,  
reviving the soul.  
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.  
The commandments of the LORD are right,  
bringing joy to the heart.  
The commands of the LORD are clear,  
giving insight for living.  
Reverence for the LORD is pure,  
lasting forever.  
The laws of the LORD are true;  
each one is fair.  
Psalm 19:7-9*

### **DIG DEEPER**

There is freedom and joy in obedience. Even when life is hard, we can choose joy because of the hope we have in Jesus. Unfortunately, not everyone has that hope. All they can see is the here and now, their own sorrow and pain. Your joy spurs a contemptuous jealousy. Out of that contempt spews anger and venomous words to destroy you and rob you of your joy if you're not deeply anchored in Christ.

### **Read 2 Samuel 6:16 with 1 Chronicles 15:29. How is Michal identified?**

#### **What was her response to David's joy-filled praise?**

Merriam-Webster defines contempt as: "the act of despising; the state of mind of one who despises: disdain; lack of respect or reverence for something."<sup>44</sup> Calling Michal the daughter of Saul seems to

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<sup>43</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 152.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contempt>

reflect that, like her father, her love David had turned to hate. This beautiful young bride with a fresh blush on her cheeks became a contemptuous bitter harpy.

In Day 5 last week, we talked about Michal and the life she was forced to live as a woman of the times with no voice and no choice. It's true she was treated poorly and misused—by our standards. But in her time, that was how women were treated. (Thank you, Jesus, for reversing the tide.) However, she did have one choice—not in who she married, not how she was treated by her father or David—but she did have a choice in how she responded to her circumstances. She had the right to choose her attitude. Her outlook. And her perspective. And so do we.

By contrast, Abigail was married to an extremely wicked man who didn't value her or her wisdom. She learned to make the most of her situation and do her best to support and serve those in her household. Do you think she would have been there had it been her choice? No Way! But she chose to utilize her gifts, intelligence, and sensibilities to bless those in her care. When given the opportunity to leave, she took it and didn't look back. (Week 4, Day 5)

Michal chose to hoard her hurt, anger, and bitterness. She added a healthy dose of pride, and let it ferment until it became a toxic concoction of contempt that hardened her heart—like her father's.

**Read 2 Samuel 6:20. What did “the daughter of Saul” say when David came in to bless his family?**

Scathing sarcasm. Resentment. Hurt. Anger. Pride. Criticism. Cruelty. It all came out in vicious jabs. Erupted out of her pestilent heart like steam from a geyser. Her words were her only weapon and she used them to hurt, maim, and shred.

**Read 2 Samuel 6:21-22. How did David respond?**

David's words, though true, struck the killing blow. Though their marriage remained, their relationship was over. And Michal remained childless for the rest of her life. This was the worst stigma for any Jewish woman to endure, especially when all the other wives and the concubines were producing children all around her. (Remember Hannah? Week 1, Day 1) Did she remain barren because God closed her womb or because David never took her to his bed again? We don't know.

The lesson we can learn from Michal is this: Life isn't fair, but our attitude and resilience are our choice.

We can nurture our hurt or foster its healing.

We can feed our anger or choose to forgive.

We can saturate ourselves in bitterness or allow God to use our scars for His glory.

We can be selfish and self-absorbed; or we can choose to rise above our situation, faithfully serve God where we are, and be a blessing to others.

Take it from one who's been in the less-than-ideal situation: hoarding hurt, anger, and bitterness is no way to live! The toxicity eats you alive, destroying your health, potential, and other relationships.

There's freedom in forgiveness and healing. There's joy in allowing God to use your scars to bless others so they see a better way. I've done it both ways. And believe me, God's way is WAY better!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 6, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *When God says 'no,' He leads you to a better 'yes.'*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29**

Broken dreams. Do you have any? Dreams you had for your life. Dreams other Believers encouraged you to pursue. Dreams you were certain were God's plan for you...but weren't.

Or maybe as you were pursuing your dream, you had nothing but green lights the whole way until, all of a sudden, you had to slam on the breaks for a dead end or a detour sign...

Or maybe you're living your dream, but another desire begins to burn deep in your heart. It wouldn't conflict with what you're doing now, and there's so much good you could do for God's Kingdom...

...but God said, "No, that's not in My plan for you. I love your heart and your passion. I even love your idea. It's a noble ambition... A fabulous ministry...Great business plan...Wonderful opportunity...An awesome venture. But no, it's not for you."

Have you been there? I have. God's 'No' is so hard to hear, isn't it? Disappointing. Painful. Want to know something crazy? King David also felt the sting of God's 'No,' and his response to it is worth digging into.

#### **Which of your dreams has God said no to?**

#### **2 Samuel 7:1-17**

David was settled in his brand-new cedar palace. The kids were happily playing together. The wives were getting along. The servants were whistling while they worked. And the nation was at peace because "the LORD had given him rest from all the surrounding enemies." (1) David hadn't had an opportunity to enjoy a moment of peace since...well, since he was in the pasture tending his father's sheep. He's been either slaying giants, leading troops to victory, running from Saul, or setting up his administration. But now he was able to enjoy an extended lull in the action.

During these special times of refreshment, of quiet and solitude, we have time to reflect on our life and the blessings God's given us. We're able to dream. To think about the future. To plan what we'd like to do and accomplish. To think about the course God has us on and where He's leading us. On occasions like these, when we slow down and take an extended amount of time to be silent before God, we most clearly hear His whisper and sense His leading. In these moments, God plants dreams in our heart.

#### **What dream has God planted in your heart?**

#### **Read 2 Samuel 7:2. What's David's dream? Who did he share it with?**

Yesterday we celebrated with David as he brought the Ark to Jerusalem and installed Zadok and his fellow priests in the Tabernacle to minister before God according to the Laws of Moses. Now he wants to upgrade God's house, the central place of worship.

Don't misunderstand, David had no hidden agenda. He wasn't looking to display his greatness or make a name for himself. On the contrary, he was feeling indignant that he lived in a beautiful palace while God's holy Ark—the representation of His glory and presence—was living in a tent. A nice tent mind you, but still a tent. To David, this wasn't right—it should be the other way around. He desired to give God an extravagant temple. One “of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations.” (1 Chronicles 22:5) So that everyone would know, “The LORD of Heaven's Armies is God over Israel!” (2 Samuel 7:26b)

### **What was Nathan's response? (7:3)**

**Don't you love that? Do you have a friend or friends who are supportive like this? Yes/No Who is it?**

Nathan knew David's dream was sincere. It wasn't selfishly motivated, guided by pride, or a desire to make a monument to himself. It was all about his love and passion for God, the worship of God, and the things of God. His dream was noble. His ambition, worthy. His desire beautiful. Nathan was all for it!

But God wasn't. In fact, He said, “No.”

This was not a rejection of David or his dream. Like us, David was created with purpose and for God's purpose. Though his dream to build the temple was noble and a magnanimous display of his ardent passion for God and the things of God, it was *not his* purpose, nor was it from God. In truth, this desire would distract him *from* his purpose. Before David got too far into the planning, God shut it down.

**Read 2 Samuel 7:8-15. Fill in the blank: “Now go and say to \_\_\_\_\_ David...” (8a)  
What had God done for David (8b-9a)**

**What will He do for Israel? (9b-11a)**

**What will He do for David? (11b-12, 16)**

**Who will build the temple for God? (13a)**

**What will God do for David's future son (13b-15)**

In other words: Son, I love your heart and your passion. In fact, that's why I plucked you out of the pasture and equipped you to shepherd My people. To gather them into one flock and protect them against those who would devour them. It wasn't to build My temple. David, you're a soldier. I've equipped you with a brilliant tactical mind and the fortitude to subdue all our enemies. But because your dream pleases me so, I promise to fulfill it through your future son—a son I will bless. And, don't worry, if he sins, I'll discipline him with the love of a father. I won't reject him as I rejected Saul. And as for you and your dynasty—it's secure for all eternity.

God wasn't rejecting David or his dream. His 'No,' wasn't because David sinned or was disobedient. His 'No' wasn't because God knew building His temple would inflate David's ego. God said 'No' because building His temple wasn't David's purpose. "You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name [David]. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name." (2 Chronicles 6:8b-9, NIV)

Dear One, when our desires and dreams don't align with God's purpose for our lives, no matter how wonderful and God-honoring they are, they'll never come to fruition; nor should they. If we're stubborn about chasing those dreams, we'll only end up fighting against God and never accomplish His purpose for us.

It's okay to be disappointed with God's 'No.' You can bet David was. But, in order to accept God's 'yes, (an eternal dynasty) David had to submit to God's purpose for his life and accept His, 'no' about building the temple. The same is true for us. Every time God says, 'no,' He redirects us to His, "yes." His 'yes' is infinitely more satisfying than our self-imposed dreams, no matter how good they seem. Therefore, we're wise to let those dreams go, to lay them down as a holy sacrifice on the altar of obedience and follow where Christ leads us. Because, let's face it, if our hands are full of *our* dreams, He can't fill them with Himself, His dreams for us, and His blessings.

**Suggested Prayer** *Father, thank you for letting me dream and for redirecting when I need it. Today my dream is \_\_\_\_\_... Is this where I should focus? Give me direction as I go...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

David felt the sting of disappointment deep in his soul. His dream would be fulfilled—but not by him, by his son. But even as he mourned the death of that dream, or rather the passing it on, he did what anyone who chases after God would do: "Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed." (2 Samuel 7:18)

### **Read 2 Samuel 7:18 -29 (1 Chronicles 17:16-27) What is David's first question?**

What a beautiful and bold prayer. Humble and sincere in the face of disappointment. David had no idea what God's overall plan was, but he chose to trust Him. He relinquished his desire to chase after God and to fulfill his part of God's plan. David started by looking back to his nation's history and replaying what God had done before his time. How God displayed His love for His people and His power to the nations.

Who am I? I am your servant.

Who am I? David submitted to God and His authority and graciously stepped aside for his son to fulfill his dream.

Who am I to receive Your gracious promises, blessings beyond what I could ask or imagine?

Who am I? A nobody from nowhere, called from the pasture to lead you people.

Who am I that You would make my name famous? "May your name be honored forever so that everyone will say, 'The LORD of Heaven's Armies is God over Israel!'" (26)

David realized despite God's 'no'...he was a blessed man. To top it off, though God wouldn't allow him to build a house for Him, God promised to build David's house for him. Isn't that like our God?

**When is the last time you sat, alone before God, and asked, 'Who am I?' Has it been a while? Take a few minutes now before your Savior: Who am I? Jesus, who am I that you would care to bring me this far? Who am I that You would die for me and call me Your own? Who am I that you would bless me with...?**

But David did more than step aside for his son to fulfill his dream. He did everything he could to set him up for success in accomplishing it.

**Read 1 Chronicles 22**

**What did David do? (1-4, 14-16)**

**Why? (5)**

**What did David tell Solomon as he passed the torch? (6-10)**

**What advice did David give his son? (11-13)**

**What were David's orders to the leaders of Israel? (17-19)**

Was there any jealousy? Bitterness? Resentment? NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT! David did everything in his power to ensure Solomon's success in carrying out this important task. He gathered most of the material needed, he blessed him, gave him wise council, and gathered the support needed to assist him in carrying the construction out to completion.

Friends, when our dream isn't God's purpose for our life, our natural, human, sinful, tendency is to be bitter and resentful toward the one who gets to execute it. But when we're chasing after God's heart and allowing the Spirit to live and work through us, we have a better option: We can do everything in our power to ensure that person's success. We can cheer them on. Provide assistance. Gather materials. Provide financial support. Pray. Offer encouragement and words of wisdom. Demonstrate our loving submission to God's purpose in our lives as we strive to be faithful where we are at. We can celebrate with them when they succeed.

*Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the entire community of Israel, and he lifted his hands in prayer...he knelt in front of the entire community of Israel and lifted his hands toward heaven. He prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion. You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and with your own hands you have fulfilled it today. (2 Chronicles 6:12-15)*

My Friend, God's promises are true. Always!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 6, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Sometimes the best way to love someone is to pay it forward.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 8, 9, 10**

Yesterday we enjoyed a quiet moment with David. A time of reflection and remembrance of God's blessings. Then we (David, you, and I) laid down our dreams—the ones God said 'no' to—so we could pursue His purpose for our lives and accept His 'yes.'

One more thing these quiet interludes provide is time to relive the memories of the people close to us, past or present. We scroll through the pictures of the past, seeing faces and events captured in our hearts and minds forever. Some we swipe past, wanting to forget. Many we look at more closely and remember what they taught us, how they helped refine us. A few, we linger on, inviting the memories to cascade over us, to fill us. We allow ourselves to feel all the feels: tears, laughter, joy, sadness.

#### **As you scroll through your memories, which faces do you linger on? Why?**

David's undoubtedly settled on Saul's. And Jonathan's. Complex memories. Memories that filled him with profound love and deep sadness. Memories of abounding joy and excruciating pain. Memories that came with vows, promises, and oaths.

We often use these words—vows, promises, and oaths—interchangeably. And they *are* interchangeable—to a point. The degree of severity and consequence for breaking them is not interchangeable, however. Nor is the commitment in keeping them.

Vow: a solemn promise or assertion.<sup>45</sup>

Promise: a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified; a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act<sup>46</sup>

Oath: a solemn usually formal calling upon God to witness to the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says; a solemn attestation of the truth or inviolability of one's words; something (such as a promise) corroborated by an oath<sup>47</sup>

#### **Read 1 Samuel 20:13-15, 42. What promise and oath did David make? To whom?**

The word "kindness" rendered here is the Hebrew word 'hesed.' Whereas the English word 'kindness' means a sympathetic or gentle nature or to show favor. Hesed takes kindness to a whole different level. Hesed is selfless and incorporates love, mercy, faithfulness, steadfastness, goodness, righteousness, justice, and acts of kindness. (Very similar to the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit, aren't they?) In other words, hesed is more appropriately translated with our 'grace'— as it's a deep love that's undeserved, unearned, and can't be repaid.

#### **Read 1 Samuel 24:20-22. What promise and oath did David make? To whom?**

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vow>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/promise>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oath>

**Read 2 Samuel 4:4. Who is Mephibosheth (let's call him Bo)? What happened to him? How old was he?**

After hearing the news of her master's death, Bo's nurse raced to get him to safety. Tucked him away in a place where he could hide from those who would want to kill him in an effort to exterminate Saul's line. Most likely it was a prearranged place, already equipped and paid for in case Jonathan and Saul were killed. A place where the child would be safe and his identity protected. Unfortunately, in her haste and fear she dropped the child, permanently damaging Bo's feet.

