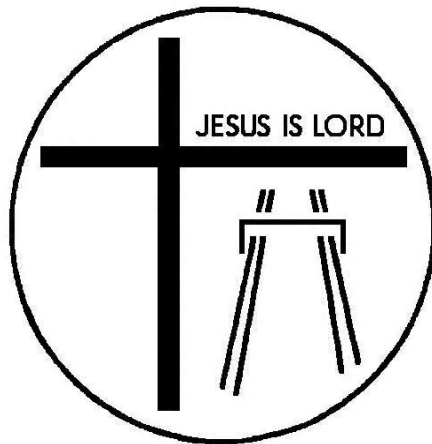


DAVID

A Man After God's Own Heart – Part 2

6 Studies for Home Groups on the life of David



MIDRAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION TO DAVID

The story of David is set at the beginning of a new millennium, at about 1000 B.C. It may seem to us like a very long time ago, in a remote barbaric and unenlightened era, but as we study the life of David and the individuals around him, we will be surprised how little people and their problems have changed in 3000 years.

Israel, after coming out of Egypt under Moses' leadership, and conquering the Promised Land in rather a patch-work way, remained a very loosely organized, tribal nation for 300 years. Ruled by God's law alone, the nation's only leaders were the local Judges or leaders.

Before long, however, the tribes, wanting to be strong and self-sufficient like the nation's that surrounded them, began to clamour for a king. Reluctantly, God gave them their wish and sent Samuel to appoint a king for the people. Samuel selected a strong, handsome young man named Saul. During his forty years as ruler he grew steadily away from the authority of God in his life. Less and less did he lead the people to worship Yahweh and follow God's law.

David's story begins as the young shepherd is called by God, not to be just the people's king, but His king. David's rise to the throne of Israel was full of intrigue, politics, struggles, and hard-learned lessons. David's reign as king of Israel was marked with both exhilarating victory and heart breaking pain.

David knew the delights and difficulties of belonging to God and of being loyal to Him in spite of the pressures of the world. David stumbled in his walk with God and suffered the consequences of his sinfulness, but Scripture recorded 1000 years later that David was a man "after God's own heart," who did all of God's will (Acts 13:22).

David, the song writer of Israel, rejoiced in the Lord of his salvation.

David, the shepherd, united Israel and protected her with diligent care.

David, the king, bowed in obedient submission to the Lord of his life.

David, longing to be like God, made the heart of God his pattern.

GUIDELINES FOR THE GROUP LEADER

1. **Focus on the passage.** Keep the group focused on the Bible passage to be studied. The questions in each study are designed to lead the group to the central themes of each passage.
2. **Encourage all to participate.** Everyone can contribute to the study. The insights gained by individuals should relate to the Bible passage. If a comment or application seems irrelevant, ask “Which verse suggested that idea to you?”
3. **Prepare!** Each study continues the story of David and, therefore, you should be prepared ahead of time to recognize and explain the connections between chapters and studies. Introductory notes are provided in the study, but a review before the group meets is often helpful.
4. **Start and end at the agreed times.** Often many questions are answered as the group moves through the study. To discover David’s character and how he dealt with situations, it is important to complete a study each time the group meets. Going too slowly will discourage most people and the impact of David’s development will tend to be diminished.

5. **Use the map** at the beginning of the study guide to trace David's movements. Pin-pointing the various places David travelled helps alleviate the feelings of being overwhelmed by "all those places with odd names."
6. **Begin with the introduction.** All group members should read this background material to help place the life of David historically. God's revelation of himself to mankind is not a random, fragmented disclosure. God's revelation is a continuous story, and David's life is a significant part of HIS STORY.

STUDY 7

AM I TENSE OR TRUSTING?

1 SAMUEL 26 & 27

Setting the Scene:

Chapters 25, 26 and 27 reveal David's mounting desperation as Saul continues to hunt him down. We will consider how this tension resulted in impulsive action (26), and in disobedience (27) on the part of David.

