

2 Samuel 17 — From Discipline to Deliverance

November 5, 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 before we get to our study.

First, the garage construction project continues on Saturday mornings. I invite you to join the team working on it. I will notify you each week to confirm the build is on for Saturday mornings.

Second, some folks requested a membership class not on Wednesday nights. They are parents who help with AWANA. To accommodate them, we are offering a two-week membership class. It will be on Tuesday, November 14, and Monday, November 20, from 6:30 to 8:30. If you have been around a while and want to join CrossWinds, the membership class is part of the membership process. I would love to have you part of it. If you are new to CrossWinds and want to learn more about Jesus and our mission to reach people with Jesus, the membership class is a great way to learn about CrossWind's heartbeat. After taking the class, there is no obligation to join. If you want to sign up for the class, use the church app. Go to the Spirit Lake page. Scroll to the bottom button called "Registrations." You can register there. If that doesn't work for you, talk to me after church.

Third, today is the Mexican Fiesta Potluck Meal. It starts at 11:15. If you didn't bring food to pass, don't worry. Come anyway. There is always plenty. The meal is a great way to get to know your church family. With Taco House closed, the CrossWinds Mexican Fiesta may be the best Mexican option in town.

Fourth, our church is on mission is to reach people with Jesus. We do that in our community and around the world. One way you can be part of that mission is through Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes. You can pick one up in the foyer to the left as you exit the main door. Be sure to get a packing list with a box. If you think the Christmas shoe boxes are a great idea, but you don't have time to shop, our youth group is packing boxes this week. They are trying to pack 100 boxes with a budget of \$30 per box. That includes the shipping costs and the contents. Their goal is to raise \$3,000 to help them reach other children around the world with the good news of Jesus. If you want to sponsor some of our students by helping them pack these boxes, put a check in the offering boxes in the back and on the memo line, specify the youth group Operation Christmas Child boxes.

This morning, we continue our study in 2 Samuel. We are in 2 Samuel 17. Last week, after the service, I talked to a friend about the message and the chapter we studied. He thought 2 Samuel 16 was a hard chapter. He wanted to head home and read some New Testament for good news.

He was right. 2 Samuel 16 is a hard chapter. David was getting hammered by God for his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Absalom's rebellion against David was not a random occurrence. It was a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Speaking for God, Nathan the prophet told him that would happen. Almost all the suffering we read about David endured in 2 Samuel 16 was from his sin Bathsheba and Uriah, even though that was years before.

One overarching message from these chapters is that the brief pleasure of sin never outweighs the long-term suffering from sin. If David could roll back the clock and on the night he lusted after Bathsheba know then about all the pain and suffering he was experiencing now, he would have never chosen an affair and murder.

Last week, in 2 Samuel 16, we met Shimei. We called him the potty mouth with a purpose. As David ran from Jerusalem for his life to escape Absalom who wanted him murdered, at his lowest moment, when he was most despondent, Shimei began cursing out David, yelling at him from the hillside. As he cussed out David, he accused him of crimes he hadn't done. The accusation was that David was a worthless man and a murderer. Shimei claimed David was involved in the murder of King Saul and his family. We know that was not true.

Interestingly, David was a worthless man and a murderer, not for killing King Saul and his family, but for having an affair with another man's wife and killing her husband. As Shimei broke his heart, cursing him out when he was down, David let him speak because he figured God was behind the words. David needed to hear that rebuke for what he had done.

When Absalom, Ahithophel and the rest of the coup arrived in Jerusalem, to solidify the rebellion, Ahithophel suggested that Absalom sleep with the 10 wives David left in Jerusalem. This was also not a random thought. It was part of God's plan to discipline David for what he had done.

God was disciplining David by the rebellion of his son, the cursing of Shimei, and the mistreatment of his precious wives. If you question that, we need

to return to 2 Samuel 12 when God sent Nathan the prophet to rebuke David for what he had done to Bathsheba and Uriah and explain to him the consequences that were coming.

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. (That was Absalom his son) And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' "(That was Ahithophel suggesting the rape of ten of David's wives.) 2 Samuel 12:11–12 (ESV)

The good news is that after last week's depressing chapter, you came back for more. Today, we see God's hand working behind the scenes, but God's purpose has changed. In 2 Samuel 16, God disciplined David for his sin. In 2 Samuel 17, God now works behind the scenes to deliver David from his enemies who want to take his life. Last week, David was getting what he deserved. This week, David will receive grace and rescue that he doesn't deserve. That is a great encouragement for all of us. Sometimes, God disciplines us for our sins because he loves us. Many more times, He is at work behind the scenes to rescuing us from the mess we have made of life. For that, we are grateful.

