THE BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL

The King Who Keeps His Promise

2 Samuel, Unfiltered

For teens who think they've heard it all

BILL McLEOD

Papa Bill Books

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR TEENS

The King Who Keeps His Promise: The Book of 2 Samuel, Unfiltered

Part of The Old Testament for Teens series.

Copyright © 2026 Bill McLeod. All rights reserved.

Published by Papa Bill Books.

Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, which is in the public domain.

All Scripture quotations in this book are from the WEB. Some are abridged, with omissions marked by ellipses; paraphrases are not placed in quotation marks.

In the author's own text, pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence. Scripture quotations follow the WEB Protestant Edition exactly, including its capitalization.

AI Disclosure. This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

Before You Start

You know the saying by now: “If you want to get something done, hire a teenager while they still know it all.” At the end of 1 Samuel, David was the hero: the shepherd boy who beat Goliath, the loyal friend of Jonathan, the fugitive who refused to kill his enemy. If the story ended there, David would be the perfect Bible hero.

2 Samuel is where the story gets real. David finally becomes king, and for a while, everything goes right. He unites the nation, captures Jerusalem, brings the ark home, and receives one of the most important promises in the whole Bible. Then, at the height of his power, he does something terrible. And the rest of the book shows the consequences ripping through his family and his kingdom: violence, betrayal, rebellion, and grief.

So why read it? Because 2 Samuel is brutally honest about what power can do to a person, even a person who loves God. It shows what real repentance looks like. And it shows that God keeps His promises even when the people He makes them to fail badly. In the middle of all the mess, God promises David a King whose throne will last forever. The rest of the Bible is the story of how He kept that promise.

Fair warning: some of these stories are hard. We’ll handle them honestly and carefully. Let’s go.

How This Book Works

This book walks through 2 Samuel in nine chapters: David's lament and the civil war (2 Samuel 1–4), David crowned, Jerusalem captured, and the ark brought home (5–6), God's covenant with David (7), David's kindness to Mephibosheth (8–10), David, Bathsheba, and Uriah (11), Nathan's confrontation and David's repentance (12), Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom (13–14), Absalom's rebellion (15–19), and David's last words, his mighty men, and the census (20–24).

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains what kind of book 2 Samuel is, where it fits, and the world it came from. Read it first.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain modern translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (Scripture is quoted exactly as the WEB prints it; in the rest of the book, pronouns for God are capitalized out of reverence); Real Talk questions to think through alone or argue about with friends; and a Try This challenge.

On questions where sincere Christians disagree, such as why Uzzah died, and how to put together 2 Samuel 24, which says the LORD moved David to take a census, with 1 Chronicles 21, which says Satan did, I'll lay out the main views fairly and leave the decision to you, your family, and your church. 2 Samuel includes sexual violence, murder, and suicide. When it does, you'll find a box with a safety note. This book quotes 2 Samuel in places and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. It's the tenth book in The Old Testament for Teens, a companion to the New Testament for Teens series, written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, with some humor, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

2 Samuel contains some of the most difficult material in the Old Testament. David's taking of Bathsheba is presented honestly as an abuse of royal power, not as a romance, and the book is clear that the text places the blame on David. Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar is summarized briefly and without graphic detail, naming it as a crime and calling out David's failure to act. Both chapters include clear safety boxes that point readers to trusted adults, RAINN (1-800-656-4673), Childhelp (1-800-422-4453), and 911. Ahithophel's death by suicide is handled with compassion, with a box pointing readers to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The book also presents fairly the main views on Uzzah's death and the holiness of God, and on the relationship between 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1. A box on Mephibosheth addresses disability, dignity, and belonging. I'd encourage you to share your own church's views with your teen, and to explain why other Christians see things differently.

The closing section, Where This Points, shows how the New Testament sees God's covenant with David fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David, while acknowledging that Jewish readers treasure 2 Samuel in their own rich ways. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, in the chapters and in the Key Verses, the wording is from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain translation.

The Real Talk questions are designed for discussion. They work well for a youth group, a small group, a family dinner table, or a car ride. Don't rush to the right answer. Let them wrestle. Faith that has been thought through tends to last.

My prayer is that every reader will see in 2 Samuel both the danger of power without accountability and the faithfulness of a God who keeps His promises.

Grace and peace,

Bill McLeod

Papa Bill Books

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

Setting the Scene

What Kind of Book Is This?

2 Samuel is history told as a story. It was originally the second half of one book with 1 Samuel. It covers David's reign as king, about forty years, roughly 1010 to 970 BC. It's one of the most carefully written stories in the ancient world, full of vivid scenes, sharp dialogue, and characters who feel like real people. It doesn't flatter its hero. It tells the truth about him.

Where It Fits

1 Samuel ended with Saul and Jonathan dead on Mount Gilboa and David, the anointed king, still waiting. 2 Samuel tells how David finally became king, first over his own tribe of Judah and then over all Israel, and what happened during his reign. 1 Kings picks up the story with David's old age and the reign of his son Solomon. 1 Chronicles tells many of the same stories from a different angle.

Who Wrote It?

The book doesn't name its author. Jewish tradition says the prophets Nathan and Gad finished what Samuel began. Many scholars think chapters 9–20 and the first chapters of 1 Kings come from an early, eyewitness-style account sometimes called the Succession Narrative, because it asks who will take David's throne. Like 1 Samuel, the book was probably edited as part of a larger history running from Deuteronomy through Kings. Christians with different views agree that it is God's Word.

