



A BETTER KING

A SERIES IN 2 SAMUEL



2 Samuel 17:1-23 – God’s Plan Or Man’s Plan

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Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. 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.’ ” 2 Samuel 12:11–12 (ESV)

(Our fathers) ...disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. Hebrews 12:10 (ESV)

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 while he sleeps. Psalm 127:1–2 (ESV alternate reading)

God works behind the scenes to carry out His plans.

1. Ahithophel’s Plan

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)

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)

- A. Ahithophel would lead the expedition.
- B. He would quickly assemble an army that represented all of Israel.
- C. It needed to be a surprise attack that night.
- D. It would be a surgical strike to take out David without further bloodshed.
- E. Once David was dead, it would be easy to reunite the nation.

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

2. 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)

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)

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)

A. 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)

B. He imaginatively exaggerated the strength of the opposition.

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)

C. He proposed an alternative plan to gain time.

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)

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

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

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

3. God's Plan

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)

...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)

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

- A. God has a plan for His chosen king. Opposing God's plan is foolishness.
- B. I can expect God's help when my plans align with God's plans.
- C. I must trust that God is at work behind the scenes PLUS make good, wise, and courageous choices.
- D. God frequently answers our prayers by simply ordering our lives and steering the desires of someone's heart.

5. Zadok and Abiathar's Plan

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)

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)

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

...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)

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)

6. Ahithophel's Final Plan

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 Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Acts 2:23 (ESV)

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.

...for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. Acts 4:27–28 (ESV)

Life Group Questions

1. **Read 2 Samuel 17.** What did you see in this chapter that you never saw before?
2. As you look back on your life as a Christian, can you discern the hidden hand of God at work in your life?
3. How were Ahithophel and Judas similar? How were they different?
4. Read Psalm 127:1-2. What does this teach us about the importance of spending our lives on plans where God is committed to their success? How do these verses connect with 2 Samuel 17?
5. Hushai, Zadok, and Abiathar boldly risked their lives for God's chosen king, and God providentially showed up to help them. What does this teach us about when we should expect God to show up to help us providentially?
6. What were the ordinary ways God answered David's prayer? What does this teach us about how God answers prayers today?
7. Read 2 Samuel 17:7-13. What strategies did Hushai use to turn Absalom's heart? What does this teach us about the way people work to manipulate?