

2 Samuel 15 — David's Darkest Hour

October 22, 2023

Good morning CrossWinds! If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are grateful to have you. I have a few quick announcements. First, a brief reminder that we have our annual meeting tomorrow night on this campus at 7:00 PM. If you are a member, we need you to vote on the new elders and deacons. We have the annual reports on the shelves next to each door. The annual report is also available on the church app on the page that lists the elders and deacons. We have one small typo. In the paper version of the annual report, it does not include Robert Morris' name as up for election to serve as an elder. He is listed on the Elder and Deacon page in the church app and the PDF version of the annual report, but the version that went to the printer was missing his name. I want you to be aware of that correction.

Second, the garage project is about to start. We will begin framing the garage at 8:00 AM on Saturday, October 28. If you want to be updated on everything, go to the registrations page of the Spirit Lake campus section on the church app and look for the church garage registration. Sign up there, and you will be added to our communication list for the project.

This morning, we continue in our studies in 2 Samuel. We are in 2 Samuel 15. If you were with us for the last few weeks of this study, you know King David's family was an absolute train wreck. It is a hot mess. David's oldest son raped his daughter, but David did nothing. David's second oldest son murdered his older brother, but David did nothing. For three years, Absalom, the son who murdered his older brother, lived in self-imposed exile. Last week, Joab, David's army

commander, successfully manipulated David to bring Absalom home. After getting manipulated into making that decision, David regretted what he had done. He manipulated Joab after Joab manipulated him. Absalom was allowed to return to Jerusalem, but he never saw his father's face. David didn't trust him. He wanted nothing to do with him.

Absalom lived in Jerusalem but could not see his father. Finally, after two years, Absalom called his father's bluff. He asked his father to either execute him for the murder of his older brother or absolve him and set him free.

David had no stomach to execute his son. He was manipulated into setting Absalom free. Last week, we finished by noticing the lack of enthusiasm between David and Absalom when it took place. David kissed Absalom to forgive him, but there were no hugs. No words were spoken between them. It was a flat, legal kiss that absolved Absalom of his guilt, nothing more. There was no restoration of the relationship between David and his son.

By restoring Absalom, David unwittingly unleashed a murderer into the city. Those who murder once tend to murder again. Absalom vehemently hated his father. His mission in life was to dethrone and kill his father. The next victim on Absalom's hit list would be his dad.

In 2 Samuel 15, Absalom carries out his plan to dethrone his father, kill him, and become king in his place. Absalom didn't want to destroy David, but he also planned to kill the rest of his brothers so he would remain the undisputed king on the throne. My friends, that is an incredibly sinister plan for a child to

have against his father and his family. As good-looking as Absalom is on the outside, his heart is the exact opposite on the inside.

This is why I called this message “David’s Darkest Hour.” Any time your own child plans to kill you, that qualifies as the darkest hour of your life.

This chapter breaks into three parts. First, politics Absalom-style. This is how he planned to undermine his father and steal the people's hearts. Second, taking power Absalom’s way. This is him executing his plan to dethrone and destroy David. Third, David ran for his life.

Politics Absalom-style

We already talked about the deep-seated hatred Absalom had for his father that began when David failed to protect Tamar from Amnon and after David didn’t do justice for her when she was raped. David was so angry at Absalom for murdering his older brother that David wanted nothing to do with his son. He kept him at arm’s length for years and refused to see his face. While Absalom’s actions in this chapter are completely wrong, and he bears full responsibility for all he does, it is worth recognizing that David bred this hatred in his son’s heart by neglecting him in difficult times instead of restoring the relationship.

This is a reminder to all parents. Our children make foolish choices. Some will make outright sinful choices. There will come times when we are so frustrated we will want to hold them at arm’s length. Don’t follow David’s path. Refusing to talk with them will breed hatred for us, not love. It won’t heal things, it will hurt things.

Last week, we saw that Absalom was literally the best-looking man in the nation. He knew that and loved it. He was a man who spent more time caring for

his hair in the morning than a movie celebrity preparing for the big screen. It shouldn't surprise us that when it comes to Absalom's plans to overthrow his father, it will involve a deceptive public relations campaign where he tries to make himself look good.

Absalom tried to look important.