The World of 2 Samuel

When the book opens, Israel is divided and defeated. The Philistines have just crushed Saul's army. The tribes don't trust each other. Jerusalem is still a Canaanite fortress owned by the Jebusites. By the middle of the book, David has united the tribes, made Jerusalem his capital, defeated the Philistines, and built a small empire. Kings in that world had almost unlimited power. They could take whatever and whoever they wanted. That background matters for understanding what David does in chapter 11, and why it was so wrong.

Hard Stories and Safety Notes

2 Samuel includes war, murder, sexual violence, family abuse, and suicide. Including a story in the Bible doesn't mean God approves of what happens in it. Often the writer is showing us how badly things have gone wrong. When we come to these stories, you'll find a safety box. Here's what they say: abuse and sexual violence are always wrong, it's never the victim's fault, and if something like it is happening to you or someone you know, tell a trusted adult. In the United States you can call 911 in an emergency, call or text the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453, call the RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673, or call or text 988 if you are thinking about suicide.

The Map

Chapter 1 (2 Samuel 1–4): How the mighty have fallen.

Chapter 2 (2 Samuel 5–6): King of all Israel.

Chapter 3 (2 Samuel 7): A house forever.

Chapter 4 (2 Samuel 8–10): A seat at the king's table.

Chapter 5 (2 Samuel 11): The king who took.

Chapter 6 (2 Samuel 12): You are the man.

Chapter 7 (2 Samuel 13–14): Tamar and Absalom.

Chapter 8 (2 Samuel 15–19): My son, my son.

Chapter 9 (2 Samuel 20–24): The last words of David.

Contents

Setting the Scene 7

1 How the Mighty Have Fallen *1–4* 11

2 King of All Israel *5–6* 17

3 A House Forever *7* 23

4 A Seat at the King's Table *8–10* 28

5 The King Who Took *11* 34

6 You Are the Man *12* 40

7 Tamar and Absalom *13–14* 45

8 My Son, My Son *15–19* 51

9 The Last Words of David *20–24* 58

Where This Points 64

CHAPTER 1

How the Mighty Have Fallen

2 Samuel 1–4

2 Samuel opens three days after the end of 1 Samuel. David is back in Ziklag after rescuing his people from the Amalekite raiders. He doesn't know yet that Saul and Jonathan are dead.

Then a young man stumbles into camp with his clothes torn and dirt on his head, the signs of mourning. He bows to David and tells him the news. Israel has lost the battle. Saul and Jonathan are dead. And then he adds a detail: he says he was there on Mount Gilboa, that Saul was badly wounded and asked him to finish him off, and that he did. To prove it, he hands David Saul's crown and armband.

The young man is an Amalekite, and he probably expects a reward. He's just brought the next king the crown of his enemy. But his story doesn't match the account in 1 Samuel 31, where Saul died by his own hand. Most readers think he found Saul's body, took the crown, and made up the rest to win David's favor.

If so, it backfires badly. David and his men tear their clothes and weep and fast until evening for Saul, for Jonathan, and for the army of Israel. Then David turns to the young man. You weren't afraid to lift your hand against the LORD's anointed? David orders him executed. Whether or not his story was true, he had claimed to kill

God's anointed king and expected to profit from it, and David wanted everyone to know he would never reward that.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Why Was David So Upset?**
>
> Saul had spent years trying to kill David. You might expect David to celebrate his death. But David never saw Saul as just an enemy. Saul was the king God had anointed, the father of David's best friend, and the man David had served and played music for. David's grief was real. It was also wise. If he had celebrated Saul's death or rewarded the man who claimed to kill him, he would have looked like a man who grabbed the throne by violence. Instead, he made it clear that he would wait for God to give him the kingdom, not take it.

Then David writes a song, a lament for Saul and Jonathan. It's one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible, and it has a refrain that's still quoted today: "How the mighty have fallen!" David doesn't want the Philistines to hear the news and celebrate. He curses the mountains of Gilboa where they died.

And he praises them both, even Saul. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. In their death, they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions." He tells the women of Israel to weep for Saul, who dressed them in fine clothes.

Then the song turns personal. "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me." David says Jonathan's loyal love for him was wonderful, greater than the love of women, meaning greater than any romantic love he had known. It's the cry of a man who has lost his best friend.

> **REAL TALK** **It's Okay to Grieve Loudly**
>
> David didn't hide his grief. He wept, fasted, and wrote a song so everyone would remember. And he grieved even for Saul, someone who had hurt him

deeply. Sometimes grief is complicated like that. You can mourn someone you also had a hard relationship with. If you've lost someone, a friend, a grandparent, a parent, or even a pet, there's no right way or right timeline to grieve. Writing, music, art, crying, talking about the person, and praying are all good ways to let it out. Don't bottle it up. Talk to someone you trust. And if your grief becomes so heavy that you can't function, or you start thinking about hurting yourself, reach out right away to a trusted adult or call or text 988.

After the lament, David does something that will become a habit in the best parts of his life: he asks the LORD what to do. God tells him to go up to Hebron, a city in Judah. There "The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah." Finally, after all those years of running, David is king, but only over his own tribe.

