

2 Samuel 23 — Successful Leaders And Their Team

January 28, 2024

Good morning, CrossWinds Church! If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are grateful to have you. Before we begin, I have a question for you to ponder. What does it take to be a good leader? If you are following the news, you see powerful leaders every day. There are political leaders, business leaders, and coaches for our children. As parents, we are leaders in our homes. What does it take to be a good leader? That is a question we need to answer.

I have a second question. How important are the people around a leader? How important is a leader's team? How important is their character, their integrity, their loyalty, and their skills? How important is a leader's team to a leader's success?

This morning, we will get answers to those questions. What does it take to be a good leader? How important is a leader's team?

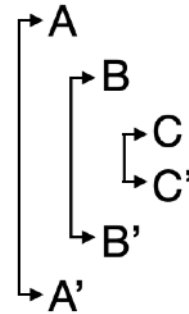
As a church, we are studying through the book of 2 Samuel. Next week, we finish the book. The following week, we will have a standalone message. After that, we will launch into a study of 1 Thessalonians.

Before we get into our study of 2 Samuel 3, let's take a moment to understand the context of the chapter.

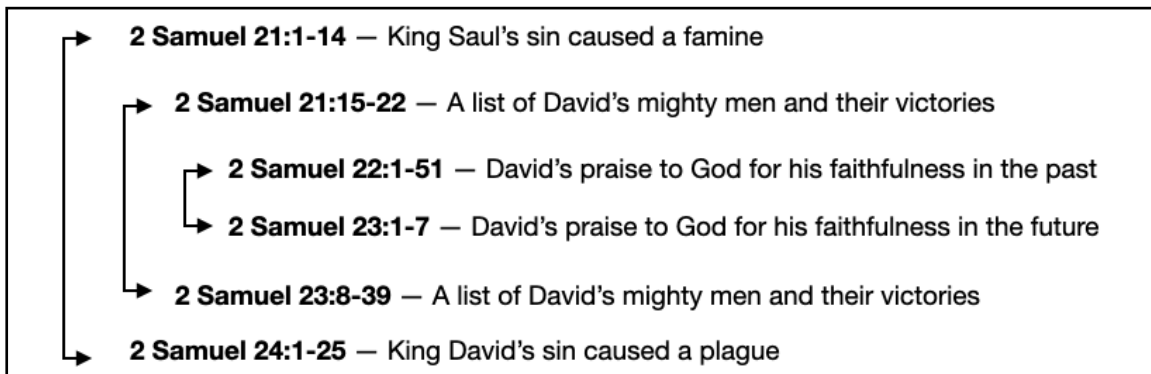
Background

While most of 1 and 2 Samuel is a chronological story, featuring the life of King Saul in 1 Samuel and the life of King David in 2 Samuel, the chronology of David's life ended in 2 Samuel 20. The last four chapters are a wrap-up that

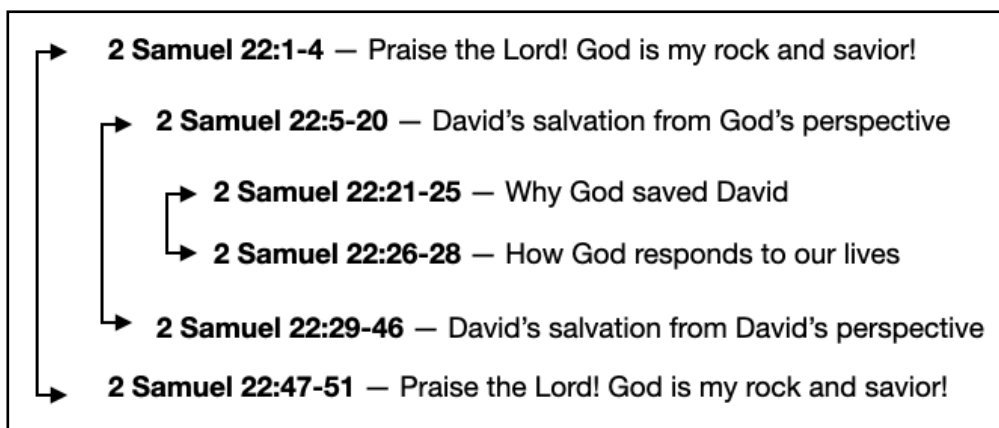
summarizes the book. They are not part of the chronological story. As I showed you for the last two weeks, the final four chapters are organized as a Hebrew inclusio. This literary structure is commonly used in the Old and New Testaments, where the front and the back halves of a unit of thought are related. The back is the same as the front but in reverse order. In the center is the main point the author wants to make.



