

SECOND SAMUEL

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH



TEACHER NOTES

Welcome, Teacher

How to use this 13-session study of 2 Samuel

Thank you for giving your time to teach middle school youth. Second Samuel is the true story of King David, a man after God's own heart who still made terrible mistakes, and of the people around him. Some of them show us the qualities God admires. Others show us the pride, revenge and disobedience God despises. Over thirteen 45-minute sessions your students will see both, and they will see Jesus Christ, the Son of David and the King whose kingdom has no end.

Each session gives you a clear Big Idea, a key verse from the New King James Version, historical and cultural background for you, three teaching points written in student-friendly language, a list of who God admires and who God despises in the passage, a 'See Jesus' connection, an activity, discussion questions with 'listen for' notes, a 45-minute plan, a prayer, and a post-session Think / Feel / Do reflection. A one-page student handout and a podcast episode go with each session.

The three lenses we use in every session

- **God admires.** Honor, humility, courage, loyalty, kindness to the weak, truth-telling, repentance, patient trust in God's timing.
- **God despises.** Pride, revenge, treachery, flattery, abuse of power, cover-ups, cruelty, and breaking promises.
- **See Jesus.** Every session ends by pointing to the perfect King whom David and the others could only picture.

The 45-minute plan

Minutes	Segment	What you do
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Open with the session's hook question or game.
5–10	Set the Scene	Read the passage or tell it briefly. Use the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three teaching points, about five minutes each.
25–33	Activity	The hands-on activity in the session.
33–37	See Jesus	Read the NKJV verse and share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three discussion questions.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the handout. Pray together. Send the podcast link home.

The 13 sessions at a glance

#	Passage	Title	Key verse
1	2 Samuel 1	How the Mighty Have Fallen	2 Samuel 1:19
2	2 Samuel 2-4	Stronger and Stronger	2 Samuel 3:1
3	2 Samuel 5-6	The King and the Ark	2 Samuel 5:10
4	2 Samuel 7	God's Promise to David	2 Samuel 7:16
5	2 Samuel 8-10	A Seat at the King's Table	2 Samuel 9:7
6	2 Samuel 11	When a Strong King Falls	2 Samuel 11:27

#	Passage	Title	Key verse
7	2 Samuel 12	You Are the Man	2 Samuel 12:13
8	2 Samuel 13-14	Protect the Hurting	2 Samuel 14:14
9	2 Samuel 15-16	Stolen Hearts and Faithful Friends	2 Samuel 15:21
10	2 Samuel 17-19	A Fallen Rebel and a Forgiving King	2 Samuel 19:23
11	2 Samuel 20-21	A Wise Woman and a Faithful Mother	2 Samuel 20:19
12	2 Samuel 22-23	The Lord Is My Rock	2 Samuel 22:2-3
13	2 Samuel 24	The Threshing Floor	2 Samuel 24:24

BACKGROUND FOR THE TEACHER

About 2 Samuel

Author, date, structure and timeline

Second Samuel was originally one scroll with First Samuel. The author is not named. The prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad are connected with the record (1 Chronicles 29:29), and the final form was written after Solomon's death. The book covers about forty years, David's reign from roughly 1010 to 970 BC. Its central message is that God keeps His promise to build David's house forever (chapter 7), and that this promise reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

How the book is built

Chapters	Theme	Sessions
1–4	David becomes king of Judah; a divided nation	1–2
5–10	David triumphant: Jerusalem, the ark, God's covenant, kindness to the weak	3–5
11–12	David's great sin and repentance	6–7
13–20	Consequences: a broken family, rebellion and a restored king	8–11
21–24	Appendix: promises kept, David's song and last words, mighty men, the census and the altar	11–13

Approximate timeline

About	Event	Passage
1010 BC	Saul and Jonathan die at Mount Gilboa; David mourns	2 Sam 1
1010–1003	David reigns at Hebron over Judah	2 Sam 2–4
1003	David king over all Israel; captures Jerusalem; brings the ark	2 Sam 5–6
About 1000	God's covenant with David; kindness to Mephibosheth	2 Sam 7–10
About 990	David's sin; Nathan confronts him; Solomon born	2 Sam 11–12
About 980–975	Amnon and Tamar; Absalom's revolt and death	2 Sam 13–19
Later years	Sheba's revolt; famine; David's song; the census	2 Sam 20–24
About 970	David's death; Solomon reigns	1 Kings 1–2

Dates are approximate; scholars differ by a few years.

REFERENCE

Who God Admires and Who God Despises

A summary chart for the whole study

Session	God admires	God despises
1	David; Jonathan; David's men	Saul; The Amalekite messenger; Gath and Ashkelon (the Philistines)
2	David; The men of Jabesh Gilead; Abishai and the warriors who stayed loyal	Joab; Abner (at times); Rechab and Baanah
3	David; Obed-Edom; The Levites	Uzzah; The leaders who used the cart; Michal
4	David; Nathan	Pride that says 'I deserve this'; Hasty assumptions
5	David; Mephibosheth; Joab and Abishai (in chapter 10)	Hanun; Hanun's advisors; Ziba (watch for him)
6	Uriah the Hittite; Joab's soldiers and the men of Israel	David (in this chapter); Joab (for following the order); Abuse of power
7	Nathan; David (when confronted); The poor man in the story	The rich man in the parable (and David as the rich man); Hiding sin; Making excuses
8	Tamar; The woman of Tekoa; Anyone who listens, believes and acts	Amnon; Jonadab; David (in his inaction)
9	Ittai the Gittite; David (in humility); Hushai and the priests	Absalom; Ahithophel; Ziba
10	Hushai; The unnamed woman at Bahurim; Shobi, Machir and Barzillai	Absalom; Ahithophel; Joab (for ignoring the king's command)
11	The wise woman of Abel; Rizpah; David	Sheba; Joab; Saul (in the Gibeonite matter)
12	David (as a worshiper); The three mighty men; Eleazar and Shammah	Pride and rebellion (summarized); Rulers who rule by force and cruelty; The 'sons of rebellion' (23:6)
13	David (in repentance); Gad the prophet; Araunah the Jebusite	Pride and trusting in numbers; Ignoring a warning; Cheap worship

A WORD ABOUT DAVID

David appears in both columns because the Bible is honest. He is the shepherd who trusted God, honored his enemies and waited on God's timing, and also the king who fell badly in chapter 11. Help students see that God's grace is greater than our failures, and that sin still has real consequences. David's story points us to a better King, Jesus.

Teaching Hard Passages Wisely

Sessions 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 need extra care

Second Samuel is honest about sin and its effects. These sessions include adultery and murder (6), sexual assault of a young woman (8), battle deaths and a suicide (10), executions and a mother's grief (11), and a plague (13). Please:

- Read the 'Sensitive material' box in each session before you teach. Tell the story at the level of pattern and consequence, not detail.
- Always have two screened adults present, in line with your church's child-protection policy.
- Tell students that if anyone has been hurt, or a friend is in danger, they can speak to you or another safe adult. Never promise to keep a secret about harm.
- Know your reporting duty. Idaho law (Idaho Code 16-1605) requires anyone who has reason to believe a child has been abused to report it; confirm the details with your church leadership. The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-422-4453.
- If a student talks about hopelessness or hurting themselves, stay calm, do not leave them alone, and involve a parent and pastor right away. In the U.S., the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available by call or text at 988.

Please confirm these Scripture quotations

All Scripture is quoted from the New King James Version. During preparation, the quotations from 2 Samuel chapters 1–16 and 20–24 were compared against the NKJV text and corrected. Bible Gateway blocked access while I was checking chapters 17–19 and the New Testament and Psalm cross-references, so those could not be compared. Please confirm these against your printed NKJV before copying them into slides or print: 2 Samuel 17:14, 18:5, 18:33, 19:23 and 19:30; John 1:41; Luke 23:34; Isaiah 9:7; John 2:4; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:32–33; Ephesians 2:4–5; Hebrews 4:15; Philippians 2:8; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:3–4, 34:18, 41:9, 51:10 and 103:12; Matthew 11:28; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 5:19 and 1:20; 1 Peter 2:23 and 1:18–19; Romans 5:8; Luke 1:69; John 8:12, 10:11 and 13:1; 1 Corinthians 10:4 and 15:26; Revelation 22:16.

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How the Mighty Have Fallen

A King Who Honors

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who honor others, even people who treated them badly, and who grieve with real love instead of celebrating when an enemy falls.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 1:19

“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!”

Background for the teacher

WHERE WE ARE IN HISTORY. 2 Samuel picks up the very day 1 Samuel ends. King Saul and his son Jonathan have died in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa (about 1010 BC). David has been running from Saul for years. He is staying in Ziklag, a town in the far south, after rescuing the families that the Amalekites kidnapped (1 Samuel 30). The book was written by an unnamed author after Solomon’s reign. Jewish tradition connects the prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad with the record (1 Chronicles 29:29). Together 1 and 2 Samuel were one scroll.

THE AMALEKITES. They were the first nation to attack Israel after the Exodus (Exodus 17:8-16). God told Saul to stop them completely, and Saul disobeyed by sparing their king and the best animals (1 Samuel 15). So it is a sad irony that an Amalekite appears at David’s door claiming credit for finishing Saul. His story does not match 1 Samuel 31:4-5, where Saul fell on his own sword. The man most likely made up the tale and brought Saul’s crown and armband hoping for a reward.

CULTURE NOTES. Tearing clothes, weeping and fasting were the normal way to show deep grief. ‘The Lord’s anointed’ means a king set apart by oil poured on his head as a sign that God chose him. Attacking such a person was treated as attacking God’s choice. The ‘Book of Jashar’ (1:18) was a collection of poems about Israel’s heroes that has not survived. ‘The Song of the Bow’ was taught to the people so that they would remember. In ancient times a song was how a nation kept its history.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “Think of someone who was unkind to you and then got in trouble. Did you feel happy, or did something feel different inside?” Take two or three answers. Then say: “Today a young man hears that his worst enemy is dead. Watch what David does.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 1 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David honors a man who hunted him; (2) God takes lying and disrespect seriously; (3) David turns grief into a song of love.
25–33	Activity	HONOR CARDS. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read John 1:41, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David honors a man who hunted him

Saul chased David across the wilderness for years. David had two chances to hurt Saul and refused both times, saying he would never harm the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 24 and 26). Now Saul is dead and David's problems seem solved. Most people would cheer. Instead David tears his clothes, weeps, and fasts until evening. His men do the same (1:11-12). Real honor shows up when it costs us something, like honoring a person we do not enjoy being around.

2. God takes lying and disrespect seriously

The Amalekite expected a reward. David asked him a question that exposed the problem: "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" (1:14). Then David said, "Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the Lord's anointed'" (1:16). Teach students that the man was judged by his own words. Whether he lied or told the truth, he boasted about harming the king God had chosen. God cares how we treat leaders and how we treat truth.

3. David turns grief into a song of love

David writes a lament and tells the people to teach it to everyone. He praises Saul for what was good, and he speaks of Jonathan with deep love: "Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, And in their death they were not divided" (1:23). Jonathan had given David his robe and sword and had been happy for David to be the next king (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 23:17). David does not hide that he is sad, and he does not pretend that Saul was perfect. He chooses to remember what was good and to love well. He also wants God's people to remember their fallen leaders, so he has the song taught to the children of Judah (1:18).

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David: Honors God's choices and grieves honestly instead of gloating over a fallen enemy.

Jonathan: Loyal, humble friend who gladly stepped aside so God's plan for David could happen.

David's men: Stood beside their leader in his sorrow and mourned for the nation (1:11-12).

GOD DESPISES

Saul: Started with great promise but disobeyed God, was jealous of David, and stopped listening to the Lord (1 Samuel 13, 15, 18). His life is a warning that a good start does not guarantee a good finish.

The Amalekite messenger: Lied to get a reward and boasted about harming God's anointed. Greed and flattery lead to disaster.

Gath and Ashkelon (the Philistines): Celebrated the fall of God's people. David asks that the news not be told there so that they do not rejoice (1:20).

See Jesus

John 1:41

He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).

'Messiah' and 'Christ' both mean 'Anointed One.' David honored the anointed king of his day. Jesus is THE Anointed One, the perfect King that every king in Israel pointed toward. Notice how Jesus treated His enemies. He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41) and prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). David's tender heart toward his enemy gives us a small picture of the love of Christ.

Activity

HONOR CARDS. Give each student an index card. Ask them to write a short note (they do not have to share it) to a person who is hard to honor: a rival, a bossy sibling, a teacher they find tough. The note must say one true, good thing

about that person and one prayer for them. Allow volunteers to share what they wrote about a general type of person without naming names. Remind students that David's song had both honest grief and real honor.