The rest of Israel doesn't follow him yet. Saul's general, Abner, makes Saul's surviving son Ishbosheth king over the northern tribes. Ishbosheth seems to be a weak king, with Abner as the real power behind him. So now there are two kingdoms and two kings. "Now there was a long war between Saul's house and David's house. David grew stronger and stronger, but Saul's house grew weaker and weaker."

The civil war is ugly. At one point, the two armies meet at the pool of Gibeon and agree to settle things with a contest between twelve young men from each side. All twenty-four end up dead. In the battle that follows, Abner kills Asahel, the younger brother of David's general Joab. Joab never forgets it.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Joab and the Sons of Zeruiah**

Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were David's nephews, the sons of his sister Zeruiah. They were fierce, loyal, and effective, and they were also violent and

> hard to control. Joab in particular will be one of the most important characters in 2 Samuel. He wins David's battles and helps him out of trouble, but he also kills people on his own terms whenever he decides it's necessary. David will complain more than once that the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for him. It's a picture of a problem many leaders face: the people who help you get power can be the hardest to hold accountable.

Eventually Ishbosheth and Abner have a falling-out. Ishbosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with one of Saul's concubines, which in that culture was a way of claiming the throne. Abner is furious and decides to switch sides. He sends a message to David offering to bring all Israel over to him.

David agrees on one condition: give me back my wife Michal, Saul's daughter. Saul had given Michal to another man while David was on the run. Now David wants her back, probably for political reasons as much as personal ones, since she connects him to Saul's family. Her second husband follows her, weeping, until Abner orders him to go home. It's a heartbreaking little scene, and a reminder that the powerful men in this story often treat women as political pieces. We'll see where that leads.

Abner goes around to the elders of Israel and urges them to make David king. He points out that God had promised to save Israel through David. Then he meets with David at Hebron, they make a deal, and David sends him away in peace.

But Joab hears about it. He's furious. He tells David that Abner was only spying. Then, without David's knowledge, he sends messengers to bring Abner back, takes him aside at the gate of Hebron as if to speak privately, and stabs him to death, to avenge his brother Asahel.

David is horrified. He publicly declares that he and his kingdom are innocent of Abner's blood. He makes Joab and all the people tear their clothes and mourn. He walks behind the coffin and weeps at the grave. He refuses to eat all day. And he sings a short lament: "Should Abner die as a fool dies?" The people notice. "All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them." They understand that David had nothing to do with the murder.

But David doesn't punish Joab. "I am weak today, though anointed king," he says. "These men, the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me." It's an honest admission, and also a failure. A king who can't hold his own general accountable is setting up problems for later.

> **REAL TALK** **Saying It's Wrong Isn't the Same as Stopping It**
>
> David mourned Abner sincerely and said all the right things. But he let Joab get away with murder. That's a pattern that will haunt David's whole reign. He feels deeply, but he often doesn't act when he should, especially when it involves people close to him. You've probably seen this happen: a coach who lets the star player get away with bullying, or a group of friends who all know something is wrong but nobody does anything. Feeling bad about wrong isn't enough. Sometimes love and justice require us to act, to speak up, to tell someone in authority, or to set a boundary, even when it's hard.

With Abner dead, Ishbosheth's kingdom collapses. Two of his own captains sneak into his house while he's taking an afternoon nap, kill him, and bring his head to David, expecting a reward. Like the Amalekite in chapter 1, they get the opposite. David reminds them what happened to the man who claimed to have killed Saul. "How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house on his bed, should I not now require his blood from your hand?" He has them executed.

In the middle of all this violence, the writer slips in a short, sad note. Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. When news came that Saul and Jonathan had died, his nurse picked him up and ran, and in her hurry she dropped him. He was five years old, and he became disabled in both feet. Remember his name. He's going to come back.

KEY VERSE

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. In their death, they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions.

2 Samuel 1:23 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think David grieved so deeply for Saul, who had tried to kill him?
2. David refused to reward anyone who killed his enemies for him. Why was that so important?
3. David mourned Abner but didn't punish Joab. What should he have done?
4. Have you ever seen someone say the right things but fail to act? What happened?

TRY THIS *If you're grieving someone, try writing your own lament, a letter, poem, or song about them. Then share it with someone you trust.*

CHAPTER 2

King of All Israel

2 Samuel 5–6

With Ishbosheth gone, the tribes of Israel finally come to David at Hebron. “Behold, we are your bone and your flesh,” they say. In other words, we’re family. They remind him that even when Saul was king, David was the one who really led Israel in battle, and that God had said to him, “You will be shepherd of my people Israel.” So the elders make a covenant with David, and “they anointed David king over Israel.”

It’s David’s third anointing. The first was by Samuel in his father’s house when he was a teenager. The second was by the men of Judah. Now all Israel anoints him. “David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.” He had been anointed as a boy, but he waited perhaps fifteen years for the promise to come true.

> REAL TALK **The Long Wait**
>
> David spent years between his anointing and his crowning: years of running, hiding, living in caves, and wondering whether God’s promise would ever happen. Waiting is hard, especially when you believe God has something for you. Maybe you’re waiting for a friend, a healing, a family situation to change, or just to know what you’re supposed to do with your life. David’s story says God’s timing isn’t always fast, but it’s never wasted. Those hard years made

> David the kind of leader who could shepherd a nation. What might God be building in you while you wait?