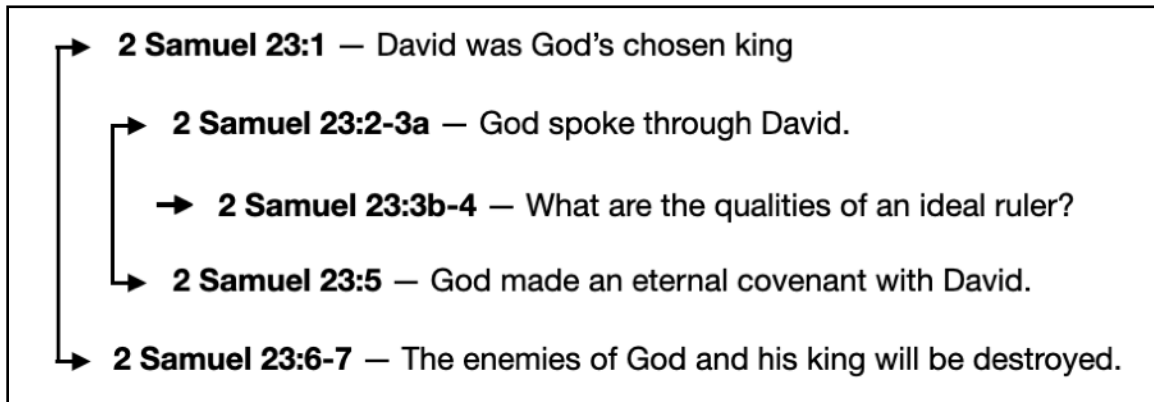
Let me show you how chapters 21 to 24 form an inclusio.



In the center of 2 Samuel are two poetic songs written by David. 2 Samuel 22, which we looked at last week, was David's looking back on his life and celebrating God's faithfulness in the past. 2 Samuel 22 had a surprise. It is an inclusio inside of the inclusio! Let me show you.



This morning, as we look at 2 Samuel 23, we begin the backside of the inclusio. In 2 Samuel 23:1-7, we have another surprise. It is another inside of the big inclusio. 2 Samuel 22 was David celebrating God's faithfulness in the past. This inclusio is David looking forward with confidence in God's faithful in the future. It also answers the question, what makes a good leader?



After that, for the rest of the chapter, we will look at David's mighty men. These are the team of men around David who were essential for the success of David. Sorry to disappoint you, it is not in an inclusio.

What does it take to be a successful leader?

Let's begin.

Now these are the last words of David... 2 Samuel 23:1a (ESV)

Last words are significant words. If these are the words of King David, they will be important. We want to listen closely.

There is a little confusion about King David's last words. If there were David's last words, did he croak after saying this? If we turn to 1 Kings 2:2-9, in those verses, David was speaking to his son Solomon as he died. Those look like his literal last words. If those were his literal last words, what about these words? Are you confused? Let me unravel the mystery. 2 Samuel 23:1-7 are

David's last carefully composed words. They are his last public speech. David's last physical words are recorded in 1 Kings 2 with his son Solomon. 2 Samuel 23 is David's last carefully composed speech. Let's look at it.

2 Samuel 23:1 — David was God's chosen king.

David begins describing himself. He gives four descriptions of himself that sound arrogant. They are not arrogant. They are honest.