Discussion questions

1. David was told his enemy had died. What would you expect him to do? What did he really do?

TEACHER: *Listen for: celebrate versus mourn. Point out that David wept, fasted and wrote a song.*

2. Why do you think David was so careful about not harming 'the Lord's anointed'?

TEACHER: *Listen for: God chose Saul, so David trusted God to handle Saul. David did not take matters into his own hands.*

3. What is the difference between honoring someone and agreeing with everything they do?

TEACHER: *Listen for: David knew Saul's faults but still honored the office and remembered good things. We can respect people and still say no to wrong.*

4. What do you think made Jonathan such a great friend?

TEACHER: *Listen for: loyalty, humility, happy for David's success, no jealousy.*

5. Who in your life needs you to show honor this week? What is one way you could do it?

TEACHER: *Let students answer privately or in pairs. Do not force sharing.*

Sensitive material

Saul's death is mentioned. Keep it brief: Saul was badly wounded in battle and died. If a student asks, say the Bible tells us Saul died in a battle where he was seriously hurt and that this was a very sad day for Israel. If any student seems troubled, follow up privately.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the perfect Anointed King. Teach us to honor people the way David did, even when it is hard. Help us grieve with love and never be happy when someone falls. Make us loyal friends like Jonathan. Amen.

What we learned

- God admires people who honor others, even difficult ones.
- We do not celebrate when enemies are hurt, because God does not.
- Jesus is the true Anointed King who loves His enemies.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David honored Saul even though Saul had treated him badly. What does this teach you about how God wants us to treat difficult people?

FEEL: Have you ever felt happy when someone you did not like got in trouble? How do you feel about that now after seeing David's heart?

DO: Name one person you will honor this week and what you will say or do to show it.

PODCAST: Session 1 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

Stronger and Stronger

Waiting on God's Timing

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who wait for His timing and refuse to grab power by wrong means, and He is displeased with those who use violence, revenge and trickery to get ahead.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 3:1

“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”

Background for the teacher

A DIVIDED NATION. David was anointed by Samuel as a teenager (1 Samuel 16), but years passed before he sat on a throne. After Saul's death David asked God where to go, and God said Hebron (2:1). Hebron was a city in Judah, about 20 miles south of Jerusalem, where Abraham and Sarah were buried. The men of Judah anointed David king over their tribe (2:4). Meanwhile Abner, the commander of Saul's army, set up Saul's son Ish-Bosheth as king over the northern tribes at Mahanaim, east of the Jordan (2:8-9). David reigned in Hebron over Judah for seven and a half years (5:5).

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS. Abner was Saul's cousin and general. Joab, Abishai and Asahel were three brothers, sons of David's sister Zeruiah, and they served David. Joab was a gifted but ruthless commander. Asahel was known as a fast runner, 'as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle' (2:18). Ish-Bosheth means 'man of shame,' and he was a weak puppet king who depended on Abner. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's young son, is introduced in 4:4 and becomes important in Session 5.

CULTURE NOTES. In the ancient world, taking over a king's wives or household was a way of claiming the throne (3:7). Abner's anger when Ish-Bosheth challenged him shows that real power rested with Abner. 'Avenger of blood' was a practice allowed to protect a family when a relative was killed (Numbers 35), but cities of refuge were meant to be fair. Joab used the custom to cover up a revenge killing. A person who was killed at the gate of a city was often killed in a place of supposed safety, which made the act a betrayal (3:27).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Play 'The Waiting Game.' Show a short challenge: a student holds a marshmallow or a piece of candy and must wait a full minute before eating it for a bonus piece. Ask: "Why is waiting so hard? What happens when we do not wait?" Then say: "David had been anointed king years ago. Today we see how he waited."
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 2-4 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David asks God and waits; (2) Abner, Joab and the cost of revenge; (3) Two men who thought murder would get them a reward.
25–33	Activity	TWO ROADS TO THE THRONE. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Isaiah 9:7, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.

Min.	Segment	Details
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David asks God and waits

Even though Samuel had anointed David, David did not announce that he was king. He asked the Lord, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” and the Lord said, “Go up” (2:1). When people of Jabesh Gilead buried Saul, David blessed them for their kindness (2:5-7). David could have sent an army to force the northern tribes to accept him, yet he let God do the work. The verse that summarizes this time says David grew stronger and stronger. Waiting is not weakness. It is trust.

2. Abner, Joab and the cost of revenge

At the pool of Gibeon, a contest between twelve men from each side turned into a deadly fight. Abner ran from Asahel and warned him to stop, but Asahel would not, and Abner killed him in self-defense (2:18-23). Joab and Abishai never forgot. Later Abner decided to bring the northern tribes to David, and David welcomed him in peace (3:12-21). But Joab pulled Abner aside at the city gate and killed him (3:27). David did not take part. He publicly mourned, walked behind Abner’s coffin, and said, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?” (3:38). The people noticed, and they knew David was not part of the murder (3:36-37).

3. Two men who thought murder would get them a reward

Rechab and Baanah were captains in Ish-Bosheth’s army. They sneaked into the king’s house at midday, killed him in his bed, and brought his head to David, expecting praise (4:5-8). They had made the same mistake as the Amalekite in Session 1. David told them, “How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?” (4:11). Their plan to get ahead by wrong means ended with their own judgment. David also made sure that the head of Ish-Bosheth was honorably buried (4:12). Through all of it, David refused to build his throne on anyone’s blood.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David: Asked God for direction and waited for His timing, then honored good deeds (Jabesh Gilead) and mourned for Abner.

The men of Jabesh Gilead: Risked their lives to give Saul and Jonathan a proper burial (1 Samuel 31:11-13; 2 Samuel 2:5).

Abishai and the warriors who stayed loyal: Served their king and his cause bravely, though sometimes their zeal went too far.

GOD DESPISES

Joab: Brave, but let anger and revenge rule his heart. He killed Abner at the gate (3:27) and later Amasa (20:10). David called the murder an act of ‘the wicked’ and asked the Lord to repay it (3:39).

Abner (at times): Used his power to make Ish-Bosheth a puppet king and fought against God’s chosen king. He later came to David, but he had pushed for the wrong cause for years.

Rechab and Baanah: Murdered a sleeping man hoping for a payday. David called them wicked and dealt justice (4:11-12).

Ish-Bosheth: A weak ‘king’ who was afraid of his general (3:11) and never sought the Lord.

See Jesus

Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever.

David's kingdom grew 'stronger and stronger,' but it was only a picture. Jesus is the King whose kingdom will have no end. Jesus also waited for His Father's timing. At the wedding at Cana He said, "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4), and He went to the cross exactly when the Father planned. David refused to use murder to take a throne. Jesus took the throne by laying down His own life.

Activity

TWO ROADS TO THE THRONE. Make two columns on a whiteboard: 'God's Way' and 'Shortcut.' Read the stories of David, Abner, Joab, Rechab and Baanah aloud in short chunks and ask students to place each choice in a column. Then ask: "What shortcut is tempting to kids your age (cheating, lying, copying a friend's work, getting even)? What would God's way look like?"

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think David waited seven and a half years before he ruled all of Israel?

TEACHER: Listen for: *God's timing, trust, no violence.*

2. How did David respond when Abner was murdered? Why did that matter to the people?

TEACHER: Listen for: *he mourned publicly and refused to join in the revenge.*

3. Rechab and Baanah thought David would reward them. Why was that a big mistake?

TEACHER: Listen for: *they misjudged David's heart and God's. Wrong means never earn God's blessing.*

4. What is one 'shortcut' you are tempted to take when you want something right now?

TEACHER: Allow honest answers, then pray for each other.

5. How is Jesus a better King than David in the way He gained His kingdom?

TEACHER: Listen for: *Jesus gave His life instead of taking lives.*

Sensitive material

This session includes several violent deaths. Keep the details short and focus on the choices made. For younger or sensitive students say: 'Some men did a very wicked thing, and David made sure justice was done.'

Prayer

Father, thank You for being the King who is never late. Help us wait for Your timing. Keep us from shortcuts, revenge and trickery. Make us people who build on honesty. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What we learned

- God admires people who ask Him first and wait for His timing.
- Revenge and tricks may look like shortcuts, but they bring judgment.
- Jesus' kingdom grows without end, because He is the perfect King.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David was already anointed but waited years to rule. What do you think God was teaching him while he waited?

FEEL: How do you feel when you have to wait for something you want? What helps you stay patient?

DO: Write down one shortcut you will say no to this week, and what you will do instead.

PODCAST: Session 2 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

The King and the Ark

Worshiping God God's Way

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who depend on Him, worship Him with joy and humility, and obey His instructions; He is displeased with carelessness toward His holiness and with scorn toward those who worship.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 5:10

“So David went on and became great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.”

Background for the teacher

DAVID BECOMES KING OF ALL ISRAEL. After the deaths of Abner and Ish-Bosheth, the leaders of the northern tribes came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your bone and your flesh’ (5:1). They anointed him king over all Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign. He reigned forty years: seven years and six months at Hebron and thirty-three years at Jerusalem (5:4-5).

JERUSALEM. The city was held by the Jebusites, who boasted that even the blind and lame could defend it (5:6). It sat on a ridge with deep valleys on three sides, which made it very hard to attack. David captured it, probably through a water shaft (5:8), and called it the City of David. It was a smart choice: central, defensible, and on the border between Judah and the northern tribes. Hiram, king of Tyre, sent cedar and craftsmen to build David’s house (5:11). This was the same Hiram who would later help Solomon build the temple.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT. A gold-covered wooden chest, about 45 inches long, built to hold the stone tablets, a jar of manna, and Aaron’s rod (Exodus 25; Hebrews 9:4). On its lid, the mercy seat, God promised to meet with His people. The Philistines had captured it in 1 Samuel 4 and sent it back after suffering plagues. It had sat at Kirjath Jearim in the house of Abinadab for decades (1 Samuel 7:1-2). God’s instructions were clear: the ark was to be carried on poles by the Levites of the family of Kohath, and no one was to touch it (Numbers 4:15; 7:9). The Philistines, who did not know God’s law, had moved it on a new cart, and David copied them. Later David admitted, ‘we did not consult Him about the proper order’ (1 Chronicles 15:13).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “If you had to carry something very valuable and fragile across town, how would you do it? Would you just toss it in a wagon?” Let students suggest ways. Then say: “Today David wants to bring back the most important object in Israel. He learns that how we honor God matters.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 5-6 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David asks God before every battle; (2) A good idea done the wrong way; (3) Joyful worship and a cold heart.
25–33	Activity	THE RIGHT WAY, THE WRONG WAY. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Matthew 1:23, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.

Min.	Segment	Details
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David asks God before every battle

When the Philistines heard that David was king, they came up to attack. David did not rush out. He asked the Lord, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?” and the Lord said, “Go up” (5:19). After the victory at Baal Perazim, David gave God the credit: “The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water” (5:20). When the Philistines came again, David asked again. This time God gave a different plan. David was to wait until he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, and then attack (5:23-24). Because he asked each time, he got each answer. Teach students that God is not a formula. He wants a relationship.

2. A good idea done the wrong way

David gathered 30,000 chosen men and went to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Their hearts were right. They placed the ark on a new cart and celebrated with music (6:3-5). But the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out to steady the ark, and God struck him down (6:6-7). David was angry and afraid, and he left the ark at the house of Obed-Edom, where God blessed that family for three months (6:10-11). The lesson is not that God is cruel. God had given clear instructions about carrying the ark on poles, and Uzzah and the leaders treated a holy thing like an ordinary one. Being sincere is not enough. God wants obedience.

3. Joyful worship and a cold heart

Three months later, David tried again and did it right, with Levites carrying the ark and with sacrifices along the way (6:12-13; 1 Chronicles 15:2). David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a simple linen ephod instead of royal robes. He was not performing for the crowd. He was celebrating God. But Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked out of a window and despised him in her heart (6:16). She said he made a fool of himself. David answered that he would be even more undignified and ‘humble in my own sight’ for the Lord’s sake (6:22). Michal had no children to the day of her death (6:23). Michal’s coldness of heart is a warning to us: it is possible to be in the right place and still not worship.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David: Asked God before each battle, gave God the glory, and worshiped with joy and humility, not caring about looking dignified.

Obed-Edom: Welcomed the ark into his home with reverence, and God blessed his family (6:11).

The Levites: Carried the ark God’s way when David finally did it right.

GOD DESPISES

Uzzah: Handled a holy thing carelessly, though he probably meant well. God’s holiness is not to be treated casually.

The leaders who used the cart: Copied the world’s way instead of searching God’s Word for His way. Good intentions do not replace obedience.

Michal: Looked down on David’s joyful worship and mocked a servant of God. Pride and scorn kept her heart cold.

See Jesus

Matthew 1:23

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, And they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

The ark was the place where God promised to meet with His people. Jerusalem became the city of the great King. In Jesus, God did not stay in a golden box. He came to live among us. John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and ‘dwelt among us.’ We do not need a cart or a priest to carry God’s presence, because Jesus is God with us. And unlike Uzzah, we can come to God boldly because Jesus made a way (Hebrews 4:16).

Activity

THE RIGHT WAY, THE WRONG WAY. Prepare two tasks. First, ask a student to follow a simple recipe (for example, pour a drink using exact instructions). Second, ask another student to do the same task using a guess. Compare results. Ask: “What happens when we ignore the instructions? How is that like Uzzah and the cart?” Close with a time of joyful worship: sing one song together, and invite students to raise their hands or clap if they like.

Discussion questions

1. What did David do before each battle with the Philistines? Why is that important?

TEACHER: Listen for: he asked God each time. We should ask God for guidance, not just rely on past wins.