Okay, with the groundwork laid, **look at 2 Samuel 9.**

This is such a beautiful story of an everlasting friendship and the *hesed* that flowed from it. My prayer as you experience this moment in David's life, is it will forever be planted in your heart, applied to your life, and that you will bear its fruit until you rest in your Savior's arms.

**What did David ask? (1) For whose sake did he ask this question? (1b)**

This was an unusual request. In those days, when a new king took the throne, he wiped out the old king's *entire* family to prevent any rival descendants from trying to get revenge and steal back the throne. Not David. God promised to keep his line secure, and he trusted Him to keep His word. Now it was David's turn to keep his word to his most intimate friend.

David didn't just want to be nice to someone in Saul's family. He wanted to show them *hesed*, *grace*—a deep love that's undeserved, unearned, and cannot be repaid. The kind of love Jonathan showed him. Look at his question again. There weren't any qualifications, limitations, or standards to meet for this person to receive his *hesed*. *Anyone* remaining from Saul's line was welcome. *Anyone*, no matter what.

**Who did he summon? (2a) Who was he? (2b) What did he tell David? (3)**

How sad is it that this man tried to convince David Bo wasn't worthy of grace because he wasn't 'perfect'? "Why yes, Your Highness, there's one person left. In fact he's Jonathan's son. However, he's a cripple, and not just in one foot, but *both* feet. You aren't going to want that around, I mean him, him around. He'll be a blemish on your court and this magnificent palace. I mean, sir, a cripple, in court? That's a major social faux pas. No, no, no. You don't want him. He's not worthy. He's nothing."

But David wasn't deterred. Honestly, I wonder if he heard past Jonathan's son is alive! I imagine his heart leapt with joy at the thought, and he saw it as God's *hesed* to him, His way of soothing those still-raw edges of his heart. Once David learned of Bo and where to find him, he went after him.

Put yourself in Bo's shoes. You've been hiding all your life. Constantly looking over your shoulder, fearing discovery. To be found out and executed for no other reason than you are Saul's grandson and Jonathan's son. Then one day you see David's servant coming up the road. Your night terrors are now your reality. Because of your disability you can't run and hide. It's time to accept the fact your life is over. Through tears, you hug and kiss your young son, speak a blessing over him, you embrace your wife, and prepare yourself for the inevitable.

Imagine David as he waits for Bo's arrival. Pacing. Nervous. Excited. His heart already swollen with love, love that stemmed from his love for Jonathan. Then Bo comes in. Did he resemble his father? Did his face spark a wildfire of memories in David's mind, ignite his love for his kindred spirit afresh? Did he have to restrain himself from running to him, throwing his arms around him, and calling him Jonathan? Did the sight of this young man finally start to heal his heart?

**Read 2 Samuel 9:5-6. Still wearing Mephibosheth's shoes, what are you thinking?**

**I love this next part. What are David's first words to Bo? (7a)**

I imagine David knelt down beside this terrified young man and lifted his head so their eyes could meet, a warm loving smile exploding on his lips. "My dear, son, don't be afraid. I loved you father more than my own life, and out of that love, I will love you. Let me tell you how I am going to bless you..."

**How did David bless Bo? (7)**

**Still wearing Mephibosheth's shoes, what are you thinking?**

**What was his response to David? (8)**

"A dead dog like me" was more than a self-deprecating term. It was how he would be viewed by the rest of society. He was a cripple. He was a dead man's son. He'd been stripped of all his promise when his father and grandfather died. And he was poor as he had no way to provide for himself due to his disability. He, according to the people, was as worthless as a dead dog.

By David's grace, he was now provided for, given land and servant (prestige and wealth), and most important—he was elevated to the status of the king's own son. This scene make my heart explode!

Some have tried to tarnish this act as a political maneuver to garner the trust and loyalty of Saul's remaining supporters. Or as a way to keep an eye on Saul's heir. But if those thoughts entered in, they weren't entertained for long, because David's *hesed* to Bo far outweighed any political gain he would have acquired. In fact, it cost him more than he gained. He never counted the cost; it was worth it to him. This was about Jonathan. And David's love for Jonathan. And his oath to him.

**Suggested Prayer** *Father, help me be like David. To love others like he did, to show grace. I want to live like this so people will know I hesed them. Today, I need help loving...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

What I most love about reliving this story is it's a picture, a foreshadow, of Jesus's grace toward us. The unmerited favor He extends toward us. Favor we *don't deserve, haven't earned, and can never repay*.<sup>48</sup> Before God said, "Let there be light," formed Adam out of dust, and breathed His breath into his lungs, plans were already in place for Jesus's death and resurrection. Before the garden, the snake, and the apple, God's *hesed* was already determined.

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<sup>48</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 169. (emphasis mine)

When Bo was young, he enjoyed a beautiful relationship with his daddy. He wrestled and played, watched for Jon to come home so he could tell him all about his day, and when Bo saw him, he ran full-tilt into his arms, confident his daddy would catch him. Before sin entered into the world, Adam also enjoyed a beautiful relationship with the King of Kings.

Then tragedy struck. Confusion. Chaos. Pain. Once carried securely, Bo was on the ground—broken. Stripped of his identity as a child of the king. Destitute. And crippled for the rest of his days. We know that pain, don't we? How sin breaks us. Robs us of our identity. Cripples us for the rest of our days.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-3. Who were we in our sin? How did we used to live?**

Then David, out of his deep love and affection for Jon, desired to fulfill his oath to him and sought out his son. He left the 99 and went looking for the lost and broken lamb to bring him back to the fold and give him a place of honor as an adopted son of the king.

**Read Ephesians 2:4-9. What has God done for us out of His mercy and grace?**

David's grace was selfless. Bo had nothing. He was a dead dog, like he said. He didn't deserve David's *hesed* and had no way to repay it. Bo had absolutely nothing to offer David that he didn't already have. But David accepted him as he was. Loved him as he was. And counted him as his son. He didn't care that he was broken. Imperfect. Crippled. All that was left for Bo to do was accept the grace of the king. Oh, Friends, doesn't this make your heart burst? David's deep love and grace for Bo was undeserved, unearned, and could never be repaid just as Christ's love is for us. We come to Him broken, deficient, and incomplete—and he accepts us just the way we are.

**Read Ephesians 2:10. Who are we because of our acceptance of God's grace?**

**Read John 13:34-35. What are we supposed to do with this grace and love?**

We are called to pay it forward. To offer *hesed* to those around us—a deep love that's undeserved, unearned, and cannot be repaid—because by that kind of love the world will know Whose we are. Children of the King.

As I meditate on David's *hesed* for Bo and Jesus's grace toward us, I can't keep from singing *Reckless Love* by Cory Asbury. To us, God's love seems reckless. But to God, His love is exactly what it needs to be:

*There's no shadow You won't light up  
Mountain You won't climb up  
Coming after me  
There's no wall You won't kick down  
Lie You won't tear down  
Coming after me  
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God  
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine  
I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away  
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God, yeah<sup>49</sup>*

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<sup>49</sup> Reckless Love, Cory Asbury. Produced by Jason Ingram & Paul Mabury. Album Reckless Love. 2017.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 6, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The difference between sin in the Bible and sin today is Biblical sin is written down.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 11-12**

The Bible is a very real book. From Saul taking care of business in a cave, to David and his men ready to spill blood in a hangry rage, to the moral erosion of our protagonist, it offers encouragement, instruction, and direction. I'm thankful Scripture's author, the Holy Spirit, didn't sugar-coat the lives of those who fill its pages. Instead, He invites us to see them in their glory as well as in their depravity. He helps us understand their sin is no greater than our sin; the forgiveness that was extended to them is available to us; when we sin, God still loves us and wants to use us; and even in light of forgiveness—the consequences of sin remain.

Friends, the only difference between the sin of those in Scripture and ours is theirs is recorded, preserved for all eternity for us to read, study, and learn from. This is the case with David's sin with Bathsheba. And as we will see, this sin was not an all-of-a-sudden, out-of-nowhere event. David's moral character had been steadily dissolving over a period of 20 years due to his refusal to control his sexual impulses. Unaware his eroding integrity had left him weak and vulnerable, he stayed home from leading his troops into battle, went out onto the terrace, became overwhelmed by his weakness, and had a complete moral collapse. And those few hours of intense pleasure lead to 20 years of intense devastation, and caused him to die as a broken man with a broken heart.

I'm not justifying David's actions, condoning his sin, or feeling sorry for him. I'm keeping things in perspective and using these events to examine our lives to identify our weaknesses and where we need to fortify our moral character. And it starts by asking two very important questions:

1. Where did the erosion start?
2. How do we prevent the dissolution of our moral character and avoid a moral collapse?

Thankfully, the Spirit recorded those answers for us.

**Read Psalm 19:7-11. What does David tell us about God's Word?**

**Read God's guidelines for the king in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Record verse 17.**

**What was the king required to copy, read daily, and why? (18-20)**

God gave us His Word to teach and guide us. To give us joy and instruct us on how to live life well. If we're not engaged in His Word every day and actively learning and applying *all* His principles and precepts, our moral character and integrity *will* decay. They're either fortifying or eroding. They don't remain stagnant. And we choose whether they get stronger or weaker.

We're responsible for 100% of God's Word. We don't get to pick out which parts we want to apply and ignore the rest. We can't accept 100% of the blessings, heed 98% of the warnings, and obey 96.6% of the principles and precepts, and expect to live victoriously. Because it's at that 2% and at that 3.4%

that our moral character first starts to break down...and the erosion rapidly spreads from there. On the outside, everything can look perfect, stable, secure, and strong, but under the surface a massive sinkhole develops. Like David, we may not realize what's happening until everything collapses.

Friends, we're also tasked with discerning between what's socially acceptable and what God says is acceptable because, let's face it, they're often not the same. And if we're not well anchored in His Word, we'll be clueless. For David, it was the norm for kings to collect a harem—in fact, it was expected. A substantial harem was a sign of prosperity, power, prestige, and virility. However, that was the world's way, not God's way. So with each additional wife or concubine David collected, his moral character weakened because he was in direct violation of God's will and commands.

### **We identified David's Achilles Heel in day 4 of week 5. What was it?**

Throughout our study we've witnessed David's intensity and extreme passion. Whether it's fighting on the battle field, escorting the Ark into Jerusalem, or showing compassion, "whatever David did, he did it with all his heart<sup>50</sup>." And this included his love life. 2 Samuel 3:1-5 lists the 6 wives David accumulated while in Hebron. A few verses later, Michal was taken from her husband and forced to join his harem. Then a few chapters after that, we're told David continued to accumulate wives and concubines once he moved to Jerusalem. (5:13)

### **Read Psalm 19:12-14. What did David pray in regard to hidden sins?**

Do you remember when we talked about "pet sins"? Those things you know are wrong but make excuses for and justify because they're socially acceptable. Those things that might be feeding the "elephant in the room" or be the "elephant in the room." (Week 1, Day 3, Week 2, Day 2) As a man of passion, David's was sex. No, he wasn't some sex-crazed pervert. He wasn't out of control. He was a man after God's heart. But even so, he fell for one of Satan's greatest lies: 'if I have more of a good thing, my cravings will be satisfied. I'll be content.' But a full harem didn't quiet David's sex drive. It fed it. Heightened it. And he was never satisfied.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. What warnings are we given? What promise?**

### **What do you learn from 1 John 1:8-10?**

David didn't realize his sexual desire was his weakness. Nor did he believe collecting women to abate his desire was sinful. According to the world, this was his right and privilege as king. According to God, it was sin. David ignored the "elephant in the room," though others could clearly see it. (2 Samuel 11:3) He fed and nurtured it until it controlled him rather than him controlling it. In the moment he took his eyes off God, it rampaged through his home and life, leaving behind brokenness and destruction.

Friends, our flesh is just as weak as David's. To complicate matters, we live in a culture that's obsessed with pleasure-seeking activities, thrives on self-indulgence, and encourages all kinds of pet sins. The temptations are real and the "justifications" for our choices are "plausible." If we don't stay anchored in God's Word and apply His precepts and principles, our moral character will erode just as David's did.

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<sup>50</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 138.

**How do these verses encourage you to stand firm against temptation?**

**Matthew 26:41**

**Hebrews 2:18**

**James 1:12-16**

**James 4:7**

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, you have blessed me beyond my wildest expectations. Help me continue to keep my eyes on you. If I have a hidden sin, reveal it so I can turn completely to you. I'm struggling with...*

**DIG DEEPER**

David loved God. He was zealous for the things of God and worshiped God with unabashed passion and joy. David was a man after God's heart. He openly acknowledged God made him king over all Israel; and that His hand of blessing was on him, the nation, the people, and his leadership. It was because of God's blessings he went from being someone that nobody thought to call a strong leader, to being honored and respected by his people and enemies alike. David had it all. He was at the zenith of his life. He had a growing nation. A thriving economy. An army no one could beat. A beautiful new home. Gorgeous children. The hottest wives...

...about those wives. Were they really his Achilles Heel? After all, he got it 99% right. What's 1% really? Besides, David was so powerful, who'd be qualified to confront him? To keep him accountable?

**Read Hebrews 4:12-13. Describe the Word of God. Who are we accountable to?**

Let's see who God tried to use to get David's attention.

**Read 2 Samuel 11:2-3. How did the servant identify Bathsheba?**

This statement was as significant as it was unusual. A woman was typically identified by stating who her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were, with no reference to her husband. However, this servant was keenly aware of David's weakness, so he respectfully and tactfully informed him—The lady's married. She's off-limits. David didn't listen.

**Read 2 Samuel 11:26-27. Summarize what happened.**

**Read 2 Samuel 12:1-4. "So the LORD sent \_\_\_\_\_ to tell David this story" (1)**

Don't you love how God works? After so many years in the field, no doubt David bonded with a lamb or two. Back then they didn't have pets like we do today. Where our pets are treasured members of our family, their animals were their livelihood. Property. However, some animals are very affectionate and each has its own unique personality which causes us to bond with them. It was these long-forgotten memories God was shedding a fresh light on to expose David's sin and cover-up.

