



THE ONCE & FUTURE KING

A Study in the Life of David
SE Online Fall Bible Study 2025

“The kingdom of God in David’s day is the kingdom of David. And the kingdom of David is pointing to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Alastair Begg

“...the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people...”

1 Samuel 13:14



Israel's first king had been a disaster.

After years of having only temporary Judges to guide their nation, the Israelites gathered at Ramah to petition the prophet Samuel to give them a king. They were tired of having no one to lead them. They were tired of having no one to turn to in times of national crisis. Worse, they were tired of being different from the nations around them. Everyone else had a king. Why shouldn't they?

And so, the Israelites chose their first king the only way they knew how. They selected King Saul because he looked the part. He was taller. He was stronger. He was better. While that may be a good strategy for choosing a Homecoming King, it's a terrible way to choose an actual monarch. The promise with which Saul began his reign soon gave way to disappointment and disarray.

The kings we make have a way of letting us down.

What the Israelites failed to consider is that God had already given them a King. He was supposed to be their King. After all, God took care of them. He protected them. He provided for their every need. He was the perfect King for an imperfect people. Yet, knowing their desire to have a person seated on the throne, God set out to give the Israelites a better king – a “man after His own heart.” This new king's power wouldn't come from his strength, but from his soul.

When David was finally confirmed as Israel's second king, he proved himself to be better than Saul in every way. His kingship ushered in a new era of peace and stability for the Israelite nation. Where Saul turned to go his own way, David chased after the heart of God. Yet, David was not without his faults. He may have been an improvement from the king that came before, but he was as imperfect as the people he led. Even the better king reminds us that we need a greater King:

Luke 1:31-33: “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”





Week One
A King Who Understands Me

“The king we decide we want, the king we choose for ourselves, is not the right ruler for us. We need someone who will rule humbly. We need someone who will care for wandering sheep; who will die to protect us. We must all choose a king to rule our hearts, our lives, and our futures.”

-Tim Chester



Most of us can't relate to royalty. Kings and Queens live a life we can only dream about. They are born into privilege and wealth. They live in palaces and castles. They have influence and power. From the moment they are born, their lives are different. Everything in their day-to-day lives seems so distant and disconnected from normal life. There's no way the crown could ever understand the concerns of the crowd.

David's story is different. It doesn't start in a castle; it starts in the countryside. He wasn't born into a palace of opulence. He grew up in the tiny town of Bethlehem. As the son of a shepherd, David's early life was marked more by poverty than it was by privilege. As Jesse's eighth son, it was probably easy for David to get lost in the shuffle. He was so overlooked, in fact, that his father forgot all about him when the prophet Samuel came into town to choose Israel's next king.

David's ascension from shepherd to sovereign reminds us of a comforting truth, one articulated by God Himself: **"People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"** (1 Samuel 16:7). It's not about where we start. It's not about where we come from or what we have. When we stand before the Lord, it's all about what's on the inside. We don't need to come from a royal bloodline or a powerful pedigree. We need only come with a willing heart.



DAY ONE: Humble Beginnings

The story of how David came to be king started decades before his birth. In the time of the Judges, an Israelite woman named Hannah found herself in a desperate situation. Years of infertility had left her feeling abandoned and unloved. With no clinics or specialists to turn to, Hannah sought refuge in the only place she could think to go: the Tabernacle. As she poured out her heart before God, Hannah's despondent prayers at first sounded like the detached ramblings of a drunk (1 Samuel 1:13). Yet, the prayers that seemed so incomprehensible to the priest were precious to God. He heard Hannah's cry and answered her prayer with the birth of her son, Samuel – a child who would grow up to play a pivotal role in Israel's history and in David's anointing as King.



READ 1 Samuel 2:1-11

What does Hannah praise God for in this song?

What are some of the phrases she uses to describe how God works in ways that don't always make sense from a worldly perspective?

How does it bring you comfort to know that God sees and hears those the world overlooks? Why do we all need this assurance from time to time?





READ Psalm 145

What does this Psalm (written by David) show us about His heart for God?

What images speak to his reliance on what God has done for him?

Samuel's name carried an incredible meaning: "Asked of God." Every time it was spoken, it echoed the heartfelt prayer of his mother, Hannah. God heard her request and blessed her with a son.

As it turned out, the blessing wasn't just for her household, but for the entire nation of Israel. All the people would benefit from Samuel's life and ministry. As the last Judge of Israel, he would help to usher in the age of the Israelite monarchy. His name – "asked of God" – would serve not only as a reminder of Hannah's request, but as a reminder of Samuel's destiny. Just as Hannah asked for a son, the people of Israel would one day ask Samuel for a king. The king they asked for, however, would turn out to be far from the king they imagined.



DAY TWO: We Need a King

The days of the Judges had been a mixed bag at best. Though there were occasional bright spots like Deborah and Gideon, many of the Judges followed the path of Samson – a man who brought national victories despite his own personal failings. Generation after generation of Israelites had ridden the rollercoaster from bad leaders to good leaders only to find themselves back in the valley again. Perhaps that's why they were so anxious for a more permanent form of leadership over the nation. Samuel had been such a great judge and influence for Israel. When he stepped away, who knows who (or what) might replace him? Facing such an unclear future, they asked Samuel for the one thing they thought would solve all of their problems. They wanted him to appoint and anoint a king over the nation. The one thing they failed to consider, however, was that they already had a King – One who had faithfully guided them in the past. And He was far from pleased with their desire to replace Him!



READ 1 Samuel 8:1-20

How did God try to reassure Samuel when the people brought their request for a king (1 Sam 8:7)? Who were they really rejecting with this request?

What warnings did Samuel offer the people when it came to having a king? What would a king ask from them?





READ Deuteronomy 17:14-20

How had God described the ideal king?

How would these requirements have helped the Israelites find a king who would lead the nation well?



What should you look for in a king? Though our minds so quickly gravitate to quantifiable characteristics, kings must have qualities that aren't so easy to see at first glance. A king should be wise, able to see a problem and its solutions from multiple points of view. A king should be powerful, able to protect His people and their interests. A king should be compassionate, someone who genuinely loves and cares for his subjects. In short, a king needs to be perfect. He needs to make perfect decisions, have perfect power, and live with perfect love.

That's why God is the ideal king. He never makes mistakes. He never fails to protect. He always acts with love. There is no King like Him. In chasing after the king they wanted, Israel neglected the only King they ever really needed!



DAY THREE: Starting Strong

Choosing a king can be a tricky business. Sometimes you get lucky and have a clear line of succession from the previous king. But for Israel, establishing a monarchy meant starting from scratch. Where do you even begin? Do you take applications? Trying to decide who should be the first king of a nation doesn't come with an instruction manual. After much deliberation and lot-casting, it became clear that Israel's first king was to come from the tribe of Benjamin. They eventually whittled it down even further to family of the Matrites. Finally, the lot fell to Saul, son of Kish. While few people seemed to know much about him, there was one thing that was clear from the beginning: Saul was (literally) head and shoulders above the competition. His physical stature made an impression – but as Israel would soon learn, true leadership runs deeper than appearances.



READ 1 Samuel 9:1-2; 10:17-25

How is Saul physically described in these passages? Why would this have been such an attractive quality for a king to have?

What were some of the early signs that Saul's reign might have trouble? Where was he when his selection as king was announced (10:22-23)?





READ 1 Samuel 11:1-15

What were some of Saul's early victories?

How did the people of Israel respond to this?

Saul's kingdom and kingship met with some immediate success. He stood up against King Nahash and drove the Ammonites out of Israelite territory. While this military victory might have been significant enough on its own, it was layered with symbolic meaning. King Nahash's name sounds phonetically similar to the Hebrew word for "snake." In Genesis 3:15, God promised that He would one day send a Deliverer who would crush the head of the snake. Could King Saul be this long-awaited snake-crusher? Was he the one who would finally make good on all God's promises?



As the Israelites heard the first reports of this early victory, they certainly must have thought they had their man. Unfortunately, Saul's success masked deeper flaws – flaws that would show him to be far less than the king they hoped for.



DAY FOUR: Falling Down

The higher you put someone on a pedestal, the further they have to fall. We all know what it's like to build someone up in our minds only for them to let us down. Whether it's a childhood hero, a celebrity we admire, or a romantic relationship gone sour, all of us have dealt with the reality of shattered dreams and unmet expectations. It shouldn't surprise us, then, that Saul had trouble living up to his initial successes. While his reign started well enough, things quickly went off the rails. Saul's own impatience and insecurity caught up to him at the worst time. As Israel was about to head into battle with the Philistines, Saul hastily made a sacrifice to the Lord. He hoped such a gesture would lead to victory. Sadly, it ultimately led to his ruin.



READ 1 Samuel 13:7-14

What did Saul do that was so displeasing to the Lord? Why do you think he let his own fears get the better of him in that moment?

God makes it clear that he wants a king “after his own heart.” How did Saul's actions show that he was more concerned with chasing the hearts of his people?





READ 1 Samuel 15:7-23

How did Saul disobey God's command?

How did this reinforce God's decision to remove the kingdom from Saul?