...The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,... 2 Samuel 23:1b (ESV)

The first thing to notice is the word *oracle*. Behind this English word is a weighty Hebrew word that usually describes the words of God. David understood what he was about to say was not his own words. It is God's words spoken through him.

He also reminds us of his origins. He was a son of Jesse. That is a way of saying that he was born as a nobody. Jesse was a nobody who lived in the one-horse town of Bethlehem. When Samuel paid a surprise visit to see Jesse's sons and anoint one of them as king, David was so insignificant that he wasn't even invited to the party. He was left in the field tending sheep. David started as a nobody, but look what happened.

...the oracle of the man who was raised on high,... 2 Samuel 23:1b (ESV)

All the success David had in his life came from God. After God chose David, God was at work in David's life to elevate him. God carried David through life's tragedies and triumphs. Giving him positions of great importance along the way. We flip back a little in 2 Samuel and see this.

And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him. 2 Samuel 5:10 (ESV)

As I read this, I thought, wouldn't it be nice to be in David's position, to be a nobody that, by God's grace, was made into somebody? As I thought about this, I realized that is exactly what God has done for us. We were far from God in this world. We deserved the lake of fire for our sins. God chose us. He chose to put us together with Jesus. He softened our hearts to trust in Jesus. God lifted us up. He gave us the position of being the most blessed beings in the universe, and we deserve none of it! Look how the apostle Peter describes us.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

Let's get back to the story and the next description David gave of himself.

...the anointed of the God of Jacob,... 2 Samuel 23:1d (ESV)

Anointed means chosen by God to be king. David was not just lifted up by God, but God set him apart to be king. You may remember how it happened. Samuel was directed to Jesse's house to anoint with oil the next king. God directed the prophet Samuel to anoint David. This was all God's grace, God's choice.

...the sweet psalmist of Israel: 2 Samuel 23:1e (ESV)

Lastly, David reminds us he was given the privilege of writing many of Israel's songs, songs we can find in the book of Psalms, which was the Hebrew songbook. Psalm 3 is a Psalm of David praying for help in his time of need. Psalm 2 is about God setting David up as king. Psalm 51 is about David repenting after his sin with Bathsheba. These psalms were written out of the joys and struggles of David's life, but God also wrote them as God worked in and through David's life.

David moves from talking about his identity as God's chosen king and songwriter to telling us about the words he wrote. This is the next step in the inclusio

2 Samuel 23:2-3a — God spoke through David.

The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. 2 Samuel 23:2 (ESV)

David tells us God speaks through him. David spoke God's very words, and he was aware he was speaking God's words, not his own words. This means that when David wrote Psalms that were written out of the pain in his life experiences, he was aware the psalms he wrote were not just his words, but they were God's words as God spoke through him.

This is one of the many statements in the Bible that prove the Bible contains the very words of God to us. Skeptics claim the Bible is nothing more than man's ideas about God, but David claims the exact opposite. God spoke to us through him. Look what other verses in the Bible say about this.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

Paul says the Bible is God's words spoken to us. The Bible is not the words of man speculatively speaking about God, but God definitely speaking to us.

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 (ESV)

Peter reminds us that the words of the Bible were not written by the will of a man but by the will of God. Men spoke from God as they were carried them along with his Holy Spirit to say exactly what God wanted them to say.

David reiterates that in the next line.

The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me... 2 Samuel 23:3a (ESV)

God has spoken. The Rock of Israel said to me. This is a strong preamble telling us to be prepared for the definitive words David was about to speak.

2 Samuel 23:3b-5 — What are the qualities of an ideal ruler?

...When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,... 2 Samuel 23:3b (ESV)

According to David, God revealed to him the lesson that we are supposed to learn from his kingship. This lesson was given to him by God speaking to him. There are two things a leader must focus on to be successful.