After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 Samuel 15:1 (ESV)

The chapter begins with the words "after this." This tells us what we are about to witness began immediately after his father kissed him and set him free. As soon as Absalom didn't have a legal deadweight hanging around his neck, he immediately set in motion his plans to overthrow his father. This gives us additional insight into Absalom's heart. He didn't have a good relationship with his father, but at least David accepted, he restored him. Absalom got away with murder thanks to his father's love. Absalom showed no gratitude to David for what he had done. He showed no respect for his father's position or gratitude for his kindness. This gives us a window into the selfishness and entitlement that flowed through Absalom's veins.

He began by obtaining a chariot and horses to ride around Jerusalem. He also had 50 men who ran before him. I am sure they would yell something like, "Make way for the great prince Absalom!" They would clear the streets for him. I am also sure Absalom's chariot was not a rickety one. It was not used with over 200,000 miles. Absalom cared about looks and impression. His chariot was probably a new exotic one that was the equivalent of an expensive Italian sports car in his day. He wanted people to stand in awe at his pimped-out ride.

The fact that this is all about looking impressive is underscored when we realized chariots were useless in the rocky mountains around Israel. It was an impractical vehicle that, in the terrain around Jerusalem, led to the driver's death, not their victory.

If you want people to think you are important, you must begin by looking important. A fancy chariot with a small militia of men clearing the road for you to pass was a way to achieve that goal.

It is also worth noting that Absalom's chariot may have been the first to be seen on the streets of Jerusalem. As we learned in earlier weeks of our study, Israel's enemies possessed chariots and cavalry but God prohibited his people from using horses, chariots, and other exotic military equipment in war. Israel was to be composed of only foot soldiers. They were to trust in God for the victory. Earlier in 2 Samuel, God repeatedly gave his people victory over much larger armies that were trusting in horses and chariots, while Israel trusted in the Lord their God.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalm 20:7 (ESV)

Absalom's chariot parade was designed to impress people with what looked important. It represented a decisive shift for the nation and what they saw as important.

Jesus warned us about people who parade themselves around public for a show, trying to gain admirers by the car they drive, how they dress, the job they hold, or the money they flash. This is not good.

“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, Luke 20:46 (ESV)

Jesus warned us about becoming trapped by image. That is the card Absalom played in his bid for the throne.

Absalom made promises he could never keep.

Absalom’s street parades were accompanied by something ever more sinister. In the people’s hearts, Absalom cultivated discontent with David’s kingdom and presented himself as the answer to their unhappiness.

And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate...”
2 Samuel 15:2a (ESV)

The only good news is this verse is at least Absalom wasn’t lazy. He got out of bed early. As early as he could, he went to the city gates. What was the significance of this move? In the ancient world, the city gates were the place where disputes or complaints were brought for adjudication. It was their version of small claims court. Judge Judy type of claims.

...And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, “From what city are you?” ... 2 Samuel 15:2b (ESV)

The king was the head judge of the land. If people had a case, they brought it to the king. The word disputes indicates we are not talking about major cases but minor ones. While we don’t know, it appears David was either deciding all cases himself, so the judicial system was backed up, or minor cases were ignored because there wasn’t enough court time to handle them. Another possibility would be that David had not installed enough lower judges to handle the minor cases at the city gates.

As soon as Absalom learned where a person with a personal case was from, look what he said.

...And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." 2 Samuel 15:2c-3 (ESV)

The first thing Absalom told people was their claims were good and right. This is exactly what the person coming for justice wanted to hear. Everybody with a dispute wants to hear that their side is correct and the other person is wrong. When someone powerful, like Absalom, believes your side of the story, you like them and feel like you have an ally and friend.

One thing we should notice in this brief sketch is that it doesn't appear Absalom bothered to hear the other side of the argument before telling people they were in the right. Absalom never told anyone with a claim that they were wrong. Absalom was manipulating people's hearts by ingratiating himself to them.

Absalom then told people King David did not have anyone appointed to hear their case. Even though their case was good and valid, they wouldn't be able to get justice with King David in charge. Was any of this true? We don't know. In many ways, it doesn't matter. What matters is what Absalom did with the problem. If he were a true son, he would have brought these concerns to his father, and together they would work to solve them. Instead of doing that, he used this problem in the judicial system as an opportunity to undermine his father.