The king the people had asked for had been unable to do the things asked of him. His unwillingness to wait on Samuel – his unwillingness to wait for God! – showed that he wasn't the man for the throne. The king needed to be a man who sought after God's own heart. He couldn't chase after the applause of men. He couldn't be someone who pursued the crown strictly for the power and prestige. Nor could he be someone whose heart was merely set on treasure. No, the king of God's people had to be a man who sought the good of both God and His people. So, God sent Samuel on a mission to identify the next king of Israel. What Samuel discovered there would clearly illustrate they needed a new king who was completely unlike their first.



DAY FIVE: A New Kind of King

When Saul had been anointed as King of Israel, there had been much fanfare and celebration. The nation celebrated because God had heard their request and granted them a king who looked the part and fit the imposing molds of the kings of the surrounding nations. The circumstances surrounding the anointing of their second king could not have been more different. Prompted by God, Samuel traveled alone to the small village of Bethlehem. He had been told that he would find the next king in the home of a man named Jesse. As Jesse's sons paraded in front of Samuel, he saw young men of stature and strength. God had to remind him that those were the very same qualities that had led to Saul's coronation. If Israel was going to get it right this second time, Samuel would have to look beyond what his eyes could see to find a king whose heart aligned with God's.



READ 1 Samuel 16:1-13

How did Samuel almost fall into the same trap of looking at appearance? What truth did God remind him of?

What happened when Samuel anointed David? What does the delay between his anointing and his coronation teach us about David's character?





READ Psalm 145

What does this Psalm (written by David) show us about His heart for God?

What images speak to his reliance on what God has done for him?



David is the last person we would expect to be chosen as king. He's probably not the son we would have selected. He was merely a boy. There wasn't anything special about his appearance. He didn't have any qualifications. He had been sitting out in the field with the sheep all day. David was utterly ordinary. But there was something extraordinary about his heart. He had a heart that pursued God. He longed to know and be known by the Lord. More than that, David was deeply loved and deliberately chosen by God. He may not have yet looked like a king, but the heart that beat in his chest was loved by the King of the Universe. And that made all the difference.



WEEK ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? What's your biggest takeaway from these opening stories in the life of David? What does it teach you about what the world values vs. what God values?
2. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Why did God send Samuel out to Bethlehem? What was he looking for there? How did Samuel fall into the same trap of looking at appearances rather than the heart? Why is it that we are so often tempted to look at the externals when God is more concerned with what's going on internally?
3. In your opinion, what would the ideal king look like? What kind of qualities would they have? As a Group, make a list of all the criteria you can think of that would make for the perfect king? What keeps human rulers from living up to all these standards?
4. Read 1 Samuel 8:6-9. In asking for a king, who were the Israelites rejecting? Look back through the criteria of the perfect king. How does God fulfill each of those characteristics? Why, then, is it so difficult for us to follow Him as our King?
5. What does it mean for David to be a man "after God's own heart"? How does Saul's disobedience show his concern with the opinion of men over the heart of God? What are some practical ways we can live in pursuit of God in our everyday life?
6. As your Group closes, read 1 Samuel 2:1-10. What stands out to you in Hannah's song? How does God elevate those the world overlooks? How is this good news for us? Close in prayer by thanking God for how He has chosen us and elevated us in Christ.





Week Two
A King Who Fights My Battles

The size of Goliath was no problem to David, nor is the size of whatever giant stands before the church today. The more significant obstacle is the smallness of our confidence in God.”

-J.D. Greear



The story of David and Goliath is one of the most famous stories in the Bible. Its outcome is so well-known that it has become shorthand for any underdog story. The events of that day are the very definition of iconic. A young boy stands before a mighty giant. On the surface, he looks woefully overmatched. The giant wears a suit of armor and an ornate helmet. The boy is clothed only in the simple tunic of a shepherd. The giant carries a sword and spear. The boy carries only a slingshot and some stones. And yet, the boy has something intangible that more than tips the scales in his favor. David comes into battle armed with the power of the living God.

In this life, we will encounter giants. We all face those situations and circumstances that seem insurmountable. Depression. Loss. Illness. Isolation. And waiting at the end of them all is the greatest giant of them all: Death. We will not get through this life without coming face-to-face with some giant that threatens to tear our world down. Yet, if the story of David and Goliath teaches us anything, it's that our God has little regard for this world's giants. Our success – not to mention our survival – has less to do with our strength and more to do with His. We have a King who fights on our behalf. Better still, we have a King who wins on our behalf! In King Jesus, we have a King who has stepped on the battlefield for us and emerged victorious!



DAY ONE: A Giant Problem

When the Israelite army gathered to face the Philistines in the Valley of Elah, it probably felt like it was going to be business as usual. After all, the two nations had been at war with one another for generations. They knew each other's strategies inside and out. Unfortunately for Israel, this encounter with the Philistines would have a giant deviation – literally! As the armies amassed on the hills surrounding the valley, a Philistine giant named Goliath strode out to the front of the battle lines. He was ready to fight – and he was more than willing to stand toe-to-toe against any brave enough to face him! But it turned out that none were willing to step out to face the giant – not even Israel's own king. Their cowardice would give Goliath an excuse to not just insult Israel, but to slander Israel's God!



READ 1 Samuel 17:1-11

How did Goliath come out and taunt the Israelite army? Why do you think no one (including Saul) was willing to face him?

How is Goliath described in these verses? In what ways was he physically imposing? How does his description equate him with the snake of Genesis 3?





READ 1 Samuel 17:16-26

What happened when David went out to visit his brothers at the battlefield?

What does his reaction show us about David's concern for the name of God?

“This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” For 40 days, these words echoed across the Valley of Elah. For more than a month, the King of Israel sat powerless while the God of Israel was mocked. Even if Saul felt like doing something about it, he never did. His actions prove his apathy. And yet, the very first time David heard these words, he recognized that something had to be done. Someone had to go out there and face the giant – not for Israel's honor, but for God's. So, David volunteered. His godly courage would set the stage for one of the most famous battles in the Bible – and provide us with the ultimate “David and Goliath” story!



DAY TWO: Conquering the Giant

Everybody likes an underdog story. We want Rocky to defeat Apollo. We get misty-eyed when Rudy checks into the game for Notre Dame and finally gets a sack. Our national pride swells when we think about the United States defeating the Soviet Union at the 1980 Winter Olympics even though it happened over four decades ago. We want to see the longshot overcome the odds. We want to see the perennial loser finally win one. While the Bible is full of underdog stories, perhaps none is as famous – or as miraculous – as the story of David and Goliath. From our perspective, the odds seemed stacked against David. But, if the people in that valley could have seen what heaven saw, they'd have realized that Goliath never really stood a chance.



READ 1 Samuel 17:32-40

Why was David so confident that he could stand against Goliath?
How had he seen God deliver him before?

What happened when David put on Saul's armor? How does this highlight the differences between the two?





READ 1 Samuel 17:41-58

How did David defeat Goliath?

How did this inspire the Israelite army to mount an attack on the rest of the Philistine forces?

David appeared to have nothing of consequence with him as he walked down into the valley. All he had was a sling, a staff, and five smooth stones. That's certainly not the kind of artillery you want to go into battle with. Still, God used those things to give David a great victory. No one saw it coming – Goliath especially! Ballistics experts have estimated that Israelite shepherds can shoot rocks out of a slingshot at 76 mph. Regardless of the strength in David's arms, he came into battle with the full strength of God arming him. He trusted that God would meet him there in the valley, and the Lord did! It's little wonder that David was later able to write these words: **“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me”** (Psalm 23:4).

DAY THREE: Hey Jealousy

God had used David to win a giant victory over the Philistines (pun fully intended!). Given the heroic nature of his win, it's only natural that David would begin to gain attention across Israel. As word spread about his triumph over Goliath – and his continued triumphs as a part of the Israelite army – the people of Israel began to see him as a hero. They wrote songs about him and celebrated his exploits. Rather than congratulating David for such incredible victories, Saul began to be jealous of David's accomplishments. Even when Saul tried to bait David into taking on impossible missions, David somehow came out ahead. Turns out that the king who had been chosen because of his appearance couldn't bear the thought of someone else making him look bad.



READ 1 Samuel 18:5-16

How did the people of Israel begin to celebrate David? Why do you think this made Saul so insecure and bitter?

How do you think David avoided the same jealousy and bitterness? Who was with him during this time (18:14)?





READ Galatians 5:16-21

How does jealousy show that we aren't living in step with the Spirit?

In what ways does jealousy damage our life and our witness?

Jealousy always breeds suspicion. When we allow envy to take root in our hearts, it distorts our perspective. Suddenly, someone else's success feels like a threat – we begin to imagine they're after our position, our possessions, even our purpose. That's why jealousy is so destructive: it doesn't just poison relationships; it corrodes our character. Even worse, jealousy can lead us to do things we never thought we would do. I'm sure Saul never thought he would threaten the life of his greatest soldier. Yet, in the midst of his jealousy, he did just that. For all his mistakes, jealousy might just have been the worst one Saul ever made. As the king clearly shows us, if we can't allow others to succeed, then we are bound to fail.