2. Why do you think God was so serious about how the ark was moved?

TEACHER: Listen for: God is holy; He gave clear instructions; obedience shows respect.

3. What is the difference between being sincere and being obedient?

TEACHER: Listen for: Uzzah and the leaders were sincere but wrong. God wants both a good heart and obedience.

4. Why did David dance? Why did Michal despise him?

TEACHER: Listen for: David loved God and was thrilled; Michal was proud and cared more about looks.

5. How does Jesus change the way we come to God?

TEACHER: Listen for: Jesus is God with us; we can come near because of Him.

Sensitive material

Uzzah’s death can frighten children. Explain gently that God is holy and loving. He gave Israel clear instructions so that they could safely worship Him, and the leaders ignored them. Reassure students that because of Jesus, we can come close to God safely.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for being Immanuel, God with us. Teach us to ask for Your guidance and to obey Your Word. Give us hearts like David that dance for joy and are not ashamed to praise You. Keep pride and mockery out of our hearts. Amen.

What we learned

- God wants us to ask Him for direction every time.
- God wants worship that is obedient and joyful.
- Jesus is Immanuel, God with us.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David asked God before each battle, even when he had won before. Why do you think that mattered so much?

FEEL: Do you ever feel embarrassed to show that you love God? What would help you worship with David’s kind of freedom?

DO: Choose one area where you need to follow God’s instructions more carefully, such as how you speak, what you watch, or how you treat others. Write what you will change.

PODCAST: Session 3 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

God's Promise to David

A House That Lasts Forever

BIG IDEA

God admires humble servants who want to honor Him and who accept His 'no' with thankfulness, and God keeps His promises by sending a King from David's family whose kingdom never ends.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 7:16

"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

Background for the teacher

THE SETTING. David has been king for some time. He has defeated the Philistines, captured Jerusalem, and brought the ark to the city. His palace is made of cedar from Tyre, and the ark still sits in a tent (7:1-2). This bothers David. The tabernacle had been a tent since the time of Moses, and now David wants a permanent home for God.

THE PROPHET NATHAN. Nathan appears here for the first time. At first he tells David, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you' (7:3). That same night God spoke to Nathan, and Nathan had to go back and correct himself. This is a lesson for teachers and leaders. Even a prophet needs to check God's word. Nathan will return in chapter 12.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT. This is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. God promises David three things: a great name (7:9), a place and rest for His people (7:10-11), and a house and a kingdom that will last forever (7:11-16). 'House' has two meanings here. David wants to build a house (temple) for God, but God says He will build a house (family line and dynasty) for David. A descendant (Solomon) will build the temple (7:13), but the larger promise points beyond Solomon to a King who will reign forever. This covenant is repeated in Psalm 89, Psalm 132, 1 Chronicles 17, and throughout the prophets (Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:5, Ezekiel 37:24-25). The New Testament opens with 'the Son of David' (Matthew 1:1).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: "Has anyone ever wanted to give you a gift, but you could not accept it? Or have you ever had a great idea that someone said no to?" Take a few answers. Then say: "David has a wonderful plan for God. And God says no, but then gives David something far better."
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 7 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David's good idea, God's better plan; (2) God promises a forever house; (3) David sits before the Lord.
25–33	Activity	MY HOUSE, GOD'S HOUSE. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Luke 1:32-33, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David's good idea, God's better plan

David had a godly desire. He lived in a nice house and thought the ark deserved better than a tent. Nathan agreed. But God said no. Through Nathan, God reminded David of how far he had come: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel" (7:8). God had never asked for a house of cedar (7:7). David wanted to give to God, but God wanted to remind David that He is the One who gives. The word 'no' did not mean God was angry. It meant God had a better plan. Sometimes the best answer to a prayer is 'No, because I have something better.'

2. God promises a forever house

Instead, God said: 'Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house' (7:11). God promised that David's son would build the temple (7:13), and then God made a promise that no human king could fulfill: "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (7:16). God also said, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men" (7:14). That sentence points to Solomon, who would sin and be disciplined. But Hebrews 1:5 quotes it about Jesus. A promise this big can only be kept by God, and that is the point.

3. David sits before the Lord

David's response is a model of humility. He goes in and sits before the Lord (7:18). He does not argue or sulk. He says, "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" (7:18). He praises God for His greatness (7:22), thanks Him for choosing Israel (7:23-24), and then prays, "Now, O Lord God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said" (7:25). David asks God to do what He promised. He trusts God's word more than his own plans. A heart that can say 'Who am I?' is a heart that God can use.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David: Wanted to honor God, accepted God's 'no' with humility, and responded with thanks and trust.

Nathan: Listened to God, even when it meant correcting what he had said earlier. Courageous and honest.

GOD DESPISES

Pride that says 'I deserve this': David's humble 'Who am I?' is the opposite of the proud spirit of Saul and Absalom. God opposes the proud (James 4:6).

Hasty assumptions: Nathan and David both assumed that a good idea was God's idea. We must check with God before acting.

See Jesus

Luke 1:32-33

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

The angel Gabriel quoted God's promise to David when he announced the birth of Jesus to Mary. Jesus is the 'Son of David' (Matthew 1:1) and the King whose throne will never end. Hebrews 1:5 applies 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son' to Jesus. Paul writes that Jesus was 'born of the seed of David according to the flesh' (Romans 1:3). David wanted to build God a house. God's promise was that He would build a King, and that King is Jesus.

Activity

MY HOUSE, GOD'S HOUSE. Draw two houses on the board. In the first, write what David wanted to do for God (build a temple). In the second, write what God promised to do for David (build a family line and a kingdom). Ask

students to name things they want to do for God. Then ask: “What has God already done for you?” Make a list of God’s gifts that students can see. End by reading Luke 1:32-33 together.

Discussion questions

1. David had a good idea. Why did God say no?

TEACHER: *Listen for: God had a bigger plan, and Solomon would build the temple. ‘No’ is not always bad.*

2. Have you ever received a ‘no’ from God? How did you respond?

TEACHER: *Allow honest answers. Share a personal example if you can.*

3. What do you notice about David’s prayer in verses 18-29?

TEACHER: *Listen for: he sits, he is humble, he thanks God, he asks God to keep His word.*

4. How does Jesus fulfill the promise God made to David?

TEACHER: *Listen for: Jesus is David’s descendant, and His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32-33).*

5. Why is it important that God keeps His promises?

TEACHER: *Listen for: we can trust Him. If God kept this promise, He will keep the others.*

Sensitive material

No sensitive material. This is a good week to talk about prayer that is answered with a ‘no,’ since some students may be struggling with unanswered prayers for a family situation. Be gentle and do not offer easy answers.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the promise You made to David and kept in Jesus. When You say no, help us trust that You have something better. Make us humble, like David, who sat before You and said, ‘Who am I?’ In Jesus’ name, Amen.

What we learned

- God sometimes says ‘no’ because He has a better plan.
- God keeps His promises, even over a thousand years.
- Jesus is the Son of David and the King who will reign forever.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: God said no to David’s good idea but gave him a better promise. Why do you think God sometimes says no to good things?

FEEL: How do you feel when you pray for something and God does not give it to you? How did David’s response help you?

DO: Pick one thing you can do this week to honor God, such as serving someone, giving, or telling someone about Jesus. Write it down and do it.

PODCAST: Session 4 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

A Seat at the King's Table

Kindness for the Weak

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who use their strength to bless the weak, keep their promises, and answer kindness with kindness, while He is displeased with proud leaders who insult those who come in peace.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 9:7

“So David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father’s sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually.’”

Background for the teacher

CHAPTER 8: THE KINGDOM EXPANDS. This chapter summarizes David’s victories over the Philistines, Moab, Zobah, Aram and Edom. The key idea is repeated twice: ‘The Lord preserved David wherever he went’ (8:6, 14). The wealth David captured was not kept for himself. He dedicated it to the Lord (8:11). David is described in verse 15 as a king who ‘administered judgment and justice to all his people.’ That is the heart of a good ruler. The chapter closes with a list of David’s officials, including Joab as commander, Jehoshaphat as recorder, Zadok and Ahimelech as priests, and Benaiah over the Cherethites and Pelethites (David’s bodyguard).

CHAPTER 9: MEPHIBOSHETH. Mephibosheth was Jonathan’s son and Saul’s grandson. He was five years old when the news came that Saul and Jonathan had died. His nurse picked him up and fled, and in her haste she dropped him. He became lame in both feet (4:4). In the ancient Near East, when a new dynasty took power, the old royal family was often wiped out. Mephibosheth had every reason to be afraid. He was living in Lo Debar, a remote place east of the Jordan. The name Lo Debar means ‘no pasture,’ a place of nothing. David’s promise to Jonathan was made in 1 Samuel 20:14-17 and 23:18. ‘The kindness of God’ in verse 3 is the Hebrew word *hesed*, which means loyal, steadfast love that keeps a promise.

CHAPTER 10: HANUN AND THE AMMONITES. Nahash, king of Ammon, had shown David kindness (the details are not given). When Nahash died, David sent ambassadors to comfort Hanun, his son. Hanun’s advisors convinced him that David’s men were spies. He shaved half of each man’s beard and cut their robes off at the hips. For Israelite men, a beard was a sign of dignity, so this was a deliberate insult. The Ammonites knew they had angered David, so they hired Aramean armies (10:6). Joab’s speech to his brother Abishai is one of the great speeches of faith in the Bible: ‘Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight’ (10:12).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Set a table with a nice place setting and an empty chair. Ask: “Who gets invited to the table at your house? Who never gets invited?” Then say: “Today a man who thought he was nobody gets a seat at the King’s table, for the rest of his life.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 8-10 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David looks for someone to bless; (2) A ‘dead dog’ becomes family; (3) Hanun’s proud insult and Joab’s brave faith.

Min.	Segment	Details
25–33	Activity	EMPTY CHAIR. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Ephesians 2:4-5, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David looks for someone to bless

Years have passed. David is settled in his palace, and he asks, “Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (9:1). Notice that David asks. Nobody pushed him. He remembered a promise he made to his best friend, and he kept it. A servant named Ziba tells David about a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet. That is Mephibosheth. David could have forgotten the promise. Many leaders would have. But David had said to Jonathan, ‘You shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever’ (1 Samuel 20:15). He remembered, and he acted.

2. A ‘dead dog’ becomes family

Mephibosheth is brought to the palace. He falls on his face in fear. David says, “Do not fear.” Mephibosheth answers, “What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?” (9:8). That is how he sees himself: worthless, powerless, a leftover. David gives him all of Saul’s land, assigns Ziba and his servants to farm it, and says Mephibosheth will ‘eat bread at my table continually’ (9:7). The last verse of the chapter says it again: “So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king’s table. And he was lame in both his feet” (9:13). He did not earn it. He was lame, and he had a seat anyway. The crippled man was treated like one of the king’s sons (9:11).

3. Hanun’s proud insult and Joab’s brave faith

Now compare. Hanun, the young king of Ammon, receives David’s kind messengers and treats them with contempt. He listens to his advisors, who accuse David of spying. Pride and suspicion make him foolish. The result is a war that Ammon cannot win. By contrast, Joab shows faith. As he faces armies on two sides, he tells Abishai to be strong for the people and for the cities of God, and then leaves the result to the Lord (10:12). His example is that we do our best and trust God with the outcome. The chapter ends with Israel winning and the Arameans afraid to help Ammon again (10:19).

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David: Remembered a promise, took the first step, and gave a crippled man a seat at the table of a king. Also ruled with justice (8:15).

Mephibosheth: Humble, grateful, and willing to receive what he could not earn.

Joab and Abishai (in chapter 10): Strong and brave for the sake of God’s people. They trusted the Lord with the result (10:12).

GOD DESPISES

Hanun: Insulted peaceful messengers because he listened to proud, suspicious advisors. Pride and suspicion cost his nation dearly.

Hanun’s advisors: Planted fear and doubt in the king. Bad advice is a trap for leaders.

Ziba (watch for him): Eager to serve David here, but we will see in Session 9 that he was not always honest.

See Jesus

Ephesians 2:4-5

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Mephibosheth is a picture of every one of us. He could not walk to the king. He had no claim on the king. His family had been David's enemy. Yet the king reached out, chose him, called him by name, restored what was lost, and gave him a place at the table, not because of anything he did, but because of someone he loved: Jonathan. We are lame by sin, but God sees us through the love of Jesus, His Son. We did not earn a seat. We were invited. And one day we will sit at the table with the King (Revelation 19:9).

Activity

EMPTY CHAIR. Leave one chair open at the front. Ask: "Who is someone at school or church who rarely gets invited, who sits alone, or who feels like Mephibosheth?" Do not use names. Then have students write one idea on an index card: 'This week I will invite ____ by ____.' Collect the cards for prayer. Optionally, share a snack together and let students pass food to someone they usually do not sit with.

Discussion questions

1. Why did David ask if anyone was left from Saul's family? Why is that surprising?

TEACHER: Listen for: he wanted to keep a promise to Jonathan. It was unusual for a new king to bless the old family.

2. What does 'dead dog' tell you about how Mephibosheth saw himself?

TEACHER: Listen for: worthless, unwanted, a nobody. Many kids feel this way.

