

Since January, we have been going through David's life and learning what we can from his example. Today, we see how friends came to David's aid when he needed it most.

I almost skipped this portion of David's story because I believe we encouragement and this is a dark chapter in David's life. However, an observation by Chuck Swindoll points out some great lessons to learn, lessons about falsehood and friends.

Jesus is always with us in our trials; often, he appears as our friends.

David

Friends

Let's jump right in.



1. Background.

After his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, David is really broken ...

David's Broken Situation

- Spiritually – overwhelmed with guilt, 2Sa 12.
- Family – shattered, 2Sa 13 & 14. There was 'anger, bitterness, incest, rape, murder, and rebellion among his now-grown children.'¹
- Politically – lost respect. He had a growing number of critics in the country for his handling of these situations.

Family problems are the most painful to deal with. Absalom, David's son, fled from David for killing Amnon, his step brother who raped his sister. After three years, David allowed his son Absalom back to Jerusalem but refused to see him face to face.

Sin always has consequences; sin separates.

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *David: A Story of Passion & Destiny* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 1997), p. 239.

Look how he is described: ‘Now Absalom was praised as the most handsome man in all Israel. He was flawless from head to foot. ²⁶He cut his hair only once a year, and then only because it was so heavy. When he weighed it out, it came to five pounds (2Sa 14:25-26 NLT)!’

Another two years pass and Absalom seeks out and receives David’s forgiveness.

After receiving David’s blessing, Absalom hatches a conspiracy.

1. The Conspiracy.

‘Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty bodyguards to run ahead of him. ²He got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where in Israel they were from, and they would tell him their tribe. ³Then Absalom would say, “You’ve really got a strong case here! It’s too bad the king doesn’t have anyone to hear it. ⁴I wish I were the judge. Then everyone could bring their cases to me for judgment, and I would give them justice (2Sa 15:1-4 NLT)!’”

Absalom was a genius at marketing – buying a chariot and hiring bodyguards. He looked like he was running for office, but ‘his technique is based on lies and treachery.’²

- No one is able to anything. Really? This is an exaggeration.
- This is a classic ‘strawman argument’ that distorts reality or another person’s position making it easy to attack. It is a staw version of the real situation.
- David and his judges are not there to take up the case or to defend themselves.³
- Having a chariot and 50 men shows that he ‘is acting as an heir preparing for kingship.’⁴ This is what Adonijah did (1Ki 1:5).

He could even feign humility: ‘When people tried to bow before him, Absalom wouldn’t let them. Instead, he took them by the hand and kissed them. ⁶Absalom did this with everyone who came to the king for judgment, and so he stole the hearts of all the people of Israel (2Sa 15:5-6 NLT).’

Little by little, ‘he undermined David’s reputation and built his own.’⁵

² Swindoll, *David*, p. 239.

³ ‘It is easy to say “you are right” when you can ignore the other party ... (and when it) is flattering’, David Toshio Tsumura, *NICOT The Second Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2019), p. 231.

⁴ Tsumura, *Second Samuel*, p. 231.

⁵ Swindoll, *David*, p. 240.

Paul warned us to 'Watch out for people who cause divisions ... Stay away from them. ¹⁸Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people (Ro 16:17-18 NLT).'

- We know how words can divide. Because of our politics today, we know that how you frame something is important. Absalom knew just how to fame his statements to make himself look great and David poorly.
- You say a falsehood long enough and loud enough and it becomes the truth.
- David was not there to defend himself, he was busy running a country.

Absalom 'He sent secret messengers to all the tribes of Israel to stir up a rebellion against the king. "As soon as you hear the ram's horn," his message read, "you are to say, 'Absalom has been crowned king in Hebron (2Sa 15:10 NLT).'"

Nine years from the time he murdered his brother, Absalom blew the ram's horn. A messenger informed David that 'All Israel has joined Absalom in a conspiracy against you (2Sa 15:13 NLT)!

David is not a fool. He noticed the little things that were off, like ...

- When the conversation stopped when he entered the room.
- Or a change in the attitudes around him.
- Or the lack of smiles.

David said, "'We must flee at once, or it will be too late!' David urged his men. "Hurry! If we get out of the city before Absalom arrives, both we and the city of Jerusalem will be spared from disaster (2Sa 15:14 NLT)."

After all these years David has to gather a few things and go on the run again. 'The king and all his household set out at once. He left no one behind except ten of his concubines to look after the palace. ¹⁷The king and all his people set out on foot, pausing at the last house ¹⁸to let all the king's men move past to lead the way (2Sa 15:15-18 NLT).'

