

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 34
2 Samuel 11-18; 1 Chronicles 20

Key Concepts: The key concepts in this section are that David allows his power to lead him away from God and into inappropriate behaviors that threaten his kingship and kingdom, and that David is incapable of managing his family.

Stories: We begin with David and Bathsheba, Nathan's declaration that David has sinned, God's proclamation of war on David's house, the birth of Solomon, the rape of Tamar, the murder of Amnon by Absalom, Absalom's banishment and return, Absalom's betrayal and rebellion, David's flight from Jerusalem, the battle for the kingship and the death of Absalom.

Brief Summary: Up to this point in 2 Samuel, David has come across as an upstanding guy who, though he could be a bit devious, appears to truly be a man after God's own heart. The stories we will read in this section change all of that. They are so disturbing in fact that the writer of Chronicles skips right over them. 1 Chronicles 20 ignores everything that happens in the 2 Samuel texts in order to maintain the fiction that David was the perfect man of God.

Our 2 Samuel texts begin with the story of David and Bathsheba. Bathsheba is married to one of David's most loyal warriors, Uriah the Hittite. While Uriah is off fighting David's enemies, and David is at home, David sees Bathsheba bathing, has her brought to his chambers where they have sex. Bathsheba becomes pregnant. In order to cover up their actions David brings Uriah home in order that he sleep with his wife. Uriah refuses to have sex. In exasperation David conspires to have Uriah killed in battle. After an appropriate time David and Bathsheba marry.

The outcome of all of this (David breaking about half of the Ten Commandments) is that he is confronted by the prophet Nathan who delivers two messages. First the child they conceived will die, and it does. Second, the sword, meaning violence, will never leave David's house. David meekly accepts these punishments. What this incident also does is that it makes David, aware of his own guilt, incapable of dealing with the sins of his children.

We witness this first in the rape of David's daughter Tamar, by David's oldest son Amnon. David learns of this incident and does nothing. It is as if he has become impotent as a parent. Tamar's brother (by the same mother) Absalom, desires revenge and waits for the appropriate time. At a feast Absalom has Amnon murdered. Though David does not banish Absalom, Absalom flees. Once David has finished mourning Amnon he wants to bring Absalom back, but does not know how. Finally Joab, David's military leader brings about Absalom's return.

This return however, proves to be a hollow triumph because Absalom conspires to turn the hearts of Israel away from David and to himself. The scriptures say that Absalom was the best looking guy around and knew how to court people; to win them over. This Absalom does so in order to take the kingship. Through a series of twists and turns David escapes and Absalom is led to ignore the good advice of immediately going after his father. The final outcome of all of this is that Absalom is killed in battle by Joab, even though David had commanded that he not be killed (again the impotency).

1. How do these stories change your perception of David?
2. How have you seen the sins of parents limit their ability to discipline their children?
3. Why do you suppose that the writer of Chronicles was so interested in maintaining David's perfect character?