As I was thinking about what to call this message, I came up with the title, "God's plans or man's plans." Today, we will see a lot of people with plans. Some have a plan to kill David. Other have a plan to rescue David. In the end, it won't be man's plans that matter. Only God's plans will matter.

Later in life, as David looked back on this event and the ways God worked in his world, he wrote Psalm 127. In that Psalm, he talked about man's plans and God's plans. He reflected on the importance of making sure our life plans line up with God's plans or they are destined to fail.

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Psalm 127:1–2 (ESV)

The point of this Psalm is that we may have our plans, but at the end of the day, no matter how perfect our plans or how powerful our position is, our plans will fail if God is not committed to their success. The best thing we can do is make sure we know what is pleasing to God and what his plans and purposes are in this world, and then work with those plans, not against them. If we work with them, God will be committed to our success. If we work against God's plans, all our time and energy will amount to nothing.

In this chapter we have people with plans to destroy David, and people with plans to save David. Whose plans is God behind? Whose plans will succeed because they work in God's direction, not against him?

We will break our study up under the plural noun "plans" as we look at this chapter through the various plans people have for David.

As we begin, remember there are two key characters who serve as advisors to Absalom in his coup. One was Ahithophel. He was David's former best friend and close friend. He was also Bathsheba's grandfather, so he had a bone to pick with David about his affair with his granddaughter. He switched teams and joined Absalom's rebellion, working against David.

There was also a man named Hushai. He was another friend and counselor of David. He was still loyal to David. He agreed to a deep undercover operation behind enemy lines pretending to be loyal to Absalom when he was

working behind the scenes to ruin Ahithophel's well-crafted plans. Let's see whose plans with and whose plans God was behind.

Ahithophel's Plan

We will begin with one of the final verses of the last chapter to remind ourselves of the value, precision, and trustworthiness of Ahithophel's word as an advisor.

Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom. 2 Samuel 16:23 (ESV)

Ahithophel's initial counsel was for Absalom to sleep on the palace roof with his father's wives. Absalom followed that advice without question. As we begin chapter 17, Ahithophel has further advice on finishing the rebellion and David's life that night. His reputation tells us his advice will not be wrong. It will be trustworthy.

Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace." 2 Samuel 17:1-3 (ESV)

With David and his troops exhausted and in desperate flight, Ahithophel counsels that now is the time to deliver the final knockout blow.

Incidentally, this plan shows an appalling lack of respect for David as king and for the God, who installed David as king. In 1 Samuel, even though King Saul was a scoundrel and attempted to murder David numerous times, David refused to touch him. Repeatedly, David said, "I will not put my hand out against

the Lord's anointed." In 1 Samuel 24, David was conscious stricken when he cut off the corner of King Saul's robe.

Ahithophel may have been a genius, but he was not that smart regarding God and how he works. He ought to know that no matter how smart he is, attempting to do away with God's anointed king will not end well. He will be fighting against God's plan and God's king. No matter how smart he is, God will destroy his well-laid plans. That is what find.

Let's look at Ahithophel's plans.

1. Ahithophel would lead the expedition.

Notice how many times Ahithophel referred to himself. "Let me choose... I will arise... I will come... I will strike... I will bring." There was no need to expose Absalom to the dangers of a night raid. I do not know if Ahithophel proposed this because he had doubts about Absalom's military ability or was incredibly confident in his abilities. This plan would avoid the difficulty of a father and son facing one another and needing to kill one another, or even worse, the possibility of reconciling. In this plan, Ahithophel kept Absalom's hands clean and had the privilege of revenge as he took David's life.

2. He would quickly assemble an army that represented all of Israel.

It seems he intended to choose a thousand from each tribe of Israel. This would symbolically involve the entire nation in overthrowing David and preparing to reunite the nation. The Hebrew word for thousand does not always represent an exact number. Sometimes, it simply represented a large number. The point is that Ahithophel felt there were already around a thousand men from each tribe

who had come to Jerusalem in support of Absalom's rebellion. He could quickly assemble them into an army, seizing the exhilaration of the moment to finish off David and his weary men. Scholars estimate that David possessed only 2,000 people. This would give Ahithophel a 5-to-1 advantage in the fight.