Folks, isn't this the way politics works? If there is a weakness in the government leadership or administration, rather than trying to help someone in

charge fix it, people love to undermine the person in the office and use that weakness to get rid of them. It works this way in local government. It works the same way in the church. If something is not getting done well, people act like Absalom and use that weakness to undermine those in leadership instead of coming alongside to work together on a solution to the problem.

Then Absalom would say, “Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.” 2 Samuel 15:4 (ESV)

What a liar. He was such a braggart. He claimed that if he were the judge of the land, every man with a dispute could personally come to him, and they would get justice. That is impossible. Every person in that nation with a small claims court case cannot go to the king for a judicial decision. There were already too many minor legal cases for David to process. What makes Absalom think he would do so much better? In addition, by definition, he would not be able to decide in everyone’s favor. In a court case, half of the people lose. Apparently, Absalom forgot about that. He claims he could do a much better job than his father, but he has yet to decide on one court case. He is your typical sports fan who criticizes a player on his favorite team but hasn’t plays a minute of the sport himself.

Absalom worked hard to create an atmosphere of discontent among the people. He poisoned the national goodwill toward David and promoted himself as the good-looking fluffy-haired chariot-driving answer to all their problems. The truth was Absalom had no interest in the people. He just wanted the crowd's support and was willing to say or do whatever it took to obtain it.

Absalom was a schmoozer.

And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 2 Samuel 15:5 (ESV)

When people came up to him to bow before him because they were impressed by the proud prince with his fancy chariot, he would bow low before them and say, “No, the honor is mine to be with you.” Then he would take their hand and kiss it. You can imagine people were overwhelmed by this, but he was a total schmoozer. It was all fake, just a game to win their hearts.

There is a subtle play on words in the Hebrew that doesn't come across in English. When it says, “he took hold of him” in Hebrew, it is the same wording as what Amnon did to Tamar when it says in that text that he took hold of her to violate her. Amnon took hold of Tamar to violate her. Absalom took hold of the hands of an entire nation to violate them. Amnon violated one person for his purposes. Absalom violated an entire nation for his purposes. He did the same thing as his older brother, but he violated far more people than his older brother ever did. Absalom's flattery made people think he was a humble, loving, and caring leader when in reality, he was an egotistical narcissist who only cared about himself.

The problem was politics Absalom-style is that it works.

Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. 2 Samuel 15:6 (ESV)

He spent four years at the city gate undermining his father, proclaiming himself the answer to everyone's problems, and kissing hands.

While we are busy shaking our heads at Absalom, it is worth asking ourselves, “Are there times when we have become like Absalom?” Are there

times when we use people for our purposes instead of genuinely caring about them? For example, in conversations, do we care about what people have to say when they are talking to us? Are we listening, or are we waiting for a pause in the conversation so we can talk about ourselves? Is the real interest in our life on ourselves, or do we genuinely care about others and their needs and sufferings? Maybe you are an employer, and you talk about how well you care for your employees. Is that true? Do your employees work such long hours at low wages that they can barely survive? Do they have health care to take care of themselves and their family? Are we like Absalom claiming to care about others but the truth is we use people to promote ourselves?

Taking power Absalom's way.

And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. 2 Samuel 15:7 (ESV)

We already know Absalom was a man who could wait for the right moment to carry out his evil intentions. He waited for two years until the right time to carry out the murder of his brother. He worked to breed discontent with David and presented himself as the solution to the problems of normal people for four years. It was time to put his plan to overthrow his father into action.

For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.' " 2 Samuel 15:8 (ESV)

He approached his father with the claim that while he was in self-imposed exile in Geshur, he prayed to the Lord and promised God that if God would bring him back to Jerusalem, he would offer a sacrifice to the Lord in Hebron.

When David heard this, I am sure he was excited. Absalom was a godless man who only cared about himself. What was this sudden interest in God? When your godless son suddenly wants to go to church, you will do anything to make it happen. The was David. He was thrilled to hear that Absalom had a sudden interest in God, and his desire to offer a sacrifice in Hebron.

There are a few things we should know about Hebron. Hebron was a large city. It was the former capital city of the nation. It was David's royal city before Jerusalem. The people possessed some resentment that it lost the privilege of being the home to the king. Hebron was also where David was declared king.

Absalom planned to arrive in Hebron not to offer worship to God, but to declare himself king. His religious claims and supposed desire to worship was a lie to his father.