From the Word:

Read **1 SAMUEL 26:1-25 & 27: 1-12**

Looking deeper - A Group Discussion:

1. Summarize the main events of this chapter, comparing, when possible, the events of chapter 24, when David encountered Saul in the cave. Who betrayed David for the second time (verse 1)? How large a military force did Saul use to pressure David? What other signs of anxiety were evident in Saul (verses 5, 21)?
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2. Compare the attitude and advice of Abishai in verse 8 with that of David's men in 24:4. What was David's response to Abishai? What action did he take? In whose hands did Saul's fate rest (verse 10)?
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3. Notice the similarity in David's words in 1 Sam 24:11 and 26:17. What does this reveal about David's attitude towards Saul? Why?
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4. Although David hoped that Saul really would change, what does 1 Sam 27:1 reveal about what David really believed would happen?
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5. Who did David consult when making the decision to go to Gath?

6. On his arrival in Gath, David was welcomed as an outlaw and a known enemy of Israel's king. What were the immediate results of David's move (verses 4-5)? How long did he stay in Philistia (verse 7)?

Note: the full consequences of David's decision to leave Judah will be realised in the chapters ahead!

Making it relevant - Life Applications

7. In chapters 25, 26, 27 we see the growth of tension and anxiety in David's life. What are or have been the sources of depression, discouragement or despair in your life?

8. Considering your study of David's life so far, did he have reason to trust God for his safety and therefore stay in Judah and not flee? What reasons do you have to go on trusting God in your life?

9. Has your lack of trust in God in the face of problems led to disobedience in your life?

10. What causes you to escape to the 'land of the Philistines', thereby taking the easy way out?

11. What will you do in the future to avoid this?

STUDY 8

HOW DO I RELATE TO GOD AFTER FAILURE?

1 SAMUEL 28: 1-2, 29 & 30

Setting the Scene:

1 Samuel 27 concludes with a sinister statement. Achish, the Philistine king, anticipated that David's broken relationship with Saul would always make him an enemy of Israel, turning the mighty warrior into "my servant forever". David found himself on this predicament because he had disobeyed the admonition of God (1 Samuel 22:5) to remain in Judah. Weary of Saul's pursuit and afraid for his life, he fled to the land of the enemy. This study traces the painful consequences of David's lack of trust in God.

From the Word:

Read 1 Samuel 28: 1-2, 1 Samuel 29: 1-11, 1 Samuel 30.

Going deeper - A Group Discussion

1. Considering David's respect for Saul's position as the anointed king of Israel - note David's ambiguous response to Achish in 1 Samuel 28:2 and 8? Do you think David would have fought against Israel? Why?
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2. How did the Philistine commanders react when they learned of the presence of David and his men? What two reasons did they have to be suspicious of David (verses 4-5)?
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3. Describe in your own words the scene as David and his men returned "home" to Ziklag. How was the intensity of their grief demonstrated? What additional distress did David encounter (verse 6)? What significant change took place in David at that point?

4. What was David's pressing concern at this point? What reassurance did he receive? Briefly describe the rescue. What made the ambush of the Amalekites possible?

5. How was God obviously at work in the rescue mission? What unexpected happy discovery did David make (verses 18-19)?

6. Describe how David's relationship with others was affected by his experience of God's grace. Summarize the problem that developed over the division of the spoil. Contrast David's attitude with that of the "wicked and worthless" in verse 22.

7. Grace is God's unmerited favour toward the undeserving. His blessing is never earned by our own effort or work (see Ephesians 2:8-9). How did David's decision about dividing the spoil illustrate his understanding of grace (verses 23-24)?

Making it Relevant - Life Applications

8. 1 Sam 28:2 reveals David's self-confidence, even arrogance in his abilities, while acting outside the will of God. Have you found yourself ever substituting self-confidence and independence for trust in God and doing His will?

9. In spite of David's failure to trust God, God had not forsaken him and was leading him, by circumstances, toward a renewed trust relationship. Lessons in trust are often painful and sometimes have to be learned through the removal of all support and help by God himself. Have you had to learn this lesson in your life?

10. When David felt threatened by his men in 1 Sam 30:6, he ran to the Lord. Why is it that so many 'find' God or run to God only when all else is lost?

