

THE SECRETS OF LEADERSHIP 2
A Devotional Study of 2 Samuel
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Recently God laid it upon my heart to do a study in the lives of three very diverse men in the Old Testament: Samuel, Saul, and David. I wanted to learn the secrets of leadership: what is good and what is not so good. So, I invite you to read with me and study with me 1 and 2 Samuel. I trust these studies will be a blessing to you.

So, how about some thoughts from Second Samuel 2, where the focus is on the struggle between those loyal to David and those loyal to Saul's family.

- I. David anointed king over Judah (vs. 1-7)**
- II. Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, made king in Israel (vs. 8-11)**
- III. The battle at Gibeon (vs. 12-17)**
- IV. Abner kills Asahel (vs. 18-23)**
- V. The truce between Abner and Joab is declared (vs. 24-32)**

When I was a young boy I would join with some friends in my neighborhood and we would play "king of the hill." The lot across the street from our house had a nice hillside, and so we would don our battle gear and try to take the hill from the king. Now we soon learned that there was room on the hill for only one king. Whoever could depose the king by pushing him off the hill became the new king. But you had to be on your guard lest you too be pushed off. As I look back decades later upon that game, I remember the turmoil that went with it, much like those events described in this chapter. Israel was a divided nation with two kings, two armies, two different loyalties. There would not be any sense of quiet until the nation resolved the question of who would be "king of the hill."

Many times my life could be described by scenes from this chapter. Like Paul describes in Romans 7, there is a constant battle for the control of my life. Two different kings desire the control of my life. Each day and, yes every hour of the day, I must decide who I will let reign as the "king of my hill." Sadly, I must confess, that too often I let the king of self reign rather than Jesus Christ. How I need to be more careful in my choosing. "Lord, it is the desire of my heart to be close to you. Give me the wisdom and courage to always make you my 'king of the hill.'"

In Abner and Joab, and I might add Joab's brothers - at least Asahel, We see a contrast in leadership styles. Joab and Asahel were aggressive. No matter the consequences they forced the fight. Joab and his men faced an insurmountable

challenge in trying to assault the well-defended positions of Abner, and in trying they would have brought much Bloodshed upon the battlefield. Abner, on the other hand, appears to be more diplomatic. He twice warned Asahel to stop his pursuit. And he was the negotiator of the cease-fire with Joab. It would appear that Abner, as a leader, was able to see the bigger picture, while Joab had a much more narrow focus. "Lord, I want to develop the qualities of an Abner. Help me to see the bigger picture."

As we turn to the Word, we see the continued struggle between David and Saul's family for the right to reign over Israel. In our study of chapter 3 of Second Samuel, the focus will be upon two brilliant army commanders, Abner and Joab. A study of their lives is a study in contrasts. So, let's hear what the Word has to say.

I. David's family (vs. 1-5)

II. Abner defects to David's camp (vs. 6-21)

III. Joab murders Abner (vs. 22-39)

It is often heard that revenge is sweet. But if that be so, then salt tastes as wonderful as a chocolate candy. If revenge is so sweet, then why are so many families and lives destroyed by it? In American history and folklore is the story of the continual feud between two families - the McCoys and the Hatfields. The cycle of revenge, once initiated, is hard to break. Abner, the captain of Saul's army who had remained loyal to Saul's family even after his death, became the victim of Joab's revenge for the death of his brother. Oh the cruel treachery of Joab versus the kindness of David. Joab saw Abner as an enemy. David saw him as a friend. The motive for revenge had eaten away the kindness in the heart of Joab. How destructive hatred can be! Paul was so correct when he wrote to the Romans that revenge should be left in the hands of God. Our task is to forgive and to let God settle the accounts.

One may wonder what the problem was in Abner's taking one of Saul's concubines. It sounds like such a silly thing to get bent-out-of-shape about. Yet, the custom of the time dictated that everything belonging to the former king now belonged to the present king, and that would include his harem. When Abner slept with one of Saul's concubines, Ish-bosheth, Saul's son and the present king, took that as a direct assault upon his throne. Now the throne of Israel was tenuous at best. Abner, being the commander of the army, had much more power than did the king. Once again, in this chapter, we observe Abner seeing the big picture. He understood that God had given the kingdom to David, and being the man of vision he was, he worked toward that end. His plans were thwarted by the narrow-minded, revenge-seeking attitude of Joab. One died a hero in the eyes of the people, the other lived as a pretender-hero.

Let's see what 2 Samuel 4 shares with us. It is an account of the death of Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son.

- I. Ish-Bosheth is murdered (vs. 1-6)**
- II. News of his death is made known to David (vs. 7-8)**
- III. David executes Ish-Bosheth's killers (vs. 9-12)**

It would appear that David did not lack for those who thought it their task to help David get revenge upon Saul's family. Ish-Bosheth was in a state of panic now that Abner, the captain of his army, was dead. Perhaps even he had now begun to think that it was time to appeal to David and trust that he would be gracious and merciful to him as he had been to his father. But we will never know if those were his thoughts because two rouges believed that God had called them to bring revenge upon Ish-Bosheth on behalf of David. Now some might want to say that David is being harsh here. But look at David's reasoning. While running from Saul, on two separate occasions he could have killed Saul himself, in fact he was encouraged to do so. Yet, consistently his response was that he could not lay his hand against the Lord's elect. So, if David, Israel's future king, could not take his own revenge, how could he condone the actions of these two men? David walked as a man of high integrity and he expected his followers to do the same. His cry was for them to be followers of himself even as he followed God. That is real leadership.