DAY FOUR: You've Got a Friend

From the very beginning of the Bible, we're told that it's not good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18). We weren't meant to live in solitary confinement. God created us for relationship – not just a relationship with Him, but relationships with one another. As David faced increasing hostility from Saul, it surely must have felt like he was on an island by himself. Who would want to align themselves with someone who was being hunted by the most powerful man in the country? Yet, David found an unlikely companion in the midst of his suffering. Jonathan, one of Saul's own sons, became one of David's closest friend and confidants. There were multiple times when Jonathan was the only person shielding David from Saul's murderous rage. If David hadn't had Jonathan as a friend, then his kingship might have ended before it ever officially began.



READ 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7

What gifts did Jonathan give to David? How did this solidify how Jonathan viewed David and his eventual role in Israel?

How deep was the relationship between Jonathan and David? What does this show us about the nature of true friendship?





READ 1 Samuel 20:16-42

Why did David and Jonathan ultimately part ways?

What covenant did they make with one another?



God is our provider. He provides us with air, water, and all we need for life. One of His most overlooked provisions is the gift of friendship. He gives us food to help meet our physical needs and friends to help meet our emotional and spiritual needs. God places people in our lives to walk with us, protect us, and reminds us that we are not alone. In David's time of crisis, God knew it wasn't just about WHAT David needed, but WHO David needed. He needed a friend. He needed someone to stand up for him. Most of all, he needed someone to save him. God used Jonathan to stand between David and certain death. In that way, the friendship David had with Jonathan reminds of the friendship we have with Jesus – the ultimate friend who stands between us and the grave.



DAY FIVE: On the Run

During his time in the palace, David had been nothing but loyal to King Saul. He had played music on his harp to calm Saul's anger and anxiety. He had fought military battles and emerged victorious whenever Saul sent him out to fight his enemies. Even as Saul's requests became more and more ridiculous, David still deferred to the king and his status as God's anointed. Yet, things finally reached a tipping point when Saul's violently lashed out against David. After unsuccessfully trying to impale David with his spear – not once, but twice (1 Sam. 18:10-11; 19:10) – Saul decided he needed a new tactic. He attempted to widen his scheme to include his daughter Michal, who was also David's wife. But Saul underestimated just how deeply David was favored – not only by the Lord, but by the members of his own family! David's journey to the throne wouldn't be impeded by spears or schemes.



READ 1 Samuel 19:11-24

What was Saul's scheme against David? How did Michal help David escape? How did the Spirit get involved?

In your opinion, what kept Saul from recognizing his folly? How can jealousy and envy blind us to the reality of our actions?





READ Psalm 18

When was this Psalm written?

How do its words further the contrast between David and Saul?

It's hard for most of us to imagine what it would be like to live on the run. Fleeing your home. Leaving your family behind. Not knowing the danger each new day would bring. Living in that constant uncertainty and pressure would be enough to drive anyone crazy. And yet, it only served to drive David closer to God. The words of Psalm 18:2 would become a refrain for David's entire life: **"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety."** When all other foundations are gone, God alone offers a safe space. When all our security seems lost, God gives us a home. When it feels like everyone has abandoned us, God is still there as our Father. Even on the run, David knew he couldn't go anywhere that God wasn't with him.



WEEK TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? What's been your biggest takeaway from this week's reading on the life of David? Why do you think the story of David and Goliath has resonated with people down through the centuries?

2. Read 1 Samuel 17:1-19. How is Goliath described in these verses? How overwhelming do you think his appearance would have been to the Israelites? Saul allowed Goliath to taunt his people (and his God) for over a month. Why do you think he allowed this to happen? What does this teach us about Saul?

3. How do we normally interpret this story? When you think of some of the "giants" in your own life, what comes to mind? How does Goliath remind us of the ultimate "giants" of sin and death we all face? Why do we need a champion to represent us?

4. Read 1 Samuel 17:24-51. How does David see things differently than the rest of the Israelites? Why is he so concerned that the name of Israel's God is defiled by Goliath? Should there be a difference in how we respond to attacks on God's character and how we respond to attacks against us? Why or why not?

5. How does David's faith serve as an example to you? What are some elements of his character that you want to emulate in your own faith? What would it look like for you to live with those priorities? How does David's example point us toward Jesus – our ultimate King and Champion?

6. Has there ever been a time when you saw Jesus conquer something in your life that you couldn't have done on your own? What was that like? How did you see Him move and work? Close in prayer thanking God that we have someone in the "in-between" who stands in our defense.





Week Three
A King Who Shows Mercy

“What does God do when we are in a bind? ...That question can be answered with one word: fight. He fights for us. He steps into the ring and points us to our corner and takes over. “Remain calm; the Lord will fight for you” (Exodus 14:14). His job is to fight. Our job is to trust. Just trust. Not direct. Or question. Or yank the steering wheel out of His hands. Our job is to pray and wait. Nothing more is necessary.”

Max Lucado



Thrones are usually places of judgment. Most of the time, common folk weren't called before the throne for just any old reason. Some came to be commended. Perhaps they had done a service for the kingdom, or maybe even the king himself. They felt honored to stand before the throne. Others weren't so lucky. They came to the throne to be condemned. It could have been a simple violation of the law or maybe even treason against the king. Whatever the cause, their trip to the throne room ended in humiliation. When you're in the presence of the one who sits on the throne, you're the one who's on the hot seat.

In that moment, you want to stand before a king who has mercy. You want to stand before someone who understands your faults and can commiserate with your problems. You want to know that the king has a soft spot for his subjects. Even before He ascended to the throne, David was that kind of king. Despite the fact that Saul had threatened multiple times to kill him, David refused to reciprocate. In those moments when David had a chance to end Saul's life and reign, he refused. David's grace and mercy towards someone who should have been his enemy points us towards an even greater King who will one day turn His enemies into friends.



DAY ONE: A Place of Refuge

We all need a place of rest. We have that spot where we go at the end of the day to sit down, lay back, and relax. Some have a favorite chair or a spot on the sofa that's reserved solely for them. Others have a chair on the patio or a well-loved bench in the park where they can hang out for a minute and let the sounds of nature wash over them. When we feel tired and worn-out, we need an oasis where we can stop and get replenished. As David was on the run, he found such a refuge in the city of Nob. Mentally and physically exhausted from Saul's relentless pursuit, David needed someone he could trust. Thankfully, Ahimelech the priest welcomed David and gave him shelter and provision. His act of kindness gave David the strength to continue on his journey. It also set the stage for one of the darkest chapters in King Saul's reign.



READ 1 Samuel 21:1-15

How did the priest Ahimelech help David? What provisions did he give to David? Whose sword did David end up procuring when he was in Nob?

What happened when David turned to the King of Gath for help? What do you think it felt like for David to be running out of places to hide?





READ Psalm 46:1-3

How is God described in these verses?

How can God be a source of refuge for you in some of the trials and anxieties you are facing today?

David was running out of options. Saul's relentless manhunt meant David had few places to turn to within the nation of Israel. David's own military success meant no one in the surrounding nations would trust him, either. Foreign or domestic, the doors were closing in David's face. It seemed like Saul would catch up with him any day. And yet, even in the midst of his running, David found refuge in the Lord. Though the kings of earth would hunt him down and reject him, the King of Heaven was always there for him. David trusted that even when he could find no physical shelter, his God could provide the spiritual refuge he really needed. No matter who rejects us here, we know our Father will always welcome us with open arms. In Him, we find the refuge that never fails.



DAY TWO: The Madness of King Saul

From the day Saul had been rejected as King over Israel, his mental health began to unravel. First Samuel 16:14 tells us that the Lord “sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear.” Saul’s paranoia and obsession flowed from a deeply spiritual problem. In turning his back on the Spirit of God, Saul had opened himself up to attacks from the spirits of this world. This spiritual domination cost the king more than his kingdom. In many ways, he didn’t just lose his sanity but his very soul. Perhaps nothing illustrates this more clearly than what happened when Saul found out about Ahimelech and the priests of Nob aiding David in his exile. Saul’s response reminds that rejecting God’s presence doesn’t just cause us to lose direction. It can cause us to lose ourselves.



READ 1 Samuel 22:11-23

What did King Saul do to his own people at Nob? How does this show us the depth of his fall away from God?

In what ways does our desire for vengeance cloud our thinking? Has it ever taken you down a path you never intended to travel?





READ 1 Samuel 28:4-19

How far did Saul eventually fall from God?

How did he break both his own law and the law of God?

Earlier in Saul's reign, he had refused to eliminate King Agag and the Amalekites despite God's direct command (1 Samuel 15:1-23). He showed mercy to those who had earned judgment. In the town of Nob, however, Saul was unable to conjure up the same kind of mercy for God's own people. He destroyed a village full of Israelites just because they damaged his ego. His hatred for David was so great that he was willing to eliminate anyone who had anything to do with him. What kind of king slaughters his own citizens? Saul may have had the title of a monarch, but he had the heart of a monster. His end couldn't come quick enough. Yet, David would soon have opportunity to show King Saul the mercy he had denied to the people of Nob.



DAY THREE: The Cave

What would you do if you had the chance to make all your problems go away? If you could push a button and gain total control over your life, would you do it? That was the scenario facing David in 1 Samuel 24. David and his men had heard that King Saul was drawing near to their location. Desperate, they hid in the back of a cave to avoid being seen. As luck would have it, King Saul soon made his way into that very cave. In the days before rest areas and gas stations, caves made for convenient pitstops. Saul, completely oblivious to David's presence in the cave, had come alone to "relieve himself," as Scripture puts it. He was isolated and alone. With the king in such a vulnerable position, David had an even greater opportunity to relieve himself. One swing of his sword and David could end it all – all the running, all the suffering, all the conflict! The decision standing (squatting?) before David would ultimately define so much about his reign.