Lead Justly

The first calling of a leader is to be just and fair. This applies to David's sons, who will reign in his place as kings in the future. It also applies today to government leaders, business leaders, church leaders, and mothers and fathers in the home. Be a just leader who does what is best for the people and doesn't play favorites. The most common defect of government leaders is corruption, so instead of a leader leading with fairness to benefit a country, they lead with favoritism to benefit the interests of a select few. Leaders can also be known for harsh, uncaring, and abusive leadership. Leaders can also use their power to oppress those who do right.

As leaders in our places of work and as parents who lead in our homes, we are to be just, fair, equitable, and compassionate in our leadership.

Leading With Fear Of God

The second quality of a good leader is they have a healthy fear of God. This means leaders remember they are accountable to God for their decisions as leaders. Many leaders like being leaders because they can do what they want and nobody can stop them. Nobody will hold them accountable. That attitude is a recipe for disaster. It is bad leadership. David acted this way at one point in his life and it ended up in disaster. David was the king, and he saw another man's wife named Bathsheba. He did what he wanted. He took her and slept with her. He killed her husband to have her as his wife. Who would hold him accountable? The answer is God. God held David accountable. God holds all leaders accountable for their leadership. Good leaders remember they will give an account to God for their leadership choices. That can be a business leader, a government leader, a church leader, or a mom and dad lovingly leading children at home. As a leader, am I loving my neighbor as myself? Am I hurting people unnecessarily because I am the leader, and I can do that? Remember, all leaders will give an account of their leadership to God.

David next tells us what life is like under a good, just, and fair leader who fears God, not just uses his power for himself.

...he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. 2 Samuel 23:4 (ESV)

A good leader refreshes people.

David describes being under a good leader as refreshing. It is like the sun breaking across the horizon on an early summer morning when you sit on the porch with a cup of coffee. On those mornings, as you feel the sun's warmth on

your skin, everything feels right in the world. That is how refreshing it is to be under a just leader who fears God as they lead.

A good leader promotes life and growth among people.

David says a good leader is like a nice rain on a summer day. I am a cheapskate. I don't water my lawn. It gets brown and nasty. When we get a good summer rain, it turns green almost overnight. My lawn bursts to life when it is given water. That is the way David describes the lives of people under a fair and just leader who fears God. Everyone is filled with life and vitality.

Remember the importance of this. These are God's very words to David. They are the lessons we are to learn from his kingship. When David focused on justice and honoring God, the people were refreshed, and the nation did remarkably well. When David did not pursue justice and did not fear God, such as his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, not just David but the entire nation suffered.

One thing we should notice is that while some leaders are more just and fair than others, and some leaders live with greater reverence for God than others, nobody does this perfectly. David was a great leader most of the time, and the nation flourished when he was that way, but he wasn't that way all the time. There is only one good, perfect, and wise leader who always leads with justice and obeys God the Father in everything he does. His name is Jesus. That is why Jesus is the one leader that is always worth following. Jesus is the one leader we can always trust.

Now, we move to the back side of the inclusio.

2 Samuel 23:5 — God made an eternal covenant with David.

For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 2 Samuel 23:5 (ESV)

As David thought about his death and the importance of the next kings in his family line doing what was right and fearing God in their actions, he knew things wouldn't always go that way. He knew there would be times his descendants would fall into sin, just like he did. They would suffer for their sin, just like he did. Surprisingly, he didn't fear the future. He knew God made an everlasting covenant with him. It couldn't be broken. God may discipline his descendants, but God wouldn't abandon his descendants.

When did God make the promise of an eternal covenant to David? It was in 2 Samuel 7. Let's read it.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' ” 2 Samuel 7:12, 15–16 (ESV)

God promised David he would raise up offspring from his body and establish their kingdom. Even if they sinned, as David did, God would not depart from them as he did King Saul. God may discipline them, but he would not give up on them. God promised to ensure David's kingdom and dynasty would be established forever.

Wouldn't that take away your worries as an old man concerned about the transition of your kingship when you die?

If you are like me, you find yourself asking, “How could David’s kingship be established forever? Didn’t there come a time when David’s descendants were no longer on the throne of Israel?” Look at today. There is no descendent of Israel leading Israel now. What happened?

