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Looking for a Leader

Studies in Samuel and Kings

The story so far...

In 2 Sam 11-12 David committed adultery with Bathsheba, tried to hoodwink her husband, and then murdered him. When confronted by Nathan, David confesses his sin and pleads for mercy (Psalm 51). God removes David's guilt, but promises there will be consequences. In 2 Sam 12:10-14 God says to David:

"Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own... Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel."

For discussion: Do you think that, though God forgives the sinner, he should still inflict 'consequences' upon the sinner (and others)? *Must* there always be 'consequences' for sin?

The Consequences of David's Fall

This study covers a large section of the book of 2 Samuel, detailing the sorry consequences of David's fall. If you have not had time to read chapters 13-24 before the study, here is a very brief summary of events leading up to chapter 15:

David's first-born son Amnon falls in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom, David's third son. Amnon rapes Tamar. Absalom then kills Amnon, making himself the logical heir to David's throne. David exiles Absalom but three years later, Absalom returns to Jerusalem and begins a plot to usurp David.

Read 2 Samuel 15:1-18, 23.

1. How did Absalom 'steal the hearts' of Israel?
2. How did Absalom¹ steal the throne of Israel?
3. *(Optional)* What, if any, impact might the promise given to David in 2 Sam :11-16 have upon Absalom's actions?
4. As David leaves Jerusalem, how do you think he feels?

¹ Ironically, the name Absalom means 'father of peace'!

Read Psalm 3, noting carefully its heading.

5. How does Psalm 3 confirm or modify your answer to question 4?
6. Absalom's rebellion turned on 'public opinion'². This is reflected in Ps 3:1-2. In the remainder of the Psalm, how did David deal with others opinion of him? How do you deal with other people's opinions of you?
7. Although his son has deposed him and is trying to kill him, David can sleep (Ps 3:5). Specifically, what confidence does David have in God that enables him to 'sleep' under pressure? How might this help the anxious Christian³?
8. It seems surprising that David would meekly give up the military stronghold of Jerusalem without a struggle. Given his long wait to become king, we might have expected David to stay and fight Absalom. Instead, Psalm 3:7-8a shows David waiting on God alone to prove his rightful kingship. How do you think David's attitude here prepares us for Jesus' attitude towards his kingdom?⁴

For prayer

- Pray for your ability to rest in God's sovereignty and trust in his promises.
- Pray for someone you know who needs to trust God in the midst of a desperate situation.

Postscript

For those who cannot wait to read 2 Sam 16-24 to find out what happens to David, here is a summary:

Two wise men give Absalom advice on what to do now that he has taken Jerusalem. Ahithophel advises Absalom to pursue and kill David immediately. Hushai, one of David's loyal spies, persuades Absalom to delay. This 'advice' saves David's life and allows him to time to prepare for battle against Absalom.

A 'civil war' is fought between Absalom's forces and the people loyal to David. David's forces prevail and Absalom is killed. David's personal battle to distinguish between his son and his enemy continues. He mourns Absalom deeply, shaming his own troops who have risked their life to defeat Absalom. David then returns to Jerusalem as king of Israel, rewarding those who remained loyal to him into his later years. Chapters 22-24 detail David's last words and a summary of his military achievements.

For next week: read 1 Kings 1-10.

² cf 2 Sam 15:1-6

³ Serious insomniacs might also like to read Psalm 4, which is a companion to Psalm 3.

⁴ If you get stuck, your group might like to look up the following: Jn 18:36; Mk 15:25-32. For further expression of David's waiting on God for vindication, see 2 Sam 22.