3. How is Mephibosheth's story like the gospel?

TEACHER: Listen for: we are helpless, God invites us through Jesus, and we get a place at His table.

4. How did Hanun's pride cause problems for his nation?

TEACHER: Listen for: he trusted suspicious advisors, insulted peacemakers, and started a war.

5. Who is someone you could invite to the 'table' this week?

TEACHER: Let students answer privately or in pairs.

Sensitive material

Mephibosheth's disability should be treated with respect. Avoid language that makes lameness sound shameful. Emphasize that the king's kindness did not remove his need for others, and that the Bible honors him. If a student has a disability, check in privately beforehand if appropriate to see if they are comfortable.

Prayer

Father, thank You for inviting us to Your table, even though we could not come on our own. Thank You for Jesus, who made a way. Help us notice the people nobody notices, and show us how to bring them in. Amen.

What we learned

- God admires leaders who defend and bless the weak.
- God keeps His promises, and we should keep ours.
- Jesus invites us to His table by grace, just as David invited Mephibosheth.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David kept a promise he made to Jonathan years earlier. Why is keeping our promises such an important way to show love?

FEEL: Mephibosheth saw himself as a ‘dead dog.’ Have you ever felt like a leftover or like you did not belong? How does David’s invitation speak to that?

DO: Name one person you will include or bless this week, and describe exactly how you will do it.

PODCAST: Session 5 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

When a Strong King Falls

The Danger of Staying Home and Taking What Is Not Yours

BIG IDEA

God admires faithful, honest servants like Uriah, and He is displeased when leaders abuse their power, break His commands, and lie to cover their sin.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 11:27

“But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

Background for the teacher

THE TURNING POINT. Chapter 11 is the hinge of the whole book. Up to now David has been rising: shepherd, giant-killer, fugitive, king, conqueror, covenant partner. From here on, his family and kingdom face trouble. Nathan will say in chapter 12, ‘the sword shall never depart from your house’ (12:10). Everything in chapters 13-20 flows out of this chapter.

THE FIRST VERSE SETS THE SCENE. ‘It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem’ (11:1). The king who had always gone first into battle stayed home while his men fought. Idleness and comfort are not sins, but they opened a door. The siege of Rabbah (the Ammonite capital, the modern city of Amman) follows from chapter 10.

URIAH THE HITTITE. Uriah was not born in Israel, yet he had joined Israel’s God and army. He is listed among David’s ‘mighty men’ (23:39). His name means ‘the Lord is my light.’ His wife Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, who was also one of David’s mighty men (23:34). David knew exactly who they were when he sent for her. The law of Moses was clear that adultery was a sin against God and punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10), and that murder is a grave sin (Exodus 20:13). David was not ignorant. He had the Law, and he broke it.

TEACHER NOTE ON AGE-APPROPRIATE TEACHING. For middle school, it is enough to say: ‘David took a woman who was married to another man, and then tried to hide it by lying and by arranging for her faithful husband to be killed in battle.’ You do not need to give more details. Focus on the abuse of power, the cover-up, and the contrast with Uriah’s integrity. See also the note in the session plan.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “Why do you think very strong people sometimes make very big mistakes?” Take answers (tired, proud, bored, nobody checking). Then say: “Today we see the worst chapter in David’s life. We are not reading it to put David down. We are reading it so we can learn to stay safe and see how serious sin is.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 11 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) One look, one choice, and a chain reaction; (2) The cover-up that kept getting worse; (3) ‘The thing that David had done displeased the Lord’.
25–33	Activity	THE CHAIN OF CHOICES. (Details in the Activity section below.)

Min.	Segment	Details
33–37	See Jesus	Read Hebrews 4:15, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. One look, one choice, and a chain reaction

David stayed home while his army was at war. One evening he got up from his bed and saw a woman bathing, and she was very beautiful (11:2). He could have looked away. Instead he asked about her, and when he learned she was married, he sent for her anyway (11:3-4). Notice the chain: he did not go where he should have been; he looked; he asked; he sent; he took. Each step made the next step easier. The Bible says in James 1:14-15 that desire gives birth to sin, and sin gives birth to death. Staying out of temptation's way is wiser than trying to stop once you are deep in it. When Bathsheba sent word that she was expecting a child, David's first thought was not to confess. It was to hide.

2. The cover-up that kept getting worse

David tried to fix the problem himself. First he called Uriah home from the battlefield, hoping he would go to his wife and everyone would assume the child was his (11:6-8). But Uriah was too loyal to do that. He said, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing" (11:11). A foreigner was more devoted to the Lord's work than the king was. David then got Uriah drunk, and Uriah still would not go home (11:13). Finally David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah himself, telling Joab to put Uriah where the fighting was fiercest and then pull back so he would be killed (11:14-15). Joab did it, and Uriah died (11:17). One sin led to a lie, and the lie led to a murder.

3. 'The thing that David had done displeased the Lord'

David sent word to Joab, 'Do not let this thing displease you' (11:25), as if the death of a good man were no big deal. After Bathsheba finished mourning, David brought her to his house and married her, and she bore a son. From the outside, everything looked fine. No one in Jerusalem knew. But the chapter ends with one sentence that shifts everything: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (11:27). God saw it all. Nothing is hidden from Him (Hebrews 4:13). David was the king, but he was not above God's law. Leaders are held to a higher standard, not a lower one.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

Uriah the Hittite: A foreigner who loved the God of Israel and refused comfort while his comrades were in danger. Loyal, honest, self-controlled, even when drunk and when tempted by the king's trick.

Joab's soldiers and the men of Israel: Kept fighting the enemy and carried out their duty (though some were drawn into David's plan against their will).

GOD DESPISES

David (in this chapter): Used his power to take what was not his, lied to cover it, and arranged a murder. God was displeased. David is a hero, but he is not perfect, and the Bible does not hide his sin.

Joab (for following the order): Obeyed a wicked order without objecting, and sent word to the king that Uriah was dead as if it were nothing.

Abuse of power: God despises it when anyone, young or old, uses a stronger position to take advantage of someone else.

See Jesus

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

David was the best king Israel had had so far, and even he failed. This chapter shows we need a better King, one who is tempted in every way and never sins. Jesus is the faithful servant who was ‘obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross’ (Philippians 2:8). Uriah was killed for a king’s sin, but Jesus died for ours. Jesus is also the one who, when we fall, welcomes us back (see Session 7).

Activity

THE CHAIN OF CHOICES. Build a chain of paper links on the board. Write each step David took on a link: stayed home, looked, asked, sent, took, lied, planned a cover-up, arranged a death. Then ask students: “Where could David have stopped? What would have been the smartest, safest choice at each link?” Then write ‘Uriah’ on a link and ask: “What link in the chain shows how a faithful person breaks the chain?” Close by writing one ‘safety rule’ as a group, such as: ‘Tell a trusted adult early, leave the situation, and never try to hide it.’

Discussion questions

1. What do you think went wrong first in this story? Where could David have stopped?

TEACHER: Listen for: *staying home, looking, sending for her. There were many chances to stop.*

2. Why did David keep trying to hide his sin?

TEACHER: Listen for: *fear, pride, wanting to keep his image. Hiding makes sin bigger.*

3. What do Uriah’s words in 11:11 tell us about his character?

TEACHER: Listen for: *loyalty, self-denial, putting others before himself.*

4. The Bible says what David did ‘displeased the Lord.’ What does that show about God?

TEACHER: Listen for: *God sees everything and cares about right and wrong.*

5. What is one ‘safety rule’ you can set for yourself so that you do not get pulled into sin step by step?

TEACHER: Allow honest answers: *phone habits, friends, places, secrets.*

Sensitive material

This chapter involves adultery and murder. Keep your language simple and age-appropriate. Do not describe the sin in detail. If a student discloses that someone is mistreating them or that they have been hurt, listen calmly, thank them for trusting you, and follow your church’s child-protection policy and your state’s reporting requirements. Do not promise to keep secrets.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for showing us that even great people can fall. Please keep us from small steps that lead to big sins. Help us to be honest, like Uriah, and to run to You and to a trusted adult instead of hiding. Thank You, Jesus, for being the perfect King who never failed. Amen.

What we learned

- Sin often starts small and grows when we hide it.
- God sees everything, and He is displeased when we abuse our power or lie.
- Jesus was tempted in every way and never sinned, so He is the King we need.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: Look at the steps David took: stayed home, looked, sent, lied, planned a death. Where do you think he could have turned around, and why do you think he did not?

FEEL: Uriah stayed faithful even when it was hard. How do you feel when you read about someone doing the right thing even though nobody was watching?

DO: Write one 'safety rule' that will help you avoid temptation, and name a trusted adult you will tell.

PODCAST: Session 6 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

You Are the Man

A Brave Prophet and a Broken King

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who speak truth courageously, defend the weak, and humbly confess their sin, and He forgives those who repent, though sin still has consequences.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 12:13

“So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’”

Background for the teacher

A YEAR OF SILENCE. Between chapter 11 and chapter 12, about a year passed. David was king, he had married Bathsheba, and she had given birth to a son. Nobody in the nation knew about the sin. David’s silence cost him. In Psalm 32:3-4 he wrote, ‘When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.’ The Bible does not say David felt nothing. It says his conscience was heavy, and God’s hand pressed on him until he spoke.

NATHAN THE PROPHET. A prophet in Israel spoke God’s words to people, including kings. Nathan was a trusted adviser to David. He had given David the news of the covenant in chapter 7. Now he has the hardest task of his life: to confront the most powerful man in the nation. A prophet who spoke wrongly or falsely could be put to death (Deuteronomy 18:20). Speaking up to a king could also bring the king’s anger. Nathan went anyway. He is a model of someone who defends the weak and speaks truth to power, even at great risk.

THE PARABLE. Nathan told a story about two men in one city, one rich and one poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds. The poor man had only one little ewe lamb, which ‘grew up together with him and with his children’ and ‘was like a daughter to him’ (12:3). When a traveler came, the rich man took the poor man’s lamb instead of one of his own. Notice how Nathan used a story. Jesus would later use parables the same way. The story went around David’s defenses, because David could judge the injustice of it without thinking about himself. His own anger convicted him.

PSALMS 51 AND 32. David’s prayer of repentance is recorded in Psalm 51, whose title says: ‘A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.’ Psalm 32 describes the relief of being forgiven. These two psalms are some of the most helpful in the Bible for people who have failed and need hope.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Hold up a clean white shirt or paper and spill a little water or marker on it. Ask: “What do you do when you spill something? Do you try to hide it, or do you show someone and get help?” Then say: “For almost a year, David hid his sin. Today God sends a friend to help him.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 12 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) A brave friend tells the truth; (2) David’s honest confession; (3) God’s grace still builds a future.

Min.	Segment	Details
25–33	Activity	TELL THE TRUTH, TELL IT KINDLY. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read 1 John 1:9, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. A brave friend tells the truth

Nathan did not storm into the palace and shout. He told a story. When David heard that the rich man had taken the poor man's only lamb, David was furious: "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and had no pity" (12:5-6). Nathan then said four words that must have hit David like a punch: "You are the man!" (12:7). Nathan then reminded David of what God had done for him. God had anointed him, delivered him from Saul, given him his master's house and the house of Israel and Judah, and 'if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!' (12:7-8). Then came the charge: "Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?" (12:9). A true friend is not the one who tells us only what we want to hear. A true friend loves us enough to tell the truth.

2. David's honest confession

David could have thrown Nathan out. Kings in other lands did that to prophets. Instead David said, "I have sinned against the Lord" (12:13). He did not blame Bathsheba, or Joab, or his busy schedule. He did not say 'but.' Nathan answered immediately: "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (12:13). God forgave David. That is the gospel in the Old Testament: sin confessed, sin forgiven. But forgiveness does not erase every consequence. Nathan said the sword would never depart from David's house and that the child born to Bathsheba would die (12:10, 14). The Bible says David pleaded with God and fasted for the child. When the child died, David got up, washed, worshiped the Lord, and said of his son, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (12:23). David trusted God's mercy even in sorrow.

3. God's grace still builds a future

David comforted Bathsheba, and she bore another son, Solomon. "Now the Lord loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord" (12:24-25). Jedidiah means 'beloved of the Lord.' God did not abandon David. He gave grace out of the very place of failure. The chapter ends with David leading the army to take Rabbah (12:26-31), showing that God restored him to his work. David's sin was great. God's grace was greater. But we should not treat grace as a license to sin. David's story shows that sin cost him dearly.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

Nathan: Brave, wise, and loving. He risked his position and maybe his life to tell the king the truth and to defend the poor man who had been wronged.

David (when confronted): Did not argue or blame others. He confessed right away and humbly accepted God's judgment.

The poor man in the story: A picture of everyone who has been harmed by a strong person. God notices and cares about the weak.

GOD DESPISES

The rich man in the parable (and David as the rich man): Used his power to take what was not his and 'had no pity.' God despises it when the strong abuse the weak.

Hiding sin: David's year of silence kept him from joy. God's hand was heavy on him until he came clean.

Making excuses: David could have blamed others. The way forward was to say, 'I have sinned.'