READ 1 Samuel 24:1-22

What happened when Saul entered the cave? Why did David ultimately make the decision to spare Saul's life?

What would you have done had you been in David's position? Why would you have made that decision?





READ 1 Samuel 26:1-25

What happened when David had a second opportunity to eliminate Saul?

How do David's actions speak to what kind of king he would eventually be?

“Then David went away, and Saul returned home” (1 Samuel 26:25). The encounter on the fields of Ziph would be the last time David and Saul would ever see one another. The divergent paths they walked would finally separate once and for all. In his final words to Saul, David would reiterate the fact that he meant the king no harm. Saul, for his part, would speak words of blessing over David: **“Blessings on you, my son David. You will do many heroic deeds, and you will surely succeed.”** Though David would not take the kingdom by force, Saul could see that David's rise was inevitable. The king the people had asked for was fading. The one they needed would soon sit on the throne.



DAY FOUR: Nabal and Abigail

Even the best of us can make mistakes. We have bad days. We get in bad moods. We make bad decisions. There are just days when we're not at our best. David's graciousness had kept him from striking Saul down on at least a couple of occasions. He had proven that he could show mercy to those who had wronged him. And yet, something snapped in David when he encountered Nabal. David and his men had spent months protecting Nabal's property and flocks. It was only right for Nabal to compensate them for their time and effort. When David asked for provisions for his men, Nabal balked. With Saul already testing his patience, David was at a breaking point. He didn't just threaten retaliation – he vowed to wipe Nabal's family off the face of the earth! Thankfully, someone stepped in before things went too far and reminded David of the man he truly was.



READ 1 Samuel 25:2-22

Was Nabal right or wrong for what he did?

How did David compound Nabal's error by making one himself?





READ 1 Samuel 25:23-38

How did Abigail diffuse the situation? What does her reaction show us about what graciousness looks like in the midst of disagreement?

Read Proverbs 15:1. How do our reactions to things influence the way people respond to us?



Biblical characters have a way of living up to their names. Eve's name rightly recognizes her place as the "mother of all the living." When God changed Jacob's name to "Israel," the meaning of the new name hinted at the theme of Jacob's entire life: "He wrestles with God." Here in 1 Samuel 25, both Nabal ("Fool") and Abigail ("source of joy") live up to their names. Nabal's foolishness almost doomed his entire family, while Abigail's kindness restored joy to a tense situation. Their differing actions – and their names – remind us of the two responses before us whenever we are wronged. We can, like Nabal, respond with recklessness and retaliation. Or, like Abigail, we can respond with graciousness and forgiveness. We can choose the path of the fool or the path that leads to joy. The next time someone wrongs you, be careful whose steps you choose to walk in.



DAY FIVE: The Fall of the House of Saul

Saul's downfall had been years in the making. It had been somewhere around 15 years since David had been anointed by Samuel as Saul's successor – a decision that cast a long shadow over Saul's reign. For over a decade, Saul lived with the knowledge that both his reign and his legacy were coming to an end. The path to Saul's coronation began with a Philistine raid. Their defeat at the hands of their oldest enemies had prompted the Israelites to ask for a king. Oddly enough, Saul's reign would end with another Philistine attack. Caught in a battle on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, Saul and his sons faced an overwhelming Philistine onslaught. Though they fought bravely, they were outnumbered and outmatched. Saul's disobedience had finally caught up with him in a devastating way. He died on that mountain, along with his sons – his crown lost, his dynasty broken, and his story closed in tragedy.



READ 1 Samuel 31:1-13

What happened on Mount Gilboa? How did the Philistines react to the death of King Saul?

What did the people of Jabesh-Gilead do? What had Saul done for them at the beginning of his reign (1 Samuel 11:1-15)?





READ 1 Chronicles 10:1-14

What does this passage say about Saul's death?

What final reminder are we given as to why the Lord took the kingdom from him?



Disobedience always comes with a cost. Sometimes, those costs are immediate. One bad decision can wipe out a relationship or a reputation in an instant. Other times, the cost of disobedience happens more slowly. We lose our sense of peace as sin rots away our security. We lose our health as the consequences of our years of bad choices start to catch up with us. The bill for our disobedience might not come immediately, but it comes inevitably. Saul's disobedience ultimately led him to the mountain of death. His story is a sobering reminder of sin's cost. But it also casts the shadow of another King – one whose obedience would take Him to the place of death. King Saul paid the price for his own sins; King Jesus pays the price for ours. While Saul's fall reminds us of the full cost of our disobedience, Jesus' sacrifice offers us all the hope of redemption.



WEEK THREE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? Our weekly reading took us through Saul's collapse and David's time on the run. What were some of your biggest takeaways from this part of the story? Why do we all need a King who shows mercy?

2. Why did Saul become so jealous of David? How did Saul's jealousy reveal his inadequacies and how he saw himself? What effect did Saul's jealousy have on his reign and on his kingdom? How can jealousy have a toxic effect on our lives today?

3. Read 1 Samuel 24:1-22. What happened in the cave? What opportunity did David have? Why didn't he take it? If you have been in David's shoes, what choice would you have made? How does David's choice show us his mercy?

4. David trusted that God would elevate him on His timetable. How does trusting in God's timing help us to have grace towards the people around us? How does it keep us from jockeying for position or trying to make a name for ourselves? In what ways does relying on God in this way help us to practice contentment?

5. How does knowing God's mercy help us be merciful? When we think about how God has forgiven us, how should that motivate us to respond to others? On the other hand, how does knowing God's justice help us practice mercy? How was David trusting in God's justice when he spared Saul?

6. As your Group closes, read 1 Peter 2:21-25. Who is the ultimate example of mercy? How does Jesus' example help us to show grace and mercy to others? Is there someone in your life you struggle to forgive? Pray over one another, that God would create that same kind of gracious heart in each one of you.





Week Four
A King Who Honors God

David, the shepherd-king who worshipped God with abandon and joyfulness, is pointing to Jesus, the true and greater David, the true and greater Shepherd-King, who perfectly worshipped his Father with abandon and joyfulness, and became so undignified as to lay down his life for his sheep on the cross.”

Jamie Brown



When the time finally came for David to ascend to Israel's throne, he proved himself a far more competent king than Saul ever was. Gone were the days of paranoia and doubt. Gone, too, was the rampant pattern of disobedience Saul had so often shown as a leader. Though David was not without his faults, his reign showed a new concern not just for the glory of Israel, but for the glory of God. In nearly everything he did as king, David sought to honor and elevate His God.

Perhaps nothing illustrates this more clearly than what happened when David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Nearly sixty years earlier, the Philistines had stolen the Ark of the Covenant from Israel. Though they eventually returned it to the Israelites, the Israelites had never returned the Ark to its rightful place in the Tabernacle. Not once during Saul's reign did the subject of moving the Ark ever come up. All that changed with David's coronation as king. Desiring to get the Ark of the Covenant into his capital city of Jerusalem, David made plans to bring the Ark back home. On the day that happened, the whole nation of Israel celebrated the event – and the king who made it possible. More than that, they celebrated the greatness of the God who inhabited the Ark.



DAY ONE: Mourning the King

For years, David had been on the run from Saul. He had left his family, lived in foreign countries, and hidden in caves. He dealt with the constant fear of being discovered – and possibly even losing his life. From a purely human perspective, then, we wouldn't fault David for feeling a little bit of relief upon hearing of Saul's demise. We might even pardon him for feeling a slight tinge of joy at the death of the one who had made his life so difficult. David's response contained none of those emotions. Instead, when David heard of Saul's death – along with the death of Jonathan – David burst out in lament. His song of mourning stands as a testament to the depth of his friendship with Jonathan and his sorrow over the relationship he might have had with Saul. More than that, it speaks to David's loyalty, his forgiveness, and the respect he carried for the Lord's anointed one.



READ 2 Samuel 1:1-27

How did David respond to the messenger's words about Jonathan and Saul? What do you think prompted that reaction within him?

What stands out to you about David's psalm of lament for Jonathan and Saul?