**How did David respond to this story? (5-6)**

**YOU ARE THAT MAN, DAVID! Imagine what he was feeling. (7a)**

**Then what does God tell David? (7b-8)**

**And asks him what question? (9)**

**What are the consequences of David's sin? (10-12, 14)**

The consequences of David's sin were far, far reaching, as we will discover in the next few weeks. Like a rock dropped in a lake, the ripple effects of his sin went on and on, affecting many innocent people. We should never think our "secret sin" doesn't hurt anyone. It does. And more often than not, it's the innocent (such as this newborn babe) who are the most damaged by our sin.

As tragic as this story is, the next few verses reveal why David was a man after God's heart and display his resilience despite his bitter tears.

**Read 2 Samuel 12:13-23**

**What was David's response? (13)**

**David begged God to spare the life of the child, but the child died. What did David do after he learned of the child's death? (20) Fill in the blanks. Then David \_\_\_\_\_ from the ground, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. He \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. After that, he returned to the palace and was served food \_\_\_\_\_.**

David got up and purified himself externally; went before God and asked Him to purify him internally. *Then* he took care of his physical needs. After that, he went back to work. Was he broken? Yes. Hurting? Absolutely. David would never be the same again. But he went back to fulfilling God's purpose for him. His confession and repentance were real. But he didn't wallow in self-pity or feel sorry for himself. He didn't run away and hide or pretend like nothing happened. David took responsibility for his sin, submitted to the consequences, and continued to chase after God. That, my Friend, displays resilience.

Friends, David's sin was no different from your sin or my sin. The only difference is, it was recorded for us to read and learn from. His story has more to teach us than we had time to dig into today. But we can carry away a few nuggets such as:

- David's 1% disobedience to God's principles and precepts eroded his moral character over time.
- His sin with Bathsheba could have been avoided on multiple fronts, but it all started with his not being anchored in God's Word daily
- When confronted with his sin, David authentically confessed and repented
- After Bathsheba there is no record of him adding another woman to his harem
- Though David was forgiven, he still had to face the consequences of his sin
- David submitted to his consequences and got back to work

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 7, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God answers the mess of life with one word: Grace.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 13:1-23**

One of my favorite things is seed starting indoors in the late winter/early spring for summer planting. A special magic happens when seeds germinate and grow into mature flowering or vegetable bearing plants under your supervision and care. However, not all seeds are good. Some are noxious weeds that, once established, rapidly take over your garden, choke out every good thing in their path, and destroy everything you've worked so hard to build. They reduce yields and weaken the plants you want to nurture. They are difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate. However, if you use preventative measures and are diligent about plucking out the weeds while they're young, your garden will thrive and produce a bountiful harvest that will bless many.

The same is true in our lives. Our small, "inconsequential" decisions, our 2% disobedience, our 3.4% neglect of God's principles and precepts, sow seeds of sin and destruction in our life that if we aren't diligent about eradicating, they will wreak havoc on our lives, cause a steady dissolution of our moral character and lead to a complete moral collapse. (Week 6, Day 5) But it doesn't have to be that way.

One of the things that saddens my heart is the amount of erroneous teaching I continuously stumble across that infers in this age of grace, when we confess our sins and are forgiven, we are free from the consequences of our sin. So, when we look at the consequences of David's sin and how they played out many are led to believe— "So glad that's not me! I live in the age of grace. I am free from the consequences of my sin." But let me share a passage from Paul, the apostle of grace.

#### **Record Galatians 6:7-8.**

**"Don't be deceived..."** (NIV) This phrase is a flashing emergency light to capture our attention. Paul is telling us: don't let yourself be lied to and don't believe the lies. Teachers with slick tongues are coming. They're eloquent and charismatic speakers telling just enough truth to make their teaching believable, but there are lies threaded in that truth. Lies that will mess with our mind, and weaken our faith. Lies that will lead us astray if we aren't grounded in truth, and well-anchored in God's Word.

**"...you cannot mock the justice of God."** The justice of God = the consequences of sin. We know "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) That is the grace we live under. When David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan replied, "Yes, but the LORD has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin"—that was grace. (2 Samuel 12:13) David should have died for his sin of adultery and murder, but God was gracious and forgave him and let him live. David's consequences remained...as do ours. Grace is Jesus's forgiveness for our sins and offering us eternal life. Grace is God's loving kindness that is undeserved, unearned, and can't be repaid. Grace is the strength and endurance God gives us to submit to and work through the consequences of our sin. Grace does not erase the consequences of our sin—for us and those around us—it enables us to endure them, learn from them, and teach others how to avoid them.

***“You will always harvest what you plant.”*** Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. This is the noxious weeds we talked about earlier. They start out as that 2% disobedience and that 3.4% neglecting of God’s principles and precepts, but over time they take over. If we aren’t diligent about eradicating them, they will wreak havoc on our lives, cause a steady dissolution of our moral character and lead to a complete moral collapse. The pleasure, joy, and thrill of planting these seeds is far outweighed by the harvest (consequences) they produce. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

***“But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.”*** How do we do that? The answers are in Romans 6. Paul explains that as Believers we are children of grace, dead to sin—meaning we now have eternal life. As such, we are called to live a life of 100% obedience and follow 100% of God’s precepts and principles. We are to live in and through the power of His Spirit, who lives in us. In this way, we sow seeds of love and righteousness. We reap a harvest of joy and everlasting life.

### **Read Romans 6:11-14. What do you learn about who we are, who we are not, and God’s grace?**

By God’s grace we are saved, and through His grace, when we are fully surrendered to Christ and anchored deep in His Word, we have power over sin in our lives. We can see temptation for what it is, rebuke it, and run from it. We can see the weed sown into the soil of our lives early, repent, and through the power of the Spirit, rip those weeds right out of the ground before they have a chance to be established.

**The Bible provides weed identification manuals including: Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21.** I invite you to read one or all of these passages to see if there are any noxious weeds and seeds nestling themselves into the soil of your life. And then to hit your knees in sincere confession and eradicate them before they lead to the same destructive consequences David faced. Remember grace doesn’t remove the consequences of our sin, but it does give us the power to avoid sin in the first place.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, thank you for your identification manuals prepared long ago, but so applicable to me today. I’m guilty of \_\_\_\_\_, and need your help to get rid of these desires. Help me see when I’m about to stumble and give me strength to turn away. Especially when \_\_\_\_\_....*

### **DIG DEEPER**

The consequences of David’s sin were great. However, had he confessed to his adultery the morning after, they would have been significantly less. Or if he fessed up once he found out Bathsheba was pregnant with his child—he could have humbled himself, confessed, and made restitution to Bathsheba and Uriah and God. But he didn’t. He chose to cover up the sin and murdered an honorable and innocent man. However, “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.” (Hebrews 4:13) Since He is the one we are accountable to, He is the one who gives the consequences. **2 Samuel 13:1-23** is the first in a string of consequences in regard to: “I will raise up evil, (ESV) calamity, (NIV) adversity, (BSB) rebellion, (NLT) disaster (CSB) against you out of your own house.” (12:11)

***Disclaimer:*** This is a horrific and painful chapter to read and study. For some of you, these wounds are fresh, for others the scars are tender. And for some of us, it's an area that's healed, but the memories are still sad and painful. Before you dive into this chapter, ask God to protect you and your healing process. Know that I'm not digging into the rape of Tamar as much as the other sin surrounding it.

## **Review 2 Samuel 13:1-23**

**Who was Tamar's full-brother? (1a)**

**Who is Amnon? (1b with 2 Samuel 3:2)**

As the oldest son, Amnon was the crowned prince, the next king of Israel. As we go through this chapter, our concern starts to rise as we see who this man was—his character and integrity. His "love" for his half-sister Tamar was a disgusting, shameful, incestuous lust that bore none of the characteristics of real love. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

- Love is patient—Lust is demanding and immediate
- Love is kind—Lust is cruel, demeaning, and often violent
- Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude—Lust is all of the above
- Love does not demand its own way—Lust forces its way in and steals what it wants
- Love is not irritable—Lust causes distress, anxiety, and oppression
- Love keeps no record of being wronged—Lust is deceptive and shrewd
- Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out—Lust is selfish and cares nothing for the truth
- Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance—Lust is treacherous, traitorous, temporary, and fickle

The very fact that Amnon harbored this evil in his heart, nurtured it, and obsessed over it to the point of making himself physically sick, reveals his heart was far from God. Each thought he entertained sowed seeds of destruction into the soil of his life. Each erotic fantasy he allowed to captivate him, watered and fertilized the others seeds already planted. Make no mistake, Amnon had a well-tended garden.

**Whose advice did he follow? Who was he? (3-4)**

**What did he tell Amnon to do? (5)**

Amnon's friend (NASB), adviser (NIV), is described as *very* crafty, (NLT) *very* shrewd, (NIV) *very* subtle. (KJV) He knew how to get what he wanted (CEV).

**Look at Genesis 3:1. Who else was describe that way?**

The Hebrew of these words literally means “very wise.” Obviously Jonadab doesn’t possess godly wisdom. “Rarely will Scripture include the word ‘very,’ and when it does, rest assured it is not an exaggeration.”<sup>51</sup>

### **According to James 3:14-16 what kind of wisdom does Jonadab have? What is its source?**

Jonadab’s advice was wicked on every level. The fact that Amnon listened to him is not only concerning, but it gives us a preview of what kind of administration he would have with his self-indulgences encouraged and perpetuated by his advisers.

Oh friends, we need to be careful of whose advice we follow. If we aren’t, their guidance could lead us straight to the pit of hell. We need to surround ourselves with godly men and women who are well anchored in God’s Word, are passionate for the things of God and worship of God, and are actively chasing after his heart. Even then, we must take their advice and line it up with Scripture, then pray through it to be sure it aligns with God’s will for us. Because even well-meaning, God-fearing advisers get it wrong sometimes—like Nathan and his initial support of David building the temple. (2 Samuel 7)

### **What does James tell us about godly wisdom? (3:13, 17-18)**

Tamar sought to give Amnon wise advice to protect herself and him, but he wouldn’t listen to her. When he was finished taking what he wanted, his “love” turned into fierce hate. He took out his self-disgust on her and further violated her by throwing her out and locking the door behind her—making it look like she seduced him and was no better than a common whore.

Amnon’s crime destroyed her for life. Her chances of marriage were gone, as well as her innocence, virtue, and ability to trust. The physical damage would heal, but the psychological and emotional damage...in that time...I doubt would ever heal.

Tamar was the third recorded innocent victim of her father’s sin: Uriah, a new born child, and now her.

This event was the spark that ignited the fire of rebellion in David’s home.

*“You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature.” (Galatians 6:7b-8a)*

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 184.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 7, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The true test of leadership is not measured by one's professional life, but rather by what's accomplished at home.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 13:23-37**

With a palace full of who knows how many dozens of wives and concubines, each producing children (with the exception of Michal), it's unknown how large David's family actually was. As a mom of four boys, I can only imagine how difficult it would have been to parent all those children to adulthood. It makes my brain hurt to think of it. The first challenge would be to remember all their names and birthdays—and in David's case, who was whose mom. The next obstacle would be balancing all their unique personalities in order to help each discover and develop his or her own gifts, talents, and interests. Let's not forget about helping with their schoolwork, mentoring, discipling, and disciplining.

The truth is, David didn't do any of this. Though he loved his children, he was uninvolved, ineffective, and futile as a father. This great man who did everything with all his heart, neglected to pour any of his passion into raising his children, and the results are heartbreaking.

David was an assertive, provident king. Inside the cedar walls of the palace, however, he was neglectful and passive. He was a vigilant leader. His army was well trained and disciplined. But his children had no discipline or training. He was a meticulous statesman, but his children lacked direction and purpose.

David was a shepherd-king successful in gathering and uniting his flock under God. But he didn't disciple his children in the ways of the Lord. He expanded Israel's territory from 6,000 square mile to 60,000. But his children had no boundaries and ran wild. He was loved by his people and revered by his enemies. But his children didn't respect him and repeatedly manipulated and used him.

In short, David failed as a father. He provided for their every physical need and material desire. But he didn't give them what they really needed—an interested, involved father. Though he loved his children, due to his inactivity in their lives, he cultivated a seedbed of resentment and bitterness in which he planted seeds of neglect and ignorance. From there, he reaped a harvest of strife, rebellion, and trouble.

#### **Record 2 Samuel 13:21**

David's oldest son had just violently raped his teen-aged daughter, destroying her life and future. Then he further violated her by treating her like a seductress, a common whore. David was furious! His son used and manipulated him to get her into his bedroom, and David was irate. But that was all. He did nothing else. No discipline. No confrontation. Nothing.

**What does David's son Solomon say about disciplining our children?**

#### **Proverbs 13:24**

#### **Proverbs 19:18**

## **Proverbs 22:6**

## **Proverbs 29:17**

Of all of David's children, Amnon was the one he should have poured into as he was heir to the throne. David should have guarded and guided the development of his character and integrity. He should have mentored him on how to be a fair and honest king while teaching him how to run and continue the development of the country. He should have enlisted him in his army to learn discipline and how to be a strong leader. He should have disciplined him to be a man after God. But he didn't.

## **What do these verses teach about training our children in the Lord?**

### **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

### **Ephesians 6:4**

David made a critical error assuming his children would catch his passion for God and the things of God, that they would hunger and thirst for Him as he did. But that's not the way it works. Our children need to be taught God's principles and precepts. They need to see them in action and applied to our lives. They need to observe the blessings in following Jesus and understand the consequences of rejecting Him. David's children never learned that, and as a result they didn't possess the tools needed to overcome their temptations and avoid sin.

Some assume David's reluctance to discipline Amnon was due to his affair with Bathsheba. But in reality, that sin provided the perfect opportunity to lovingly discipline his son so he wouldn't follow in his footsteps and reap the same consequences he did. David didn't take any opportunity to discipline his son or mentor him.

## **What does Proverbs 3:11-12 tell us about God's discipline for us?**

David sinned, repented, and was forgiven. But God's forgiveness didn't cancel the consequences of his sin—remove His discipline. God disciplined this man who chased after his heart, not out of enmity but out of love. My friend, it takes courage to confront our children and discipline them when they are wrong. It often hurts us more than it hurts them, but if we don't, they will be wicked people with selfish hearts. They will become self-indulgent and violate the rights of others without remorse or regret. When we withhold discipline and refuse to train our children, we are in essence condoning their sin and paving the path of destruction they're on.

## **Record 2 Samuel 13:22. Underline Absalom's emotional response to Amnon's violation of his sister.**

David's unwillingness to discipline Amnon fed Absalom's hatred for his brother. As hatred does—it spread—to his father. Parenting is the hardest, most thankless job we will ever have. It requires diligence, consistency, and sacrifice. The hope, goal, and prayer is when our kids are grown they'll become our friends, but while they are young—they aren't. Our action or inaction in their lives contributes to the choices they make and the people they become—good or evil.