3. It needed to be a surprise attack that night.

Absalom wanted to use the strategic advantage of surprise while David and his men were in shock and confusion. This was essential. Look at all that happened to David on this day. News of Absalom's rebellion reached Jerusalem. David and his men needed to access the news and then decide on a plan to escape. They then gathered everyone from the place and fled 20 miles across the desert. I am sure Ahithophel heard that as David and his men left Jerusalem, they covered their heads. They were so discouraged that they didn't respond to Shimei's cursing. This told Ahithophel that David and his men were mentally defeated. That night was the time to strike while they were at their weakest.

4. It would be a surgical strike to remove David without further bloodshed.

As Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel was undoubtedly personally interested in the death of David, but he wanted to limit the collateral damage. Too much collateral damage turns people against you.

We have seen this in Israel's war against Hamas. While Israel is focused on the leaders of Hamas, people who are not directly involved pay with their lives. This turns the hearts of people against Israel. Ahithophel wanted a quick surgical strike on David to avoid as much collateral damage to make reunification as easy as possible.

5. Once David died, reuniting the nation would be easy.

There would be no revenge taken against David's supporters. Where else would people go besides gather around Absalom? As David's son, he was next in line for the throne.

Ahithophel's plan was good. It was quick. It was efficient. It had a clear and limited goal: the death of David and no more. It would finish the rebellion that night. The rest of the leaders in the nation also thought the advice was good.

And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel. 2 Samuel 17:4 (ESV)

Everything went according to plan until we read the next verse.

Hushai's Plan

Then Absalom said, "Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say." 2 Samuel 17:5 (ESV)

This was the turning point in the rebellion. This is when God was at work in the background, moving from David's discipline to David's deliverance. After everyone agreed to Ahithophel's plan, why did Absalom suddenly want a second opinion? We know Ahithophel's plans are always wise, good, and right. There was no need to hear additional counsel.

God was at work behind the scenes, turning Absalom's thoughts in the direction he wanted them to go. The Bible tells us God can change people's thoughts and desires.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)

Remember when David heard that Ahithophel joined Absalom in the rebellion? He knew the wisdom of Ahithophel was good and it would lead to the

rebellion's success. All David could do in that moment was pray that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. David didn't just pray. He also acted. He sent Hushai the Archite back into Jerusalem, hoping and praying that God would allow Hushai to confuse Ahithophel's wise words. This was God answering David's prayer. God gave Absalom the desire to hear a second opinion when he didn't need to seek it.

When we go to the next verse, it gets even better.

And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak." 2 Samuel 17:6 (ESV)

Hushai didn't even need to ask Absalom to hear Ahithophel's plan. Absalom vomited it out for him and then asked for his evaluation of it. He handed Hushai the chance to disrupt Ahithophel's plans on a silver platter. This was God at work behind the scenes, ordering circumstances.

Hushai began to pick apart Ahithophel's plan.

1. Hushai boldly disagreed with Ahithophel.

Then Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good." 2 Samuel 17:7 (ESV)

Given his unrivaled reputation, this was a bold way to speak about Ahithophel. He claimed Ahithophel's plan was wrong. That made people sit up and take notice. Nobody disagreed with Ahithophel. Then Hushai softened the blow a bit. Ahithophel is wrong, just this one time. Everybody gets something wrong once in a while. Most likely, Ahithophel was out of the room when Hushai began picking apart his plan.

2. He imaginatively exaggerated the strength of the opposition.

We know David was weak and unprepared. He and his men were in shame and weakness. They were exhausted and resting at the Jordan River. Since Hushai knew David couldn't defeat Absalom on a literal field of battle, he set out to have David defeat Absalom on the battlefield of his imagination.

Hushai said, "You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people. Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men. 2 Samuel 17:8–10 (ESV)

Ahithophel's plan was brilliant, but Hushai's speech was brilliant.

The first word he says is "you." In the Hebrew, it is in the emphatic tense. In Ahithophel's advice, Absalom did nothing. Hushai's advice was about Absalom's glory. For a man with a big ego and fluffy hair, that sucked him in.

Hushai said, "*You know* that I don't need to tell you about your father's strength. Your father and his men are mighty men. Your father took down Goliath. He and his men destroyed the Philistines and Amalekite. The armies they battled possessed horses and chariots. Your father and his men defeated them on foot, even though they were smaller in number. Do you think it would be wise to send a quick and unprepared force to try and strike down your father? You know their reputation.