Second Samuel and its account of the life of King David has always fascinated me. It is a wonderful book from which to study leadership principles. I trust you are finding that to be so in your own study of this great book. Chapter 5 describes the coronation of David and his first acts as king of Israel:

- I. David becomes king over Israel (vs. 1-5)**
- II. David conquers Jerusalem (vs. 6-12)**
- III. David's family (vs. 13-16)**
- IV. Victories over the Philistines (vs. 17-25)**

Although David was the king, he knew that he also was under the authority of God. It is easy when we are placed in positions of importance, where we have the sense of power at our fingertips, and when everything seems to be going in a right direction, to have the feeling that we are in charge. David was now king over all of Israel. All the armies were now united behind him. He had received recognition from other world leaders as being the ruler of all Israel. And God has prospered him. For many, with all these things in their favor, when those arrogant Philistines reared their ugly heads once again and threatened the stability of the nation, it would have been simple just to march out to battle with their armies. But not David.

He might be king over Israel, but he also had a king - God. As leaders it is always wise to remember that we are just servants, that we are accountable to another. We must not strategize according to the flesh but seek wisdom and guidance from God. And not just once, but every time the enemy strikes as did David. Then God will make our way successful. So, let us not forget that we are to be servant-leaders.

An interesting statement is made in verse 21. Reading it reminded me of another scene recorded in First Samuel 5. There the Philistines had captured the ark of God and had brought it into the temple of their god. The next morning the mighty god Dagon was fallen on his face before the ark of God. In the verse here in Second Samuel 5, David and his men captured the idols of the Philistines. What was their impact upon Israel's God? Absolutely nothing! God remained powerful. He still was the mighty God. No other gods stood before Him. All other gods were impotent when compared to Him. The Philistines suffered disastrous consequences after capturing the ark of God; the Israelites won an incredible victory after capturing the gods of the Philistines. Whose god would you rather serve?

In Second Samuel chapter 6, the story is told of the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. A story that should have been full of celebration ended with a tragic twist. Two people - Uzzah and Michal missed the joy.

- I. The ark is brought to Jerusalem (vs. 1-5)**
- II. Uzzah's disobedience and death (vs. 6-7)**
- III. Ark taken to the house of Obed-Edom (vs. 8-11)**
- IV. David rejoices in the ark's return (vs. 12-23)**

A time of celebration became an occasion for grief. Triumph turned into tragedy. In his eagerness to bring the Ark of the Lord into the City of David, the newly crowned king had failed to consult the priests concerning the proper way to transport the Ark. If only David had taken time to have done his homework Uzzah would not have died. God had commanded centuries earlier that only the priests could move the Ark and that was to be done by means of carrying it on poles, not an ox cart. David is to be applauded for his enthusiasm but it needed to be directed properly. But, often through our errors in judgment, God causes us to grow and to mature. That happened for David and I have experienced that in my life as well. Mistakes in judgment can be beneficial. It all depends upon how we react to them.

The attitude of Michal has intrigued me. When we were first introduced to her in First Samuel 18:20, we were told that she loved David. Saul, her father, then gave her in marriage to David. Because of her love, she sided with her husband in his escape from her father (1 Samuel 19:11-17). It would appear that Saul then gave

Michal to another in marriage (2 Samuel 3:15). David, after being established as king, desired her to return to his harem, and so she was brought. But there was no love this time. She returned with a measure of contempt that played itself out in this chapter (see verses 16 and 20). Her heart was no longer with David. Her heart belonged to another whom she could not have and she despised David and his actions. David accuses her of speaking out for her father and not for him, but I think David erred here. I think Michal grieved her separation from her husband. If David had read her heart, I believe healing would have occurred. But, to our knowledge, Michal probably died a bitter, lonely woman. How sad!

God is faithful to His promises. He is faithful to all He has written in His Word. God is consistently consistent in all that He does. In a world where change is about the only constant, it is so refreshing to just rest in an unchanging God. At times I am just overwhelmed with Who God is. And I marvel that He has chosen me to serve Him. I wonder if that is how David felt when God shared with him His plans. The answer is found in Second Samuel 7, our focus for this week.

I. David's desire to build a temple for the ark (vs 1-3)

II. God's message to David through Nathan (vs. 4-17)

A. God had not dwelt in a house before (vs. 4-7)

B. David to become great (vs. 8-11)

C. David's throne to be established (vs. 12-17)

III. David's prayer of commitment (vs. 18-29)

David's great disappointment at being told that God would not allow him to build a temple for the Lord was tempered by the overwhelming magnitude of God's great gift to him. David could not build a house for God, but God was going to build a house for David. That house would be an eternal one. David is overcome as he thinks of the magnitude of God's sovereignty. How long has it been since you, since I, have been so moved. We hardly give thought to God's sovereignty today. Our emphasis is upon His love and mercy, His grace and faithfulness. In their own right, those are great attributes of God. But because we are self-centered we are slow to emphasize God's sovereignty. God is still the ruler yet. God still sits on the throne. God still orchestrates the affairs of this world and of my own life. We may not understand the how or the why of God's ways. But, like David, we just need to praise God for His ways.

The promise God made with David was an unconditional one. It was not based upon what God had done or would do. Furthermore, it was not based upon what David's children would do. God knew that they would mess up and need disciplined (see verses 13-16), but yet God would not take the kingdom from the

hands of David. This very fact is what makes the promises of God so awesome. They are all grounded upon the eternal, unchanging nature of God. We can and will err, but God is so very faithful (read 2 Timothy 2:13). Praise God!