**Suggested Prayer** *Father, thank you for loving me just where I am and teaching me Your ways. It's never too late to teach others how to chase God's heart. Help me "parent" or "mentor" these people today...*

## **DIG DEEPER**

**Review 2 Samuel 13:23-37.**

**How many years had passed since Amnon raped Tamar? (23a)**

That's a long time to wait for discipline to happen. It's a long time to wait for your father to *do something*, anything, but get angry. It's a long time to watch the broken, desolate life of your once vibrant sister, a life that once held such vitality and promise. It's a long time to witness her daily grief, sorrow, and disgrace. It's a long time to harbor bitterness and hatred. A long time to plot revenge, plan the perfect murder, orchestrate your escape, and setup a place of refuge.

**Record what you learn about hatred from these verses**

**Proverbs 10:18**

**Proverbs 26:24-26**

**1 John 2:11**

These verses describe Absalom perfectly. But his heart was already full of evil.

**Read 2 Samuel 13:20. What did he tell Tamar after he confirmed Amnon raped her?**

These words hint at an underlying rivalry between these two brothers. Absalom was used to doing what he wanted and getting what he wanted, and he had his sights set on the throne. Tamar's rape gave him the excuse he needed to get his brother out of the way. "Come live with me, my dear sister. But stay silent about this. Tell no one. Seek no justice. I will take care of him for you." Could it be her silence was what hindered David from taking action? Made him hesitate? Probably not, but it gave him an out—which Absalom was counting on.

**What did Absalom invite David and his servants to? (24)**

David's refusal was expected, evidenced by Absalom's ready counter argument. "I understand. So please honor me by sending Amnon in your place."

**How did Absalom get his way? (27)**

He urged him. (NIV) The Hebrew word used here is "*paras*" which literally means "to break out and down. To burst forth. A powerful multiplication of force that spreads in all directions to tear down walls.<sup>52</sup>" In other words he badgered him until he caved. He manipulated and intimidated him into ordering Amnon to come.

When our children have no boundaries or discipline, they know they can badger us until we cave. They will push and push until they get what they want—and in the process their respect for us erodes. Absalom knew how to manipulate his father, which buttons to push, and how to break down the wall. David let him do it, but we don't have to.

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<sup>52</sup> I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard et al. eds., *New Bible Dictionary Third Edition*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press., 1996), 922.

## **Now look at verse 22. How much interaction did Absalom have with Amnon after he raped his sister?**

Had David been engaged, he would've been aware of Absalom's loathing for Amnon and observed his sons hadn't spoken in two years. Absalom's incessant badgering would have set off all kinds of red-flags, either making him curious about his hidden motives or all-out alerting him to his evil plans. But he wasn't. And it didn't.

### **What is the first report sent to David? (30)**

In horror and sorrow David (and his advisers) tore his robe—symbolizing the rending of his heart. I can't imagine the depth of his pain, the nightmare that overcame him. David may have been an ineffectual father, he may have been spineless about disciplining them, but he did love. His tears would have been inconsolable tears. Filled with a wrenching sorrow no one could share— "I will raise up evil against you from your own household." (2 Samuel 12:11, NASB). Then Jonadab strolls in. Remember him? (2 Samuel 13:4-5)

### **What did he tell David? (32-33)**

What a blow to the heart! David was a man of many extraordinary accomplishments. But he was just that—a man, human. Flesh and blood like everyone else. He had blemishes on his character and failures in his resume just like the rest of us. But all these accomplishments were overshadowed by passions that prevented him from cultivating a godly family.

## **Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7. What are the qualifications of a church elder?**

### **Write out the question asked in verse 5?**

The question is rhetorical, but rest on it a minute. Our pursuits should never overshadow our responsibility to our family, distract us from disciplining or discipling our children, or from nurturing our marriages. Likewise, our family should never be used as an excuse to not do the things God has called us to do—even if you're a family of one or two. Finding that balance requires seeking His wisdom through His Word and prayer. And maybe inviting in some godly council.

Before we close, let's turn our attention to Absalom. He wasn't a victim; he chose his actions. Planned his brother's murder down to the last detail. He had a devious mind and an inflated sense of self.

However, Absalom illustrates this principle well: The sins of the parents are often reflected and amplified in their children. Children who learn how to manipulate and badger their parents at a young age will continue to do so as adults. Undisciplined children grow up to be undisciplined adults. Friends, the reality is, David could have been the perfect parent and Absalom still could have been the man he was. (Don't believe me? Look at Adam and Eve, they literally had the World's Greatest Dad.) But we can't deny David's habitual, perpetual sin and ineffectual parenting greatly influenced the man Absalom became.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 7, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Admitting a weakness is a sign of strength.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 14:1-16:14**

Like his father, Absalom was handsome and charismatic. People loved him and gravitated towards him. Unlike his father he had no reverence for God—as evidenced by the fact he sinned and continued to sin with no sign of repentance. When David sinned, however, he fully repented, accepted God's forgiveness, and submitted to the consequences. Also unlike David, Absalom didn't have the integrity, moral character, or self-control needed to be a quality leader or king. That and his inability to discern between wise and foolish advice would lead to his downfall.

#### **Read 2 Samuel 13:37b-39. Where did Absalom go? Why? How long was he there?**

For two years Absalom burned with hatred for Amnon and plotted his murder. Makes you wonder what he was harboring in his heart while he lived in his granddaddy's palace.

Joab was one of the few people who had been with David from his time in caves. He was David's cousin, the Chief Commander of his army. He knew David as well as David knew himself—if not better. He likely felt David's anguish over Amnon's death, and then later, his longing to be reunited with Absalom. Knowing David as well as he did, he knew his king wouldn't ease his anguish to extend the olive branch to reconcile with his son. So, Joab concocted a plan to paint the situation in a different light and was rewarded by being allowed to bring Absalom home. Though his intentions were flawless and done out of genuine love and concern for his king and his friend, he made one critical error—he didn't consult with God first.

#### **What was David's order? (2 Samuel 14:24)**

#### **How is Absalom described? (25-26)**

#### **What was the name of his daughter? (27) \_\_\_\_\_**

Giving his daughter his sister's name was a double edged sword. On one side, it was a loving tribute to his sister and the life she should have had. On the other, it was a not-so-subtle reminder to all—especially his father—what Amnon did and what David didn't do.

Two years later, Absalom grew impatient and demanded to see the king. He started badgering Joab to intercede on his behalf, but Joab stood his ground—until Absalom burned his barley field! In this act, Absalom showed he was just as insolent as ever. But like his badgering of David to order Amnon to come to his celebration, this act hinted that something more nefarious lingered under the surface.

#### **What did Absalom demand Joab do and what was his challenge to David? (32)**

Absalom was forcing David's hand to determine whether or not he was going to follow the law and discipline him—execute him. Like Joab, Absalom knew his father. He was certain David wouldn't do

*anything*. After his brashly destroying Joab's field to get his way and knowing he has his sights set on the throne, it makes you wonder what plans Absalom had been making. You can almost feel the rebellion, disrespect, and hatred emanating from him, can't you?

### **How did David greet his son? (33)**

Absalom was right. David did *nothing* to discipline him. He ignored the sin against his family and didn't even confront him about how Absalom used him to murder his son. He caved under his son's manipulation. His kiss restored Absalom to his place of privilege as prince and heir to the throne.

Immediately after this meeting, Absalom started implementing his plan to orchestrate a conspiracy and steal that throne from his father.

### **Read 2 Samuel 15:1-7.**

#### **What was Absalom's strategy for stealing the hearts of the people? How long did he do this? (7a)**

Just like his murder of Amnon, Absalom's revolt against his father was well thought out and meticulously planned. He was patient and conniving. He manipulated the people's emotions with his charisma and appearance; with his dramatic entrances and gestures. It's no wonder he stole their hearts! With each embrace and kiss he conveyed they were his equal, his peer, his brother. Who wouldn't be impressed by that?

#### **Have you known people like this? Yes/No Was it hard to resist their charm? Yes/No If so, explain.**

Oh, we need to be perceptive and discerning, Friends! Guard against these people and their depraved minds and counterfeit faith. They prey on the unperceptive and lead hearts astray. When we're grounded in our faith, anchored deep in God's Word, and have a strong vertical relationship with Him, it's easier to recognize these snakes in the grass. To stand firm in our convictions and not be swayed by the horizontal distractions, false promises, and pretty words that tickle our ears.

#### **What do we learn about manipulators from these verses?**

**Matthew 7:15**

**Romans 16:17-18**

**2 Corinthians 11:12-15**

**2 Timothy 3:1-5**

#### **How did Absalom manipulate David to leave town? (2 Samuel 15:7b-8)**

He irreverently used God and His religious mandates as a smokescreen to put the last parts of the conspiracy into motion. No other time do we see him acknowledge God or seek Him. His blasphemy is reminiscent of Saul and Hophni and Phinehas. We're aware of their fate.

### **What was Absalom's real reason for going to Hebron? (10)**

### **Who did he take with him? (11)**

These men were innocent and had no knowledge of the conspiracy. These particular men were meticulously chosen to accompany Absalom because they were critical members of David's administration—advisers, military officials, governors. Separating them from their king would cripple David at this critical time of revolt and verify Absalom was the new king. These men were hostages, trapped in a fortified city filled with Absalom's supporters, unable to get out to alert or aid their king. A brilliant move on Absalom's part.

### **Who did Absalom send for? Who was he? Where was he from? (12)**

Why him? When you send for someone, it hints at a previous connection. So, why would Absalom send for David's chief advisor? This is David's primary confidant, the most trusted man in all his administration. What was Absalom hoping to gain? Information? Inside knowledge? Execution?

**Go back to 2 Samuel 11:3. Who was Bathsheba's father? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Now jump ahead to 2 Samuel 23:34. Who was *his* father? \_\_\_\_\_**

Do you see the connection? Bathsheba was Ahithophel's granddaughter! I assume at some point during Absalom's first 2 years back in country, these two men connected over their mutual disdain for the king and conceived this revolt. Once the plans were finalized, Absalom reached out to Joab to set the whole thing in motion. The motives? One wanted the throne, the other wanted to avenge his granddaughter and her husband. Kind of puts things in a whole new light, doesn't it?

It make me wonder what Ahithophel was doing behind-the-scenes while Absalom was stealing the people's hearts. What advice was he whispering in David's ears? How was he diverting and filtering information? What was he twisting, stealing, and manipulating to facilitate their plans? Absalom was the beautiful face of the rebellion, the charisma, the status. Ahithophel was the stage-manager who wrote the script, executed the plan from the sidelines, and directed Absalom's devious mind to overthrow the government. Now it was time for him to step out of the shadows.

### **What does Proverbs 6:16-19 tell us the Lord detests?**

As hopeless as all this seems, this was all part of the consequences of David's sins. God was still in control of everything. Remember, nothing in all the earth is hidden from Him. Nothing happens without His knowledge or outside of His plans. Even in our season of discipline, when everything seems to be falling apart, God is still in complete control and in charge. David knew this, and as we will see next, he will tell us what to do when we go through season like this.

**Suggested Prayer** *Father, I'm so thankful you are sovereign. I'm thankful that no matter what happens, you see all, and are in control and in charge of my life, even with my baggage. Help me today...*

## **DIG DEEPER**

David heard Absalom orchestrated a nation-wide conspiracy to take over the government and was marching troops up from Hebron to take over Jerusalem, with who knows how many other groups coming from other directions. David knew if he was going to save the innocents, he had no choice but to run. If he stayed, Jerusalem would be destroyed along with its inhabitants, as would his family.

**Who did he leave behind? Why? (2 Samuel 15:16)**

**Who showed their loyalty and went with him or tried to go with him? (15, 16, 18-22, 24, 32)**

**How does David show his submission to God and his discipline? (25-26)**

**Despite his distress, David's was strategizing. What were Zadok's instructions? (27-29, 35-36)**

**What did he tell Hushai to do? (32-37)**

A shattered David wandered into the wilderness. I can only imagine the “would-a, should-a, could-as” running through his mind. The brokenness of his heart. His only comfort were those with him and the spies he left behind. With nothing else to do, his mind shut down and gave way to the deepest sorrow he'd ever known. When he ran from Saul he knew he was righteous, the pursuit was unjust. This time it was his fault—consequences of his sins. The guilt was overwhelming! This typically wise and decisive leader was overrun with emotions and couldn't think straight.

**Read 2 Samuel 16:1-4.**

**Who was Ziba? (2 Samuel 9, Week 6, Day 4)**

He was Saul's servant, caretaker of his estate. When Saul died he was a free man and logically the estate he managed went to him as there was no one else to claim it. Then David elevated Bo's status and downgraded Ziba's. Over the last 10 years, he'd been looking for his opportunity to get his own back. And it came in the form of sweet poetic justice. A conspiracy. A coup. The king on the run...he just needed to play his cards right...

**What did he bring? (1) Why? (2)**

**When David asked were Bo was, what did Ziba tell him? (3)**

Imagine the blow to David's already shattered heart. This was salt in the wound, more sorrow to endure.

However, David didn't stop and think: “Ziba was Saul's supporter—a possible enemy. Bo was crippled. Ziba could be taking advantage of the situation and manipulating me.” Instead, overwhelmed by emotion, David made a hasty and harsh judgment on the damning word of a man who would greatly profit from the situation. A judgement that would humiliate him later. When we're in emotional distress, we are wise not to make hasty decisions we would later regret. Be wise. Be patient. And pray first.

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 7, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *God can do some of His best work in storms.*

Epic stories all have intrigue, conspiracy, betrayal, sin, romance, and conflicts—little ones scattered throughout that lead to the main conflict and a few small ones to wrap things up. David's life is no different. Today, we come to the biggest conflict of David's life, and his most significant heartbreak.

#### **Read 2 Samuel 16:15-18:33**

Absalom's immaturity, inexperience, and ignorance were highlighted in his blind acceptance of Hushai. He was too caught up in the moment to seriously consider the man could be deceiving to him. In fact, had Absalom been more preceptive and discerning, he would have realized Hushai secretly proclaimed where his true loyalties lie three different times:

1. "Long live the king!" he exclaimed. "Long live the king!"—David was the only true king of Israel.
2. Absalom said to Hushai, "So this is the love you show your friend? (17a, NIV)—Hushai showed his love for David by risking his life to spy on Absalom and frustrate Ahithophel's advice.
3. Hushai said to Absalom, "No, the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and I will remain with him." (18, NIV) David was God's chosen and His anointed, Absalom was not!