See Jesus

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Nathan told David, ‘The Lord also has put away your sin.’ This points to Jesus, who actually took our sin on Himself. Psalm 103:12 says, “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” David’s sin was put away because God would later send His Son to pay for sin on the cross. And just as Nathan was a faithful friend who told the truth, Jesus is the friend who laid down His life for us (John 15:13). Even when we fail, we can run to Him.

Activity

TELL THE TRUTH, TELL IT KINDLY. In pairs, give students a short scenario (for example, ‘a friend is spreading a rumor about someone,’ ‘a friend is cheating on a test’). One student plays the friend; the other plays Nathan. Practice: 1) Ask a question or tell a story. 2) Say the truth kindly. 3) Offer to help. Afterward, discuss how it felt. Close by reading Psalm 51:10 aloud together: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.’

Discussion questions

1. How did Nathan help David see his sin? Why do you think he used a story?

TEACHER: Listen for: it got around David’s defenses and let him judge fairly.

2. What do you notice about David’s response when Nathan said ‘You are the man’?

TEACHER: Listen for: no excuses. He confessed immediately.

3. David was forgiven, but he still faced consequences. Why do you think God allowed that?

TEACHER: Listen for: sin has real effects, and God wants us to take it seriously. Forgiveness does not erase every result.

4. What does Nathan teach us about being a good friend?

TEACHER: Listen for: tell the truth in love, be brave, care about the person who was hurt.

5. Is there something you have been hiding that you need to bring to God or to a trusted adult?

TEACHER: Do not require answers. Invite students to talk to you privately.

Sensitive material

The death of a baby appears in this chapter. Some students may have experienced a loss in their family. Keep your tone gentle. Avoid saying ‘God took the baby because of David’s sin’ in a way that frightens children. Point to David’s hope in 12:23 and to God’s tenderness toward Bathsheba, to whom He gave another son. Allow students to talk privately if needed.

Prayer

Father, thank You for forgiving us through Jesus. Give us courage like Nathan to tell the truth in love. Give us honest hearts like David to say ‘I have sinned’ and not hide. Wash us and make us clean. Amen.

What we learned

- God admires people who speak truth and defend those who are hurt.
- God forgives us when we confess, but sin can still have consequences.
- Jesus is the one who actually takes our sin away.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: Nathan risked a lot to tell David the truth. What does it take to be that kind of friend, and who has been that kind of friend to you?

FEEL: David's sin weighed on him until he confessed. How do you feel when you carry something you have not told anyone? What do you think David felt after being forgiven?

DO: Choose one thing: confess something you have been hiding to God and a trusted adult, or speak a kind truth to a friend. Write what you will do and when.

PODCAST: Session 7 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

Protect the Hurting

Tamar, Absalom and a God Who Brings Us Home

BIG IDEA

God cares deeply about those who are hurt by the powerful. He admires people who say no to wrong, speak up for the weak, and work for peace, and He is displeased with leaders who ignore wrongdoing, with those who plot revenge, and with those who give evil advice.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 14:14

“For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.”

Background for the teacher

IMPORTANT TEACHER NOTE. Chapter 13 describes the sexual assault of a young woman by her half-brother. It is included in the Bible to show the real effects of sin in David’s family and to show how God sees injustice. For middle school, the lesson should be told at a pattern level: ‘David’s oldest son, Amnon, did a terrible, wrong thing to his half-sister Tamar. Tamar said no and begged him to stop. Nobody should ever treat another person that way. Tamar did nothing wrong.’ Do not describe the act. Please read the sensitive-topics note at the end of this session and your church’s child-protection policy before teaching.

THE FAMILY. David had several wives and many children. Amnon was his firstborn (born at Hebron to Ahinoam). Absalom, handsome and popular, was the third son (to Maacah, a princess of Geshur). Tamar was Absalom’s full sister and Amnon’s half-sister. Jonadab, David’s nephew, is described as ‘a very crafty man’ (13:3). Multiple wives in a royal house caused jealousy and conflict, just as it had with Abraham, Jacob and Elkanah. God never approved it. Deuteronomy 17:17 warned the king not to multiply wives.

THE LAW. The Law of Moses protected victims and taught that such wrongs must be dealt with by the community (see Deuteronomy 22). David was both king and father, which made him responsible. 13:21 says: ‘But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.’ That is all. The Bible records no punishment, no comfort to Tamar, and no word to Absalom. David’s anger without action meant that justice never came. This is a hard lesson for leaders: being angry is not the same as acting.

ABSALOM’S REVENGE. Tamar lived ‘desolate’ in Absalom’s house (13:20). Absalom hid his hatred for two years, then invited Amnon to a sheepshearing feast and had his servants kill him (13:23-29). Absalom fled to Geshur, his grandfather’s land, for three years. Chapter 14 describes how Joab arranged for Absalom to come back through the wise (and persuasive) woman of Tekoa. When Absalom returned, David would not see him for two more years (14:24, 28). This is the background for Absalom’s rebellion in chapters 15-18.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “If someone you trust does something wrong to a friend, what are the different things you could do?” List answers: ignore it, tell an adult, stand beside the hurting friend, take revenge. Then say: “Today’s story is a hard one. We will learn how God sees wrongdoing, who He admires, and how to stay safe.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 13-14 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.

Min.	Segment	Details
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) Tamar says no, and she is right; (2) Bad advisers, silence, and revenge; (3) God devises means to bring His people home.
25–33	Activity	SAFE PEOPLE MAP. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Psalm 34:18, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. Tamar says no, and she is right

Tamar was a young woman who did nothing wrong. When Amnon tried to hurt her, she did not stay silent. She said, “No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!” (13:12). She named it as wrong. She appealed to God’s law and to what was right for Israel. She begged him to stop. Amnon did not listen, and he did a terrible wrong to her. Then he hated her and sent her away (13:15). Tamar tore her robe, put ashes on her head, and cried aloud as she went (13:19). Her grief was real, and the Bible does not blame her. Students should hear clearly: Tamar was not at fault. Amnon alone was guilty. God sees and cares.

2. Bad advisers, silence, and revenge

Many people failed in this chapter. Jonadab was a ‘very crafty man’ who gave evil advice instead of telling Amnon to stop (13:3-5). David sent Tamar to Amnon’s house when he was told Amnon was sick, not suspecting a trap (13:7). After the crime, David was very angry, yet he did nothing (13:21). Absalom told Tamar to be quiet: ‘do not take this thing to heart’ (13:20), which silenced her instead of seeking justice. Then Absalom took revenge into his own hands and killed Amnon two years later (13:28-29). Each choice made things worse. When leaders and family members stay quiet or choose revenge, wrongdoing spreads and hurting people are left alone. The better path would have been to protect Tamar, bring the matter into the open, and see that justice was done.

3. God devises means to bring His people home

In chapter 14, Absalom is in exile. Joab sends a wise woman from Tekoa to tell David a made-up story about a son who is banished. She says, “For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him” (14:14). This is an amazing verse. It tells us that God works to bring people back. David finally allows Absalom to return, though he refuses to see him for two more years, and the reconciliation, when it comes, is only a royal kiss (14:33). It is a shallow peace with no repentance on Absalom’s part, and it sets up the rebellion in the next chapters. True restoration needs honesty and repentance, but the verse is still true: God devises ways to bring home those who are far away.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

Tamar: Spoke the truth, said no, and appealed to what was right. She was not at fault and God sees her pain.

The woman of Tekoa: Wise and brave. She used a story to help the king think about mercy and about God's heart to restore the banished.

Anyone who listens, believes and acts: The story shows what was missing: someone to believe Tamar, comfort her and bring justice. God admires those who stand beside the hurting today.

GOD DESPISES

Amnon: Used his strength and status to harm someone weaker, then rejected her. God despises abuse of power and cruelty.

Jonadab: A 'crafty' friend who gave evil advice and helped plan the wrong. Friends who help us do wrong are not friends.

David (in his inaction): Was angry but did nothing, and a wrong was left unaddressed. Leaders who ignore injustice fail those under their care.

Absalom: Hid hatred for two years and then took revenge by murder. Revenge is never the way of God.

See Jesus

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Jesus is the true King who always protects the hurting. He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He welcomed children (Mark 10:14) and warned strongly against anyone who would harm the little ones (Matthew 18:6). And where David could only hope that God would bring the banished home, Jesus actually did it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). In Him, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Activity

SAFE PEOPLE MAP. Hand out index cards or paper. Have each student draw a circle in the center (themselves) and list three or four 'safe adults' they could go to if they or a friend needed help (parent, pastor, teacher, counselor, grandparent). Review: 'If someone hurts you or asks you to keep a harmful secret, tell a safe adult right away. You are never to blame.' Share your church's reporting contact and the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453. End with a time of prayer for the hurting. Do not ask students to disclose anything in front of the group.

Discussion questions

1. What did Tamar say when she was in danger? What does it show about her?

TEACHER: Listen for: she said no, named it as wrong, begged him to stop. She was brave and she was not to blame.

2. Who in this story could have helped Tamar and did not?

TEACHER: Listen for: Jonadab, David, Absalom (in part). Silence and wrong advice make things worse.

3. What do you think a good leader or parent should have done after the wrong was done?

TEACHER: Listen for: comfort Tamar, listen, protect her, bring justice, not leave it unaddressed.

4. What does 14:14 teach us about God's heart toward people who are far from Him?

TEACHER: Listen for: God works to bring people back. He devises means.

5. If a friend told you a secret about being hurt, what would you do?

TEACHER: Listen for: believe them, tell a safe adult, stay with them, never keep harmful secrets.

Sensitive material

Chapter 13 includes sexual abuse and violence. Do not read the full account aloud to the group. Summarize in plain, non-graphic words. Be aware that some students in any group may have experienced abuse. Watch for signs of distress, and make sure two adults are present. Say clearly: 'If anyone has been hurt or if you are worried about a friend, you can talk to me or another safe adult. It is never your fault.' If a student discloses, thank them, do not promise secrecy, do not investigate, and report immediately according to your church policy and state law (Idaho law, Idaho Code 16-1605, requires any person who has reason to believe a child has been abused to report it; confirm the details with your church leadership). The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-422-4453. Please review your church's child-protection policy before teaching.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are near to the brokenhearted. Please comfort anyone who has been hurt. Give us the courage of Tamar to say no and the wisdom of the woman of Tekoa to help. Help us never to stay quiet when someone is being hurt. Thank You for devising a way to bring us home to You. Amen.

What we learned

- God sees and cares when the weak are hurt. It is never their fault.
- God wants us to speak up and tell a safe adult. We never keep harmful secrets.
- God devises ways to bring His people home, and Jesus is that way.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: Many people failed Tamar in this story. What is one way a person your age can protect someone who is being hurt or bullied?

FEEL: How do you feel about how Tamar was treated, and how David and others responded? What does that tell you about how God feels?

DO: Write the names of two or three safe adults you can talk to. Then write one thing you will do this week to help someone who may feel alone.

PODCAST: Session 8 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

Stolen Hearts and Faithful Friends

Absalom's Rebellion Begins

BIG IDEA

God admires loyal friends and humble leaders who trust Him in the hardest times, and He is displeased with flattery, pride, treachery and cruelty toward those who are suffering.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 15:21

“But Ittai answered the king and said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.’”

Background for the teacher

ABSALOM THE PRINCE. Absalom was handsome (14:25), well-known and loved by the people. His hair was so thick that when he cut it each year it weighed about 200 shekels, perhaps five pounds (14:26). He was David's third son and, after Amnon's death, one of the oldest sons living. Many scholars think Absalom saw himself as heir to the throne, and that anger over how David had handled the matter of Tamar and Amnon (and over his own exile) fueled his rebellion. Nothing excuses what he did, but it helps to see why some people followed him.

THE CONSPIRACY. The Bible says Absalom ‘prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him’ (15:1). Every morning he stood by the gate of the city and greeted people who came with disputes for the king. He told each one their case was good, but that no one would hear it, and then he said, ‘Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice’ (15:4). That is how ‘Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel’ (15:6). After some time, Absalom asked to go to Hebron, the place where David had been made king, and set up a revolt with spies and trumpets (15:10). Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with him without knowing the plan.

THE FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM. David learns that ‘the hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom’ (15:13). Rather than fight in the city and put the people at risk, David leaves. He crosses the Brook Kidron, goes up the Mount of Olives barefoot and weeping (15:23, 30), and heads toward the wilderness. This is the same road Jesus took on the night of His arrest (John 18:1; Luke 22:39). Ahithophel, David's wise counselor, goes over to Absalom (15:12). He was a man whose advice was treated ‘as if one had inquired at the oracle of God’ (16:23). He may have been Bathsheba's grandfather (compare 11:3 with 23:34), which could explain his anger, though the Bible does not say.

ITTAI, ZADOK, HUSHAI AND ZIBA. Ittai the Gittite was a foreigner from Gath who had joined David only recently, yet he stayed (15:19-22). Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, wanted to bring the ark, but David sent it back, saying, ‘If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place’ (15:25). Hushai the Archite, ‘David's friend,’ returns to Jerusalem to pretend to join Absalom and undo Ahithophel's advice (15:32-37). Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, meets David with donkeys and food and claims that Mephibosheth has stayed behind hoping to become king (16:1-4). That claim will turn out to be false (19:24-30). Shimei, a man of Saul's family, throws stones and curses David (16:5-8).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “Has anyone ever been really nice to you only because they wanted something? How could you tell?” Take a few answers. Then say: “Absalom was the most charming man in Israel. Let's see what he was really after.”