David's first move as king of all Israel is to capture a capital. He chooses Jerusalem, a fortress city on a hill that the Jebusites had held for centuries. It's right on the border between Judah and the northern tribes, so it doesn't belong to either side, a smart choice for a king trying to unite a divided country.

The Jebusites are so confident in their walls that they taunt David: "The blind and the lame will keep you out of here." Basically, we could defend this place with our weakest people. But David's men find a way in, possibly through a water tunnel. "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion. This is David's city." From now on, Jerusalem will be known as the City of David, and Zion will become one of the most important names in the Bible.

"David grew greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of Armies, was with him." The king of Tyre sends cedar wood and builders to make David a palace. David defeats the Philistines twice, asking God for direction each time. And he realizes something important: God has made him king "for his people Israel's sake." The kingdom isn't about David. It's about God's people.

But there's a warning sign in the same chapter. The writer mentions that David took more wives and concubines in Jerusalem. Deuteronomy had specifically warned that Israel's king "shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart not turn away." David is starting to collect the things kings of the nations collect. Keep an eye on that.

Now that David has a capital, he wants to bring the ark of the covenant there. The ark has been sitting in a village called Kiriath

Jearim, also known as Baale Judah, for about twenty years, ever since the Philistines sent it back. David gathers thirty thousand men for a huge celebration.

They put the ark on a new cart pulled by oxen, with two brothers, Uzzah and Ahio, guiding it. David and all Israel dance and play music with all their might. It's a parade.

Then the oxen stumble. Uzzah reaches out and grabs the ark to steady it. "The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by God's ark."

The party stops. Everyone is stunned. And David is angry. "David was displeased because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah." He names the place Perez Uzzah, which means outburst against Uzzah. Then his anger turns to fear. "How could the LORD's ark come to me?" He leaves the ark at the house of a man named Obed-Edom and goes home.

REAL TALK **Why Did Uzzah Die?**

This is one of the hardest stories in the Bible, and lots of people find it unfair. Uzzah was trying to help. So what happened? Christians have offered several explanations. First, God's law gave clear instructions about the ark. It was to be carried on poles by Levites from the family of Kohath, and even they were warned: "they shall not touch the sanctuary, lest they die." Putting it on a cart was how the Philistines had moved it. David had copied the pagans instead of checking God's word. Second, Uzzah's family had kept the ark in their house for years, and some think familiarity had made them careless about its holiness. Third, some point out that Uzzah may have thought the ark needed his protection, as if God couldn't take care of Himself. Others admit that the story still feels hard and that we don't know everything about Uzzah's heart. All agree on the main point: God is holy, and He is not to be handled casually. Hebrews says "our God is a consuming fire." The good news of the gospel isn't

> that God's holiness stopped mattering. It's that Jesus made a way for us to come near safely.

Three months later, David hears that the LORD has blessed Obed-Edom's household because of the ark. So he tries again, and this time he does it right. The Levites carry the ark on poles, as God's law said. After the bearers take six steps, David offers a sacrifice. And "David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was clothed in a linen ephod," a simple priestly garment, not his royal robes. The whole nation celebrates with shouting and trumpets.

But one person isn't celebrating. "Michal the daughter of Saul looked out through the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

When David comes home to bless his family, Michal meets him with sarcasm. "How glorious the king of Israel was today," she says, accusing him of making a fool of himself in front of the servant girls by dancing around in his underwear, more or less.

David doesn't back down. "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father." He says he'll celebrate before the LORD, and "I will be yet more undignified than this." He doesn't care what he looks like when he's worshiping God.

There's an important detail in David's answer to Michal. He says the servant girls she was worried about will honor him. David isn't trying to impress the important people. He's comfortable being humbled before God in front of ordinary people. That's a mark of a good leader. The best leaders aren't the ones who protect their image at all costs. They're the ones who are willing to look foolish for the right reasons, who admit they need God, and who don't think they're too important to celebrate with everyone else. Jesus would

later wash His disciples' feet, the job of the lowest servant, and tell them to do the same.

The chapter ends with a sad line: "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death." We aren't told exactly why. It may have been God's judgment, or it may simply mean David never shared a home with her again. Either way, their marriage, which began with love in 1 Samuel 18, ends in contempt.

> **REAL TALK** **Worship Without Worrying What People Think**
>
> David was the king, and he danced before God with all his might, without worrying about looking cool. Michal cared more about appearances. It's easy to be like Michal: to feel embarrassed about worship, judge how other people express their faith, or hold back because you're worried what someone will think. Worship can be loud or quiet, joyful or tearful, and Christians express it in different ways. The point isn't to dance a certain way. It's to care more about God than about your image. In fairness to Michal, she had been treated badly by David and by her father, used as a pawn, taken from a husband who loved her, and that may have fed her bitterness. Hurt can make it hard to rejoice. But bitterness never makes it better.

KEY VERSE

David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was clothed in a linen ephod.

2 Samuel 6:14 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. David waited years between being anointed and becoming king. What do you think those years taught him?
2. Why do you think God took Uzzah's mistake so seriously? Does the explanation about the ark's poles help you, or does the story still feel hard?
3. What's the difference between being afraid of God and having reverence for God?
4. Have you ever held back in worship because of what others might think? What would it look like to worship "with all your might"?

TRY THIS *Spend ten minutes this week worshiping God in a way that feels free: singing in your room, praying out loud on a walk, or writing a list of reasons to praise Him.*

CHAPTER 3

A House Forever

2 Samuel 7

Chapter 7 is one of the most important chapters in the entire Old Testament. If you remember only one chapter from 2 Samuel, make it this one.