Don't you love his cunning wisdom?! You can hear the echo of Jesus's words: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16, NIV)

#### **Record Absalom's question to Ahithophel? (2 Samuel 16:20)**

#### **What was Ahithophel's answer? (21-22)**

This fulfilled Nathan's prophecy. Sadly, these women were more innocent victims caught in the backwash of David's sin. When David reclaimed the throne, he placed these women in seclusion. Their needs were provided for, but they lived their remaining days as desolate widows—like Tamar. (2 Samuel 20:3)

#### **What was Ahithophel's next bit of advice? (2 Samuel 17:1-4)**

#### **Was this good or bad advice? Why?**

#### **What was Hushai's counter-advice? (5-13)**

#### **Was this good or bad advice? Why?**

#### **What does verse 14 say about their advice? What did God determine to do?**

Again, we see Hushai's cunning wisdom. He repeatedly reminded Absalom David was a mighty and experienced warrior—while implying Absalom was not. But he could be... "you personally lead the troops." (11c) Hushai flattered Absalom and appealed to his vanity and pride by implying when he kills David and his army he would prove to a mightier warrior.

### **What did Ahithophel do once his advice had been rejected? (23)**

Foresight was one of Ahithophel's greatest assets. It's what set him apart from David's other advisers. When he realized his advice had been rejected, he knew the rebellion would fail and everyone who supported Absalom would be arrested and executed.

#### **Read 2 Samuel 17:15-29.**

When life's storms rage, we beg Jesus to make them stop. To call out, "Peace! Be still!" Sometimes, He quiets the wind and waves, rolls back the clouds, and exposes the sun. Other times, He calms us—our worries, anxieties, and fears—as the storm continues to rage around us. It's in these storms our character is cultivated. Our integrity is intensified. Our faith is fortified. It's where we're strengthened and develop endurance and persistence. It's where we learn to submit to and cling to Jesus. It's in these seasons, He reminds us He's both in control *of the storm* and *in the storm*. The more we trust Him, the more we'll see His unexpected blessings, God-winks, and moments of reprieve.

There was a storm raging around David. Treachery. Betrayal. Insurgency. Turn-coats. Defectors. Rebellion. All foretold consequences of his sin. But there were still many who were loyal to David—evidence God was in control of the storm and in the storm.

#### **Describe the first God-wink (2 Samuel 17:17-20)**

#### **The second is recorded in 2 Samuel 27-29. What did these non-Israelite sympathizers provide?**

#### **What was their reason for this gracious gift?**

Ha! Don't you love the ingenuity of this unnamed man and his wife? Bravo! And then the generosity and kindness shown by these sympathizers in a time of such desperate need. Their kindness provided comfort and the nourishment needed to battle the insurgents. To them the gift may not have meant much, but to David and his group, it was a God-send.

#### **Has God ever put the right person in your life to provide for your moment of need? Yes/No Explain.**

#### **What do these verses teach you about helping those in need?**

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

#### **1 John 3:17-18**

Generosity is a privilege because we get to share from the bounty God has given us. It opens up the doors for us to share and spread the gospel as individuals or through ministries we partner with. And watching God take our gifts, multiply them, and use them for His glory—it's crazy amazing!

**Suggested prayer** *Thank you, Lord, for providing for me. Open my eyes to see Your God-winks, Your blessings on me! Help me to bless others as you have blessed me. Thank you for...*

## **DIG DEEPER**

“From this time on, your family will live by the sword *because you have despised me* by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own.” (2 Samuel 12:10) The ominous words of David’s curse echo the curse delivered to Eli, “*Because you have despised me...all the members of your family will die before their time...and their children will die a violent death.*” (1 Samuel 2:30-33) As we’ve learned, God will not be mocked. By anyone. Not by an irreverent priest and his sons. Not by a man after His own heart. No one. The consequences are real, even in this age of grace. But just as the consequences of our sin are real, so is God’s deep and abiding love for us.

**2 Samuel 18** is a heartbreaking chapter to read and study. David narrowly escaped from Jerusalem with his family and those loyal to him. He’d found a safe place to hole up, got some food, and caught some sleep thanks to a few faithful friends who sympathized with his plight.

Feeling a little more stable after being backed into a corner, the “old David” emerged—the decisive, confident leader. The military commander and strategist. The man of confidence and poise. Just as he was about to lead his troops out, his three newly appointed generals urged him to stay behind. They knew he was the target, and they would better be able to protect him in the walled city as opposed to the open battlefield. They also knew they were about to battle his son, and David, despite everything, loved his son and would protect him at the cost of his own life.

### **What was David’s command to his generals? (5)**

Absalom did nothing to earn or deserve David’s love. It didn’t matter he caused so much turmoil, David loved him and wanted to protect him. Every parent of a wayward child understands this love on a deeper level than most of us do.

**Take a few minutes to intercede for your wayward child or that of someone you know. Let the Spirit guide your prayer.**

### **How did Absalom die? (9-15)**

There’s much debate about Joab’s motives in killing Absalom and whether or not the killing was wrong. Was it revenge for his field? Did he do it because he knew the only way to kill the rebellion was to kill Absalom? Or did God use Joab to accomplish His planned disaster for Absalom? (2 Samuel 17:14) We don’t know. The overkill of this act wreaks of hateful vengeance. So was Joab wrong in killing him? I’m not sure.

Meanwhile, David waited anxiously for word. I’m sure he knew deep in his soul Absalom was going to die to fulfill the curse, but he held out hope anyway.

### **How does he respond when he learns of his son’s death? (33)**

David knew he wasn’t guiltless in his son’s violent death. He also knew Absalom wasn’t an innocent victim. He consciously made his choices and had to face the consequences. This is why I think he didn’t tear his robe or put ashes on his head; he just gave in to his grief and let his love and regret pour out in sobs.

Two things stand out to me in this chapter.

1. It's better to be a proactive parent rather than a reactive one.  
It's easier to continuously show our kids the right path and explain *why* the other paths aren't wise while they're very young than it is to try to alter their course when they're older. The "why" is critical because as kids observe the lives of those around them, they can see the "why" play out, ask questions, and get clarification. I've learned kids tend to be more responsive to correction if the *why* comes with it, and they have a greater respect for you as a parent.
2. As David's love for Absalom was unearned and undeserved so is God's love for us. We can't repay God for His love, but we can and should pay it forward by loving others.

**Start with Ephesians 2:4-5. What do you learn about God's love?**

**Then turn to 1 John 4:7-21**

**Where does love come from? (7a) \_\_\_\_\_**

**When we love, Whose do we show we are? (7b) \_\_\_\_\_**

**How did God show his love for us? (9)**

**What is real love? (10)**

**Why should we love each other? (11-12)**

**What proof do we have of God's love? (13)**

**When we confess Jesus is the Son of God, what do we have? (14-15)**

**What happens when we live in love (1 Corinthians 13)? (16)**

**What happens when we live in God? (17)**

**What does perfect love do? (18)**

**Write out verse 19.**

**If we hate our Christian brother or sister, what does that make us? Why? (20)**

**What command have we been given? (21)**

**Now put all this together. Summarize how God's love is unearned and undeserved. And since we can't repay His love, explain what we're supposed to do with it.**

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12, ESV)*

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 7, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 19:1-43**

David was a man who wore many hats. He was a man. A father. A husband. A lover. A military commander. A worship leader. A king. Before his affair with Bathsheba, those hats were functionally out of balance. Since then, they've been completely out of whack. This once decisive and confident man became paralyzed with shame and guilt over his moral collapse. He had no emotional control, and he lost sight of who he was because of Whose he was. He forgot his purpose and began to shut down. Thankfully, he had one friend who wasn't afraid to rebuke him, to snap him out of his self-imposed funk, and to help restore his good sense.

#### **Look at 2 Samuel 19:1-7**

**What message did David's deep grief send to the returning troops? (2)**

**How did the soldiers come back into town? Why? (3)**

Our emotions are powerful things. They greatly affect (and are often caught by) those around us—in our homes, schools, sports teams, work places, ministries, etc. Emotional maturity is critical to keeping a clear head, maintaining balance, and being able to be effective in all the previously mentioned places. Jesus was a master at this. Over and over we are able to see in the gospels how he would take his personal emotions, box them up, put them on the shelf, and do what needed to be done. Later when he was alone, he would go back to that box, open it, bring His hurts to His Father, feel all the feels, and then get back to work.

**What was Joab's forceful rebuke of his king? (5)**

**What did he accuse him of? (6)**

**What did he command him to do? (7a)**

**What did he warn him of? (7b)**

Joab was spot on. Had his delivery been any softer, it wouldn't have been heard or received. "David's personal grief was out of control and in danger of destroying his newly salvaged kingship.<sup>53</sup>" David's *personal* grief was appropriate. His anguish, justified. Losing a child is a nightmare I never want to face, particularly due to hate-filled rebellion. However, his *public* expression of that grief was unacceptable. Intolerable. Disgraceful. *Especially* at that moment. Especially considering what Absalom had just done and was planning to do. Especially considering what these loyal men, who loved and supported him, had just accomplished on his behalf.

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 328.

We can't deny David was a shattered man at this point. Who wouldn't have been? However, his self-flagellation was out of control. His focus was inward—not horizontal or even vertical. He was so overwhelmed by his guilt and deep anguish as his consequences became his reality, he took his eyes off the God who was in control of those consequences and the resulting storm.

David's lack of control and his self-focused attitude made him lose sight of his responsibilities as king and his obligation to thank and congratulate his valiant troops. He had no right to make these men feel ashamed for saving his life and those of his family. He had no right to rob them of their victory. He had no right to make them feel abandoned and demoralized.

Thankfully, David not only listened to Joab's rebuke, but he put his grief aside and went out to be the leader he was called to be—the leader he used to be. It worked. The people flocked to him. This confrontation worked because these two men knew each other well, had a good rapport, and respected each other. Joab was a strong commander and served David faithfully over the past thirty years. And David knew he was right.

Joab's rebuke and David's response proves, "A single rebuke does more for a person of understanding than a hundred lashes on the back of a fool." (Proverbs 17:10)

**What do we learn about an honest rebuke or rebuking others in these verses?**

**Leviticus 19:17**

**Matthew 18:15**

**Luke 17:3**

**James 5:19-20**

It took a lot of courage to rebuke David because of the risk involved. The same is true for us. Confrontation is hard and scary in general. It's even more challenging when the one we need to confront is a superior. Beloved, we need to remember our leaders are human, just like us. They make mistakes. They fall into patterns of sin and self-destruction, just like we do. Sometimes they're not even aware of their behavior or that it's toxic and negatively affecting those around them.

So, when we're in a situation that requires us to confront a superior, we'd be wise to bring the confrontation before God first—particularly if we don't have the same rapport Joab did with David. We need to ask for His wisdom and words, and for those words to be heard and received. We need to ask for protection. It may even be necessary to invite others to pray with and for us as prepare.

**What warning is nestled in the command recorded in Leviticus 19:17-18?**

When we ignore the wrong and avoid the confrontation, that person's behavior builds resentment and hate in our heart. And if not dealt with properly, that could lead us to sin—gossip, slander, jealousy, rage, hate, \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank). This can lead to division and strife which has the potential to tear the family or organization apart. Friends, confrontations are never fun, but they are often necessary.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you for your instructions today and for loving us even when we need correcting. Thank you for friends and family to keep us on the right path. Is there someone I need to confront today? Or am I the one needing correcting? Help me know the direction I should take...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

The rebellion was crushed. Absalom was dead. However, they weren't out of the woods yet. There was a tremendous amount of dysfunction, instability, and uncertainty in the aftermath of the rebellion. The unity of the kingdom rested on the edge of a knife blade. The slightest wrong move would destroy everything David had accomplished during his years on the throne.

#### **Review 2 Samuel 19:8-18a**

**What message did David give Zadok and Abiathar to take to the elders of Judah? (11-12)**

**What special message did he have for Amasa? What position did David promise him? (13)**

**Who was his current commander? \_\_\_\_\_**

**What did he do the last time his position was threatened? (Week 5, Day 5, 2 Samuel 3:22-30)**

**Jump to 2 Samuel 20:7-10. What would he do this time?**

Politically, David needed to reunite the kingdom and reacquire the people's loyalties. And making Amasa commander would help him do that by: 1) Bringing Absalom's supporters and the rebel army under his banner. 2) Solidifying the allegiance of them men of Judah. As Abner had great influence over the men of Israel, Amasa had great influence over the men of Judah—which he proved by convincing them to unanimously accept David back as king. (19:14)

Personally, this decision would punish Joab for his crimes, including the murders of Abner and Absalom.

**Look at 2 Samuel 19:15-18a. What are some of the people who help David and his family cross the Jordan?**

**Now look back as 2 Samuel 16:5-14. Who was Shimei? (5)**

**What did he do? (6, 13) What did he accuse David of? (7-8)**

His accusations were false. His criticisms savage. His insults brutal. Clearly the rebellion emboldened him to express his hate for David as did his belief that David was a disgraced king on his way out. Or maybe as David said, God led him to do it (11). Who knows, but now we see him again at the river bank trying to save his neck.

**What did Shimei say to David? (2 Samuel 19:19-20)**

**How does David respond? (23)**

**Who does David meet next? What state is he in? (24)**

**What was his reason for not joining David? (26-28)**

**How did David restore him? (29)**

**Who else did David meet? (31) What role did he play while David was in Mahanaim? (32)**

**How did David reward him for his kindness? (38)**

Mercy. Grace. Generosity. Kindness. Forgiveness. All these things emanated from David as he made his way back to Jerusalem. This season gave him a new and fresh perspective on all these things as they were lavishly poured out on him from God Himself.

David should have died for his sins—but God mercifully forgave him, spared his life, and allowed him to live with consequences instead.

David should have lost his kingdom—but God graciously allowed him to be restored.

David's life was characterized by his fierce love for God and the things of God—so after God restored his kingdom, He continued to shower him with generosity and kindness.

Friends, this is a beautiful foreshadow of when Jesus comes back and sets up His coming kingdom!

