

# BIBLE CHALLENGE

## A 1 week study of the book of 2 Samuel

The story so far: Saul is dead; David is king, having consolidated his reign in his new capital city, Jerusalem. Saul's death presented a problem: Who would be the next king – Saul's remaining son by inheritance, or David by God's divine appointment? A series of battles ensue in which David gains the upper hand until he is finally anointed publicly (previously, remember, he had been anointed only privately by Samuel) as king over Israel. David decides to make Jerusalem not only his political capital, but the religious one as well, which is where we pick up the story.

Monday:

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-23

What to look for:

- In sending for the Ark of the Covenant (remember: it was in the Ark that the Israelites kept the sacred law of God which they had received during their wilderness wanderings and which they had carried with them into the promised land. The Philistines had carried the ark off with them during their wars with the Israelites) David was acknowledging that the true ruler of Israel was God – something Saul had never been able to do. Setting the Ark up in Jerusalem indicated God's reign.
- Exodus 25 provides instructions that the Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites (the priestly clan). What happens here, however, is that in carrying it on an ox cart, in the same way the Philistines paraded their pagan gods around, they were not following God's law.
- Note how David behaves when the Ark finally arrives in Jerusalem. He allows himself to be undignified in his joy. When his wife (Saul's daughter), Michal, chastises him for his unrestrained behavior, David makes clear to her that it is God and no one else before whom he is dancing, and that the only one whose opinion matters was the one before whom he dances – God.
- Do you feel the same passion toward God that motivated David? Are you willing to be undignified in your love of God?

Tuesday:

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17

What to look for:

- This is a key chapter both for the rest of the Old Testament story as well as for Christians. In this reading, God makes a promise to David that he will establish a kingdom – a dynasty – from David's line that will endure forever and through which David's descendants will rule.

- Note the word play taking place in this passage: In the opening verses David is toying with the idea of building a house for God (temple), while beginning in verse 11b God is saying, “I will build a house for you”, namely a royal dynasty that will last forever.
- This promise of God in verses 11b-17 – another one of the unconditional covenants he has made, as with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc – will form the basis of hope for the nation of Israel throughout the remainder of the Old Testament. Regardless of the circumstances to come the people will cling to this promise that God would give them a kingdom established from David’s line.
- Christians see this promise as coming to fulfillment in Jesus. God keeps his promise in an unexpected way through establishing his kingdom, as he promised, through one of David’s descendants – Jesus. To see how the New Testament approaches this promise and connects it to Jesus, look up Matthew 1:1, Luke 1:31-33, Acts 13:21-23

Wednesday:

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-17, 26-27

What to look for:

- David was a great man but not a perfect man as evidenced by this story. This is a classic story of how sin works its way into life and how we try to deal with it on our own.
- Note how David’s downfall begins innocuously enough at verse 2. It begins with a simple glance, an ordinary action that opens a tiny fissure in his life through which sin will seep like water. It sometimes is the smallest, most mundane actions and choices that hardly seem critical at the time that open a crack in our faith and values that at first we may hardly notice....but that allows, ever so subtly, the poison to leak in. Why do you think David was vulnerable to sin at this time?
- On finding out that Bathsheba is pregnant, David attempts to manage his sin by covering it up. Vs. 6-9 is plan A: Make it look like the baby is Uriah’s, her husband. When Uriah doesn’t go home due to his own integrity, plan B in vs. 12-13 is to get Uriah drunk and try again. Once again the plan is unsuccessful. In vs. 14 and following David progresses from adultery to planning a murder and having it carried out.
- What are some of the ways in which we try to manage our sin – such as running away from it, denying it, refusing to face the truth? What are some other ways?

Thursday:

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-25

What to look for:

- The final sentence of yesterday’s reading indicated the incident with Bathsheba was not over. God is not pleased and so Nathan, a prophet, goes to David and tells him a parable – a story – over

which David's sense of justice is offended and he reacts predictably.

- Imagine how David felt when he heard Nathan's words, "You are the one." They were the same words he had heard when Samuel had identified him as God's choice to replace Saul as king, but now they meant something completely different.
- Look at 12:13 for David's response. He recognizes how far he's fallen from God's dream for his life, David hangs his head and tells the truth. David is worrying that this is hurting his relationship with God.
- What does that suggest to you about the importance of repentance and the confession of sin? What purpose does repentance and confession serve?
- Note that in vs. 13 and following, David is forgiven, but his actions will still have consequences.

Friday:

Read Psalm 51

What to look for:

- Sometime after this event, David wrote a Psalm. Psalm 51 is often associated with this incident. Note in it the step by step process for dealing in a healthy way with brokenness, sin, and guilt. This Psalm was likely used in worship as a guide to confession.
- Vs. 3-5 acknowledges that all that is wrong in his relationship with God must be laid at the author's feet.
- Vs. 5 allows for no wiggle room: we've been guilty from the beginning.
- Vs. 6-14 asks God to do what we cannot do on our own – create in us a clean heart.
- What made David a great king was that, though he was terribly flawed, above all else, he wanted to remain close to God. The deepest holes we dig for ourselves are never deeper than the grace that is waiting to lift us up.