It begins in a moment of peace. "When the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around," David has an idea. He says to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but God's ark dwells within curtains." David lives in a beautiful palace, and the ark of God is still in a tent. That doesn't seem right. David wants to build God a temple.

Nathan thinks it's a great idea. "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you." But that night, God speaks to Nathan, and the message turns everything around.

God's answer starts with a question: Are you going to build a house for Me to live in? God reminds David that He has never asked for a house. Ever since He brought Israel out of Egypt, He's been moving around with His people in a tent. Then He reminds David where he came from. "I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, to be prince over my people, over Israel." I have been with you wherever you went. I have defeated your enemies. I will make your name great.

And then comes the twist. David wanted to build God a house. Instead, God says He will build David a house. "Moreover the LORD tells you that the LORD will make you a house."

There's a wordplay here. In Hebrew, the word house can mean a building, like a palace or a temple, or it can mean a family line, a dynasty, like the house of Windsor or the house of David. David wanted to build God a house made of stone and cedar. God says, I'm going to build you a house made of people, a royal family that will last forever.

BACKGROUND CHECK **A Covenant with David**

A covenant is a binding agreement. God had already made covenants with Noah, with Abraham, and with Israel at Mount Sinai. Now He makes one with David. Scholars call it the Davidic Covenant. Unlike the covenant at Sinai, which came with conditions and consequences if Israel broke it, this promise is unconditional in its core. If David's sons sin, God will discipline them, but He will never take away His loyal love from David's family the way He did from Saul. Psalm 89 celebrates it: "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David, my servant." This covenant becomes the foundation of Israel's hope for a Messiah, an anointed king from David's line, and it's central to how the New Testament understands Jesus.

Here's what God promises. When David dies, "I will set up your offspring after you, who will proceed out of your body, and I will establish his kingdom." That son will build the temple David wanted to build. "He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

And God promises something incredibly personal: "I will be his father, and he will be my son." If that son does wrong, God will discipline him, the way a father disciplines a child. "But my loving kindness will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul."

Then comes the big finish: "Your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before you. Your throne will be established forever."

Forever. That's a huge word. In the short term, the promise is fulfilled in Solomon, David's son, who builds the temple. But Solomon dies. So do all his sons. About four hundred years after David, the kingdom of Judah falls to Babylon, and there's no son of David on the throne anymore. For centuries, it looks like the promise has failed.

That's why the prophets kept talking about a future king from David's line. Isaiah promised a child who would sit "on David's throne," whose government and peace would have no end. Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of a righteous Branch from David. By the time of Jesus, many Jewish people were waiting for the Son of David to come and restore the kingdom.

> **REAL TALK** **Is This About Jesus?**
>
> When Christians read 2 Samuel 7, they see Jesus all over it. The angel Gabriel told Mary that God would give her son "the throne of his father David," and that "There will be no end to his Kingdom." Matthew's Gospel begins by calling Jesus "the son of David." Hebrews quotes the line "I will be his father, and he will be my son" about Jesus. And Jesus, who rose from the dead, is the only son of David who could actually reign forever. But it's also fair to say that the first meaning of the promise is about Solomon and David's royal line, and that Jewish readers understand the promise in their own way, many still waiting for a Messiah to come. Christians believe that the promise, which seemed to fail when David's kingdom fell, came true in a bigger way than anyone expected. God didn't just keep a dynasty going. He sent His own Son to become a son of David.

It's worth pausing on how big this promise is in the story of the whole Bible. God promised Abraham a family that would bless all

nations. He promised Israel at Sinai that they would be His treasured people. Now He narrows the promise down to one family within one tribe: the family of David. From here on, the Old Testament keeps watching David's descendants, waiting to see which one will be the forever King. Some are good. Many are terrible. None of them lives forever. The promise keeps getting passed down like a torch, through wars, exile, and centuries of silence, until an angel shows up in Nazareth and tells a young woman engaged to a man "of the house and family of David" that her son will sit on David's throne. When you read the New Testament's long genealogies, this is why they matter. They're tracing the torch.

Notice too what the promise doesn't say. It doesn't say David's sons will be perfect. In fact, God expects them to sin and promises to discipline them. The promise doesn't depend on how good David's family is. It depends on how faithful God is. That's good news for anyone who has ever felt like their family is a mess.

How does David respond? He goes into the tent where the ark is, sits before the LORD, and prays. "Who am I, Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?"

That's the prayer of a humble man. He doesn't say, I deserve this. He says, who am I? I'm a shepherd boy. My family is nothing special. And yet You've brought me this far, and now You're promising something that reaches far into the future. David says, "Therefore you are great, LORD God. For there is no one like you."

He ends by asking God to do what He said. "Now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are truth, and you have promised this good thing to your servant." David doesn't try to earn the promise. He

receives it with gratitude and asks God to keep it. That's what faith looks like.

REAL TALK **When God Says No to a Good Idea**

David's plan to build the temple wasn't a bad idea. It came from a good heart. Even Nathan said go for it. But God said no, at least not you, not now. 1 Chronicles explains that David had fought many wars and shed a lot of blood, so God wanted a man of peace to build His house. Sometimes God says no to good things because He has something better, or someone else in mind for that task. That can be disappointing. You might not make the team, get the role, or get into the school you wanted, even though your motives were good. David's response is worth copying. He didn't sulk. He worshiped. And later, he gathered materials so his son could build the temple. He helped make someone else's success possible.