Here is the good news. This was ultimately speaking about Jesus. Jesus is the son of David that these words pointed to. If you look at the beginning of the gospel of Matthew and Luke, those books begin with a long genealogy. The genealogies are there to prove that Jesus was a descendant of King David. Jesus was a legitimate heir to be king. Jesus didn’t establish a mere earthly kingdom. By his death and resurrection, he established the eternal kingdom of God that will endure forever. As Paul reminds us in Philippians, one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Everyone will one day confess Jesus as the one true eternal king.

David describes God’s covenant with him as ordered and all things secure. Those were legal terms, meaning God’s promise to him is filed and guaranteed.

2 Samuel 23:6-7 — The enemies of God and his king will be destroyed.

The inclusio began with God selecting his king. On the back side of the inclusio, it ends with God describing what will happen to those who oppose God’s chosen king. This doesn’t just apply to David and his descendants, but it also ultimately applies to Jesus.

But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and

the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.” 2 Samuel 23:6–7 (ESV)

The term worthless men has appeared several times in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Worthless men are always those who live in opposition to God and God’s chosen king.

Worthless men who rebel against God and his king are described as useless. Getting involved with them will always end up in hurt. The only appropriate place for them in the fire to be burned and destroyed.

As David faces his last days, he tells us the words God spoke to him about what good leadership looks like for David’s descendants in that day and for leaders in our day. It is focusing on leading rightly and living in fear of God. Thankfully, even when David’s descendants failed to live as good leaders in the future, God gave David an eternal covenant promising that God would discipline his descendants but not give up on them. One day, a descendent of David will be the ultimate leader we can trust and follow. His name is Jesus. He set up an eternal kingdom that will never go away.

That ends the little inclusio. The rest of the chapter is about the team of men God put around David and how important they were for his success. Every good leader needs an amazing team.

When God raises up a leader, he raises up a team.

These verses contain a detailed list of David’s mighty men and some of their efforts to help David. One clear message comes from these messages. David’s great success was not just because of himself but because God gave him an amazing team. This message still holds. In this world, when God is at

work, he doesn't just raise up a leader, he raises up a team of people around the leaders. Together, the team makes the success.

As I studied, I found myself giving these verses a hearty Amen. I was low on staff for a few weeks. I now have most of my staff positions filled with great people. I thank God for a great team. CrossWinds would not be possible without them. I am not just thankful for the paid staff, but for everyone else who enables CrossWinds to reach people with Jesus. Those are the AWANA leaders, the tech team, the worship team, the Wednesday night class teachers, the youth group, and the list could go on. Let's meet David's team, he couldn't succeed without them.

These verses break into four pieces. They are NOT in the form of an inclusio.

2 Samuel 23:8-12 - David's Most Famous Soldiers, The Three

These are the names of the mighty men whom David had:... 2 Samuel 23:8a (ESV)

David's top soldiers were known as his mighty men. There were three that were especially outstanding. Their group had a name. They were known as "The Three." They were three top soldiers who worked with David and helped, a little like the three musketeers.

Josheb-baashebeth

...Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time. 2 Samuel 23:8b (ESV)

His claim to fame was he fought and killed 800 guys in one battle. That is all we know about him. The people he killed were probably the Philistines.

Samson killed 1,000 Philistines at once with the jawbone of a donkey, this guy

killed 800 at once. He almost killed as many Philistines at one time as Samson, which means he was a stud. He is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 27:2. There, we find he became the commander of the first division of David's standing army.

Eleazar

And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew. He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain. 2 Samuel 23:9–10 (ESV)

We have another conflict with the Philistines. Eleazar and his men defied the Philistines. 1 Chronicles 11:13-14 also has this account, and exactly what happened is clearer in that passage. Apparently, the Israelites were guarding a field of barley before harvest. Some Philistines showed up to mock them in hopes of scaring them off so the Philistines could steal the crop and starve the Israelites. The Israelite men were outnumbered. They ran for their life, except Eleazar, who stood his ground. The Philistines came, and I picture him as a human weed wacker. Holding his sword, he sliced and diced them until they were dead, and he was the last man left standing. He was so exhausted, and the battle went on so long that they had to peel his fingers off the sword because he couldn't unclench his fist.