**Read Revelation 21**

The new heaven and new earth will come down like a bride for her groom. (1-2)

**What was shouted from the throne? (3) What will God do? (4)**

**God proclaimed He's making everything new! (5) How did He identify himself? (6a)**

**What were His promises? (6b-7)**

**Describe the New Jerusalem (10-21)**

**If that isn't enough to give you goosebumps, Who serves as the temple? (22) And the light? (23)**

**And the gates? (25) Who's allowed to enter? Who isn't? (27)**

**Read Revelation 22:1-5. Let it rest on you. This is our future home! How do you respond to that?**

*"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book...Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End...I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne I am the bright morning star...Yes, I am coming soon!" (7, 12-13, 16, 20b)*

AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SAID, AMEN!

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 8, DAY 1**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *The difference between average people and extraordinary people is their perception of and response to failure.*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 21-22**

**2 Samuel 21** marks the beginning of the end of David's rule. Before we dive in:

Flip through the pages of this study and 1 & 2 Samuel. Look at everything you've learned. Relive the heights and depths you've traveled with David, Saul, and others; recapture the practical lessons you've absorbed; and revel in how your knowledge of God has expanded (and hopefully your faith as well). Then, thank God for sharing their stories with us so we can know Him better and learn from the page what they encountered in life.

Now, to better understand **2 Samuel 21:1-14**, go back to **Joshua 9**. While Joshua was conquering the Promised Land, the Gibeonites deceived Joshua into making a covenant with them not to destroy their people. Once Joshua learned of their deception, he confronted them.

#### **Why did they lie to Joshua? (24-25)**

#### **Joshua honored their covenant, but how were they cursed for their lie? (22-23, 26-27)**

#### **Now back to 2 Samuel 21.**

As we explore this passage, let me caution you not to look at Scripture through 21<sup>st</sup>-century-middle class-American eyes and impose our cultural norms on it. Instead, ask God to help you see past our world and look into theirs with clarity. Also, remember this is pre-Jesus, pre-resurrection, pre-New Testament. As such, events like this are recorded to help us understand their culture, how our sin affects those around us, and to help us see what life would be like had Jesus not come and changed the course of history.

#### **What was happening in the land? How long? Why? (1)**

#### **What did David ask the Gibeonite elders? (3)**

#### **What did they suggest for recompense? (5)**

Saul's attempt to wipe-out the Gibeonites isn't recorded in Scripture. Regardless, this was a serious crime in God's eyes because Saul broke the holy covenant between them and Israel—and such oaths are never to be broken. (Numbers 30:1-2) So, as it was Saul's crime, the Gibeonites asked for seven of his sons to give full restitution, as seven is the number of completion.

Why were these men put to death for a crime they didn't commit? In this patriarchal society, families were permanent units, cohesive, and indissoluble. Fathers were the heads of the household, and therefore, responsible for everyone in their care. So, if they were prosperous and lived a joyful life, so did their family. If they loved and served God faithfully, so did their family. When they sinned, their

household (sons) were also guilty of his sin until restitution was paid and forgiveness granted (i.e., sacrifice).

### **However, beauty did come from these ashes! Who was Rizpah? What did she do? (8-10)**

Not allowing these men to have a proper burial and keeping their remains exposed to the elements signified a treaty violation. It marked them as “disgraced and under God’s judgment.”<sup>54</sup>

But Rizpah, in a beautiful act of love and loyalty to her sons and the House of Saul, vigilantly guarded these men’s bodies from scavenging animals. For six months, this incredible woman risked her health, life, and safety to remain on that mountain and protect the bones of her children and their kin.

This reminds me of a few other women who safeguarded the body of The One they loved. The One who died to make full restitution for all our sins, to end our souls’ famine and make us right with God.

Jesus’s body was hastily prepared for burial by two devout, well-meaning men. However, by these ladies’ estimation, his body was exposed. The burial was improper, unfit for their Lord. So, in a beautiful act of love and loyalty to Jesus, they purchased the necessary spices and went to care for His body. This was one last way to honor the One they loved.

### **Read Mark 16:1-3; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1-2. Who went to the tomb? Why?**

### **Read John 20:11-13. What was Mary afraid of as she stood by the tomb?**

Her lonely vigil put her safety at risk, but that didn’t matter at the moment. She was determined to find Jesus’s body and prevent any further desecration to him.

### **Lost. Despair overwhelming her soul. What does she beg the “gardener”? (14-15)**

### **How does he respond? (16)**

This wrecks me every single time. His love. His tenderness. His one utterance healed everything broken inside. Filled her with joy and hope. It’s no wonder she flung herself at His feet. Jesus rewarded her for her loyalty and love, gave her dignity, and *honored her* by giving her a message for his disciple. “*I have seen the Lord!*”

### **David honored Rizpah’s loyal vigil. Read 2 Samuel 11-14. What did he do?**

David dignified those seven men as well as Saul, his son Jonathan, and his other sons with a permanent burial site in Saul’s hometown. Thus, closing that chapter in Israel’s history. And God was pleased. And the rains once again fell on the land.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Father, for preserving this history for us, for giving us hope when we are hopeless, and for giving us mentors to strengthen our faith. Help me understand...*

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<sup>54</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D Bergen., Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 346.

## **DIG DEEPER**

David has entered his twilight years. Our once invincible warrior is showing distinct signs of age. David's handsome face is lined and weather-beaten from countless days of exposure. His powerful body is creaky and scarred from years on the battlefield. His thick raven hair and beard are now white from stress, strain, and deep anguish. His stout heart is shattered and scarred from his uncurbed passions and sins. Through it all, he continued to rely on God. To hit his knees. And look up. Whatever David did wrong, he always got that right.

When he won a victory, he gave praise to God. When he crushed an enemy, he dedicated the plunder to the Lord. When he sinned, he fully repented and submitted to God's discipline. Even when the consequences of sin threatened to crush him, he drew his strength for God, picked himself up, and kept moving forward—demonstrating great faith and resilience. I don't know about you, but to me, this makes him more human. More relatable. More real. It's no wonder he was a man after God's own heart, and that he was able to capture ours along the way.

### **Read 2 Samuel 21:15. David's humanity surfaces in his last battle. What state was he in?**

Who could blame him? David was beaten-down from the consequences of his sin. He was sapped from the grief he still felt over losing Jonathan and his sons (Bathsheba's infant son, Amnon, and Absalom). Add in the effects of a nation trying to regain its footing, a crippling famine, an army wracked with tension, and Father-Time—the poor man was about to crack.

But he didn't. In light of everything, he chose to praise His God instead. To look up. To give thanks and acknowledge how He strengthened him, protected him, sustained him, and forgave him. Showing how God made him clean, pure, righteous. He chose to write, quite possibly, his last song of praise to the One who had his heart.

### **Read 2 Samuel 22. As you read, list out: Who David said God is (ie, rock, fortress...)**

#### **God's characteristics/attributes (i.e., protector, saving...)**

As David looked back on his life, he could see God's fingerprints all over the place. Not one moment was left untouched. Through first-hand experience and faith, David learned God is our only hope. Our only security. Our only refuge. His loving-kindness is available to anyone who chooses to surrender to Him and follow Him. Often we get our priorities messed up and look for horizontal answers to life's battles and challenges. We look for something else to give us the strength we need to endure. David profoundly reminds us God is our only source of strength.

In this song of triumph, David offers several principles, promises, and truths for victorious living while helping us identify God's fingerprints in our life. As we briefly examine these principles, promises, and truths, look back on your life. Identify God's fingerprints, and write them down below.

1. The Lord is our security when all hope is lost. Our refuge when we're oppressed by our enemies. Our fortress when things go wrong. Our rock when everything seems to be falling apart. (2-20)

Life is hard. Uncertain. And sometimes scary. Calamity, destruction, and violence are real. But so is God. Remember, God hears us when we pray! (Week 1 Day 1) When He answers, He moves with glory and power. One of the Enemy's favorite times to strike is when we're weary, run-down, and in distress. God reaches down and supports us, gives us the strength to endure, as He leads us to safety.

### **Record 2 Samuel 22:7**

#### **God's Fingerprints in your life:**

2. When we fall into a pit of sin, Jesus is the only One who can rescue us, forgive us, and restore our innocence (21-31)

David isn't claiming to be sinless. (See Psalm 51) He's declaring how God sees him because of His grace and forgiveness: Innocent. Righteous. Obedient. Blameless. Perfect. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection and our accepting his gift of salvation—this is how God sees us too.

### **Record 2 Samuel 22:29.**

#### **What 3 profound truths are recorded for us in verse 31?**

#### **God's Fingerprints in your life:**

3. When we're weak, when we stumble and fall, God will give us His strength. He will make our steps sure, train us for battle, and be our shield. (32-46)

When we prioritize our vertical relationship and keep it strong, we'll be able to face whatever comes at us horizontally. Will it be hard? Yes. Will it be a battle? Of course! Look at David's words again. He described specific times of weakness *during* his battles and *how God* empowered him to overcome and give him victory. Victory he wouldn't have had if not for God's strength, guidance, and presence in his battles. (Week 6, Day 1)

### **Record 2 Samuel 22:33**

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10. Record what Jesus told Paul.**

#### **God's Fingerprints in your life:**

4. God is the only one worthy of our praise (47-51)

When we live God's way and with His strength, we need to remember to praise Him and say thank you! For being our God and Savior. For His blessings, glorious gifts, and grace. For chasing us down and pursuing us with His reckless love! I suggest reading these 5 verses *out loud*, shout them out to our Great God! Pour out your thanksgiving with all your heart. And Worship.

### **Record 2 Samuel 22:47**

#### **God's Fingerprints in your life:**

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 8, DAY 2**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Getting old doesn't guarantee good sense. (Job 32:9b)*

David's first battle and last battles serve as bookends to his military career. In his first battle, he was a naive, squeaky-voiced teen whose star was just beginning to rise. He single-handedly (humanly speaking) killed Goliath with a sling and a stone. (Week 3, Day 5) In his last battle, he was an old man whose star was beginning to fade. He had knowledge and wisdom from living through life's peaks and valleys. He and his warriors killed Goliath's brother and several of his kin. (2 Samuel 21:20-22)

After his last victory, David is enjoying the view from the mountain's pinnacle. Earlier we talked about how these mountaintop experiences are wonderful times in our lives, but they're also potentially dangerous times, because Satan sets his best traps when we're so captivated by the horizontal view we forget to look up. He knows when we're on top, our defenses are down, so he slithers in and starts to spin his web of deception and temptation. (Week 5, Day 1) Once again, he has David in his sights.

#### **Read 1 Chronicles 21 & 2 Samuel 24**

It's obvious taking the census was a sin, but what's not obvious is *why* it was a sin. So, let's look at the first one and investigate the standards God set for it and the ones that followed. The first census was taken when Moses gathered and prepared the army to conquer the Promised Land. Since then, they were taken only during wartime to identify which men, 20 years and older, were capable of fighting and enlist them into service. However, God graciously incorporated some provisions and exemptions for those pressed into military action.

#### **Read Deuteronomy 20:5-8. What were those exemptions?**

**Read Exodus 30:11-16.** When a census was taken, it was to be combined with a holy ceremony. During this event each man was to pay a ransom for himself by donating a half-shekel to the temple treasury to signify he was undefiled and able to serve.

#### **What was the penalty for not doing this? (12c)**

#### **What was the purpose of this? (15)**

#### **How was the money to be used? (16)**

These two passages present two problems with David's census:

1. It wasn't wartime. The nation had just entered a time of peace after subduing the Philistines.
2. It violated God's law. David neglected God's exemptions and provisions for those pressed into service.

As David took in the horizontal view from his mountaintop experience, Satan incited his pride, particularly his pride in his army—its undeniable strength, undefeated record, and massive size. Then David began to think about those who could be added to their numbers...

David sinned by placing his security in the size and strength of his military rather than in God, who gave them countless victories regardless of how many men were fighting. Thus, he allowed the size of his army to dictate the size of his faith. Once again, David lost sight of his vertical relationship with God.

Friends, we've all been guilty of placing your faith and security in things other than God. Whether it's our financial success, career, intelligence, athletic ability, family, network, other relationships, etc.

**How did God get your attention and reestablish your faith and security in Him alone?**

**Or are you two still working that out? Explain.**

Here's a hard truth: We can't chase after both our God-given ambitions and our selfish ambitions. When we chase our selfish ones, we neglect our vertical relationship with God and ignore His laws, principles, and precepts. As a result, our achievements fall flat. We lose the thrill of accomplishment, and the sweetness of victory turns to ash in our mouths.

**Yesterday you recorded 2 Samuel 22:31 & 33. How can you apply those verses to check the direction of your current ambitions?**

When we err toward selfishness and pride, one way God tries to redirect us is by using those we respect to point out our faulty plans. They alert us we're about to take a header into a pit of sin.

**How does Joab respectfully rebuke David for this command? (1 Chronicles 21:3)**

As we've seen, Joab believed in God, but he wasn't a deeply religious man nor was he overly theological, "but he knew a major violation of God's law when he saw it...He asked David why he would want to do anything as stupid as to cause problems for the entire land with this unproductive measure, because the census would not add a single warrior to the prospective pool of soldiers<sup>55</sup>." But David insisted they take the census.

Let's pause for a moment. Satan incited David to take the census. And David himself chose to do it. His sin was his alone. He willingly listened to Satan's council and ordered the unethical census. Therefore, he was responsible for the fallout of his sin—just as he was for his other sins. Just as we are for our sin.

**Read 1 Chronicles 21:6. Joab didn't finish taking the census. Why?**

David had no one to keep him accountable. Joab tried, but David pulled rank and refused to listen. My friend, we all need to be held accountable, no matter what position we hold. Accountability helps keep our life and choices pure. When we refuse to be held accountable, we flirt with disaster—and are often overcome by it.

So, when our actions are questioned by someone we respect and trust, let's be wise, stop, and take account of what we're doing or planning to do. Let's pray and make certain it's God's will. If it is, get after it and proceed with confidence. If not, STOP! Rebuke the Enemy and flee from the temptation threatening to destroy you!

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<sup>55</sup> Winfried Corduan, *Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Chronicles*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 141.

We've seen how far reaching the effects of sin are. When we involve others in our sin, it's even more devastating. Joab felt powerless to refuse his king's order. As a result, he felt repulsive, (NIV) abhorrent, (ESV) abominable, (KJV) and detestable, (HCSB). David had no right to put someone in this position, and neither do we.

Friends, we aren't powerless when Satan messes with our minds and incites us to sin! There's *always* a way out. Jesus modeled the perfect battle plan for us, and showed us how to have victory over temptations.