11. Consider David's victory over the Amalekites. Share a time in your life when doing things God's way brought blessing and satisfaction. How does the phrase "nothing was missing" speak to you about the completeness of God's forgiveness and provision?

12. When you have been forgiven and blessed by God, as David has been over the incident with the Amalekites and the sharing of the plunder, what changes should you see in your actions and relationships with other people?

13. Two kinds of service for God are represented here - waiting by the baggage (necessary but ordinary work) and going into battle (necessary but exciting work). What kind of work has God given you in His Kingdom? How does this study of David encourage you and affect your attitude toward your fellow Christian?

STUDY 9

AM I WILLING TO “LOSE MY LIFE”?

1 SAMUEL 31 & 2 SAMUEL 1

Setting the Scene:

The death of Saul was an obvious turning point in the life of David. God’s anointed shepherd had been prepared for the crown by the experiences of being both a hero and a fugitive. He had been confronted by God’s grace and God’s forgiveness and his attitude towards others reflects what he had learned from God. Nowhere is this more evident than in his reaction to the death of Saul.

From the Word:

Read **1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 1**

Going deeper - A Group Discussion

1. How thoroughly were the men of Israel defeated (verses 1, 7)? What significance did the death of Saul’s three warrior sons have for David’s future as king?
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2. There was no national mourning for Saul. What did this indicate about the state of the nation of Israel at that

point? How might this disunity have been an obstacle for David's future kingship?

3. Note the inconsistencies in the story, the Amalekites (Israel's enemy) brought to David about Saul's death - compare 2 Sam 6-9 with 1 Sam 31:4. What might have been his motive for lying and bringing Saul's crown and bracelet to David?
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4. How did David refer to Saul and Jonathan in his lament? Why was David so grief-stricken?
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Making it relevant - Life Applications

5. Saul had carefully protected his own life for a long time. He had tried to eliminate any suspected enemy or rival (1 Samuel 18:10-11, 19:110, 20:30-33, 22:16). He never turned his back lest he be vulnerable to attack (1 Samuel 20:25). He surrounded himself with guards (1 Samuel 22:6, 26:5) and even slept with a weapon by his head (1 Samuel 26:7). How ironic that Saul, who held his life so tightly, died by his own hand! David by contrast, refused to grasp at the crown or to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed, yet he was to be Israel's next and greatest king. Read Matthew 16:25 and discuss it in the light of the lives of Saul and David. Is there something in your life to which you cling tightly? Perhaps we need to

encourage and support each other in 'letting go' of the control and worry?

6. Notice how David and his men react to the news of Saul and Jonathan's death (2 Samuel 1:11, 12). Though it is off the topic - compare this very public show of grief with how many of us mourn privately and 'quietly', which do you think is 'better', if at all? Why?
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7. David's long-time 'enemy' had fallen and David mourned. How do you respond when your 'enemy' fails or falls? Do you rejoice at their demise or take the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and grow in humility?
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8. Read Psalm 103: 8, 10, 12. David omits Saul's failings and sins from his lament. It seems that David understands well God's kind of forgiveness. How can you extend that same kind of forgiveness and forgetting to others in your life? Be specific.
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STUDY 10

CAN I TRUST GOD'S TIMING?

2 SAMUEL 2 (This Study) AND 2 SAMUEL 3 (Next Study)

Setting the Scene:

After Saul's death, David returned to Judah. For the next seven and a half years he reigned in Hebron as the tribal king of Judah, developing military strength, political power and a strategy for uniting all the tribal states of Israel under his own leadership.

Two new personalities emerged during this period. Abner, Saul's former military commander, was a power-hungry opportunist who endeavoured to stay in power by promoting Saul's son Ishbosheth to be the successor to Saul's throne. Abner was ambitious, self-serving and 'loyal' to the one he perceived as his benefactor. Joab, David's military commander, was also aggressive, but because he was bound to David by affection and respect, his loyalty was deeper and truer. Though Joab showed jealousy for his own

position, he was also zealous for the acquisition of the national throne for David – as God’s anointed one.