Your father and his men will not be weary and worn out. They will be angry like a mother bear with a stolen cub. Do you want to face your father when he and his men are in a rage? Would that be a good idea?

Your father is an expert at war. He will not spend the night among the troops. He will have hidden himself away someplace expecting this kind of attack. King Saul tried hunting him for years but couldn't find or kill him. Do you think you will find him that easily tonight when he escaped every other attack on his life?

Hushai then stirred up Absalom's fears. Since David killed Goliath, nobody has outwitted or overpowered your father and his men. Did you forget that? Imagine what would happen if word got out that David and his men were slaughtering your army. Everyone would flee. The bravest men would become cowards. Your rebellion would be over. You would be alone. That was a nightmare Absalom couldn't handle. Like a coward, he killed defenseless people at the dinner table, not the battlefield. He was more concerned about his complexion and hair than acting like a battle-hardened soldier.

Hushai's speech did not use facts. It played on Absalom's fears and nightmares. It manipulated his emotions. It played into his pride used the power of language to manipulate his mind. Hushai did his best to make Ahithophel's wise plan look like foolishness.

He proposed an alternative plan to gain time.

Hushai proposed an alternate plan. The purpose of Hushai's plan was the opposite of its stated goal. Hushai's true purpose was to give David time to

escape. The essential point Hushai needed to defeat was moving against David that night. He needed to allow David and his men to escape and regroup.

Hushai knew Absalom was driven by vanity and a desire for recognition. Absalom worshipped himself. If Hushai could paint a picture in Absalom's mind of a glorious victory with himself as the center of all of it, he would fall for it.

But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left. If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there.” 2 Samuel 17:11–13 (ESV)

He played into Absalom's ego by insisting he lead the battle.

According to Hushai, the problem with Ahithophel's plan was that it did not give Absalom his proper place of importance. There should be parades with Absalom at the center of them. Make this a grand adventure. Absalom, not Ahithophel, must lead the army. The victory must be in Absalom's name so his name would be in the history books for the children to learn.

He played into Absalom's fears by telling him he needed a larger army.

Hushai claimed the army in Ahithophel's plan was too small. He encouraged Absalom to take time and institute a draft of all the nation's men so David and his mighty men would be overwhelmed by their power. He suggested Absalom enlist all the nation's men from Dan to Beersheba. Sometimes, we see Dan and Beersheba mentioned this way. Dan was the northernmost city in Israel. Beersheba was the southernmost. It is like saying from Los Angeles to New York

City. It was a way of referring to the entire country. Hushai told Absalom to take time to gather the entire nation behind him.

I love the way Hushai painted the picture in Absalom's mind. We will fall on him like dew falls on the ground. There will be no place to turn for rescue because dew is everywhere. That is a powerful mental picture.

He played into his lust for blood by encouraging him to destroy all of David's men.

Hushai knew he was dealing with a murderer, a thug, a man who burned the fields of people who didn't return his phone calls. Ahithophel's quick surgical strike that would only kill David didn't appeal to Absalom. He loved blood. He loved the idea of a grand war with himself as the hero and killing those who didn't support him. Encouraging Absalom to slow down and take the time to build a military operation large enough to destroy David and all of his men played into Absalom's bloodlust and huge ego. Most important, it bought David time.

Hushai pictured David trying to hide in a city. If David tried that, they would so decimate the city that nobody would even know the city existed on that spot when they were done destroying it because their destruction of the city would be so complete. This appealed to Absalom's vanity, his desire to make a name for himself. Absalom was focused on building his fame, not getting the job of the rebellion done.

God's plan.

Ahithophel's simple and honest advice was 42 Hebrew words. Hushai's deceptive advice that manipulated Absalom's ego and fanned the fears of his

fears is 129 Hebrew words. The greater number of words, not the quality of advice carried the day.

And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.”... 2 Samuel 17:14a (ESV)

The God who prompted Absalom to ask for Hushai’s advice also confused the minds of Absalom and the men of Israel to consider the wrong advice to be better. God was at work again behind the scenes, confusing the minds of these men.

In case you are unsure what happened, the narrator spells it out in the remainder of the verse.

...For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom. 2 Samuel 17:14 (ESV)

God was behind all of this. God was delivering David and answering David’s prayer.