The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. 2 Samuel 15:9 (ESV)

David instantly approved Absalom's travel plans with gratitude that his son planned to seek the Lord. David even told him to go in peace. Ironically, while David sent him to Hebron in peace, Absalom was traveling to Hebron to declare war.

It is the same Absalom. Outward expressions all looked good but they were lies. His heart was evil. He was out for himself. He deceived the people, now he deceive his father.

The last words of David to his son were words of love as he sent him on his way in peace. The last words of Absalom to his father were a deceptive lie.

But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" 2 Samuel 15:10 (ESV)

These were operatives. Absalom planted sleeper cells in every city and village of Israel. They were waiting for the word that Absalom was proclaimed king, then they would rise up in their city, support Absalom's kingship and fan the flames of the rebellion in their town.

With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. 2 Samuel 15:11 (ESV)

When Absalom killed his brother Amnon, as cover for that murder, he brought his brothers and their families to his murderous feast to disguise his intentions. Here he did the same thing. To this fake offering in Hebron, he invited 200 men from Jerusalem. These would not have been common men but important men. These were people who worked for David. This served a variety of purposes. In Hebron, when Absalom declared himself king, these important men would face the choice of joining his rebellion or facing certain death. In addition, they would not be in Jerusalem to assist David in the crisis that followed. Finally, since they were with Absalom, David would be forced to assume they were also part of the coupe. That would give him the impression that the attempt to overthrow him was wider spread and more deeply embedded into his leadership than it was.

And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh... 2 Samuel 15:12a (ESV)

In recent chapters, we saw the important role wise and crafty people played. Jonadab was the crafty man who planned the rape of Tamar and the murder of Amnon. Last week, the wise women of Tekoa manipulated David's

heart to bring Absalom home. Now we meet Ahithophel. He was the wisest and craftiest of them all. His counsel was highly esteemed. He was one of David's closest friends, if not David's closest friend. David shared everything with him. He sought his advice on everything and he was filled with wisdom. You can't get much closer than David and Ahithophel. Ahithophel stabbed David in the back and joined Absalom in the rebellion. David later wrote about Ahithophel's betrayal with these words.

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. Psalm 41:9 (ESV)

What brought such a close person friend of David to do such a hurtful things? It turns out Ahithophel's granddaughter was Bathsheba. When David took her and impregnated her, he violated Ahithophel's precious loved granddaughter! Athiphophel's son was Eliam. He was one of David's mighty men. Eliam and Uriah served together as part of the elite mighty men in David's army. Ahithophel's son gave his daughter in marriage to Uriah, who was one of his close friends. David murdered Uriah, the much-loved son-in-law who married into Ahithophel's family. David's affair with Bathsheba violated Ahithophel's precious granddaughter and ended up with the murder of her much-loved husband.

Athiphophel may have been David's closest friend and confidant, but he had a major bone to pick with David after the way his actions devastated his children and grandchildren. This is why he wanted to get even with David.

...And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing. 2 Samuel 15:12b (ESV)

Once the people heard Athiphophel was on Absalom's side, everybody rushed to Absalom's side. They kept coming.

David ran for his life.

And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." 2 Samuel 15:13 (ESV)

We don't know who this person was, but he assessed that the entire nation turned from David to Absalom. When Absalom won the affection of the people, it was clear to David that he lost the heart of the nation. It is interesting to see how quickly the people turned from David to Absalom. They forgot the David who rose up from a shepherd to lead the nation to become a world power. They forgot the Philistines and Goliath. Their love quickly turned to a man who was a schmoozer with fluffy hair who loved to hand-kiss and sweet-talk. Absalom was a man who never won a battle, decided a court case, or led anything in his life, yet their fickle hearts abandoned David and turned to him.

Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." 2 Samuel 15:14 (ESV)

The David we know since his sin Bathsheba was a weak and indecisive leader. In this crisis, he finally starts to shake the old rust. It looks like the old David is back. He knew he had to make some decisions and make them fast. First, he needed to get out of Jerusalem. He had no idea who was part of the conspiracy in the city. Second, he didn't want to be stuck in Jerusalem when Absalom returned to kill him. If people weren't loyal to him in the city, they would give him up. If the city resisted him, much blood would be shed. While Jerusalem was his home, he knew he needed to leave it and run for his life.