As you read and discuss the next two studies, notice particularly the political motivations of David, Joab and Abner. Notice how each responds to the revealed will of God. Behind the conflict described in this study, observe the hand of God steadily working to make David king of all Israel.

From the Word:

Read **2 Samuel 2**

Going deeper - A Group Discussion

1. Why did David contact the men of Jabesh-Gilead? Why did he think it important to do this? What did his message and its phrasing reveal about David? What possible political benefits could have resulted?
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Note: David was thirty years old and would rule in Hebron for seven and a half years as king of Judah.

2. How long was Ishbosheth (Saul’s son) king of Israel? Who exercised the real power during his reign?
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Note: There is historical speculation that Ishbosheth was physically and/or mentally handicapped. Though he was

forty years old when he became king, there are no records of his involvement in battles or of his having a wife or children. He appears to have been a puppet king for ambitious Abner, reigning only for the last two of David's seven-and-a-half-year reign, probably because it took five and a half years to regain land lost to the Philistines, and only then could a government be re-established.

Note: The contest of verses 12-17 was a means of limiting bloodshed by involving only one or more representatives from each side rather than two armies. David's heroic contest with Goliath was another example.

3. What reason did Abner give Joab for wanting to stop the fighting (verse 26)? What other reasons could he have had (verse 31)? What was Joab's response to Abner? What do you think would have been the result of a long-drawn-out civil war?
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4. Read 2 Samuel 3:1. What change is described in this verse? What were the implications of this change politically, socially, and personally? David was patient during these years in Hebron. But, waiting would have been hard. What might David have been tempted to do? (See 1 Samuel 15:26 and 16:1).
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Note: the “long war” which took place between Judah and Israel was a cold war. There was little or no armed conflict between them.

Making it relevant - Life Applications

5. Notice David’s first action in 2 Sam 2:11 - he sought specific guidance but though he was aware of his promised kingship, he did not ask how he would ultimately be king. When you pray, do you ask for specific or general guidance? Do you want to know everything that lies ahead or are you content to be led one step at a time? Discuss.
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6. There was a long wait for David before he became king of all Israel. Do you find it hard waiting for God’s promises to be fulfilled in the ‘in-between places’ of your life?
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7. Read Phil 4:11-13. How can you learn to be content while you wait?
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Close in prayer thanking God, with David, that our ‘times are His hands’ (Ps 31:15). Pray for clear insight in understanding what God wants to teach us in these waiting times.

STUDY 11

HOW DO I TREAT MY 'ENEMIES'?

2 SAMUEL 3: 2-39

Setting the Scene:

In this section, David shows further evidence that he is learning from God and following God-like strategies in his plans and purposes. Instead of provoking all-out civil war

between Judah and the rest of the nation of Israel, David follows a different tactic. From this story you may learn much about the value of a 'soft answer' that 'turns away wrath.'

From the Word:

Read **2 Samuel 3: 2-39**

Going deeper - A Group Discussion

1. How did Abner attempt to strengthen his position in Saul's house (verse 6-8)? On what basis did Abner feel justified in sleeping with Saul's concubine? What did this indicate about Abner's view of himself and his role?
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Note: concubines were thought of as the exclusive possession of the throne's heir.

2. What does verse 9 tell us about Abner's appraisal of God's revealed intention for David? Since Abner knew God's plan for David when he made Ishbosheth king, what did this show about Abner's attitude toward God's will? From what you have learned about Abner, what was the real reason he defected to David (see 2 Sam 3:1)?
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3. David's position as king over all of Israel was now being consolidated. Why was it politically expedient for David to have Michal again for his wife? (See 1 Samuel 18:20). How would you describe Israel's attitude toward David during Ishbosheth's reign? What did this mean to David?

4. Why did David make a feast for Abner? What did this reveal about David's attitude toward his 'enemies' and his strategy for becoming king?