### **Read Matthew 4:1-11. How did Jesus refute Satan's temptations?**

He quoted Scripture. He had it memorized and ready. Remember, our sword (which represents the Word of God) is the only offensive weapon we have in our holy armor. Keep it sharp—never let it grow dull. Keep it ready at all times. And “pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:18, HCSB) Staying anchored in God's Word and on our knees is the only way we'll pass our tests. Because, let's be honest, no matter how old we are, no matter how long we've followed Jesus, “we will NEVER be immune from sin's appeal<sup>56</sup>.”

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Father, for being with me always and always giving me a way to escape the Enemy's schemes. Thank you for your Word and for helping me hide it in my heart, making me battle ready. Today, I need help fighting...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

Is there anything worse than a troubled heart when you know you sinned? To feel attacked and assaulted by the Spirit because you disobeyed the One you love, and sacrificed your character and integrity for this stupid thing called pride? I have yet to find anything that surpasses this feeling. Nothing has caused me more distress, and anguish, and internal pain.

### **Review 1 Chronicles 21:7-30 & 2 Samuel 24:10-25**

#### **God was displeased by David's command, and did what? (1 Chronicles 21:7)**

#### **What was David feeling? What did he do? (2 Samuel 24:10)**

This is why David is a man after God's heart. When God was bothered by something, so was David—even when it was his own stupidity. The word ‘bother’ is the Hebrew word ‘nakah’ which means to beat, to strike, to wound, to cripple either physically or verbally<sup>57</sup>. In other words, David was so troubled (NASB) and conscience-stricken (NIV) he felt physical pain because he had displeased God. And that drove him to his knees.

Oh, that we would all have this kind of sensitivity to the things of God and our sin. That our conscience would drive us to our knees when we've displeased our Savior. That we'd readily confess and repent rather than trying to run and hide our sin. Thankfully, David learned this lesson.

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<sup>56</sup> Charles Swindoll. David: A man of Passion & Destiny (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 272.

<sup>57</sup> Warren Baker, D.R.E. and Eugene Carpenter, Ph.D., *Word Study Series The Complete Wordstudy Dictionary Old Testament*. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 732.  
4 Swindoll, 282.

**The Lord forgave him, but His forgiveness didn't cancel out the consequences. So, God allowed David to choose his punishment. What were his choices? (1 Chronicles 21:9-12)**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What would you have chosen? Why?**

**How did David respond? What did he choose? Why? (1 Chronicles 21:13)**

This would be my choice because God's mercy is great and our enemies are ruthless. God limits the punishment He delivers. Our enemies wouldn't stop until we're completely destroyed. God punishes out of love, our enemies, out of vengeance. God gives us the strength to endure. Our enemies prey on our weaknesses and exploit them. God restores us after the punishment is complete. Our enemies leave nothing to restore.

**Review 1 Chronicles 21:14-17.** Imagine having God pull back the veil that separates our world from the spiritual world to reveal the horror of our consequences play out. God allowed David to see His death angel sweeping across the land and killing 70,000 people with his sword—because of his sin.

**What would you be feeling? What would you do?**

**What did David do? (17)**

**Review 1 Chronicles 21:18-30. What did the angel command God to tell David to do? (18)**

And he did. David offered multiple sacrifices and prayed. *Do you feel the need to fall on your face before God, to confess sins that have been tormenting your conscience? Crippling your faith? Affecting the innocent ones around you? If so, do it now.*

**How did God respond to David's obedience and sacrifice? (26-27)**

The plague was over. God relented. The judgment was enough. Such grace. Such mercy. Before we begin to ask how this shows mercy, we need to remember what we deserve for our sin.

**Read Revelation 20:15, 21:8. Where should we all go?**

**What happens there? (Revelation 20:10)**

**Instead what are we offered? (John 3:16 with Revelation 3:5)**

Friends, we deserve so much more judgment, so much more punishment than we receive. Though God was gracious and ended the plague, there were still 70,000 dead. 70,000 that would still be enjoying life had David fled from temptation, rebuked his pride or heeded the advice of a friend. 70,000 reminders of what his pride cost his people.

*"If a man as great and godly as David could foul up his life so near the end of his days, so can anyone else. That includes you. That includes me. God help us all."<sup>4</sup>*

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 8, DAY 3**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *There is no success without succession.*

#### **Read 1 Kings 1**

When our time in a leadership position is coming to close, it's imperative to have a succession plan in place to safeguard the future of our ministry, organization, or business. For those not in a leadership position, it's our responsibility to honor, support, and facilitate the prescribed transfer of power to guarantee a smooth transition to the next phase. Granted, there are times succession is out of our control, but when it's in our hands, it's a requirement to take seriously because our neglect will cause undue confusion, fear, uncertainty, instability, rivalry, and division. In some cases, it can cause the collapse of everything we've accomplished.

#### **What are some factors that would keep us from creating and implementing a succession plan?**

Interestingly, there are examples of succession plans all through Scripture. Men and women who've groomed the next generation or their peers to pass the torch of leadership. Their purpose was to ensure the spiritual vitality of those left behind and enable them to continue to spread the Good News in their absence. Moses mentored Joshua. Naomi loved on Ruth. Elijah guided Elisha. Jesus taught his disciples and others. And Paul discipled and prepared Timothy, Philemon, Titus, and countless others to lead the churches he started on his missionary journeys.

In our study, God anointed David as king 15 years before David took the throne. Over those years He groomed him for the position, prepared him for the challenges he'd encounter ruling a nation, and helped him develop skills that would enable him to be successful. However, as David advanced in years, he foolishly neglected to publicly declare his plan for the next king.

What was his plan?

**Read 2 Samuel 12:24-25. Fill in the blanks. Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife, and slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and \_\_\_\_\_.** The LORD \_\_\_\_\_ and sent word through \_\_\_\_\_ that they should \_\_\_\_\_ (which means "beloved of the LORD"), as the LORD had \_\_\_\_\_.

What a significant moment! Historically, when God changed a person's name, He was setting that person apart for sacred use to further His plan here on earth.

According to 1 Chronicles 3:5, Solomon was David and Bathsheba's fourth son. We know David had several other sons from other women. Yet, Solomon's name was the only one he changed. Meaning, God chose him to be the next king—and build His temple. Therefore, it's assumed this is when David "made a vow before the LORD [his] God when [he] said to [Bathsheba, in Nathan's presence], 'Your son Solomon will surely be the next king and will sit on my throne.'" (1 Kings 1:17)

However, this private declaration wasn't shared beyond the palace—it was never made public. Now that David was a very old man and becoming increasingly frail, this oversight was creating a power vacuum his oldest living son was determined to fill.

### **Look at 1 Kings 1:5. What did Adonijah do and begin boasting?**

This whole thing wreaks of selfish pride, and it's eerily reminiscent of Absalom's rebellion. (Week 7, Days 3 & 4) But the Hebrew word, 'mitnase' removes all doubt of where this rebellion is headed. 'Mitnase,' translated 'boasting,' means: to exalt oneself, to show oneself as great, to lift up oneself for a purpose.<sup>58</sup> This is a whole new level of arrogance, and it's saturated with evil.

### **By contrast, what does 1 Peter 5:6 tell us?**

### **What does Proverbs 17:11 & 24:21-22 say about rebellion and rebels?**

Adonijah knew Solomon was to be the next king. But he took advantage of the public's ignorance and exploited his father's frailty and age to orchestrate a plan behind his back and enlist some pretty heavy hitters to help him secure the throne.

### **Who did he enlist to help him? (1 Kings 1:7, 9)**

### **Who refused to support him? (1 Kings 1:8)**

### **Who did Adonijah omit from the guest list? (10)**

Those who followed Adonijah were once loyal to David. Why they chose to betray him is anyone's guess, but their betrayal foreshadows the abandonment Jesus suffered when those closest to him betrayed him in his final hours. However, like Jesus, there were many who remained loyal to David.

### **What does Jesus promise to reward our loyalty in Matthew 10:32?**

### **What does Solomon teach about loyalty in Proverbs 3:3?**

Unfortunately, like Absalom, Adonijah was undisciplined and always wanted his own way regardless of how he got it. He disregarded how his actions could affect those he involved in his schemes, and he showed no reverence for God, the things of God, His plan, or His will. In short, this undisciplined man was leading himself and those who followed him down that same path of destruction Absalom took. And they didn't see it even though they were all present during Absalom's rebellion—and helped squash it. Beloved, we must prayerfully consider who we follow, especially in times of transition, or we could unknowingly be led down a treacherous path that could destroy our character, integrity, and life.

### **What do these verses teach us about being wise about who we follow?**

### **Proverbs 12:26**

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<sup>58</sup> Warren Baker, D.R.E. and Eugene Carpenter, Ph.D., *Word Study Series: The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament*. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 693. (emphasis mine)

## Proverbs 13:20

## Galatians 5:16-17

Who knows what Adonijah promised those who betrayed David to “gratify their desires of the flesh.” Or if they sold-out because they were disgruntled and wanted a change—any change. Regardless, they sinned against God and His anointed ones. As a result:

- Adonijah was later executed after David’s death when he made another play for the throne despite Solomon’s mercy for this current rebellion
- Joab was also later executed by Solomon
- Abiathar and his son, Jonathan, were defrocked and sent home

But Solomon rewarded many of those who remained faithfully devoted to David:

- Zadok was named the sole high priest
- Benaiah, one of David’s mighty men, was elevated to chief commander
- Shimei (this is not the same man who hurled curses at David) was appointed district governor in Benjamin

What gets me, is all of this probably could have been avoided had David put his succession plan in motion long before he was incapacitated with age and frailty. Had he enlisted those around him to honor, support, and facilitate the prescribed transfer of power to guarantee a smooth transition to the next phase. But he didn’t. His neglect forced Solomon to clean up the mess created by the backwash of the rebellion. Friends, when we neglect to create and implement a succession plan it has significant ramifications and creates unnecessary damage to the ministry, organization, or business we’ve poured so much of ourselves into. Not to mention people’s lives.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Father, thank you for Biblical examples to learn from. Training up the next generation, or the next leader is not easy, so thank you for your help. Who is in my circle that I can train or mentor? Give me wisdom to identify them, and courage to do what needs to be done!*

## **DIG DEEPER**

Unsung heroes are some of my favorite people in Scripture. The obscure men and women who boldly step out in faith to protect and guard God’s plan despite the failures of those around them, give me the confidence to do the same. Nathan is our unsung hero of the moment. His bold actions prevented the rebellion from gaining any real traction. Therefore, it was shut down before it could spread and do too much damage.

## **Review 1 Kings 1**

**What was the first thing Nathan did? (11) What did he tell her to do? (12)**

Remember, Nathan delivered God’s message to name him Jedediah, so he was there when David made his vow to Bathsheba in regard to Solomon being the next king. Being the astute, godly man he was, he recognized the rebellion put Bathsheba and her son into a life-and-death situation.

When Adonijah's neglected to invite Solomon (and Nathan) to his party, it was more than just a slight. He was declaring Solomon his adversary, a dangerous rival. The cultural norm was, when a new king took the throne, all his rivals and their families would be executed to prevent future uprisings.

### **What did he promise to do? (14)**

This was to give her testimony credibility and for David to hear the facts from two reliable sources—verifying their accuracy. This emboldened Bathsheba to take Nathan's advice and she went before the king. And Nathan did as he promised.

### **What was Nathan's shrewd question to David? (27)**

Nathan wasn't manipulating David, nor was he accusing him of anything. However, he was respectfully making David aware of the situation and putting the ball in his court.

### **What was David's response? (29-30)**

Though David's body was frail, his mind was still sharp and savvy. He quickly devised a plan that exposed the rebellion for what it was—an illegal sham. He categorized Adonijah's sacrifices and feast an act of treason—punishable by death. **Look at verses 33-35**, and let's breakdown the significance of each part of his plan.

- Gihon was less than 1/2 mile away from En-rogel (within shouting distance), and closer to the palace.
- David gave Solomon his own mule—which would have been recognizable by everyone. (Mules were prized animals. They signified royalty, wealth, and power.)
- The sacred oil was reserved for those God called to service. This anointing set them apart, consecrated them for God's holy service. (Week 2, Day 4 & Week 3, Day 4)
- The ram's horn and the shouting would be heard for miles, proclaiming something significant just happened.
- Solomon being officially escorted by the king's body guard not only ensured his safety, but it emphasized he'd been given the throne and was indeed the new king.

### **How did the people respond—the whole city? (40, 45)**

### **How beautiful is that? Amazing! What was David's response? (47b-48)**

And just like that, the rebellion was over. Adonijah's supporters scattered, and Adonijah himself ran for the altar in the tabernacle—a place of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Now, let's consider that a moment. What if Adonijah considered God's plan in the first place? What if he'd honored Him rather than "gratifying the desires of his flash"? **How could this have turned out differently?**

Solomon succeeded David because *God* chose him. Period. It didn't matter what others thought or that Adonijah was next in line according to tradition. Solomon was God's choice. He was born for this purpose, to serve God's purpose. We need to be careful to submit to God's authority and remember He alone chooses who will lead us. Our regard for these people isn't a factor in His decision. Nor is our agreement to their policies. They are there to fulfill *His* purpose, whether they know it or not.

**DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

**WEEK 8, DAY 4**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *Trust God and chase after His heart.*

**Read 1 Chronicles 28 & 29**

When a person chases after God's heart, delivers his last speech, and passes the baton to the new leader, we would be wise to absorb every word he says, and apply them to our lives. David's speech is no exception.

**Look at 1 Chronicles 28:1-10**

**Who did David summon? (1)**

**Summarize his preamble. (2-7)**

**What charge did he give the people? (8)**

**Record what he says to Solomon (and us). (9-10)**

None of the themes in this charge are new to us. We've investigated each of them throughout this study. Let's take a few moments to remember what we've learned, pick up a few Hebrew words, and plant good seeds into the soil of our life, so we can produce a bountiful harvest in honor of the Lord our God.

Learn to know God intimately.

'Yada' = "Learn."

I love how David says "*learn*." We studied this word in Week 1, Day 2. Except here, it's used twice, for "learn" and "know," to emphasize the vital importance of knowing God—intimately.

We have to learn how to know God because it doesn't come naturally. Naturally, we're sinful people—enemies of God. But we *can* learn how to know Him because He *invites* us to know Him *intimately*. Our vertical relationship with Him is the fulcrum that keeps everything else in our horizontal life in balance. Without it, our life falls flat.