KEY VERSE

Your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before you. Your throne will be established forever.

2 Samuel 7:16 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. What's the wordplay on "house" in this chapter? Why does it matter?
2. David's prayer begins with "Who am I?" What does that tell you about his heart at this point in his life?
3. How do you think God's promise to David is fulfilled in Jesus?
4. Have you ever had a good plan that God seemed to say no to? How did you respond?

TRY THIS *Pray David's prayer this week: "Who am I, Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?" Then list five ways God has brought you this far.*

CHAPTER 4

A Seat at the King's Table

2 Samuel 8–10

Chapter 8 reads like a highlight reel. David defeats the Philistines, Moab, the Arameans, Edom, and others. He builds a small empire stretching from the Egyptian border toward the Euphrates River. Kings send him gifts of gold, silver, and bronze, and David dedicates all of it to the LORD. The writer sums it up: "David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness for all his people." For a moment, David is the king Israel always hoped for.

But the most beautiful story in this section isn't about a battle. It's about a guest at dinner.

One day David asks a question. "Is there yet any who is left of Saul's house, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Years earlier, David and Jonathan had made a covenant. Jonathan had asked David never to cut off his kindness from Jonathan's family, even after the LORD had defeated all of David's enemies. Now David is king, and he remembers his promise.

That question would have shocked people. In the ancient world, when a new dynasty took over, the new king usually wiped out every surviving member of the old royal family so nobody could challenge him. If you were related to Saul, the safest thing to do was

hide. And here is David, asking where Saul's relatives are, not to kill them, but to be kind to them.

They find a servant of Saul's family named Ziba. David asks him again, "Is there not yet any of Saul's house, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Notice that phrase: the kindness of God. The Hebrew word is hesed, loyal love, the same word that runs all through the book of Ruth. David wants to show someone the kind of love God has shown him.

Ziba answers, "Jonathan still has a son, who is lame in his feet." It's Mephibosheth, the boy who was dropped by his nurse when he was five. He's grown up now and has a young son of his own. He's been living in a town called Lo Debar, east of the Jordan. The name may mean something like no pasture or nothing, a fitting picture of where he's been: far away, forgotten, with nothing.

David sends for him. You can imagine what Mephibosheth was thinking on that trip. The king knows I exist. The king has sent soldiers to bring me. This is it.

When he arrives, he falls on his face before David. "David said, 'Mephibosheth?' He answered, 'Behold, your servant!'"

And David's first words are: "Don't be afraid." Then he explains. "I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your father. You will eat bread at my table continually."

Mephibosheth can hardly believe it. "What is your servant, that you should look at such a dead dog as I am?" A dead dog was about the most worthless thing you could call yourself in that culture. He thinks he's nothing. Maybe that's how people had treated him his whole life.

David gives him all of Saul's land and orders Ziba, his fifteen sons, and twenty servants to farm it for him. And Mephibosheth eats at the king's table "like one of the king's sons." The chapter ends with this line: "So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. He was lame in both his feet."

That last sentence is beautiful. The writer doesn't pretend Mephibosheth's disability disappeared. He's still lame in both feet. But now, when he sits at the king's table, his feet are under the table like everyone else's. He's not a charity case in the corner. He's family.

> **REAL TALK** **Disability, Dignity, and Belonging**
>
> Remember what the Jebusites said when David attacked Jerusalem: "The blind and the lame will keep you out of here"? In that world, people with disabilities were often mocked, pushed aside, or treated as less than human. Mephibosheth called himself a dead dog. David saw a son of his best friend and gave him a seat at the table. God's law had already said, "You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind." Every person, with or without a disability, is made in God's image and has full dignity and worth. If you have a disability, visible or invisible, physical, learning, or mental, you are not a burden, and you belong. And for all of us, the question is: who's missing from our table? Who gets left out at lunch, in group projects, at youth group, or at parties? Belonging isn't just letting someone in the room. It's making sure they have a real seat, and treating them as family.

Think about what David's kindness cost him. Restoring Saul's land to Saul's grandson meant giving up valuable property. Feeding Mephibosheth at the royal table every day, for the rest of his life, was an ongoing expense. And politically, keeping a descendant of Saul close to the palace could have been risky. David did it anyway, because he had made a promise to Jonathan and because he wanted to show the kindness of God. Real kindness usually costs something.

It takes time, attention, and sometimes risk. It's easy to be nice to people who can do something for you. Mephibosheth couldn't do anything for David. That's what makes the story so powerful.

Christians have long seen Mephibosheth's story as a picture of the gospel. We were far away, helpless, and afraid of the King. We couldn't walk to Him on our own. But for the sake of someone else, Jesus, God sought us out, told us not to be afraid, and gave us a permanent seat at His table as His children. We don't earn it. We just receive it.

Mephibosheth's story isn't over, though. Later, when David has to run from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion, Ziba shows up with supplies and claims that Mephibosheth stayed behind, hoping to get Saul's kingdom back. David believes him and gives Ziba all of Mephibosheth's property. But when David returns, Mephibosheth comes out to meet him looking terrible. He hasn't trimmed his beard, cared for his feet, or washed his clothes the whole time David was gone, a sign that he'd been mourning. He explains, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me." He had wanted to go with David, but because he was lame, he needed Ziba to saddle a donkey, and Ziba had left without him.