Shammah

And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory. 2 Samuel 23:11–12 (ESV)

Lehi was in the foothills of Judah, near the Philistines. The Philistines had their eyes on a crop of lentils that had not been harvested. They planned to steal the crop and starve the Israelites. Everyone fled, but Shammah single-handedly stood his ground and struck down the Philistines. We don't know how many he killed. The first guy killed 800 at one time, I suspect Eleazar and Shammah killed close to that number.

These men earned the title "The Three." They were the mightiest warriors David had in his kingdom.

One thing we don't want to miss is why they were victorious. Twice, we were told, "The Lord brought about a great victory." In other words, the great accomplishments of these men were not just feats of superhuman strength and ingenuity, but they were saving acts of God. Last week, when David prayed for help in times of desperation, one of the ways God answered his prayer was by giving David incredible strength and ability to fight the battles. Last week, we read of David leaping over a wall, bending a bow of bronze, fighting against a troop, and battling an entire army.

Here, we get a window into how God works. Many times, in a crisis, when we pray, God doesn't take us out of the crisis, but he gives us perseverance, endurance, strength, and wisdom beyond ourselves to carry us through the crisis, just like he did for these men in their battles. Many of the answers to our prayers for help in our time of need come in ordinary ways, even though God is behind them.

2 Samuel 23:13-17 — Water from Bethlehem

This next section shows us how dedicated these men were to David and the kind of king David was around these men.

And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. 2 Samuel 23:13 (ESV)

Just as the top warriors around David were called the three. Under them, the top group of warriors was known as the thirty. As we will see, that is more of a name than an actual number. Here, three from that group came to David when he was hiding in the cave of Adullam. It was harvest time, which would be May or June. That would be one of the hottest times of the year. The Philistines had invaded the land. They were encamped in the Valley of Rephaim, which was Israelite territory.

David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. And David said longingly, “Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!” 2 Samuel 23:14-15 (ESV)

The Philistines were also in Bethlehem, deep inside Israeli territory. In the heat, David casually mentioned that he wished he had water from the well outside of Bethlehem. He didn't mean that literally. He grew up drinking the well. It was probably a deep well and a cool well. He remembered how refreshing that cool water was on sweltering hot days.

Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David.... 2 Samuel 23:16a (ESV)

Three of his soldiers left, probably by night. They traveled 15 miles to Bethlehem. They broke through enemy lines to get to the well so they could get a canteen full of water for David. That shows the loyalty and love these men had

for David as their leader. They risked their lives to get David a canteen of water from his favorite well.

...But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the LORD and said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did. 2 Samuel 23:16b-17 (ESV)

David was so honored by what these men did that he refused to drink the water they brought to him at the risk of their lives. He poured it out before the Lord. He gave it to God. This was one of David's finest moments. There was a king who didn't want to take from his people. He didn't use his people for his pleasure. He modeled for his men putting the honor of God before comfort from his men.

2 Samuel 23:18-23 — Two Notable Heroes

Now we meet two more famous men in the group of thirty who served David faithfully and effectively.

Abishai

Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty. And he wielded his spear against three hundred men and killed them and won a name beside the three. He was the most renowned of the thirty and became their commander, but he did not attain to the three. 2 Samuel 23:18–19 (ESV)

Abishai was David's nephew, David's sister's son. He was a prominent person. We saw him earlier in David's story. His unique skill set was killing people. He was always offering to kill someone for David. Once, he offered to kill King Saul. Later, he assisted his brother Joab in killing Abner. He offered to kill Shimei when he mocked David. He reminds me of Liam Neeson in the movie "Taken." In the movie, after his daughter is kidnapped, on the phone, he talks with the kidnapers, saying, "I have a particular set of skills that will make me

your worst nightmare.” Like Abishai, Liam Neeson was a trained assassin who was good at killing people.