Picture it like this: Imagine the old-fashioned balancing toy that has a flat board on top of a cylinder that rolls back and forth. Remember those? So does the scar on my left knee.

The goal is to maintain your balance while standing on the board with the fulcrum beneath you. As you shift your weight from foot-to-foot, adjusting the pressure on top of the board, the board glides across the fulcrum, so you can maintain your balance. The trick to keeping your balance is, stand up straight, don't lock your knees or hips, keep your abs in tight, chest out, shoulders back and down. Keep your eyes up. If you look at the board, you will lose your form and your balance. And you will fall.

Our life is like this toy. The board represents our horizontal life and relationships and the cylinder represents our vertical relationship with God—the foundation that keeps everything up and in motion. As our life shifts and changes, adjusting to various pressures placed on us, we're able to maintain our balance if we have an intimate, vertical, relationship with Jesus and continue to look up. Oh, we might get a little wobbly at times, but we'll quickly recover, regain our form, and recover our balance if we keep our eyes on Him. However, if we get distracted by the horizontal, we'll fall. Hard.

Two questions I repeatedly ask those I mentor to redirect their focus UP:

- Whose are you? Answer: God's (John 1:12)
- Who are you? Or put another way: Who does that make you? Answer: listing the characteristic of our identity in Christ.

The problem is, we can't answer the second question unless we *intimately* know who God is. And the only way we know that is by taking a few minutes every day to hang out with Jesus in His Word and pray. Yes, we're children of the Living God, but what does that mean? Oh, Dear one, God spells it *all* out for us in His Word. I promise. It's in there.

When we know who we are because of Whose we are—He'll reveal His purpose for us and show us how to get after it. Another thing, as our knowledge of Him grows, our relationship becomes *more* intimate, and our faith grows! It's such a beautiful thing!

#### Worship and serve God with your whole heart and a willing mind

'Adab' = "Serve." Verb implying serving God is a joyful experience of liberation.

'Salem' = "Whole." An adjective meaning full, complete, undivided.

'Hapes' = "Willing." An adjective meaning delight, pleasure, desire, matter.

We who follow Christ are able to delight and take pleasure in the joyful experience of worshiping God with undivided hearts because we've been liberated from the eternal consequences of sin and death. Our worship reflects our vertical relationship with God *and* enhances it! We are to engage our entire heart *and* mind in serving Him. And when we compare who we were with who we are now, and who, if not for the grace of God, we would be—it's difficult NOT to worship God joyfully! Friends, we aren't created for divided loyalties. We either serve God 100% or 0%. There's no middle ground. In a culture of 5001 shades of gray, this is a black and white issue. The choice is ours.

#### The Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought

Dear One, we get to choose our thoughts, what we think about, and the plans we make. God knows our motives. Our sincerity. He knows if we're going through the motions, or if we're sincerely seeking

Him. He knows if our plans are made or created out of our own selfish ambition or if we're seeking His will and direction.

Let Paul's words resonate with you: *Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.* (Philippians 4:8-9)

*If you seek Him you will find Him*

There's no greater promise in Scripture! Because when we seek Him with all our heart, and are determined to know Him intimately—we will find Him! We have to seek Him, accept Him, and surrender to Him. From there all of the other blessings and promises flow.

*If you forsake Him, He will reject you forever*

There's nothing that wrecks me more than people abandoning God; allowing their heart to harden until they commit blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because they can no longer sense His activity in their life. This warning may not be for you, but it may be for someone you care about. Through the power of the Spirit in us, we can intercede for these loved ones and chisel away at the stone with our prayers, kindness, grace, and love until they surrender and ask God to take out their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart. A heart like David's. A heart like His.

*So take this seriously. The Lord has chosen you to \_\_\_\_\_ . Be strong, and do the work.*

You were created with purpose and for God's purpose. You were chosen to be here at this time, in this community, in this church, in this family, in your job, etc., for His purpose. What is your purpose? We've talked a lot about that through this entire study. What has God revealed to you? Whatever, it is, BE STRONG! GET AFTER IT! AND DO THE WORK!

**Suggested Prayer:** *Pray David's Prayer—out loud—in 1 Chronicles 29:10-19.*

**DIG DEEPER**

David's most ardent desire was to build the temple for the Lord his God. But God said no. However, in His matchless grace, He allowed David to gather all the materials needed to build it. Then He did something even more incredible: He gave him every part of the plan, down to the minutest detail, in written form from His very own hand. He knew the details of how the temple would be laid out, the rooms, the furnishings, the duties of the priest—everything! David got to study it in God's very own writing! I'm undone.

**Review 1 Chronicles 28:11-29:20.**

After David gave Solomon the plans for the temple and its furnishing, he turned to the entire assembly.

**Using every resource in his command what did David gather? (1 Chronicles 29:2)**

**What did he donate out of his private treasure? (3-5a)**

**Record his question to the people in 1 Chronicles 29:5b.**

**Move by the Spirit, what did they willingly give? (6-8)**

**How did they respond to their giving? (9)**

**What do you learn from these verses?**

Building the temple was expensive. David collected the materials over 20 years, he donated from his personal treasure, and he opened up the opportunity for others to share in his joy of giving by offering donations of time, talent, materials, and finances.

Friends, I'm going to be blunt and real with you. God's work is expensive.

Every church, Christian organization, and ministry has a business side as well as a ministry side. It's the business side that pays for and enables the ministry side to operate—allows for the creation of the various faith-based products and services we enjoy. More often than not, their funds come from donations and offerings from those who use their products and services. Faithful supporters like you and me who partner with them by pouring in our time, energy, talents, and financial resources. We tend to forget these organizations have budgets just like we do. They have bills and staff to pay. Buildings and equipment to maintain. They need to invest in further education, seminars, and conferences to keep their hearts and minds fresh, to fill themselves up, so they can pour out and fill us up.

We also forget it takes just as much money, time, effort, and energy to create faith-based products and services—movies, books, literature, conferences, workshops, webinars, blogs/websites, sermons, curriculum, concerts, etc.—as it does for the general-market (non-faith-based). The blessing is some of those expenses can be off-set by volunteers willing to contribute their gifts and talents to help accomplish their goals.

So, my friend, I'm opening up the same opportunity up to you that David did to his people in 1 Chronicles 29: 5b:

**Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?**

Prayerfully consider what your offering would be—then get after it. How could you contribute to God's ministry? In your church? A ministry they partner with? A ministry God's ignited a passion for in your heart. What are you willing to give? Time, talent, energy, finances? All of the above?

## **DIG DEEP-LIFE OF DAVID**

### **WEEK 8, DAY 5**

**Today's BIG Idea:** *You were made by God and for God*

#### **Read 2 Samuel 23:1-7 & 1 Kings 2:1-12**

You were created with purpose and for God's purpose. You were created to fulfill your purpose in this time and in this generation. In your current community, church, workplace, and family. It's your responsibility to discover what that purpose is and to fulfill it. This act of obedience is what makes the difference between a life that's well-lived and leaves a mark for God, and a life that's tragically wasted. David's purpose was to serve Israel as king and turn his people's hearts back to God, to the things of God, and to the worship of God. He did just that as well as many other wonderful things.

Yesterday, we relived David's last public appearance. Can you imagine what a fantastic gathering that must have been! To see David, this incredible man, stooped with age and frailty looking out on his honored guests. Each face represented love and loyalty. Each face evoked memories. Each face marked seasons of his reign. As he looked out into their eyes for the last time, David did four significant things:

1. He charged them to obey all God's commandments so they could continue to enjoy their Promised Land and pass it on as an inheritance to future generations
2. He spoke to his son about the vital importance of his vertical relationship with God and how to keep it fresh and vibrant
3. He presented God's plans for the Temple to his son, gave all the materials he'd collected and donated for it, and invited the assembly to contribute to it as well
4. He rejoiced and praised God with his people and prayed over them

#### **Read 1 Kings 2:1-12**

Today, we're entering David's private chambers to hear his final advice and instructions to Solomon. And to us.

In light of everything we've studied and learned, verses 1-4 provide beautiful opportunities for final personal application.

**Pause after each bit of advice and carefully consider how you can apply it to your day-to-day life.**

#### **After David acknowledged his death is imminent, how does he encourage Solomon? (2)**

David knew he was leaving big shoes to fill. That ruling a nation the size of Israel was daunting and scary. He also recognized he was a hillbilly from the pasture who'd lived a disciplined life. He learned how to live in harsh conditions, and knew how to do what needed to be done. By contrast, his son was undisciplined, like the rest of his children, and lived a life of wealth and privilege. David was 30 years old when he took the throne, and by that time he was a giant slayer, a warrior, a leader of a large band of mavericks, and a husband a couple time over. Solomon, on the other hand, was about 20 years old and still wet behind the ears. "It's time to man up, son. You can do it. Take courage."

## **Personal Application:**

### **What did David instruct Solomon to do? (3)**

This was the most critical piece of advice David could have given to his son. He knew from various painful experiences, Solomon's life, success, and the fulfillment of his purpose hinged on his vertical relationship with God—his fulcrum. Nothing in his horizontal life would stay in balance unless he kept his shoulders down and back, his chest out with abs in tight, and his head and eyes up. If he got captivated by his outward view, he would lose his footing and fall. Hard. Just like David did.

## **Personal Application:**

### **What did David remind Solomon of? (4)**

God gave David a promise. Part of it was conditional. Part of it was unconditional. David was reminding Solomon of his responsibility to maintain the conditional part of this promise, to ensure their line would always sit on the throne, so that Israel would always remain a viable nation. Solomon's active choices to faithfully follow God, obey His commands, and chase His heart as David did, would determine whether or not their dynasty continued. The same is true for each generation after him. Like us, the Israelites were always one generation away from becoming a pagan, godless nation.

## **Personal Application:**

### **On whom does David suggest Solomon execute justice? Why? (5-6)**

### **Who to extend benevolence and grace to? Why? (7)**

### **Punishment? Why? (8-9)**

To us, this all seems strange. These men weren't Solomon's enemies or friends. They were David's. However, Joab joined Adonijah's rebellion and had proved to be a ruthless man who would do whatever it took to win and maintain his position of power. Executing him would protect and secure Solomon's throne from conspiracy after David's death. Shimei broke both God's law and civil law by cursing God's anointed king—both were punishable by death. The kindness to shown to the sons of Brazillai would establish Godly allies and faithful confidants in Solomon's camp while preserving David's vow to care for them.

David did all he could in his final days to ensure his son's obedience to God and his success. The rest was up to Solomon. He had to decide his path and make his own choices and mistakes. Just as we do. Beloved, we're wise to learn from those who came before us. To hear their stories and glean from their

wisdom. To know how to avoid their mistakes and how to recover from the ones we make—with humility, confession, repentance, and resilience.

Likewise, for those of us who've walked this planet for a while, it's equally important for us to pour into the lives of the next generations. Why? Because if we don't, the world will.

**Suggested Prayer:** *Thank you, Father, for giving us spiritual mentors. Thank you for showing us how to respond and behave. I know it's up to me to continue to follow you well. Today, help me...*

### **DIG DEEPER**

I love the Bible more than anything. I love how God provides the biographies of so many people for us to learn from because in the pages of their story, we find our own.

David is no different. His heart, his passion, and his exuberance are unmatched. He was a man without equal. He was handsome, with a powerful body and beautiful eyes. He was a shepherd and a giant killer. He was an invincible warrior. Fearless and capable. He was a strong leader his men could trust and count on. He was a beloved king who earned the love and respect of his nation. He was a man after God's heart.

David was also a broken man and a sinner. He failed to discipline his children and restrain his passions. This led to costly sins and soul-shattering consequences. Yet, though it all he continued to rely on God, to submit to His discipline, and to chase after His heart. David remained on his knees and determined to keep looking up. Beloved, whatever David did wrong, he always got that right.

And *"He died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth, and honor."* (1 Chronicles 29:28)

As we say adieu to this man, let's remember: "When a man of God dies, nothing of God dies. And when a man of God dies, none of God's principles die. Nowhere is that seen more clearly than in the life of David."<sup>59</sup>

**As you look back on this study and everything you've learned:**

**What has God planted deep into the soil of your life?**

**How are you going to nurture those seeds to ensure their growth and development?**

**What are you going to carry with you and apply to your day-to-day life?**

**How has God called you out to refine and make you more like His Son?**

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Swindoll. *David: A man of Passion & Destiny* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, Inc., 1997), 295.

**What kind of harvest are you hoping to reap?**

**There's nothing harder than letting go of spiritual giants who've poured so much into our lives.**

**Who is that person for you? What did he/she teach you?**

**What lasting impact has that person made in your life?**

**What are you doing with that advice? How are you applying it?**

For me, it was a high school track coach who God orchestrated to later mentor me and my husband through our first few years of marriage. I had already accepted Jesus by the time I met Tom, so he would continually challenge me to believe Him, to follow Him in my day-to-day life, and to dig into His Word. I wish I could say I did just that back then. But I didn't. However, the seeds he planted during my high school years have long since sprouted and become a lush garden that's bearing seed-producing fruit to sow into the soil of other people's lives through my writing and mentoring ministry.

Tom's passion for sharing the gospel and teaching others about the freedom found in Christ has become my passion. His mission to mentor and invest in fellow believers and the next generations has become my mission.

When I was running relays in track, he taught me: you have to be ready in the exchange zone. You have to be willing to grab that baton, turn and run your race with all your might. Don't look back, down, or to the side, keep your head and eyes up. Stay focused and determined.

That's exactly how Coach lived every day of his life. It's how I'm determined to live mine. For every student-athlete he coached and mentored. For each person he encountered and told about Jesus's love for them. For every Christian he encouraged to feast on God's Word daily. For every Believer he challenged to believe God, not just believe in Him. He was passing the baton.

You don't have to be the fastest runner. You don't have to have the most experience. You just need to be willing to give it 110%. Just take whatever baton God places in your hands and do what He asks. Mine is clenched tightly in my hand, and I am running with everything I've got.

I choose to allow Jesus to break my heart for what breaks His. I open myself up for Him to love others through me. I'm willing to be vulnerable as I show His love to His people and the upcoming generations. I'm determined to teach them about Jesus and what it means to follow Him. I'm passionately challenging Christians to dig into God's word and follow Jesus in their day-to-day lives. Equipping them to enter the exchange zone, take their baton, and run the race God has for them, so they can successfully pass it off to the next generation.

Like Tom, I'm determined to be a Champion Every Day for my Jesus. Want to join me?





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