What does this teach us about the way God works in ordinary life?

We must trust God’s sovereignty plus make good, wise, and courageous choices.

This chapter gives us a window into how God works behind the scenes in life to guide things the way he wants them to go, plus our responsibility to make good, wise, and courageous choices. In this chapter, God prompted Absalom’s heart to foolishly look for further advice when he had already had the best advice. God confused Absalom’s mind, so he desired Hushai’s wrong advice instead of Ahithophel’s good advice. This was God sovereignly at work behind the scenes delivering David.

At the same time, let us not neglect how God carried out his will. A courageous man named Hushai chose to risk his life for a friend. He went behind enemy lines as a spy. He developed a strategy to deceive the enemy. We see God sovereignly working behind the scenes, but people also were making good, wise, and courageous choices in life. God carried out his rescue of David by people making good, courageous, and risky choices in line with God's will, plus God's hidden hand, then began working behind the scenes to protect David. Too many people have this wrong. Their motto is, "Let go and let God." When something is happening, they pray and do nothing. That is not biblical. The Bible admonishes us to pray AND do something. Pursue tough choices that align with God's will, plus expect God's invisible hand to show up and tip the scales in the direction he wants things to go when we do.

I am unfamiliar with everything going on in the current elections for our school board. This example is not intended to be political. If we care what our children are taught, we need to pray about that and ask God to work PLUS run for local office, go to the polls, and vote. We don't do one or the other; we do both. When we do, we can expect God's hidden hand to show up, helping us achieve plans that align with his will. That is what God did with David's prayer and Hushai's plan.

God frequently answers our prayers by simply ordering our lives and steering the desires of someone's heart.

The other thing I noticed is David prayed for this outcome. As I rolled this chapter around in my mind, I kept thinking of the ordinary ways God answered David's prayer. Almost immediately, in answer to David's prayer, Hushai happen

to run across David's path. David then had a wise man he could send into the city as an undercover spy. Hushai arrived in the city at just the right time. After plans were already decided upon, God moved Absalom's mind to ask for Hushai's advice when he didn't need to. God confused Absalom's mind with vanity and fear to choose unwise advice. God was at work all over the place, but it was in subtle ways. Random thoughts in people's minds and seemingly chance encounters with the right person and the right time. That is how God often answers our prayers, not just then but now.

Zadok and Abiathar's Plan

Now we move to a little story showing God at work again. Like before, God's hand is behind the scenes, caring for David and those working hard to save his life. The camera shifts from the palace with Hushai and Absalom to someplace in the city. At this point, Hushai didn't know if his advice would be accepted. Just as Ahithophel presented his advice and left for Absalom and his counselors to consider it, Hushai also presented his advice, leaving for Absalom and his counselors to consider. Not knowing which way Absalom would decide. Hushai knew he had to get news to David so he would cross the Jordan River that night in case Ahithophel and his 12,000 soldiers attack. Hushai remembered the spy network David set up to move information from inside the city to David in his retreat, and he needed to use it.

Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled. Now therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.' " 2 Samuel 17:15–16 (ESV)

Zadok and Abiathar, the two priests, were part of David's spy network. David was 20 miles away at the Jordan River. The two priests had their sons waiting just outside town for news from their fathers.

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel. A female servant was to go and tell them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they were not to be seen entering the city. 2 Samuel 17:17 (ESV)

En-Rogel was the name of the well. It is located about 300 yards south of the city. Fittingly, in Hebrew, it means the well of the spy. They arranged for a female servant to get water from the well to avoid arousing suspicions, but she would pass information to the priest's two sons, who would then run and carry it to David. These guys were on the Jerusalem Cross Country Team. But, all did not go according to plan.

But a young man saw them and told Absalom... 2 Samuel 17:18a (ESV)

Suddenly, Hushai's plan to warn David was in jeopardy. If the boys were captured, the spy network would be blown. The boys would be killed. Their fathers would be killed. Hushai's cover would be blown. Worst of all, they would learn the location of David and attack that night. Everything was on the line.

...So both of them went away quickly and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it. And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, and nothing was known of it. 2 Samuel 17:18–19 (ESV)

Bahurim was 1.5 miles outside of Jerusalem. The boys ran as fast as they could, but Absalom's soldiers were close behind. They happen to come to the home of someone they knew and asked for a place to hide. The man of the house quickly let them down a well. The woman of the house threw a covering over the well and spread grain on it to make it look like it was left drying all day.