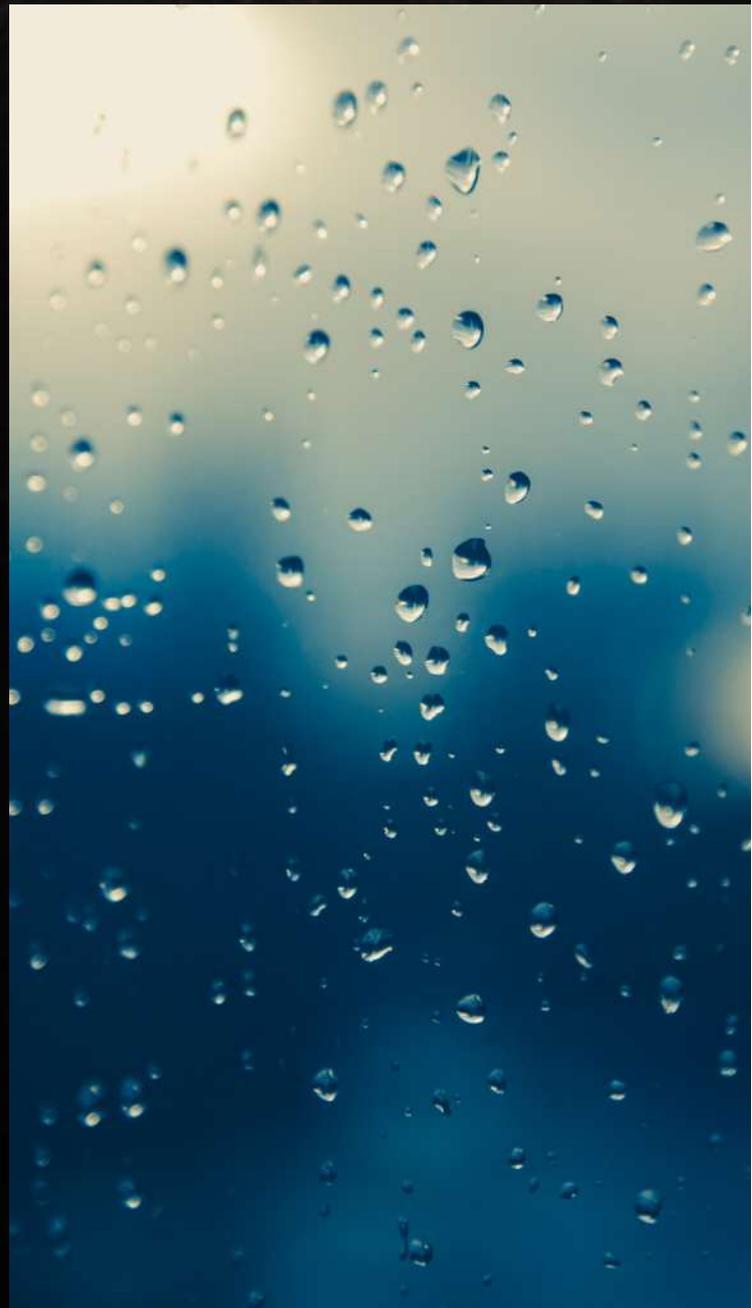


READ Psalm 13:1-6

What does this psalm of lament teach us about how David prayed/talked to God?

Is it easy for you to share these kinds of thoughts with God? Why or why not?

Lament is a lost art in our modern world. Sure, we get sad. We might even get a little angry. But, we don't always know how to mourn well. It's hard for us to think of any kind of beauty in the midst of our sadness. It's even harder for us to take those emotions and hand them over to God. David's words here (and throughout the Psalms!) show us that God is more than able to handle any emotion we feel. Rather than stuffing our emotions down or pretending they don't exist, God invites us to place them at His feet. When we do that, we find that He is strong enough to carry those emotions and near enough to meet us in them. He amplifies our joy. He calms our anxieties. He brings clarity to our confusion. He soothes our anger. Our feelings may come and go, but our God is always there.



DAY TWO: Consolidating the Kingdom

With Saul now gone, it seemed as though David might have a clear path to the throne. In the southern part of the kingdom, where David and his family hailed from, his claim was easily accepted. But in the northern part of the kingdom, things were a bit more complicated. They weren't there when Samuel anointed David as King. How could they trust that David really was God's anointed? Moreover, Saul still had a living relative. Why shouldn't Ishbosheth sit on the throne? With this uncertainty dividing the nation, the Northern and Southern kingdoms entered into a period of civil war. The king who seemed destined to unite the nation presided over a divided kingdom for his first seven years. While this division would eventually come to an end, it served as a harbinger of an even deeper, and more permanent, division to come (1 Kings 12).



READ 2 Samuel 2:1-17

Why do you think the two sides of the kingdom couldn't agree on a king?

How did this lead to fighting in the nation?

What was the cost of the division?





READ 2 Samuel 4:5-5:12

What ultimately happened to Ishbosheth? How did David continue to show his respect for Saul's lineage?

Where did David eventually move his capital city to? How did God bless him with a new palace and home?

His coronation in the north and his conquering of Jerusalem had given David both a nation and a capital. The kingdom he had envisioned since Samuel poured the oil out on his head was finally a reality. Surrounding nations took note of this new king. The king of Tyre donated the materials and workforce to build Israel a magnificent new palace. The people of Israel rallied around their new king, giving him great victories over the Philistines. Everything seemed to be falling into place. But the new king wasn't finished. Whereas Saul had focused more on being a statesman, David had it in his mind to be more of a spiritual shepherd to God's people. His next move would see him right a spiritual wrong – one that had hung over Israel for decades.



DAY THREE: Returners of the Lost Ark

Six decades before David became the King of Israel, the Philistines had won a great victory over Israel. While the defeat was humiliating enough for Israel, the Philistines added insult to injury. They carted off the Ark of the Covenant – the sign of God’s presence with His people – as the ultimate trophy of their triumph. Their pride quickly turned to panic. God sent a terrible plague among the Philistines, causing them to send the Ark back into Israel. The Israelites should have been ecstatic. Instead, they were indifferent. Rather than bringing the Ark back to where it belonged, they left it sitting in the city of Kiriath-Jearim. For over 60 years, the Ark of the Covenant sat on the fringes. It was lost, abandoned, forgotten. No one seemed to care that it had been left behind. No one, that is, until David. The “man after God’s own heart” decided that it was time to bring the Ark back into the heart of the nation.



READ 2 Samuel 6:1-15

What happened the first time they tried to move the Ark? What mistake did Uzzah make (Numbers 4:15)?

How different was the scene the second time they attempted to move the Ark? How did David celebrate before the Lord?





READ 2 Samuel 6:16-23

How did Michal respond to David's worship?

What does David's response teach us about the characteristics of true worship?



“It is time to bring back the Ark of our God, for we neglected it during the reign of Saul” (1 Chronicles 13:3). A lot of things had been neglected during Saul's time on the throne. Saul failed to chase after God's heart, and the spiritual life of his nation suffered as a result. With David on the throne, the worship of God would again become a priority in Israel. David wouldn't just lead the people by his example. He would lead them – he would lead us – through his writings, as well. Nearly half of the Old Testament Psalms originate from the pen of David. His heart for God was expressed in a heart of worship. As David shows us, worship is about more than singing. It's about giving God the place of prominence in all things – including your heart!



DAY FOUR: An Eternal Kingdom

David had brought the Ark of the Covenant back home. But as he sat in his own palace, David realized that the Ark didn't have a permanent home of its own. So, he set out to remedy that. With the initial blessing of the prophet Nathan, David began to imagine what it would be like to build a magnificent Temple for His God. He could see it in his mind's eye. This Temple would be one of the most glorious structures ever built. It would mirror the grandeur and glory of the God it honored. David began his plan to see the Temple come to fruition. There was just one problem. As Nathan prayed about the Temple that evening, it became clear that David wasn't supposed to be the one who would build it. Though David wanted to build a house for God, it was God who was going to build up the house of David for all eternity. Only, David's house wouldn't be one of stone and cedar, but of legacy and promise.



READ 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Why did God refuse David's offer to build Him a house? Why didn't God really need a Temple?

How had God already blessed David? In what ways does His blessing of David serve as an example of God's great grace towards us all?





READ 2 Samuel 7:18-29

How did David respond to God's injunction against building the Temple?

What was His reaction to the great promises God made to Him?

We often revere the heroes of the faith for the things they did. Abraham left his homeland to go settle in an unfamiliar land. Moses led the Israelites across the desert for 40 years. David himself conquered the giant Goliath armed only with a slingshot. Faith is most often defined by action. But sometimes, faith can be defined by the things we don't do. When David heard that God didn't want him to build the Temple, he didn't throw a fit. He didn't beg and plead with God to change his mind. He didn't try to force his own agenda and build the Temple anyway. Instead, David humbly submitted to what God had said. He praised God for the blessings already given and the promises yet to come. God's prohibition and plan might not have made sense to David, but he willingly submitted to what God had for him. Faith isn't just found in movement. It's also found in restraint. May we, like David, have a strong enough faith to trust God both in the progress and in the pause.



DAY FIVE: Winning Streak

We live in a world where things rarely live up to our expectations. You go to the trendy new restaurant in town only to be disappointed by their service. You pull the new car off the lot and it immediately breaks down. You spend weeks preparing for the big game only to watch your team crash and burn. High hopes can lead to deep disappointments. Not so with King David. Israel may have waited decades for his official ascension as king, but he was absolutely worth the wait. From establishing Jerusalem as Israel's capital to the return of the Ark, David's early years as king were marked by victory after victory. As his reputation and fame grew, so did the nation of Israel. It's estimated that the nation expanded from six thousand square miles to sixty thousand over the course of David's reign. In everything he did, David proved he was the king Israel had been waiting for.



READ 2 Samuel 8:1-14

How does this section of Scripture describe David's victories? How did he bring peace and security to his kingdom?

Take a look at Psalm 2. How does this Psalm speak to David's success as king? How does it remind us of King Jesus?





READ 2 Samuel 9:1-13

Who did David find and invite to live in the palace?

What does this show us about David's heart even as he found success as king?