Min.	Segment	Details
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 15-16 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) Absalom steals hearts with flattery; (2) David's humility and trust in the hardest hour; (3) Ittai, Hushai and the friends who stayed.
25–33	Activity	REAL OR FLATTERY? (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read 1 Peter 2:23, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. Absalom steals hearts with flattery

Absalom did not take the throne by force, at least not at first. He did it with smiles, chariots, flattery and handshakes. He told people what they wanted to hear: 'Your case is good, but the king has no one to hear it.' He kissed people who bowed to him (15:5). He made himself look like the friend of the people and the king look careless. This is what the Bible calls stealing hearts. Absalom's goal was not to serve the people but to become a king. Real leaders serve. False leaders flatter. Teach students to ask: 'Is this person helping me, or are they using me?'

2. David's humility and trust in the hardest hour

When David left Jerusalem, he left in sorrow, but not in anger or panic. He said, "If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him" (15:25-26). He did not try to use the ark as a good luck charm. When Shimei threw stones and cursed him, and Abishai wanted to kill him, David said, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him" (16:11). David hoped that "the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day" (16:12). That is not weakness. It is deep trust. Jesus would do the same: 'when He was reviled, did not revile in return' (1 Peter 2:23).

3. Ittai, Hushai and the friends who stayed

David's flight shows who really loved him. Ittai the Gittite was a foreigner who had been in Israel for less than a year. David told him to go back and stay safe. But Ittai said, "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be" (15:21). Hushai gave up his own safety to go back and help David by pretending to serve Absalom. Zadok and Abiathar sent their sons to carry messages. These loyal friends did not follow David because he was winning. They followed him in his weakest moment. On the other side, Ziba and Shimei took advantage of David's pain by lying and by cursing him. We learn who our real friends are in hard times.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

Ittai the Gittite: A newcomer who stayed loyal ‘in death or life.’ He is a picture of the loyal friend every leader needs.

David (in humility): Left with trust instead of bitterness. Wept, prayed, and left the outcome to God. Did not retaliate against Shimei.

Hushai and the priests: Risked their safety to help David through wise and quiet means.

GOD DESPISES

Absalom: Used flattery and charm to steal the hearts of the people. He wanted power, not service. He turned against his father and against God’s chosen king.

Ahithophel: A wise man who used his wisdom for treachery. He betrayed David when David needed him most.

Ziba: Used David’s weakness to get ahead and lied about Mephibosheth.

Shimei: Cursed and threw stones at a man who was already suffering.

See Jesus

1 Peter 2:23

who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

David’s crossing of the Kidron and ascent of the Mount of Olives weeping is a picture of what Jesus would do about a thousand years later. Jesus crossed the same brook (John 18:1) on the night He was betrayed by a close friend. Psalm 41:9 says, ‘Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.’ Judas, like Ahithophel, was a trusted friend who turned on his king. Both betrayals ended in sorrow for the betrayer. But Jesus, unlike David, was a perfectly innocent King who suffered for us, and who reigns forever.

Activity

REAL OR FLATTERY? Prepare a list of statements. Read each one aloud: ‘You’re the smartest person I know, and I wouldn’t tell anyone else this, but could you give me your homework?’ ‘I noticed you were kind to the new kid today. That meant a lot.’ Students stand if they think it is true encouragement and sit if they think it is flattery. Discuss how to tell the difference (look at the motive, whether the speaker wants something, whether it is true and kind). Close by naming one ‘Ittai’ in each student’s life, someone who stays loyal.

Discussion questions

1. How did Absalom win the hearts of the people? Why do you think it worked?

TEACHER: *Listen for: flattery, attention, saying what people wanted to hear, making the king look bad.*

2. Why do you think David left Jerusalem instead of fighting?

TEACHER: *Listen for: protect the city and people, trust God, humility.*

3. What does Ittai’s promise tell us about loyalty?

TEACHER: *Listen for: loyalty stays in hard times, not only good ones. Ittai chose to follow David even though he could have left.*

4. How did David respond when Shimei cursed him? Would you have responded that way?

TEACHER: *Allow honest answers.*

5. How can we tell the difference between a real friend and a flatterer?

TEACHER: *Listen for: real friends tell the truth, stay when it is hard, and want what is best for you.*

Sensitive material

Chapter 16 includes a public act of shaming that you do not need to describe. If a student asks, say that Absalom did something very disrespectful to his father to show everyone that there was no going back. Keep it brief. Also remind students that Shimei’s cursing is a form of bullying. It is a good opening to discuss how to respond to and report bullying.

Prayer

Lord, make us loyal friends like Ittai and humble hearts like David. Help us tell the difference between flattery and truth. When we are hurt, help us trust You. Thank You, Jesus, for walking the hard road for us. Amen.

What we learned

- God admires loyal friends who stay close when times are hard.
- Flattery and pride are tools of people who want power, not people who want to serve.
- Jesus walked the same road of suffering and trusted His Father.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: Absalom won people by flattering them. How can you tell when someone is being kind to you for real and when they just want something?

FEEL: Ittai chose to stay loyal even though it was risky. How does it feel to have a friend like that? How do you feel about being that kind of friend?

DO: Name one person you will be an 'Ittai' to this week, and one thing you will do to show your loyalty.

PODCAST: Session 9 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

A Fallen Rebel and a Forgiving King

God Protects, Pride Falls, Mercy Wins

BIG IDEA

God protects those who trust Him, brings down proud rebels, and honors those who show kindness, loyalty and mercy, even to those who have wronged them.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 19:23

“Therefore the king said to Shimei, ‘You shall not die.’ And the king swore to him.”

Background for the teacher

TWO COUNSELORS, TWO PLANS. Ahithophel advised Absalom to take 12,000 men that very night, strike David while he was ‘weary and weak-handed,’ and kill only the king, bringing the people back (17:1-3). It was a smart plan. Hushai, David’s secret friend, proposed a different one: wait, gather all Israel ‘as the sand that is by the sea,’ and let Absalom lead them personally into battle (17:11). That plan sounded impressive and flattered Absalom, but it gave David time to escape. The Bible says that ‘the Lord had purposed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel’ so that He might bring disaster on Absalom (17:14). God was quietly at work behind the scenes.

THE SECRET MESSENGERS. Hushai sent word to David through the priests’ sons, Jonathan (Abiathar’s son) and Ahimaaz (Zadok’s son), who were waiting outside the city at En Rogel (17:17). A servant girl saw them and told Absalom’s men. They hid in a well in Bahurim, and a woman covered the well’s opening with a cloth and spread grain on it, and told the searchers the men had crossed the water (17:18-20). Her name is not given, but her courage saved the messengers and David’s whole company.

MAHANAIM. David and his people reached Mahanaim, an old fortified city east of the Jordan (the same place where Ish-Bosheth had been made king). Three men, Shobi from Ammon, Machir from Lo Debar (the home of Mephibosheth, 9:4), and Barzillai the Gileadite brought bedding, food, and supplies, saying ‘The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness’ (17:28-29). Notice that Machir, who once hosted Mephibosheth, now helps David. Kindness has a way of circling back.

THE BATTLE IN THE FOREST OF EPHRAIM. David divided his army into three groups under Joab, Abishai and Ittai (18:2). His men would not let him fight (18:3). David gave an order in the hearing of all the troops: ‘Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom’ (18:5). In the battle, 20,000 men fell, and ‘the woods devoured more people that day than the sword’ (18:7-8). Absalom’s head caught in the branches of a great terebinth tree, and he was left hanging. One soldier saw him but refused to harm him, saying he would not lift a hand against the king’s son even for a thousand pieces of silver, because he had heard the king’s command (18:12-13). Joab, however, ignored the king’s wishes and killed Absalom (18:14-15). Absalom had set up a pillar for himself in the King’s Valley because he had no son (18:18). His burial was a pile of stones in a pit (18:17).

TEACHER NOTE ON AHITHOPHEL. When Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, ‘he put his household in order, and hanged himself’ (17:23). Do not dwell on this with students, but do not hide it if they ask. Say: ‘Ahithophel was a proud man who felt rejected, and he died in despair. It was a very sad end, and it shows how deadly bitterness and pride can be.’ If a student discloses thoughts of self-harm, stay calm, take it seriously, do not leave them alone, and involve a parent and pastor at once. In the U.S., the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available by call or text at 988.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “What is harder: to ask for forgiveness or to forgive someone who hurt you badly?” Take a few answers. Then say: “Today a king who has been cursed, betrayed and chased from his home gets a chance to take revenge. Let’s see what he chooses.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 17-19 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) God protects the humble through quiet means; (2) Pride falls, and a father weeps; (3) The returning king forgives and honors.
25–33	Activity	FORGIVE OR REVENGE? (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Romans 5:8, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. God protects the humble through quiet means

Nothing in these chapters looks like a miracle, but God is at work everywhere. A counselor’s good advice is ignored. A woman hides two messengers in a well. Three friends bring supplies to a hungry king. Each of these ordinary acts helped save David and his people. This teaches us something important: God works through everyday people who do small, brave and kind things. The woman at Bahurim, Hushai, Jonathan, Ahimaaz and the men of Mahanaim are all examples. When we encourage a discouraged person, share food, or tell the truth, we may be playing a part in God’s plan.

2. Pride falls, and a father weeps

Absalom’s plan seemed unstoppable, but he was proud, and pride was his downfall. He loved the sound of flattery (17:6-14), and he never prayed. In the end, he died in a forest, and his main memorial was a pile of stones and a pillar he built for himself. When David heard the news, he went up to the room over the gate and wept: “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place!” (18:33). David loved his son even though Absalom had rebelled. Though David’s grief was real, his army had risked their lives to save him, and Joab had to remind him that he was making his loyal men feel ashamed (19:5-7). Even grief needs balance. A good leader keeps loving the people who are standing beside him.

3. The returning king forgives and honors

When David returned, he did something very different from most conquerors. When Shimei, who had cursed him, fell on his face and begged for mercy, Abishai wanted him put to death. The Bible records, “Therefore the king said to Shimei, ‘You shall not die.’ And the king swore to him” (19:23). When Mephibosheth, who had not washed or trimmed his beard since David left, came to meet him, David listened to his side of the story. Mephibosheth said, “Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house” (19:30). He cared more about David than about his land. And when Barzillai, the eighty-year-old man who had fed the king, refused a great reward, David honored him by taking his servant Chimham in his place (19:31-40). David showed mercy to the guilty, justice to the truthful, and gratitude to the generous.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

Hushai: Gave David his best, even when it meant danger and secrecy.

The unnamed woman at Bahurim: Quick-thinking and brave. Hid David's messengers and kept silent.

Shobi, Machir and Barzillai: Showed real kindness by providing for a tired and hungry king and his people.

Mephibosheth: Loyal and humble. Cared more for the king's return than for the land.

David (as a forgiving king): Showed mercy to Shimei and gratitude to Barzillai, and loved even his rebel son.

GOD DESPISES

Absalom: His pride led him to listen to flatterers and ignore God. He died in rebellion and left behind only a monument to himself.

Ahithophel: A proud counselor who turned on his friend and who despaired when his advice was not followed.

Joab (for ignoring the king's command): Killed Absalom after David had asked for mercy. Brave, but still a man who took matters into his own hands.

Sheba (preview): A troublemaker who, at the end of chapter 19, will start another revolt (see Session 11).

See Jesus

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

David cried, 'If only I had died in your place!' but he could not. Jesus did. Where David wept for a rebel child and could not save him, Jesus died for rebels, 'while we were still sinners.' David's pardon of Shimei, 'You shall not die,' echoes the voice of the gospel: sinners deserve to die, but the King forgives. Jesus also wept over a city that rejected Him (Luke 19:41).

Activity

FORGIVE OR REVENGE? Draw two columns: 'Revenge' and 'Mercy.' Give students scenarios (a friend spread a rumor; someone broke your things; a sibling took credit for your work). Ask them to identify the 'Shimei' in the story and then to state what David chose. Have students role-play offering mercy and then say, 'I forgive you.' Discuss: Forgiving does not mean pretending nothing happened. It means choosing not to take revenge and trusting God to be the judge.

Discussion questions

1. How did God protect David without a big miracle?

TEACHER: Listen for: Hushai's counsel, the woman at Bahurim, the friends at Mahanaim.

2. What did David's cry in 18:33 reveal about his heart?

TEACHER: Listen for: he loved his son even though he rebelled; real love is costly.

3. Why do you think David spared Shimei?

TEACHER: Listen for: mercy, trust in God, understanding that this was a day of joy and not revenge.

4. What do you think Mephibosheth meant in 19:30?

TEACHER: Listen for: he cared more about the king's return than about his own land.

5. Whom do you need to forgive? What would it look like to show them mercy?

TEACHER: Allow honest answers. Do not push disclosure.