When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have gone over the brook of water." And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 17:20 (ESV)

After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, "Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you." Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan. 2 Samuel 17:21-22 (ESV)

Shortly afterwards, the soldiers chasing them arrive. The boys were still out of breath at the bottom of the well. The woman of the house misdirected the soldiers. The trail on the boys went cold. The soldiers went home. The boys escaped and warned David. David, his family, and soldiers were on the other side of the Jordan River by morning. Do you see God at work again behind the scenes again? Yes, they were chased, but the boys came to the right house at the right time to be hidden. God ordered that to save them. But people still needed to make courageous choices. The boys were risking their lives to save King David. The woman and her husband chose to risk their lives to hide the boys. If they had not chosen to be involved, they would not have played a role in saving David. If God had not intervened, their cover would have been blown. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility work together.

Some people claims that since God is sovereign over things, it doesn't matter what we do because God has everything decided. It is the opposite. Since God is sovereign over all things, when we get involved in risking our lives for God's will, we know God will get involved in his hidden ways, bringing what we know is his will to success.

It reminds me of the time we opened the Spencer Campus. As elders, we know God is committed to reaching people with Jesus. We know that as a church, our job is to reach out to the community with the good news of Jesus. At the time, several people from the Spencer community attended CrossWinds, wishing they had a church like CrossWinds in Spencer. As elders, we studied planting a church in Spencer. We also looked at becoming a multisite with a Spencer campus. We researched the options. Finally, the time came to decide on pulling the triggers and doing something about it. I remember the elder budget meeting when we planned to launch the campus in the next budget year. The problem was that we didn't have enough money not even close. We didn't have the income to run two campuses. We had the mission of reaching people with Jesus. We knew that was God's will, but we wouldn't make it unless God showed up. In faith, we decided to move forward and ask God to show up in the background to provide the funds we needed.

That is what he did. As the campus came off the ground, giving increased. As the budget grew, people began attending and giving to the Spencer campus. God worked behind the scenes to accomplish his will, launching another campus, BUT we also needed to do our homework and make some tough calls to move forward that wouldn't work unless God showed up.

Ahithophel's Final Plan

Not only does God work behind the scenes to deliver his people from hopeless situations in their time of need, but he also works behind the scenes to take out those who are bent on evil.

When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father. 2 Samuel 17:23 (ESV)

This is the second of four suicides in the Bible. Remember Ahithophel's history. He was Bathsheba's grandfather and was committed to destroying David. Many scholars believe Ahithophel was wise enough to realize that once David had time to regroup as an experienced fighter, he would defeat Absalom and his disorganized military. Once his good advice was ignored, he knew the rebellion would not survive, so he chose to take his life.

There may be more going on here. God worked behind the scenes in the mind of Absalom, prompting him to see advice when he didn't need it and to confuse his mind to choose bad advice instead of good. God may have also been at work in the mind of Ahithophel, convincing him to take himself out of the picture. I do not know this for certain. I know he was a brilliant man who was a sworn enemy of David, and God chose to protect David from him, possibly by taking him out of the picture.

How does all of this work? I don't know, and I certainly do not want to say all suicides are that way.

Next week, in 2 Samuel 18, there will be the final face-off between the forces of David and Absalom. We will see who prevails.

Applications

- 1. If my plans line up with God's plans, I can expect God's help. If my plans oppose God's plan, my life will be spent in vain.**
- 2. God is always at work behind the scenes with his hand of providence, either disciplining, delivering, or guiding our lives.**

3. **God's sovereignty over life should encourage me to expect God's help and make wise, courageous, and even risky choices as I follow King Jesus.**
4. **God's answers to my prayers will often come in ordinary ways, such as meeting the right people, being at the right place at the right time, and the thoughts that come to our minds.**
5. **Jesus is the best example of God's hidden plan showing up to deliver God's people.**

A thousand years later, in Jerusalem, Jesus, the son of David, God's chosen king, had an array of enemies assembled against him. The Jews and the Romans planned to kill him. Unlike before, God did not intervene behind the scenes to save Jesus. Did God's will and plan derail? What happened? God's plan was not to save Jesus from death but that Jesus would die. When he died, he died in our place for our sins to bring us to God. The wisdom of God's plan was not to save his son from death but to save you and me through Jesus' death. Oh, the amazing wisdom and plans of God who loves you and me.



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