A Perfect King. It's interesting how often our stories come back around to a perfect king presiding over a flourishing kingdom. King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Robin Hood longs for the return of the righteous King Richard. Even The Lion King has Mufasa as the great leader of the Pride Lands. The longing for a perfect king isn't just written in our stories – it's written in our souls! We want a ruler who will make us feel safe. We want a ruler who will make us feel seen. The early years of David's reign made it seem like that's the kind of king he was going to be. There was a time when it seemed like he couldn't lose. Victory followed victory. Unfortunately, the events that soon unfolded would prove that David was just as fallible and finite as any other human king.



WEEK FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? What was your biggest takeaway from this week's reading? When you hear the word 'worship,' what comes to mind? Based on what we've read about David, what one word would you choose to describe his worship?
2. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-23. What happened the first time David tried to bring the Ark home? What does this teach us about the seriousness of worship? What happened the second time? What does this teach us about the joy and exuberance of worship? How can we practice both those qualities of worship at the same time?
3. The Ark had been neglected during the reign of King Saul. How does this fit with the general themes of Saul's reign? What does David's decision to move the Ark show about the place he wanted God to occupy in his nation? What would someone say about the priority of worship in your life based on the way you live?
4. Based on this chapter (and any other verses you might think of), what are some of the qualities of true worship? As a Group, make a list of what you think genuine worship ought to look like. How should these things define our personal worship of God? How can they guide our corporate worship as the church?
5. Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17. What did David want to do for the Lord? How did God respond to this request? Reading a little later into the chapter, how did David respond to this news? What does it say about David that He didn't try to force his way into building the Temple? How should we respond when God tells us "No"?
6. As your Group closes, read Romans 12:1-2. What does this passage tell us about our true worship? What would it look like for you to live with this daily attitude of worship? Close in prayer by asking God to help you all live with this heart towards worshipping Him?





Week Five
A King Who Doesn't Fail

“When our hearts are not filled
with wonder for God, we wander
from Him...”

Eric Geiger



We live in a world where our heroes can let us down. It seems like not a week goes by without some story of a celebrity scandal or politician's corruption. Recent history has shown that not even church leaders or Christian teachers are exempt from the scent of scandal. When we see these things happen, our heart breaks that even the best of us are capable of the worst kinds of wickedness. The higher we put someone up on a pedestal, the further they have to fall. Imagine how devastating it would be, then, for a king to fall from grace. The aftershocks of his failure wouldn't just level his own life. They would threaten to bring the entire nation down with him.

On the day David wandered out on his rooftop, he had no idea how that one afternoon stroll would change his life. His affair with Bathsheba would become one of the most scandalous episodes in the whole of Scripture. David's temptations would unleash a tempest that threatened to sweep away his kingdom and divide his nation. Indeed, the ramifications of that day would reverberate throughout the rest of his reign. David's failures remind us that we all share a need for grace. From the palace walls to the poorest slums, all of us need forgiveness. Turns out that even David needed a King who would never let him down.



DAY ONE: David's Sin

Chapter 11 bankruptcy. We're used to hearing that phrase in a financial sense. A company overextends itself or fails to meet its quarterly projections and things start to fall apart. They need to reorganize, regroup, and see what went wrong. Oddly enough, 2 Samuel has its own story of chapter 11 bankruptcy. Only this one wasn't financial, but moral. In this chapter 11, David found himself somewhere he shouldn't have been, looking at something he shouldn't have seen. While that one indiscretion would have been enough, the spiral of events that followed would shake David's kingdom to its very core. What began as a moment on a rooftop evolved into a story of adultery, deception, and murder. The consequences of that single day would also ripple through David's family for years – bringing insurrection, violence, and heartbreak. David's chapter 11 wasn't about dollars; it was about what happens when we stop guarding our hearts.



READ 2 Samuel 11:1-13

According to 1 Samuel 11:1, where should David have been at this time of year? What does his presence in the palace show about his complacency?

Read 1 Samuel 21:5. What rule did David have for his fighting men? How did Uriah show more integrity than his king?





READ 2 Samuel 11:14-27

How did David compound the situation?

Why does sin always seem to lead to a spiral of more and more disobedience?

At the end of 2 Samuel 11, David might have thought that he had gotten away with it. Uriah was dead, Bathsheba was his wife, and no one seemed to be the wiser. But, chapter 11 closes with a chilling statement: **“But the Lord was displeased with what David had done.”** David might have hidden his sin from others, but he couldn’t hide it from God. The Lord knew what David had done. Worse, He knew what was in David’s heart. The man who had so passionately chased after God had let his passions get the best of him. Though others might be ignorant of David’s sin, God was not indifferent. He would deal with what David had done. Some of those consequences would come quickly. Others would take a while to develop. David would soon learn that even when sin feels free, it always comes with a cost.



DAY TWO: You're the Man!

Have you ever had to have a difficult conversation? One that makes your knees weak and your hands sweat? You know you have to confront someone or challenge them on something, but you also know that you don't want to. But the conversation has to happen. It's not difficult to imagine that's exactly how the prophet Nathan felt in 2 Samuel 12. God had told Nathan about David's sin. He had revealed the consequences David would face for his disobedience. Rather than speaking these things directly to David, God sent Nathan to have the conversation. As the prophet neared the palace steps, he had to feel some measure of trepidation. After all, David had already shown that he was willing to kill to keep this secret. Who's to say Nathan wouldn't be the next victim of the cover-up? So, Nathan approached the king's chamber with a story in his mind, a story that would help David see just how far he had fallen.



READ 2 Samuel 12:1-12

How did David respond to the story Nathan told? Why is it easier for us to recognize the sin in other people than it is to recognize our own sins?

What were some of the consequences of David's sin? Why does sin always have a cost attached to it?





READ 2 Samuel 12:13-25

What happened to David and Bathsheba's first son?

What does the birth/identity of their second son show us God's grace even in this circumstance?

Nathan may very well be one of the bravest characters in all of Scripture. His courage in confronting David kept the king's sin from compounding even further. David's seeming numbness to what he had done to Uriah left him in a precarious spot. Had his disobedience gone unchecked, who knows the slippery slope David might have traveled? Thankfully, Nathan pulled him from the ledge before it was too late. While Nathan could prevent any further damage to the king's legacy, he couldn't undo what David had already done. The king's blatant disregard for God's commands planted seeds of destruction that would soon sprout within his own household. Grace is real – but so are the ripple effects of disobedience.



DAY THREE: Repentance

It's been said that the two hardest words in the English language are, "I'm sorry." If that's true, then the three hardest words have to be "I was wrong." It's difficult for us to admit our faults. We want to pass the buck. We want to find someone else to blame. It's not our fault that we made that decision. It was because of our temperament, our upbringing, our Enneagram number. There are any number of excuses we can make to try and exonerate ourselves. Yet, when Nathan confronted David, the king didn't respond with explanations or justifications. He took responsibility for his actions. Better still, he repented of those actions. He recognized that the things he had done had created distance between him and his God. David wanted to close that gap. True repentance isn't just about admitting we were wrong. It's also about longing to be made right with God.



READ Psalm 51:1-19

When does this Psalm say it was written? As you read it, what stands out to you about the depths of David's repentance?

How does David pray that God will move him forward? What does he ask God to do in his life and heart from this moment on?





READ Psalm 32:1-11

How would you describe David's repentance in this Psalm?

How does your repentance compare/contrast to what David does here?



“I’m sorry. I was wrong.” Most of the problems in the world would be solved if we would all learn how to say those words. Many of the problems in our spiritual life would benefit from those words, as well. We don’t often know how to approach God after we sin. We’re afraid. We’re ashamed. We’re not sure we can trust Him with the weight of what we’ve just done. Even in the depths of his sin, however, David recognized that he could still give it over to God. All his insecurities. All his inadequacies. And most importantly, all his iniquities. God was there, waiting and willing to receive his wayward son again. The same is true for us today. When our sin brings us low, only God can lift us up. Like David, we can trust Him to remove our guilt and restore our hearts: **“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me”** (Psalm 51:10).



DAY FOUR: Rules and Consequences

Just as a parent sets the example in a home, so does a king set the example in a nation. His qualities and character (or lack thereof) have a way of setting the tone for an entire country. When David committed his sin with Bathsheba, he established a terrible precedent among his people. They saw a king who would use his power to serve his own pleasure. But, it wasn't just David's subjects who noticed this; his sons did, as well. As the consequences of David's disobedience began to bloom, they sprouted first among his own children. After all, they had a front-row seat to the things David had done. His failure as the head of the nation would bleed into failure as the head of his household. David's sin set a pattern his sons would repeat – with even more tragic results!



READ 2 Samuel 13:1-22

What did David's son Amnon do? How was his sin a mirror of the sin David committed with Bathsheba? In what ways do our children often take after us – for good and bad?

How did David respond to Amnon's sin (v.21)? Why don't you think David actually did anything about it?