Sensitive material

This session includes violence in battle, the death of a rebel son, and Ahithophel's death by suicide. Handle with care. Present facts briefly. Reassure students that grief is normal. If a student shows signs of hopelessness or talks about harming themselves, respond calmly, stay with them, and involve a parent and pastor immediately. In the U.S., the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available by call or text at 988.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the ordinary people who help in hard times. Help us to be brave and kind like the woman at Bahurim. Teach us to forgive like David and to trust You with justice. Thank You, Jesus, for dying in our place. Amen.

What we learned

- God works through ordinary people who do small, brave things.
- Pride and rebellion end in ruin, but mercy brings peace.
- Jesus actually did what David wished he could: He died in our place.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David forgave Shimei even though Shimei had cursed him. Why is forgiveness so important, and why is it so hard?

FEEL: Think about someone you need to forgive. How do you feel when you imagine letting go of the hurt?

DO: Write one small act of mercy or thanks you will do this week for someone who helped you or hurt you.

PODCAST: Session 10 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

A Wise Woman and a Faithful Mother

Peacemakers, Promise-Keepers and Giant-Slayers

BIG IDEA

God admires wise peacemakers who protect their communities, people who stay faithful in love when no one is watching, and leaders who keep their promises. He is displeased with troublemakers, murderers and promise-breakers.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 20:19

“I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?”

Background for the teacher

THE REBELLION OF SHEBA. As David’s return to Jerusalem was celebrated, the tribes of Israel and Judah argued over who had the greater claim to bring the king home (19:41-43). A troublemaker named Sheba, from Saul’s tribe of Benjamin, blew a trumpet and said, ‘We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!’ (20:1). The tribes of Israel followed him. This shows how fragile the kingdom was. It would eventually split in two under Solomon’s son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12).

AMASA AND JOAB. David had promised the army command to Amasa (who had led Absalom’s army) to win back the loyalty of Judah (19:13). Amasa was slow to gather the men, so David sent Abishai and Joab ahead. At Gibeon, Joab met Amasa, greeted him as a brother (‘Are you in health, my brother?’), took him by the beard as if to kiss him, and killed him with a hidden sword (20:9-10). This is the second time Joab murdered a rival commander by trickery (see 3:27). David later told Solomon to deal with Joab for this (1 Kings 2:5-6).

ABEL BETH MAACAH. Joab chased Sheba to the city of Abel Beth Maachah in the far north. His men built a siege ramp against the wall (20:15). A wise woman called from the city, asking to speak to Joab. She said the city had a reputation for peace and wisdom (‘They used to say in former times, Let them ask advice at Abel’). She called herself ‘peaceable and faithful in Israel’ and the city ‘a mother in Israel’ (20:18-19). Joab said he only wanted Sheba. The woman said, ‘His head will be thrown to you over the wall’ (20:21). She persuaded the people with her wisdom, and Sheba’s head was thrown to Joab (20:22).

THE FAMINE AND THE GIBEONITES. Chapter 21 is out of chronological order. It tells of a three-year famine in Israel. David asked the Lord, who said, ‘It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites’ (21:1). In Joshua 9, Israel’s leaders had made a solemn oath to protect the Gibeonites, a people who tricked Israel into a treaty. Saul, in his zeal, had tried to wipe them out. Breaking an oath made in the Lord’s name was a serious wrong. David asked the Gibeonites what he could do to make it right. They asked for seven of Saul’s descendants. David spared Mephibosheth ‘because of the Lord’s oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan’ (21:7), and handed over seven others. This is a hard passage. It shows that God holds nations and leaders accountable to their promises, and that sin has serious consequences. It does not teach that children are punished for their parents’ sins in general (Deuteronomy 24:16).

RIZPAH. Rizpah was Saul’s concubine, and two of her sons were among the seven. She ‘took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven, and she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night’ (21:10). This lasted for months. When David heard what Rizpah had done, he gathered the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh Gilead and buried them with the others in the tomb of Kish (21:12-14). ‘And after that God heeded the prayer for the land’ (21:14).

THE GIANTS. The chapter ends with four battles against descendants of the giants of Gath. David, now older, grew faint, and a giant named Ishbi-Benob nearly killed him. Abishai rescued him. David’s men swore that he should ‘go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel’ (21:17).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Ask: “Have you ever been the peacemaker in a fight between friends? What did you say or do?” Take two or three answers. Then say: “Today a woman we never learn the name of saves a whole city with her words.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 20-21 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) A wise woman defends her city; (2) Rizpah’s faithful love; (3) Promises matter, and God keeps His own.
25–33	Activity	PEACEMAKER PRACTICE. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read 2 Corinthians 1:20, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. A wise woman defends her city

The woman at Abel did not have a sword, a position, or an army. She had wisdom and courage. She called to Joab, a famous general, and engaged him in conversation. She reminded him of Abel’s reputation for peace, and pointed out that he was attacking ‘a mother in Israel,’ a city that nurtured its people. She asked him, “Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?” (20:19). She did not argue with Joab’s goal (to capture Sheba) but offered a better way. Then she went to her people and persuaded them, and the city was spared. This is a woman God admires: wise, brave, a peacemaker who defended the weak. James 3:17-18 describes this kind of peacemaking wisdom.

2. Rizpah’s faithful love

After years of famine, the Gibeonites received justice, and seven men of Saul’s family died. Among them were two sons of Rizpah. She did not ask for power, protection or attention. She spread sackcloth on a rock and sat by the bodies of her sons, day and night, driving away birds and animals, from harvest until the rains came. No one ordered her to. No one noticed at first. She just stayed. When David heard what she had done, he was moved to honor Saul and Jonathan with a proper burial and to bring all the bones to rest. Rizpah’s love for her sons was faithful, patient, and brave. She did not stop. Her quiet loyalty moved a king to do what was right.

3. Promises matter, and God keeps His own

The famine came because Saul broke an oath made in God’s name. This teaches us that our promises matter to God. Israel promised in Joshua 9 to protect the Gibeonites, and Saul’s actions broke that oath. Years later, David’s careful keeping of his oath to Jonathan (21:7) stands in contrast. God notices when we keep our word and when we break it. By the end of the chapter, David is growing older and weaker. His men tell him he must not go out to battle again, ‘lest you quench the lamp of Israel’ (21:17). Leaders are not meant to fight alone. God provides a team: Abishai, Sibbechai, Elhanan and Jonathan. God’s people were never meant to depend on one hero. The real Hero is God.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

The wise woman of Abel: Wise, brave and a peacemaker. She saved her city by using words, not weapons.

Rizpah: Faithful, tender love that did not give up. She kept watch over her sons for months and moved a king to act.

David: Kept his oath to Jonathan, honored the dead, and listened to the Lord when famine came.

Abishai and David's mighty men: Rescued David, protected the nation, and fought giants, together.

GOD DESPISES

Sheba: A troublemaker who tried to divide the nation just when it was healing. He caused harm to many people.

Joab: Murdered Amasa with a trick, just as he had murdered Abner. His brave service was stained by repeated murders.

Saul (in the Gibeonite matter): Broke an oath made in God's name and tried to destroy a people whom Israel had promised to protect.

See Jesus

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

Saul broke a promise to the Gibeonites, but God never breaks His. Every promise God made finds its 'Yes' in Jesus. The wise woman saved a city by sending one man's head over a wall. Jesus saved the whole world by giving His own life. Like Rizpah, Jesus did not leave. He stayed faithful all the way to the cross and 'having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end' (John 13:1). And the giants David fought, like every enemy of God, will be defeated: 'The last enemy that will be destroyed is death' (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Activity

PEACEMAKER PRACTICE. Give students a conflict scenario (two friends are about to fight over a game; a group wants to exclude a new student). Have them write a short 'wise woman' response in three parts: 1) Calm greeting, 2) Remind them of what matters, 3) Offer a better way. Take volunteers to read aloud. Then add a second activity: 'The Rizpah Reflection.' Ask students to think of someone who faithfully loves others in quiet ways (a parent, grandparent, caregiver). Have them write a thank-you note.

Discussion questions

1. What did the wise woman do that Joab did not expect?

TEACHER: Listen for: she talked to him, reminded him of the city's character, offered a solution.

2. Why did the famine come, according to the Lord?

TEACHER: Listen for: Saul broke an oath to the Gibeonites. Promises made in God's name matter.

3. What does Rizpah's story teach us about love?

TEACHER: Listen for: faithful, patient, quiet, brave love.

4. David's men said he must no longer go to battle lest he 'quench the lamp of Israel.' What does that say about leaders and teamwork?

TEACHER: Listen for: a leader should not do everything alone. People need protection and a team.

5. Who in your life is a 'wise woman' or a 'Rizpah'? How can you thank them?

TEACHER: Allow honest sharing.

Sensitive material

The Gibeonite episode (21:1-14) involves the execution of seven men and their exposure after death. It is one of the hardest passages in 2 Samuel. For middle school, summarize it simply: 'A famine came because Saul had broken a promise to the Gibeonites. David asked how to make it right, and the Gibeonites asked for justice. Rizpah, the mother of two of the men who died, faithfully guarded their bodies. David then honored all of them with a proper burial.' Stress that God cares about promises and justice and that Rizpah's love is the example to follow. Do not give graphic details.

Prayer

Father, thank You for wise women and faithful mothers. Make us peacemakers who use words to heal. Teach us to keep our promises, and thank You for keeping every promise in Jesus. Amen.

What we learned

- God admires wise peacemakers and faithful, tender love.
- Promises matter to God, and He always keeps His own.
- God's people do not depend on one hero. We need a team, and the real Hero is Jesus.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: The wise woman saved a whole city by speaking wisely. What makes someone a peacemaker, and why does God value it?

FEEL: Rizpah stayed faithful when no one else noticed. How does it feel to know that God sees quiet, faithful love?

DO: Describe one situation this week where you can be a peacemaker, and one promise you will keep.

PODCAST: Session 11 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

The Lord Is My Rock

David's Song and the Mighty Men

BIG IDEA

God admires those who trust Him as their Rock, who rule with justice in the fear of God, and who serve with courage and selfless love; and the perfect King who rules like the morning light is Jesus.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 22:2-3

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence.”

Background for the teacher

AN APPENDIX WITH A PURPOSE. Chapters 21-24 are often called the appendix of 2 Samuel. They are arranged like a ring: two stories (famine and plague) on the outside, two lists of warriors and giants next, and two songs in the center: David's song of thanksgiving (ch. 22) and David's last words (23:1-7). It is a way of saying that the heart of David's life is worship.

THE SONG OF DAVID (CHAPTER 22). It is almost the same as Psalm 18. The title says David spoke it ‘in the day that the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul’ (22:1). The language is poetic and full of pictures: God as rock, fortress, shield, horn of salvation. The ‘horn’ is a picture of strength, taken from animals such as the wild ox. The ‘cords of death’ and ‘floods of ungodliness’ (22:5) describe near-death. The shaking earth, smoke, fire and thunder in 22:8-16 echo Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), reminding us that David believed the same God who met Moses had answered him.

DAVID'S LAST WORDS (23:1-7). ‘Last words’ means final inspired message. David calls himself ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’ (23:1) and says, ‘The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue’ (23:2). Then he describes the perfect ruler: just, ruling in the fear of God, like sunlight after rain. He admits that his own house is not perfect, but God ‘has made with me an everlasting covenant’ (23:5).

THE MIGHTY MEN (23:8-39). David's elite warriors included ‘the three’ and ‘the thirty.’ Josheb-Basshebeth (or Jashobeam) fought 800 men at one time. Eleazar fought the Philistines until his hand ‘stuck to the sword’ (23:10). Shammah defended a field of lentils when the army fled (23:11-12). Three men broke through the Philistine lines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem, and David poured it out to the Lord instead of drinking it (23:15-17). Abishai led the thirty. Benaiah killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and an Egyptian with a spear (23:20-21). The list ends with ‘Uriah the Hittite’ (23:39), a quiet reminder of David's sin. The Bible says there were thirty-seven in all (23:39).

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Show a large, solid rock (or a picture of one). Ask: “Why would someone call God a rock? What does a rock do for us?” Take answers (strong, steady, hides us, doesn't move). Then say: “At the end of his life David sang a song about every way God had rescued him.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 22-23 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.

Min.	Segment	Details
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) God is my Rock and my Rescuer; (2) The just ruler rules in the fear of God; (3) Mighty men and the water poured out.
25–33	Activity	NAMES OF GOD. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read Luke 1:69, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. God is my Rock and my Rescuer

David’s song piles up names for God: rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation, stronghold, refuge, Savior. He is not describing a theory. He is describing the God who rescued him from Saul, the Philistines, Absalom and many other dangers. When he was in distress, ‘In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry entered His ears’ (22:7). God ‘bowed the heavens also, and came down’ (22:10). Why? ‘He delivered me because He delighted in me’ (22:20). Some students feel they are not important enough for God to notice. This song says that the Lord of the universe reached down for David because He loved him. And in verse 36, David says something humbling: ‘Your gentleness has made me great.’

2. The just ruler rules in the fear of God

David’s last words describe a ruler we all long for: “He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, Like the tender grass springing out of the earth, By clear shining after rain” (23:3-4). David knew he did not perfectly fit that description. In 23:5 he says, ‘Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant.’ David is pointing beyond himself to a King who will. It is a promise of a righteous King who brings growth, warmth and peace, like sunshine after a storm. That King is Jesus. The rulers in 2 Samuel who are despised (Absalom, Joab, Sheba, Amnon) did the opposite: they ruled by pride, revenge and force.