Note: David was determined to 'conquer' Israel with patient conciliatory effort. His strategy is exemplified in the following historical incident: In reply to cabinet member Thaddeus Steven's desire to 'destroy' their southern enemies following the civil war, Abraham Lincoln said, "Do not I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

5. Briefly summarize the rest of this chapter. How would you explain the motives and actions of Joab? (Include both political and personal dimensions).

6. What reasons did David have for such a public and elaborate mourning for Abner? What was accomplished by such action (verse 37)? How did Joab's politics differ from those of David? How would David's strategy have aided in the unification of Israel and Judah?

Making it Relevant - Life Applications

7. Do you call people to be reconciled to Jesus Christ by the threat of God's judgement or the promise of his forgiveness?
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8. How do your actions towards others enhance or hinder reconciliation - both between individuals and between God and individuals? (See 2 Sam 3:36 and Luke 2:52).
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9. Discuss your response towards 'enemies' in the light of David's conciliatory words and actions toward Abner. How does this study of David help you?
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STUDY 12

HOW DO I HANDLE 'SUCCESS'?

2 SAMUEL 4,5

Setting the scene:

After the death of Abner, Israel was essentially without leadership and sought David as their king. This study deals with the unification of Judah and Israel under David and the establishment of a centralised civil rule. 2 Samuel 4 and 5 describe the culmination of years of struggle and sojourn for David and the celebration of his rise to kingship over the nation.

From the word:

Read **2 Samuel 4, 5**

Going deeper - A group discussion

1. Considering what you know of Abner's role under Ishbosheth's reign (2 Sam 2:8-9; 3:6). Why do you think the king was afraid when Abner died? Why was Israel so disturbed?
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2. What seemed to be the motives of Rechab and Baanah in Ishbosheth's murder? Why did they think Ishbosheth's death would please David?
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3. To whom did David give credit for his success? How did this set David free from personal ambition?
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4. What reasons did David have for the execution and public display of the bodies of the two murderers? Consider both legal and political reasons.
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5. How complete was the consensus of Israel in asking David to be their king? What three reasons did they give for wanting David (verses 1-2)? What one reason should have been sufficient?
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6. What was the 'first order of business' after David became king? Why was this helpful in establishing a unified Israel? Why was it beneficial to national unity for the new capital city to be captured from the enemies of Israel?
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Note: Jerusalem, up to this time, had been an impenetrable city, and the Jebusites were mistakenly self-assured in their security. They felt that even their 'lame and blind' citizens could repel David's forces. (David sarcastically mocked them as being all 'lame and blind' after his conquest was complete!)

Before David's conquest of Jerusalem, there had been no central gathering place for Israel. There had been several temporary places where Israel could congregate, (Shiloh, Mizpah, Nob, Hebron), but no capital city. David recognized the need for a centralized government and by making Jerusalem the permanent capital, he helped establish national unity.

7. How does Scripture record the 'secret' of David's greatness (verse 10)? Why did God establish David (verse 12)?

Note verses 13-16: all of David's sons born in Jerusalem are listed here even though they had not yet been born.

8. Why would David's defeat of the Philistine's be a particularly encouraging victory for him and the 'new' Israel?

9. As you consider the confrontation and defeat of the Philistines, compared to David's earlier days as a fugitive from Saul, his reliance upon the Lord had grown. How was his trust reflected in his praying (verse 19)? How did he assess this victory (verse 20)? What did this show about David's ability to handle success?

10. What was different about the second battle strategy (verse 23-24)? What might have made this advice difficult to follow? How was David's faith demonstrated?

Making it Relevant - Life Applications

11. Israel suffered years of division and disruption because, succumbing to Abner's power play, they had not obediently sought David as their king. Discuss ways in which you depend more on your 'good reasons' and common sense than God's Word in making decisions. Why does this happen so easily?

12. David's reflective realization of God's work in his life helped him to trust God more. Do you stop and take stock of God's dealings in your life from time to time? Why is it important for you to do this?

13. How is your reliance upon God reflected in your prayer life and in your obedience?

14. Are you willing to seek God's advice even in the area where you have a strong desire?

15. How prompt is your response of praise to God for His work in your life?

16. How does dependence upon God help you handle success?