David doesn't know whom to believe, so he splits the land between them. Mephibosheth's answer shows his heart: "Yes, let him take all, because my lord the king has come in peace to his own house." He doesn't care about the land. He cares about the king.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Kindness Rejected**

Chapter 10 tells another story about kindness, with a very different ending. When the king of the Ammonites dies, David sends messengers to comfort his son Hanun, saying, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me." But Hanun's advisers convince him the

> messengers are spies. So Hanun humiliates them: he shaves off half of each man's beard and cuts their robes off at the hips, sending them home half naked. David tells the men to wait in Jericho until their beards grow back. The insult leads to a war, which Israel wins. The contrast with Mephibosheth is striking. One man receives the king's kindness with humility and gratitude. The other treats it with suspicion and contempt, and it costs him dearly.

That war with the Ammonites is the background for what happens next. It's still going on at the start of chapter 11. And it's in the middle of that war, at the height of David's power, that the man who gave Mephibosheth a seat at his table does the worst thing he ever does.

KEY VERSE

David said to him, "Don't be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your father. You will eat bread at my table continually."

2 Samuel 9:7 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why would Mephibosheth have been afraid when David sent for him?
2. Mephibosheth called himself a dead dog. How do you think the way people treated him shaped how he saw himself?
3. Who in your school, team, or church might feel left out of the table? What could you do about it?
4. How is Mephibosheth's story a picture of what God does for us through Jesus?

TRY THIS *This week, invite someone who usually sits alone, or who often gets left out, to sit with you or join your group. Treat them like family.*

CHAPTER 5

The King Who Took

2 Samuel 11

Chapter 11 begins with a sentence that sounds like a calendar note but works like a warning siren. “At the return of the year, at the time when kings go out, David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel.” Spring was the season for war, when the rains ended and armies could march. Kings led their armies. “But David stayed at Jerusalem.”

David isn’t where he’s supposed to be. He’s not leading his people. He’s sitting at home in his palace.

“At evening, David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house.” He’s been napping in the late afternoon. From the roof of the palace, the highest point in the city, he sees a woman bathing, and “the woman was very beautiful to look at.”

Some people over the years have blamed the woman, as if she was bathing on purpose to be seen. But the text doesn’t say that. The detail that she was purifying herself suggests she was carrying out a ritual washing after her monthly period, which God’s law required. She was likely in a private courtyard, doing what she was supposed to do. The person in the story with a view of everything was the king on his roof.

David sends someone to find out who she is. The answer should have stopped him cold: "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, Uriah the Hittite's wife?" She's married. Her husband, Uriah, is one of David's own elite soldiers, listed among his mighty men. And he's away fighting David's war.

David doesn't stop. "David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with her." Notice the verbs. David sent. David took. David lay. Bathsheba doesn't say a word in the whole scene. The only time she speaks in the chapter is to send David a message a few weeks later: "I am with child."

> **REAL TALK** **This Isn't a Romance**
>
> Movies and some sermons have treated this story like a love affair, or blamed Bathsheba for tempting David. That misses what the Bible actually says. David was the king, with almost unlimited power. He sent armed men from the palace to bring a woman whose husband was away at war. In that situation, she could not freely say no. What David did was an abuse of royal power. Many scholars and Christian writers today describe it as sexual coercion, and some call it rape; others think the text leaves her response unstated. But all careful readers agree on what the Bible makes unmistakable: the blame lies with David. When God sends the prophet Nathan to confront him, the story Nathan tells casts Bathsheba as an innocent lamb, and God's charge is against David alone.

So David has a problem. Bathsheba is pregnant, and her husband has been away. Everyone will know. And instead of confessing, David starts a cover-up.

He sends for Uriah from the battlefield. When Uriah arrives, David asks him casually how Joab is doing, how the soldiers are, how the war is going. Then he says, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." It's a polite way of saying, go home and spend the night with

your wife. David even sends a gift after him. If Uriah sleeps with Bathsheba, everyone will assume the baby is his.

But Uriah doesn't go home. He sleeps at the entrance of the palace with the king's servants. When David asks why, Uriah's answer is devastating. "The ark, Israel, and Judah, are staying in tents; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing!"

Uriah is a foreigner, a Hittite, but he has more integrity than the king of Israel. He won't enjoy comfort while his fellow soldiers are in danger. Without knowing it, he's exposing everything David should have been.

David tries again. He invites Uriah to dinner and gets him drunk, hoping that will change his mind. It doesn't. Drunk Uriah is still more honorable than sober David.

So David does something unthinkable. "In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah." Uriah carries his own death sentence back to the front lines. The letter says, "Send Uriah to the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck and die."

Joab does it. He sends Uriah and other soldiers close to the city wall, where the enemy's best fighters are. Uriah is killed, and so are other men of David's army. Joab sends a messenger with the news, and David responds coldly: "Don't let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another." Basically: these things happen in war. Don't worry about it.