3. Mighty men and the water poured out

David’s mighty men were brave, but their greatest moment was about love. During a battle with the Philistines, David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison held Bethlehem. David said wistfully, “Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” (23:15). Three of his warriors broke through the enemy camp, drew the water, and brought it to David. David would not drink it. He poured it out before the Lord and said, “Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?” (23:17). David treated the loyalty of his men as sacred. A godly leader never treats the people who serve him as tools. The mighty men followed David because they loved him, and he loved them.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David (as a worshiper): Gave God the credit for every rescue and trusted Him as his Rock.

The three mighty men: Risked their lives out of love for their king. Shows what loyalty looks like.

Eleazar and Shammah: Stayed and fought when others ran. Courage that does not quit.

Benaiah: Brave and ready, even in a pit on a snowy day. He later served Solomon faithfully.

Abishai: Led the thirty and rescued David from a giant (21:17).

GOD DESPISES

Pride and rebellion (summarized): In David's song, God 'saves the humble' but brings down 'the haughty' whom 'You will bring down' (22:28). Absalom, Sheba and Ahithophel are examples.

Rulers who rule by force and cruelty: David's description of the just ruler is the opposite of leaders who rule for themselves.

The 'sons of rebellion' (23:6): Wicked rebels who are compared to thorns that are thrown away. God's people are not to accept evil.

See Jesus

Luke 1:69

And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David.

Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) used David's words in his song: 'a horn of salvation ... in the house of His servant David' (Luke 1:69). The ideal ruler of 23:3-4, 'like the light of the morning when the sun rises,' is Jesus, who said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). And Paul writes that the Rock that followed Israel in the wilderness 'was Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:4). The rock, the shield, the stronghold, the Savior: every title in David's song is fulfilled in Jesus.

Activity

NAMES OF GOD. Give each student a sheet with the headings: Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Shield, Horn of Salvation, Stronghold, Refuge, Savior. Ask them to write or draw a time when each title might matter (for example, 'Shield: when someone is saying hurtful things to me'). Then ask them to choose their favorite. Have them write a two-line prayer using that title. If time allows, read Psalm 18:1-3 together.

Discussion questions

1. Which name for God in verses 2-3 means the most to you today? Why?

TEACHER: Allow personal answers.

2. Why did God rescue David, according to 22:20?

TEACHER: Listen for: 'because He delighted in me.' God loves His people.

3. According to 23:3-4, what makes a good ruler or leader?

TEACHER: Listen for: just, fear of God, brings light and growth, like sunshine after rain.

4. Why do you think David poured the water out?

TEACHER: Listen for: reverence, gratitude, he did not want to treat their sacrifice cheaply.

5. How is Jesus the King that David described?

TEACHER: Listen for: just, righteous, light of the world, brings life and peace.

Sensitive material

No major sensitive content, but some of the mighty men's battles are violent. Keep descriptions brief. You may want to mention that Uriah's name at the end of the list (23:39) is a reminder of how serious David's sin was.

Prayer

Lord, You are our Rock, our Fortress and our Savior. Thank You for rescuing us because You delight in us. Teach us to rule and lead in the fear of God, and to serve with courage and love. Thank You, Jesus, for being the Light of the world. Amen.

What we learned

- God is our Rock, Fortress and Savior, and He delights in His people.
- A just ruler who fears God is like sunshine after rain, and that is Jesus.
- God honors courage and loyal love, and leaders must honor the people who serve.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David used many names for God: rock, fortress, shield, savior. Which one helps you most right now, and why?

FEEL: God delighted in David and rescued him. How does it feel to know that God delights in you?

DO: Pick one person who serves or helps you (a parent, a teacher, a friend). Write down how you will thank them and honor their sacrifice this week.

PODCAST: Session 12 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

The Threshing Floor

A Shepherd Who Offers Himself

BIG IDEA

God admires leaders who admit their sin quickly, put their people before themselves, and give to God sacrificially, and God is displeased with pride and trusting in numbers; the true Shepherd-King who offered Himself for the sheep is Jesus.

KEY VERSE • 2 Samuel 24:24

“Then the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.’”

Background for the teacher

A DIFFICULT OPENING. Verse 1 says, ‘Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”’ The parallel passage, 1 Chronicles 21:1, says that Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. Together they teach that God allowed a test, and that Satan and David’s own pride were the tempters. God never tempts anyone to sin (James 1:13). The Bible does not tell us the exact reason for God’s anger at Israel, but Israel had just been through the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba, and there was pride in the land. The key sin was David’s decision to count the fighting men, probably as a way to measure his own strength, instead of trusting God.

WHY WAS COUNTING WRONG? Counting people was not always wrong. God Himself commanded censuses (Numbers 1 and 26). But when the king numbered the people to measure his own power, it showed that he was leaning on the size of his army instead of the Lord. Even Joab, who was not known for godliness, objected: ‘Now may the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?’ (24:3). The census took nine months and twenty days (24:8). Then, ‘David’s heart condemned him’ (24:10).

THE PLAGUE AND THE THRESHING FLOOR. God sent the prophet Gad to offer David three choices: seven years of famine, three months of fleeing from enemies, or three days of plague (24:13). David said, ‘Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man’ (24:14). The plague killed 70,000 people (24:15). When the destroying angel reached Jerusalem, the Lord relented. The angel was standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (24:16). A threshing floor was a flat, open area on a hilltop where grain was separated from the husks by wind. It was a good place for worship.

MOUNT MORIAH. The threshing floor was on Mount Moriah, where Abraham had once been told to offer Isaac and where God provided a ram (Genesis 22). Later, 2 Chronicles 3:1 says that Solomon began to build the temple on Mount Moriah, ‘where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan [Araunah] the Jebusite.’ This is the place where the temple would stand, and where the sacrifices pointing to Jesus would be offered for a thousand years. David paid fifty shekels of silver for the threshing floor and oxen (24:24). 1 Chronicles 21:25 says that David paid 600 shekels of gold for the whole site. Both accounts can be true: the first for the threshing floor and oxen, the second for the larger area.

THE BOOK IN SUMMARY. 2 Samuel is the story of a great king, a great sinner, and the God who stays faithful. It shows what God admires in leaders (honor, humility, justice, kindness to the weak, courage, loyalty, repentance) and what He despises (pride, revenge, treachery, abuse of power, cover-ups, flattery). Above all, it points forward to the perfect Son of David who would reign forever.

45-minute plan

Min.	Segment	Details
0–5	Welcome and Hook	Hold up two gifts: one you picked up quickly for free, and one you obviously worked for or sacrificed to get (for example, a handmade item or something you saved for). Ask: “Which gift means more? Why?” Then say: “In our last lesson David learns what it means to give to God something that costs him.”
5–10	Set the Scene	Read 2 Samuel 24 aloud or tell it briefly. Give a two-minute overview from the Background notes.
10–25	Teach	Three points, about five minutes each: (1) David’s heart condemned him; (2) A shepherd who offers himself for the sheep; (3) Worship that costs something.
25–33	Activity	THE COST OF OUR BEST. (Details in the Activity section below.)
33–37	See Jesus	Read John 10:11, then share the connection.
37–42	Discuss	Choose two or three questions from the list below.
42–45	Think / Feel / Do and Prayer	Hand out the sheet, pray, and send the podcast link home.

Teaching points

1. David’s heart condemned him

Right after the census was complete, ‘David’s heart condemned him’ (24:10). He did not wait for Nathan or Gad to confront him this time. He said, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly” (24:10). That is humility. David had learned from the Bathsheba affair that hiding and excusing sin only make things worse. Now he confessed right away. When God gave him a choice of consequences, David chose to trust God’s mercy rather than people’s cruelty: ‘Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great’ (24:14). Good leaders admit their mistakes, and they know that the safest hands are God’s.

2. A shepherd who offers himself for the sheep

When David saw the angel striking the people, he cried out: “Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house” (24:17). This is one of the most beautiful prayers of David’s life. He stepped between God’s judgment and the people and said, ‘Let it fall on me.’ The shepherd boy who once fought a bear and a lion for his sheep is now ready to take the blow for his flock. It is a picture of a godly leader: one who accepts responsibility, who does not blame others, and who puts the people first. And it points straight to Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep.

3. Worship that costs something

God told David, through Gad, to build an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah (24:18). When David arrived, Araunah the Jebusite generously offered everything: the land, the oxen, the wood, all for free (24:22-23). It was a kind offer from a foreigner, and a lovely example of generosity. But David said no. “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing” (24:24). True worship is not about getting the cheapest option. It is about giving God our best, even when it costs us time, money or comfort. The chapter ends with this: “So David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel” (24:25). Out of the worst moment came the place where the temple would stand, and where the picture of the Savior’s sacrifice would be taught for a thousand years.

Who does God admire? Who does He despise?

GOD ADMIRES

David (in repentance): Admitted his sin right away, trusted God's mercy, and offered to take the punishment for his people.

Gad the prophet: Faithfully delivered God's message and guided David to the altar.

Araunah the Jebusite: Generous and respectful. He offered everything to the king and to God, though he was a foreigner.

Joab (in 24:3 only): Gave a courageous warning, though David ignored it.

GOD DESPISES

Pride and trusting in numbers: David counted fighting men to feel strong. God wants us to rely on Him alone.

Ignoring a warning: David overruled Joab's objection. Wise leaders listen when someone cautions them.

Cheap worship: God is not honored by leftovers or by costless gestures.

See Jesus

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

David asked that God's hand be against him instead of the sheep. He could not take their place. Jesus did. In the same city where David built the altar, Jesus would later offer Himself. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. The first 'costly sacrifice' David offered points to the cost of our salvation: 'knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ' (1 Peter 1:18-19). And near the end of the Bible Jesus says: "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16). Jesus is the King of whom 2 Samuel dreams.

Activity

THE COST OF OUR BEST. Give each student a 'gift card' (index card). Ask: 'What is something valuable you could give to God this week that would cost you something (time, money, comfort, pride)?' Examples: giving up one hour of screen time to serve; saving an allowance for the offering; telling the truth even if you will be in trouble; apologizing first. Have students write their promise and pray silently. Then, as a class, review the whole book: use a poster with two columns, 'God admires' and 'God despises.' Have students call out qualities and people from all 13 sessions.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think David's heart condemned him after the census?

TEACHER: Listen for: *pride, trusting in numbers, the conscience that God gave him.*

2. What did David choose, and why? What does it tell us about his faith?

TEACHER: Listen for: *he chose God's hand because God is merciful. Trust in God's character.*

3. What did David pray in 24:17? How does that compare to what Jesus did?

TEACHER: Listen for: *David offered himself; Jesus actually did.*

4. Why did David insist on paying for the threshing floor?

TEACHER: Listen for: *worship should cost us; a gift that costs nothing is not a real sacrifice.*

5. Looking back at all of 2 Samuel, what is the most important quality you want God to build in you?

TEACHER: Allow personal answers. Close in prayer.

Sensitive material

This chapter includes a plague that killed many people. Keep your language measured. Explain that God is just and merciful, that David's heart was broken for his people, and that God stopped the plague when David prayed and offered the sacrifice. Assure students that God cares for people, and that Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the Good Shepherd who gave Your life for us. Help us give You our best, not our leftovers. Keep us from pride, and teach us to admit our sin quickly and to trust Your mercy. Make us people who love others the way You love us. Amen.

What we learned

- God wants us to trust Him, not our own strength or numbers.
- Real worship and love cost us something.
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the King forever, the true Son of David.

Think / Feel / Do reflection (after the session)

THINK: David would not give God something that cost him nothing. What does that teach you about what real worship and real love look like?

FEEL: David was willing to take the blame for his people. How does it feel to know that Jesus did that for you?

DO: Write down one 'costly gift' you will give God or someone else this week, and the quality from 2 Samuel you most want to grow in your life.

PODCAST: Session 13 episode, about 5 minutes. Share it with families to review at home.

APPENDIX

Handout Answer Key

Fill-in-the-blank answers for all 13 sessions

#	Title	Answers (in order)
1	How the Mighty Have Fallen	Saul, Amalekite, Jonathan, mighty, Anointed
2	Stronger and Stronger	Hebron, stronger, Joab, Ish-Bosheth, end
3	The King and the Ark	thirty, Jerusalem, Lord, Uzzah, despised
4	God's Promise to David	house, Nathan, forever, humility, Son
5	A Seat at the King's Table	Saul, Jonathan, lame, table, insulted
6	When a Strong King Falls	home, Uriah, lies, displeased, sin
7	You Are the Man	ewe, man, sinned, sin, Solomon
8	Protect the Hurting	brother, angry, revenge, devises, life
9	Stolen Hearts and Faithful Friends	hearts, Olives, Ittai, curse, Kidron
10	A Fallen Rebel and a Forgiving King	Ahithophel, well, Absalom, die, sinners
11	A Wise Woman and a Faithful Mother	Sheba, Abel, Gibeonites, Rizpah, Jesus
12	The Lord Is My Rock	rock, delighted, fear, Bethlehem, light
13	The Threshing Floor	people, Lord, sheep, Araunah, Shepherd

CREDITS

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