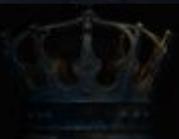
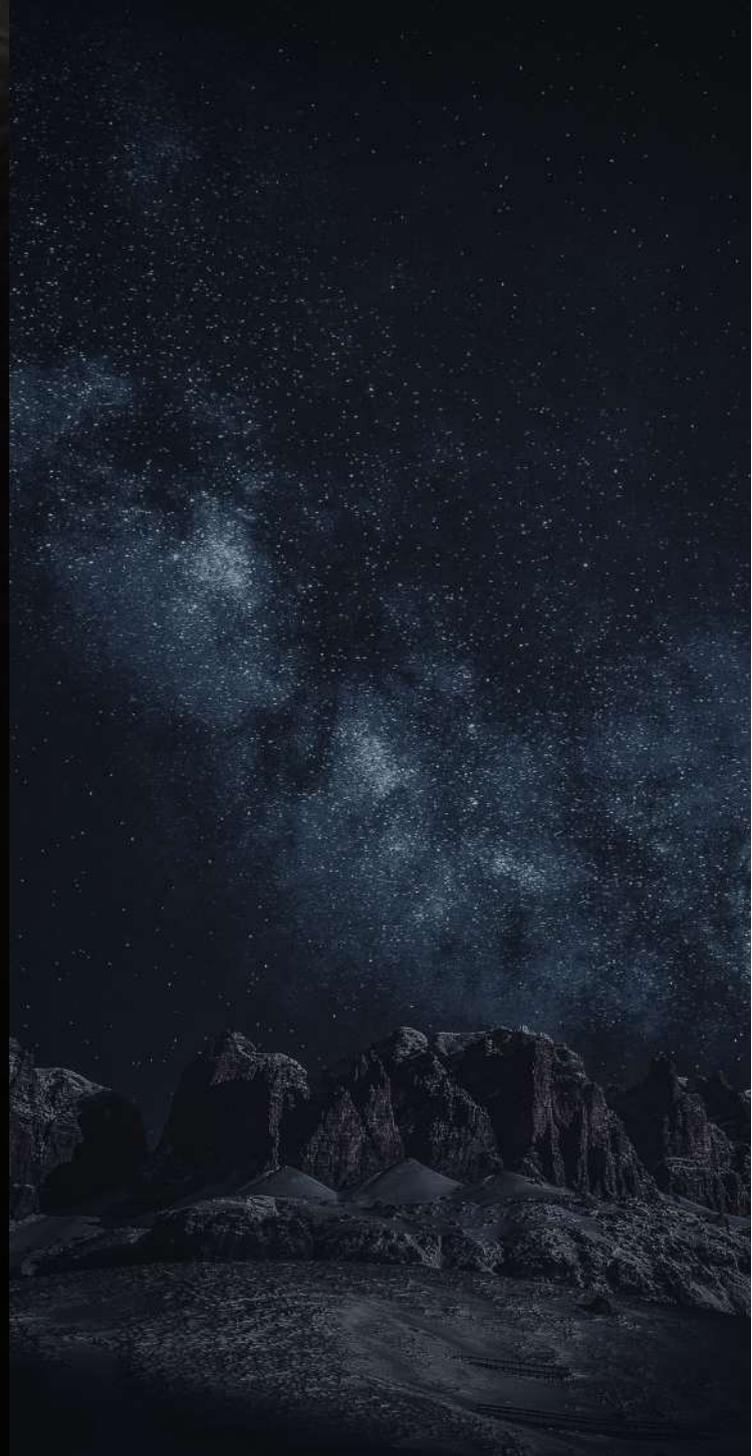


READ 2 Samuel 13:23-39

What did Absalom do in response to Amnon's sin? Why is it that sin always spirals out of our control?

How have you seen this in your life?

Sometimes, silence can be deafening. The word that goes unsaid can be more powerful than the most eloquent speech. David's silence in response to Amnon's sin spoke volumes. It spoke of David's regret about his own faults and failings. It spoke of his unwillingness to lead his ever-growing and ever-complicated family. Worse, it spoke of his complacency as a king and a father. David was paralyzed by his past failures just as much as he was by his past successes. He thought he could coast by on the victories he had already won. He thought he could just sit back and watch things work themselves out. But, as David would soon discover, ignoring the termites in your home doesn't make them go away. It only accelerates the rot – and hastens the eventual collapse.



DAY FIVE: Rebellion!

Though Absalom initially fled Israel after his murder of Amnon, David was eventually convinced to welcome his son back from exile. While the prince gave the appearance of allegiance, his fealty was a fraud. Absalom set a conspiracy in motion to depose his father and take the throne for himself. For four years of Absalom quietly built support, winning the hearts of the people and laying the groundwork for rebellion. When the time was right, he struck. He sent messengers throughout Israel to announce that he had been anointed and crowned as king. Absalom hoped to create enough chaos and division to drive David from Jerusalem and create an opening for his own reign to begin. The plan worked. For the first time since the days of Saul, David was forced to flee into the wilderness – not from a rival or a former friend, but from his own son.



READ 2 Samuel 15:13-31

What happened as David fled Jerusalem?

Why do you think there were those who stayed loyal to him?





READ 2 Samuel 16:15-17:14

How did Absalom defile his father's legacy? How did this fulfill the words spoken by the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12:11-12)?

How was God at work in the advice given to Absalom during his rebellion? What did God ultimately want to accomplish through this counsel?

An interesting thing happened as David fled the city of Jerusalem. A man named Shimei cursed David and his caravan as they walked past his village. Though his accusations were false, they must have struck a nerve: **“The Lord is paying you back for all the bloodshed in Saul’s clan... At last you will taste some of your own medicine, for you are a murderer”** (2 Sam. 16:8). Obviously, Shimei had no idea what he was talking about. David had famously refused to kill Saul. But there was a note of truth to the words David heard as he walked away from the capitol. He was a murderer. He had sinned against God. Absalom’s rebellion was a result of David’s own rebellion against God. The consequences of his sin had finally caught up with David. Thankfully, the mercy that led David through his entire life would eventually lead him home.



WEEK FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? How do you think David got himself into a place where he made such a catastrophic mistake? Was it complacency, pride, or something else? How does it make you feel to know that the “man after God’s own heart” could do something so scandalous?
2. Read 2 Samuel 11:14-27. After his affair with Bathsheba, David had her husband killed. How did his initial sin snowball even further? How did David dishonor both his friend and his God with his actions? Why does sin always take us further than we want to go? How do we see this in our own day?
3. Do you think David believed he had gotten away with his sin? In what ways does our sin lull us into thinking there aren’t any consequences? What are some of the “costs” that David’s sin carried with it? What are some of the costs of our own sin? If we could see the price tag on our sin, would we do it? Why or why not?
4. Read Psalm 51:1-19, David’s psalm of repentance after his sin. What sticks out to you in this song? How deep was David’s regret and remorse over his sin? What does this teach us about the true nature of repentance? How would David’s practice of repentance translate into your own life?
5. David was silent in the face of Absalom and Amnon’s sin. Why do you think he was unable or unwilling to confront the sin in his household? What does his silence say about his own guilt? How do we confront the sin in others while still recognizing our own mistakes (take a look at Matthew 7:3-5 for a good example!)?
6. As your Group closes, read Psalm 32:1-5. What did David say happened when he confessed his sin to God? What assurance do we have when we take our sin before God? How does Jesus – our perfect King – respond to our faults and failures? Pray that you would each walk in the reality of his grace and forgiveness this week.





Week Six
A King Who Lasts Forever

"There were three ways to kill a king: You could face him with all the force of your military might, and in the end one of you would fall. You could stab him from behind like a coward, cringing in the shadows. Or you could kill him slowly, from the inside out, so he wouldn't even know until it was too late..."

Traci Chee



Kingdoms aren't built to last. The Mongol Empire. The Qing Dynasty. The Roman Empire. No matter how great the nation or how vast the empire, human kingdoms seem to have an expiration date. Eventually, the greatness of a nation fails and her strength falters. Whether from external forces or internal rot, kingdoms collapse. The history of the world is littered with the ruins of great empires that rose and fell in the blink of an eye.

Kings aren't built to last. They pass away. Their stories and legacies pass into legend. They may get monuments and memorials, but their reign and rule has ended. They have no more power. No more influence. Nothing left to give their subjects. As David approached the end of his life, he looked back on a mixed legacy. Some of his choices set the nation on a path to prosperity. Some of his failures started the countdown to the end of Israel's kingdom. While he had sowed some of the seeds that would lead to Israel's destruction, God promised that a Son from his lineage would one day lead to all Israel's salvation. In his death, David would remind us of our need for a never-ending Kingdom led by a never-ending King!



DAY ONE: What We've Lost

David knew the wilderness well. As a boy, he sat out in the countryside tending to his family's flocks. He spent years in the wilderness running from Saul's threats and waiting for God to give him the throne he had been promised. Yet, it's no stretch of the imagination to think his wilderness time during Absalom's rebellion was the worst of them all. The urgency with which he had fled Jerusalem and the significance of what was at stake must have caused David incredible amounts of stress and grief. He briefly lost his home, his throne, his family, and his security. But nothing could have prepared him for the most permanent loss of them all: Absalom himself. David could only regain the things he had lost by losing his son.



READ 2 Samuel 18:1-18

How did Absalom die? In what ways did Absalom's own pride lead to his downfall? How does pride tempt us in the same ways today?

“God opposes the proud, but favors the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). How does pride keep us from recognizing our need for (and dependence on) God?