It is in this period when David was running for his life, in his darkest hour as he was desperately trying to protect not just his own life but the lives of his

wives and children, that David's pen began to flow. He began calling out to God again. Psalm 3 was one of the Psalms he wrote as a prayer to God at this desperate time. I won't read you the entire Psalm because we will look at it later in our series but I want to read the opening verses to give you a window into his world in those desperate moments.

O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." Selah Psalm 3:1-2 (ESV)

Everyone was saying the situation was hopeless for David. Even God couldn't save him now.

So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house. 2 Samuel 15:16 (ESV)

If you have been with us for earlier messages in this series, you know David leaving behind these ten women is significant. What happens to them will fulfill Nathan's prophecy against David. We will learn more about them in the next few weeks.

And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house. 2 Samuel 15:17 (ESV)

At the last house, David stopped to see which servants were willing to leave the city with him. He wanted to see who was willing to become a fugitive on the run to support him. Imagine how hard it would have been to leave the city running for your life because the one who plans to kill you is your own son. This is heartbreaking.

And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king. 2 Samuel 15:18 (ESV)

The first group of people that he met were loyal foreigners. They were the Cherethites and the Pelethites. These foreigners worked in David's army and served as his bodyguards. We would call them the Secret Service. Having a bodyguard of foreign soldiers was common because it avoided political alliances that could undermine the king. So, the secret service agents in his kingdom were with him. They were not part of the coupe.

The Gittites are a contingent of Philistine soldiers who joined up with David when he fought on the side of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 27. The significance of this is the foreigners in David's kingdom were more loyal to David than his own people. It was not just old foreigners who were faithful to him, but new foreigners were also.

Let's meet Ittai, the Gittite.

Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home. You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you." But Ittai answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be." And David said to Ittai, "Go then, pass on." So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. 2 Samuel 15:19–22 (ESV)

Ittai and his soldiers were foreigners who just arrived. They joined David and his army only days before. David knew this sudden change of events might cause them to rethink their commitment. He told them they had no obligation to join him in exile and fight for him in the upcoming battle against Absalom. They were free to stay Absalom and serve him as king. I love the way Ittai refused to turn his back on David. Ittai was an island of fidelity in a sea of treachery. The

irony is clear. David's own son overturned a nation against him. The foreigners in David's kingdom were more loyal to David than his own son and his people.

And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness. 2 Samuel 15:23 (ESV)

Everyone was crying. Everyone who saw David's royal family running for their life was in tears. This is not the way a son should treat his father. Notice where they are going. It was to the wilderness. David was returning to an earlier time in his life when he wandered into the desert to escape from King Saul.

We met foreigners who were loyal to David. Now we meet loyal friends.

And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out of the city. 2 Samuel 15:24 (ESV)

Abiathar and Zadok were the priests. They came with the ark of the covenant and all the rest of the Levites to support David. They planned to bring the ark with David. After everyone passed by, David said something the priests did not expect to hear.

Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. 2 Samuel 15:25 (ESV)

Notice what David did. He did not try to take the ark with him hoping to use it as a lucky rabbit's foot like Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas did in 1 Samuel. That backfired. That led to Hophni and Phineas' defeat and death. David chose to leave the ark in Jerusalem and left the result of the impending battle up to God. If God wants me to survive, I will return to the city and see the ark again. If this is my end, that is up to God too. David knew what would make the difference was having God's favor, not God's furniture.

But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him." 2 Samuel 15:26 (ESV)

David cast himself on the mercy of God. If God planned to rescue him, he would. If God was done with him, that was up to God. The results were in God's hands. Whatever God decided was okay for David.

The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 2 Samuel 15:27–28 (ESV)

Did you see what happened? In the last verse, David cast all of his anxieties on God and left them there. He would trust in God and do nothing. In the next verse, David began making plans to save himself. Trust in God didn't make David passive. Trust in God didn't mean David did nothing. He made a plan that involved sending the priests back the city to serve as undercover spies.

This is instructive for us. While we are to cast our anxiety on God and leave the results in God's hands, that doesn't mean we should sit still and resign ourselves to paralysis and inaction. We leave results in God's hands but we still also make a plan and do something.

But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. 2 Samuel 15:30 (ESV)

Tears flowed that day as they climbed the Mount of Olives to get to the other side of the hill to escape sight from the city.