This is David's city. He has spent years building it up, building his palace, and making it the center of the nation; it is where the presence of God is. He pauses at the last house and while those with him file past, he looks over Jerusalem. Memories flood his broken heart.

- On the one hand, David is aware this is a result of his 'rebellion against God's commandments.' For example, Shimei threw stones at David told the people to leave him alone. 'If the Lord has told him to curse me, who are you to stop him (2Sa 16:10 NLT)?'

- On the other hand, Absalom's 'immediate cause is his ambition.'⁶
- David has been on the run before, but the cost was not so great as this moment. Loss of everything he had built.

What turns things around for David are friends. **Jesus is always with us in our trials; often, he appears as our friends. There are five groups of friends who help David.**

2. 1st - Foreigners.

The first friend to help David is rather surprising. A foreigner, a recent arrival to Israel: 'Then the king turned and said to Ittai, a leader of the men from Gath, "Why are you coming with us? Go on back to King Absalom, for you are a guest in Israel, a foreigner in exile. ²⁰You arrived only recently, and should I force you today to wander with us? I don't even know where we will go. Go on back and take your kinsmen with you, and may the Lord show you his unfailing love and faithfulness (2Sa 15:19-20 NLT).'"

- Gath?! Yes, the home of Goliath, the place where he fled when he pretended to be insane, the place where he lived among the enemy with his army.
- Instead of hating him, they loved him.

'But Ittai said to the king, "I vow by the Lord and by your own life that I will go wherever my lord the king goes, no matter what happens—whether it means life or death." ²²David replied, "All right, come with us." So Ittai and all his men and their families went along (2Sa 15:19-22 NLT).'

David has no kingdom or wealth to reward Ittai and his men and yet these foreigners are willing to go down with David. They take the risk.

- These 600 foreigners, former enemies, pledge their allegiance to David.
- This is in addition to David's body guards and a portion of the Army that remained loyal to David.

People love success. There are few who will stand with you when everyone else has turned away. There is a reason David is fleeing, this coup is real and his life is in danger. Someone who steps up when everything is going bad is a precious friend.

3. 2nd - Levites.

⁶ Tsumura, *Second Samuel*, p. 229.

Note the two men who are named among the levites: ‘Zadok and all the Levites also came along, carrying the Ark of the Covenant of God. They set down the Ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until everyone had passed out of the city.’²⁵ Then the king instructed Zadok to take the Ark of God back into the city. ‘If the Lord sees fit,’ David said, ‘he will bring me back to see the Ark and the Tabernacle again (2Sa 15:24-25 NLT).’”

- David does not use the Ark of God as a lucky charm, he sends it back to Jerusalem.
- He does not know how ‘far the Lord intends to punish him.’
- However, Absalom’s rebellion is wrong and David uses the friends and opportunities God provides.
- He says to Zadok, ‘I will wait on the west bank of the river, send news.’

David’s line of communication ... (Ray, one big ‘chart’ like. I will be moving fast here).

Zadok / Abiathar – Levites.

Hushai – political advisor.

to

Unnamed servant girl.

to

Ahimaaz – Zadok’s son. There was some drama as they are overseen near Jerusalem.

They flee and must hide in a well (2Sa 17:17-22).

Jonathan – Abithar’s son.

to

David.

I have a friend who, like Zadok and Abiathar, went back into a dangerous situation. If you have a friend who is willing to risk it all for you, cherish them.

- I am sure it was not easy for them to leave their friend and play along with someone who wants to kill the king, your friend.

At this point in the story, it records David weeping. He has no shoes and has his head covered, a sign of mourning. David prays, ‘Lord, let Ahithophel give Abaslom foolish advice (2Sa 16:31 NLT).’ Ahithophel is obviously a counselor to Abaslom.

In response to that prayer, David runs into Hushai, who was waiting for him.

4. 3rd - Hushai.

‘Hushai had torn his clothing and put dirt on his head as a sign of mourning.’³³ But David told him, ‘If you go with me, you will only be a burden.’³⁴ Return to Jerusalem and tell Absalom, ‘I will now be your adviser, O king, just as I

was your father's adviser in the past.' Then you can frustrate and counter Ahithophel's advice ... ³⁷ So David's friend Hushai returned to Jerusalem, getting there just as Absalom arrived (2Sa 15:32-34, 37 NLT).'

Who is Hushai? We don't know, he seems to come out of nowhere. He is only described as an 'adviser,' and 'David's friend.'

He mourns with David. Hushai does not give a sermon or encouraging words. He does not promise to pray. I imagine he simply embraced David, and that was enough.