Abishai came in handy. As we saw in 2 Samuel 21, when David was exhausted and a giant tried to take his life, Abishai came to his rescue, killing the giant and saving the king. Despite his impressive resume, he never attained the rank of the top three.

Benaiah

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two ariels of Moab. He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. And he struck down an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff and snatched the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand and killed him with his own spear. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and won a name beside the three mighty men. He was renowned among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David set him over his bodyguard. 2 Samuel 23:20–23 (ESV)

Benaiah didn’t play as prominent of a role as Abishai, but he was impressive. He led David’s bodyguard. Those are the Cherethites and the Pelethites. We are told of three of his famous deeds.

He struck down two Ariel of Moab. The problem is we don’t know what an Ariel was. That is why the word is translated into English from Hebrew. Nobody knows what one was. I did a little research to learn more about what they might be. In the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament which one used at the time of Jesus, those ancient translators understood Ariels to be sons of the Moabite king. We don’t know that for sure; that is what they *might* be.

He also took out a lion that fell in a pit on a snowy day. That doesn't sound impressive until you put yourself in the situation. Imagine yourself in a cage with a lion. On the ground was snow, and you were wearing sneakers. You have no traction. You had two feet, the lion had four. In addition, the lion had claws to hold the ground, you didn't. Would anybody want to try that? I wouldn't!

He also took out an Egyptian with a spear. Benaiah only had a stick in his hand. He used that to disarm the Egyptian and kill him with his own weapon. 1 Chronicles 11:23 has a parallel account of this event. It describes the Egyptian as a man of great stature, a giant. Just as David killed a giant, Benaiah killed a giant.

My favorite part is that Jehoida was his father. Jehoida was a priest. Benaiah was a pastor's kid. Ultimately, he became the leader of an ancient version of Seal Team 6.

2 Samuel 23:24-39 — The Thirty

The passage concludes with a list of the names in the group called "the thirty." When we get to the end, there will be 37. This reminds us that the thirty was a title, not a literal number. Let's see if I can pronounce these names. If you are pregnant and looking for a unique baby name, I guarantee the name will be unique. Nobody else in the nursery will have your kid's name.

Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, Shammah of Harod, Elikah of Harod, Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah, Heleb the son of Baanah of Netophah, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeath of the people of Benjamin, Benaiah of Pirathon, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth of Bahurim, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son

of Ahithophel the Gilonite, Hezro of Carmel, Paarai the Arbite, Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all. 2 Samuel 23:24–39 (ESV)

There are a few points I want to point out in this list.

First, did you notice who was missing from this list? Joab, the commander of the army. I think I know why Abishai was mentioned, but he wasn't. As we saw in previous weeks, Joab defied David several times. He showed insubordination. He killed Absalom against David's instructions. He killed Amasa and Abner after David made peace with them. In 1 Kings 2, David instructs Solomon to kill Joab for his persistent insubordination and cold-blooded murders. He was cut from the list.

Second, notice the first and last names in the list. Both were killed. Asahel was killed in battle by Abner, the commander of King Saul's army. David killed Uriah after he had an affair with Bathsheba, who was his wife.

Despite overwhelming odds, these men were consistently victorious.

When you think about it, half of the men who died were killed by David! The greatest threat to David's kingdom was not from the Philistines outside of his kingdom. It came from David inside of the kingdom when he was not doing what was right and remembering he was accountable to God for his choices.

Applications

1. A good leader focuses on justice for people and accountability before God.
2. God promised to establish an eternal kingdom through David's family line.

The descendant of David, who established an everlasting kingdom, was Jesus. He is the leader worth following, the leader we can trust.

3. When God raises a leader, he raises a team of courageous and godly people around them. God usually works through a team.
4. The success of David and his men did not come from natural strength but from God as they courageously prayed and risked their lives for Him.



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