READ 2 Samuel 19:1-18

How did David react to Absalom's death?

How did the people of Israel respond to David after his return to Jerusalem?

When David returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he did so with much pomp and circumstance. His own return to the city after Absalom's rebellion was more like a funeral procession. Gone was the joy that had defined the earlier celebration and the sense of invincibility that had defined a king on the rise. In its place was darkness, melancholy, and a palpable sense of a kingdom in decline. The years – not to mention David's own mistakes – had caught up with him. Though he would be king again, he would never be the king he was before. Yet even in his brokenness, the heart that chased after God still beat within his chest. The crown may have been tarnished, but David's calling still remained.



DAY TWO: A Final Failure

There's a profound difference between accomplishment and legacy. One looks backwards, focusing on the things you've done and what you've been able to accumulate. The other looks forward, focusing instead on the things (and the people) you're going to leave behind. We spend our lives chasing after accomplishments; it's only in death that we recognize legacy is what we're really after. When David ordered a census of Israel's tribes, he almost certainly had his accomplishments in mind. He wanted to see how Israel had prospered because of his rule. Sensing this pride in David, God moved to punish the king for his hubris. Interestingly, the punishment would not only show David the error of his ways, it would become the soil from which one of his greatest legacies would grow.



READ 2 Samuel 24:10-17

What punishment did David (and the nation) receive? What was David's response in v. 17?

How does his desire to take the punishment point towards Jesus?





READ 2 Samuel 24:18-25

What happened when the plague finally stopped? How does this story show us David's heart for worship?

Take a look at 2 Chronicles 3:1-2. What was eventually built on the threshing floor? How did God use this incident in David's life to help him leave a legacy?



Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

Sometimes – most of the time, in fact – it's hard for us to see the reality of such a promise. We look at the darkness in the world and we wonder how that could possibly be true. Everything? God causes everything to work together for good? And yet, stories like the one in 2 Samuel 24 remind us that the promise is absolutely true. God used David's disobedience and the plague that followed to help David purchase the site of the Temple. On the very place where David offered to take the punishment for sin, Jesus would one day be condemned by Israel's religious leaders. With His death, the true King would make the sacrifice King David only imagined. Even in our failures, even through suffering, God is weaving a greater story—one that leads to healing, restoration, and hope.



DAY THREE: Life Song

If your life had a theme song, what would it sound like? Maybe you'd go with a Gilligan's Island type theme, where you explained your life story and caught people up on how you got here. Perhaps you'd aim for more of a Friends type song, talking about your core values and reassuring people that you'd always be there for them. You might even consider an Addams Family style instrumental with the occasional finger snap for emphasis. Whatever you chose, your theme song would reflect the story you lived – the lows, the highs, and the truths that have shaped you. As David approached the end of his life, he sat down and composed a song about all he had seen God do. God had proven Himself faithful over the years of David's life. The song he composed reflected his steadfast belief that God's faithfulness would continue long after David had left the scene. David's song reminds us that no matter what our melody sounds like, God is the One who weaves every note together.



READ 2 Samuel 22:1-51

As you read David's song, what stands out to you? What are some of the ways David describes the Lord? How have you experienced God in some of these same ways?

Thinking back through David's life, can you picture some of the events he mentions here? If you had to describe the ways God has led you, what images you would use?





READ 2 Samuel 23:1-7

What were David's final words? How did God's faithfulness – both in keeping His promises and in judgment – comfort David? How can it comfort us?

The book of 1 Samuel began with Hannah's song and her proclamation, **"No one is holy like the Lord! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God"** (1 Sam. 2:2). Now, here at the end of 2 Samuel, David picks up that song as he reflects on his own life: **"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock in whom I find protection"** (2 Sam. 22:2-3). In the years between those two declarations, Israel had been through a lot. They had become a monarchy, suffered the loss of their first king, fought wars with neighboring countries, and survived a coup that threatened to tear their nation apart. In all those things, God had been their Rock. He had stood firm in all the change. He didn't move. He didn't fail. Even when the ground beneath us threatens to crumble, He is the Rock that holds strong. That was the theme of David's life, and it can be the theme of ours, too.



DAY FOUR: David's Death

Benjamin Franklin once quipped that there's nothing certain in life besides death and taxes. While he was right about death, he missed one important fact about taxes: Kings don't have to pay them. Their treasury belongs to them, so they can do what they want. Kings, however, do have to face death. All the money and power in the world can't keep you from dying. Whether you are a prince or a pauper, the grave comes for us all. And so, the time came for David to die. The man who walked so bravely into the Valley of Elah to fight Goliath walked into the valley of the shadow of death to meet the final giant we all must face. As a young man, David had walked into the valley armed only with rocks, confident that his God would save him. As an old man, David walked into death's valley with that same trust, knowing that God was still his Rock. David's life and death reminds us that God is always our Rock, no matter the valley we find ourselves in.



READ 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

What had David accumulated for the building of the Temple? What does this show us about how he set his son Solomon up for success?

As you read David's final prayer over Israel and Solomon, what do you notice? How did David still give thanks to God in all things?





READ 1 Kings 2:1-12

What was David's final charge to Solomon in 2:1-4? How would you modify these words as you think about the legacy you want to leave behind?



While David had earlier struggled with his legacy, his final words to the nation (and to Solomon) show a man with his eyes on the future. He personally led the nation of Israel in the collection of supplies for the Temple. He wanted to see God's house built. He wanted to see Israel continue to thrive. He wanted to see his son succeed as the next king. More than that, he wanted to see the glory of God proclaimed across the world. God had delivered David so many times. He delivered him from the hand of Saul. He delivered him from the schemes of Absalom. He delivered David from the penalty of his sin. When David died, he died with the assurance that God was going to give him and his descendants an everlasting throne. What he couldn't have known was just how magnificent that promise would turn out to be.



DAY FIVE: His Father's Throne

David died with the promise that God was building him an eternal kingdom with one of his descendants eternally on the throne. His son Solomon made it seem like that promise was well on its way to being fulfilled. Guided by Solomon's wisdom, the nation of Israel experienced unprecedented wealth and prosperity. The Temple was built, the people flourished, and the nation seemed to be on the cusp of becoming a world power. Solomon's death, however, revealed the faults and fissures beneath the surface. The old division between the northern and southern parts of the kingdom flared into a national divorce. The nations of Israel (north) and Judah (south) couldn't possibly defend themselves the way a united kingdom could have. Eventually, both were conquered. The city of Jerusalem fell to foreign invaders and the line and legacy of David all but faded into obscurity. The promise of an eternal kingdom seemed like a broken promise from a better time. Yet, God's promises are never broken. They may not arrive on our timetable, but they always arrive. The promise that seemed lost was only waiting to be fulfilled in a way no one would expect.



READ Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 2:1-12

According to the angel, whose throne would Jesus occupy? How was God faithful to His promise to give David an everlasting King on the throne?

The Magi proclaimed that Jesus had been born a King. What gifts did they bring in response to Jesus' identity? How should we worship Him based on His identity?





READ Acts 2:22-36

What did Peter's first sermon say about how Jesus fulfilled God's promises to David? How does Jesus' resurrection prove Him to be the ultimate King?

“Jesus is King.” From the early days of Christianity, this proclamation was one of the core teachings of the church. In Rome, it meant that Jesus was the true King, even higher than Caesar himself. Throughout the centuries, it has reminded believers of their highest allegiance and their deepest affection. It's also a reminder of God's faithfulness. God made a great promise to David – a promise of an eternal king from his lineage. Jesus was born from the line of David. In fact, He was born in Bethlehem, the very same city where Samuel anointed the young David. From the moment of His birth, Jesus was a King like David – a King better than David! Jesus was the King who understands us, who fights our battles, who shows mercy, who honors God, and who doesn't fail. Best of all, He is the King who lasts forever! Because Jesus lives and reigns for all time, we know that God's promises to David – and His promises to us! – are never going to fail...



Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.

- Hebrews 12:28

WEEK SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you in the video teaching? As you read about David's final years, what stood out to you? How does his final failure with the census speak to us about the difference between accomplishment and legacy?
2. Read 2 Samuel 24:10-25. What happened after David took a census of the nation of Israel? How did he and his people suffer as a result of this mistake? Why do you think David took the census? Was it for his glory or God's? Why are we so tempted to focus on what we've done rather than what God has done?
3. What request does David make in 2 Samuel 24:17? Why do you think he felt this way? How does his request to God point us towards King Jesus? As you think back through David's story, what are some ways his faults and imperfections make us long for the Perfect King?
4. If you were being honest, would you say that you focus more on legacy or on accomplishment? What makes you say that? Why is it more important for us to think about who we're leaving behind above what we're leaving behind? How can we as believers invest our lives towards those who come after us?
5. Read (or summarize) 2 Samuel 22. This chapter records David's final song. What stands out to you in these verses? What were some of the dominant themes of David's "life song"? If you were to compose a song about the things God has done for you, what would you include? How has your experience been similar to (or different from) David's?
6. As your Group closes, share your biggest takeaway from this study of David's life. In what ways did David inspire you? In what ways did he frustrate you? How is King Jesus the ultimate fulfillment of King David? Close in prayer by thanking God that we have a perfect King whose Kingdom will never end.





THE ONCE & FUTURE KING