- The main thing about Hushai is that he was there for David; he showed up.
- Hushai proves to be a close friend, even willing to die for David. He is being sent to Absalom as spy.
- David says, 'By claiming loyalty to him, you will be on hand to find a way to turn ... against him.'⁷
- Even while running for his life, David is a great military strategist. In all the confusion, he is making plans for his return.

Can you see how Jesus is always with us in our trials? Often, he appears as our friends. We can develop a friendship with God, just like David developed his network of friends.

Hushai enters Jerusalem just as Absalom does. Absalom was crowned king in Hebron, and so Hushai's timing is perfect. He promises to serve Absalom like he did David.

Ahithophel advised Absalom to sleep with David's concubines, thereby asserting himself as king and showing disrespect for his father. He also advised Absalom to immediately go after David and destroy him before he can regroup and attack.

Hushai is called for his advice. He says that David and his men are too experienced to be with the women, children and other servants. He is hiding. It is better to let him go tonight and then you can lead us into victory when you are settled.

- Absalom takes Hushai's advice.
- Ahithophel goes home and commits suicide.
- Just in case it was a trap, Hushai sends word to David to cross over the Jordan.

⁷ Swindoll, *David*, p. 246.

Our story seems to be happening all in one day, time has slowed down to let us feel the impact of Absalom's rebellion and David's flight.

But we also see remarkable friendship.

5. 4th - Ziba, Shobi, Makir, & Barzillai.

Sometimes, friends are there just to make you a pie and cup of coffee. To take care of your physical needs, like cleaning your kitchen.

First, there is Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant. Mephibosheth was the only surviving son of king Saul. Ziba - 'He had two donkeys loaded with 200 loaves of bread, 100 clusters of raisins, 100 bunches of summer fruit, and a wineskin full of wine (2Sa 16:1 NLT).'

Then ... Shobi, Makir & Barzillai – 'When David arrived at Mahanaim, he was warmly greeted by Shobi ... and by Makir ... and by Barzillai ... ²⁸They brought sleeping mats, cooking pots, serving bowls, wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans, lentils, ²⁹honey, butter, sheep, goats, and cheese for David and those who were with him (2Sa 17:27-29 NLT).'

Can you imagine the relief of being greeted by friends with food and provisions after fleeing for your life?

- Shobi was an Ammonite, Israel's enemy.
- Makir hid Mephibosheth, he cared for people.
- Barzillai was 80 years old. He could have thought, let the young men take care of this.

There is one more friend, David's commander, Joab. Let me jump ahead in the story.

6. 5th - Joab.

Over time, David was able to muster an army with Joab as its commander. Most of David's army was experienced warriors whereas Absalom's army was fresh conscripts without any training. The decisive battle took place in the forest of Ephraim where it is said, 'More men died because of the forest than were killed by the sword (2Sa 18:8 NLT).'

- Absalom's army lost 20,000 men.
- Absalom's long hair got caught in a tree and his donkey kept going. David's army found him hanging in the air.
- General Joab himself killed Absalom as he hung in the air.

Here is where Joab is a real friend of David. David mourns Abaslom's death so much that the troops who were loyal to him were ashamed. It says, 'Victory was turned into deep sadness. ³They crept back into the town that day as though they were ashamed and had deserted in battle (2Sa 19:2-3 NLT).'

A real friend can tell you to shape up. Joab confronts David and says, "'If you don't go out, not a single one of them (army) will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than ever before.'" ⁸So the king went out and took his seat at the town gate, and as the news spread throughout the town that he was there, everyone went to him (2Sa 19:7-8 NLT).'

It is not fun correcting a friend, nor being corrected, but a true friend gives us perspective. Solomon wrote, 'Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses (Pro 27:6 NLT).'

Jesus is always with us in our trials; often, he appears as our friends.

7. Take Aways.

Here are some take aways from this segment of David's life.

1. We all need friends. Digital friends are insufficient, we need real friends who enter into our lives. I love that we have great technology to stream our services. Even Bible knowledge is being transmitted more and more through podcasts and even K-LOVE. But digi-content is not a replacement for real relationships.

2. Friendship must be developed over time. I encourage you to attend church regularly and build friendships that support your spiritual growth. You must invest time and sometimes money for friendship. It requires sacrifice.

3. Friends are not neutral – they impact our lives. 'Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character (1Co 15:33 NIV)."' Be careful how you choose your friends.

4. Sin always has consequences. David is in this mess because he lusted and murders.

5. Friendship with God is possible. Abraham was called a friend of God (Ja 2:23). The process is the same. If you want friends you must make time for them and listen to them, enjoy being with them. Solomon prophesied that 'There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Pro 18:24 NIV).'

That friend is Jesus, he longs for a relationship with you.

Pray.