And it was told David, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." 2 Samuel 15:31 (ESV)

Just when it seemed things could not get worse, David learned that Ahithophel, his most valued advisor, betrayed him and was part of the conspiracy. With Ahithophel behind the conspiracy, David's overthrow seemed all but certain. What could David do? He prayed. He asked God to turn Ahithophel's wise counsel into foolishness.

From this, we learned three things to do in a crisis of gargantuan proportions. 1. Trust in God's sovereignty. Leave the outcome in God's hands. 2. Make a good, wise, and logical plan. 3. Start praying for help.

While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. 2 Samuel 15:32 (ESV)

David prayed that God would frustrate the wise counsel of Ahithophel. As he came to the top of the mountain, just before he went to the other side, Hushai came to him. Hushai was another of his wise counselors. David realized this man might be the answer to his pray that he was looking for.

David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,' then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. 2 Samuel 15:33–34 (ESV)

Hushai was an older man. The wilderness would be tough on him. David had a job for him. Go into the city. Pretend to be on Absalom's side, and frustrate the wise counsel of Ahithophel so it isn't followed.

David prayed to have Ahithophel's wisdom frustrated, and God answered his prayer by sending across his path an ordinary person who could help.

Many times God answers our prayers in the same way. He sends ordinary people across our path who can answer our prayers by helping us in ways we need assistance.

Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear." 2 Samuel 15:35–36 (ESV)

David informed Hushai of the spy network he set up with the priests that would relay news back to David. The chapter closes with these words.

So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 15:37 (ESV)

Hushai arrived in Jerusalem just as Absalom was entering the city. Will David successfully escape to the wilderness, or will Absalom catch him while he is on the run? Will Absalom discover Hushai was a spy sent to undermine his kingdom? Will Hushai successfully frustrate Ahithophel's wise counsel?

Come back next week to find out. If you can't wait, read the next chapter.

Applications

1. **In a crisis, I must submit to God's will for the outcome AND develop a plan of action to address the problem.** When the bottom dropped out of David's world, and he found himself running for his life, he submitted to God's will. He cast his anxiety on God and left his worries at God's feet. He didn't resign himself to fatalism. He also made a plan. He sent the priests back to the city and set up a spy network. He recruited Hushai as a mole and to frustrate Absalom's plans. Trust in God and wise action are complimentary, not in opposition to one another. For example, if you are diagnosed with

sickness, part of that is giving the sickness to God and trusting his will. It is also getting yourself to a good hospital and finding a good doctor as you hope and pray to be healed. We must avoid the trap of fatalism, which says we trust God and do nothing. I remember when this truth hit me as a young adult. I was a single guy, and I didn't want to be a single guy forever. I typically stayed home in my basement and prayed, asking God to send the right person in my life. Eventually, I realized that part of the answer to my prayer involved me doing something. At the time, I lived in Chicago. I found the church with the largest Christian singles group in the city. That was Willow Creek Community Church. That gave me better odds of finding a young lady who loved Jesus. As part of God answering that prayer, I went to that singles group and met people. One of the people I met was Cindy, who is my wonderful wife. When we have a problem or a crisis, we pray about it and plan to do something about it.

2. **In a crisis, David gave us four steps to follow.** David followed four steps that we can follow when we hit a crisis.
 - a. Submit the outcome to God's will.
 - b. Develop a plan of action.
 - c. Pray and ask for help in specific ways.
 - d. Expect God's answer to our prayers to come through ordinary people.
3. **Am I like Absalom? Do I pretend to care about others while manipulating them to serve myself?** Absalom shows us the deceitfulness of someone who loves themselves and lives for themselves instead of caring for others.

He is a great reminder of how easy it is to become like him where we only care about ourselves so we use people instead of genuinely caring about them.

4. **David's exit from Jerusalem was a preview of Jesus' exit (See John 18:1-2).** David's darkest hour reminds us of one of Jesus' darkest hours many years later. David and Jesus had their closest friend turn against them. David and Jesus both left the city of Jerusalem. Both crossed the Kidron Valley. Both climbed the Mount of Olives. David and Jesus both understood their suffering was part of God's plan. The difference is David escaped to the other side of the mountain. Jesus didn't escape. He died for us. In the future, David will be restored as king. Jesus was also restored as king, but not as a king like he was before. Through his death, Jesus conquered Satan, sin, and death. Jesus has returned to being the king over all creation, the king before whom every knee will bow and tongue will confess as Lord.



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