

BIG WORD: 2 Samuel

Homework for Chapters 15—18

Discussion Dates: 14 November 2012 (in house)
and 15 November 2012 (online)

DAY ONE: Overview

PRAY for the Holy Spirit to clear your mind so that you may focus on God's Word without distractions or preconceptions. Ask Him to help you discern only what He wants for you in this reading and for this day.

READ: 2 Samuel 15—18.

If possible, read all four chapters in one sitting. Make notes of any details that stick out to you, questions that rise and/or personal insights God gives you while you read.

DAY TWO: Absalom Pursues the Throne

Last time we began the discussion of David's children. They clearly had some issues that continued unaddressed. At least we have no record of a correction or training coming from their parents.

In chapter 13, Amnon deceived his father and raped his half-sister, Tamar, then lived two years without any obvious consequences for his actions. In chapter 14, Absalom also deceived his father, this time so as to murder Amnon and then fled the country. He, too, survived the incident with few consequences. Sure, he was exiled, though that seemed more of his own volition. Eventually he was invited by the king to return. He did so and still received no punishment.

Here in 2 Samuel 15 we see the extent of Absalom's free reign.

READ 2 Samuel 15:1—12.

What did Absalom do to increase his stature in Jerusalem?

What response did this garner from the people?

From the king?

How long did Absalom work to build his reputation? (See verse 7.)

Jerusalem's stage must have seemed too small; Absalom's sights set higher. In verses 7—12, we read of his plan's expansion. What was this big next step?

Whom did he acquire as his advisor? What significance does that hold?

This is not the first time in Scripture that we hear of Hebron. What historical significance belongs to this city?

Need a hint? Check out these passages:

- Genesis 13:18 and 23:2,19
- Joshua 10:36-37 and 14:6—15
- 2 Samuel 2:1—3, 11
- 2 Samuel 5:1—5

DAY THREE: David Flees

READ: 2 Samuel 15:13—17.

David received a message. What was it?

Absalom had been living in Jerusalem for over six years since his exile. A significant part of that time was spent at the palace gates disrespecting the king and usurping his authority. And yet here it seems that David didn't have a clue any of this was happening. This conclusion can be further reinforced by David's trusting consent for Absalom to go to Hebron (as described in vv. 7—9). What do you make of this?

Do you think David knew of Absalom's undermining behaviors? Or that he had lied about his purpose in going to Hebron? If so, why didn't he do anything?

If David truly was clueless, and all his servants were still loyal to him (v. 15), why didn't anyone tell him about Absalom's actions and attitudes?

Verse 11 says that two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom "in their innocence and knew nothing." (ESV) Is it possible the coup planned by Absalom was really a mirage?

What do you think these men expected from their royal invitation to Hebron?

David's response to the message was to leave Jerusalem immediately. Do you think this decision reflects strong, confident leadership or cowardice? Why?

Scripture offers nothing to suggest that David verified the accuracy of the given message. Why do you think he trusted it (and its messenger) so intrinsically without seeking further accounts or opinions?

Regardless of the merit of his decision, David does leave. Whom does he take with him?

Whom does he leave behind? Why?

DAY FOUR: People Choose sides

READ 2 Samuel 15:13—16:14.

As David and his family exit the city of Jerusalem they encounter several people and groups of people who must take sides. Will they remain loyal to their king, David, or will they transfer allegiance to his son, Absalom?

Summarize David's interaction with and the choices of each of these people.

- David's servants
- Gittites, led by Ittai
- Levites, led by Abiathar and Zadok, the priests
- Ahithophel, David's advisor
- Hushai the Archite
- Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth
- Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul
- Shimei, son of Gera of the house of Saul

Of all of these, two accounts are particularly interesting and worthy of further dissection: Ittai and Mephibosheth.

The Gittites were former enemies of Israel. They were Gentiles, yet in the middle of chapter 15 we see Ittai leading 600 of them in support of a Jewish king.

Compare Ruth 1:8—18 to the interaction in 2 Samuel 15:19—22.

What prompted such loyalty?

According to 2 Samuel 9, Mephibosheth was not only an Israelite, but he had been exalted within the palace, adopted by David (in spite of his relations to Saul, the enemy of David) and granted riches and honor. In spite of all this, his loyalty to David remains brittle. His servant, however, professes continued allegiance to their king.

What do you make of all this?

How do you think David felt about Mephibosheth's response?

Regardless of each alternating response, David persisted in passivity. Consider these passages.

- Deuteronomy 32:35
- 1 Peter 2:23
- Romans 12:16—20
- Matthew 5:38—44

How can we create similar habits of peace in our own lives?

DAY FIVE: Ahithophel vs. Hushai

Who was Ahithophel?

Whom did he serve?

Who was Hushai?

Whom did he serve?

What was David's plan?

Both Ahithophel and Hushai ended up in Jerusalem, both giving advice to the same man. What was Ahithophel's advice?

What was Hushai's advice?

Which advice do you think was best?

Which advice was taken?

Describe the end results by these two men. What fate awaited the "winner"?

What became of the "loser"?

Ahithophel has been with our story for some time, since David was in exile hiding from King Saul. What do these latest events tell you of his character or inner turmoil? What does it tell you of his attitude toward God?

DAY SIX: The Battle and Absalom's Death

The advice that Absalom followed allowed David and his men to cross the Jordan, to rest and to replenish their supplies. Once again, David seems a waffler. He gives advice, his loyal men say "no" and he gives in to "whatever seems best."

What are your thoughts on this? Has David lost his ability to lead confidently? Or is he simply a conscientious leader who values the opinions of his followers?

In contrast, David did issue one unwavering order to his commanders. What was it? (See 18:5.)

READ 2 Samuel 18:6—18.

Describe the battle in your own words.

What pivotal role did Joab play?

READ 2 Samuel 18:19—33.

How did David's army feel about the success of the battle?

When they report the results, what seems to be David's main concern?

How do you think his men felt about this?

DAY SEVEN: In His Own Words

David was rarely one to conceal his emotions. Below are some of the psalms he wrote during this time of his life. As you read them, reflect on what they reveal of David's heart and what they teach us about God.

- Psalm 3
- Psalm 12
- Psalm 13

- Psalm 28
- Psalm 55
- Psalm 61
- Psalm 62
- Psalm 63

When you face trials and suffer betrayal, how do you react?

Do you cling to God or question Him?

How can you foster a prayer life that is open, vulnerable and honest?