SAFETY NOTE **When Someone Uses Power to Pressure You**

David used his power as king to take what he wanted and then to cover it up. People with power still do this: a boss, a coach, a teacher, a youth leader, an older boyfriend or girlfriend, or anyone who has some kind of control over you. They may use threats, gifts, flattery, secrets, or their position to pressure you into something sexual or to keep quiet about it. If someone has more power than you, it is very hard to say no freely, and that's exactly why it's so wrong for them to ask. If anything like this has ever happened to you, it is not your fault, no matter what anyone says. You are not in trouble. Tell a trusted adult, like a parent, a school counselor, or a doctor. In the United States, you can call the RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673 or chat online at rainn.org, any time. If you are in danger, call 911.

Think about Joab's role in all this. He gets a letter from the king ordering him to arrange the death of one of his own best soldiers, and he does it without question. He doesn't refuse. He doesn't confront David. He even coaches his messenger on how to report the news so David won't get angry about the losses. And now Joab knows David's darkest secret, which gives Joab a kind of power over the king that he'll use for the rest of David's life. When people with power do wrong, they usually need others to go along with it. Every person who chose to look away, follow orders, or keep quiet made David's sin possible. It takes courage to say no to someone powerful, but sometimes that's exactly what faithfulness requires.

When Bathsheba hears that her husband is dead, "she mourned for her husband." The text gives her real grief. She has lost her husband, and she is carrying the child of the man who had him killed. When the mourning period is over, David brings her to the palace, and she becomes his wife and has a son.

To everyone else, it might look like the king did something kind, marrying a war widow. The cover-up seems to have worked. Nobody knows.

Except one. The chapter ends with one short sentence that changes everything: "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

REAL TALK **How Did David Get Here?**

This is David: the boy who trusted God against Goliath, the fugitive who refused to kill Saul, the king who gave Mephibosheth a seat at his table. How could he do this? Look at the steps. He was where he shouldn't have been, at home instead of leading. He was idle. He let himself keep looking. He used power without accountability, with no one around willing to tell him no. Then each wrong choice led to a worse one: lust led to abuse, abuse led to lying, lying led to murder. Sin rarely shows up all at once. It usually grows from small compromises that nobody sees. That's why it matters what you do when you're bored, alone, and think nobody's watching. And it's why everybody, especially people with power, needs people in their life who can tell them no.

KEY VERSE

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

2 Samuel 11:27 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. The chapter begins by saying David stayed in Jerusalem when kings went to war. Why does that detail matter?
2. Why is it important to see this story as an abuse of power and not as a romance?
3. Compare Uriah and David in this chapter. What does Uriah's integrity reveal about David?
4. David's sin grew one step at a time. What are some small compromises that can lead to bigger ones?

TRY THIS *Think of one area where you're most tempted when you're bored or alone. Make a specific plan this week to guard it, and tell someone you trust about your plan.*

CHAPTER 6

You Are the Man

2 Samuel 12

Months go by. The baby is born. David seems to have gotten away with it. Then "The LORD sent Nathan to David."

Nathan is the same prophet who brought David God's amazing promise in chapter 7. Now he has to confront the most powerful man in the country about adultery and murder. That's dangerous. Kings had prophets killed for less. So Nathan doesn't start with an accusation. He tells a story.

"There were two men in one city: the one rich, and the other poor." The rich man has huge flocks and herds. The poor man has only one little ewe lamb, which he bought and raised. "It grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him." It's not just livestock. It's a family pet.

One day a traveler visits the rich man. The rich man doesn't want to use one of his own animals for the meal. So he takes the poor man's lamb, kills it, and serves it to his guest.

David is furious. He thinks Nathan is reporting a real case for the king to judge. "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die!" He must pay back four times over, "because he did this thing and because he had no pity!"

And Nathan looks at him and says four words that land like a hammer: "You are the man!"

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Why a Story?**
>
> Nathan's parable is one of the most brilliant moments in the Bible. If Nathan had walked in and said, David, you committed adultery and murder, David might have gotten defensive, denied it, or had Nathan killed. Instead, the story gets past David's defenses. It lets him see the wrong clearly from the outside, and he pronounces judgment before he realizes he's judging himself. Jesus often taught with parables for a similar reason. Stories can show us truths about ourselves that we'd never accept if someone just told us directly. Notice too who the lamb represents: Bathsheba, innocent and taken by the one with power. Nathan's story makes it clear which man in the story is guilty.

Then Nathan delivers God's message. I anointed you king. I rescued you from Saul. I gave you everything. If that had been too little, I would have given you more. "Why have you despised the LORD's word, to do that which is evil in his sight? You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon."

The consequences are severe. "Now therefore the sword will never depart from your house." Trouble will come from within David's own family. What David did in secret, God says, will be repaid in public.

And David's response is what makes him different from Saul. He doesn't make excuses. He doesn't blame Bathsheba, or Joab, or the war, or the stress of being king. He says six words: "I have sinned against the LORD."

Remember Saul in 1 Samuel 15? He also said I have sinned, but then he asked Samuel to honor him in front of the people. David doesn't ask for anything. He just admits it.

Nathan answers immediately. "The LORD also has put away your sin. You will not die." The law said that both adultery and murder deserved death. But God forgives David.

REAL TALK **Psalm 51, a Prayer for When You've Blown It**

The heading of Psalm 51 says David wrote it "when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." It's one of the most honest prayers ever written. "Have mercy on me, God, according to your loving kindness." David doesn't minimize what he did. "For I know my transgressions. My sin is constantly before me." He asks God to wash him and make him new: "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me." And he understands what God wants most: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. O God, you will not despise a broken and contrite heart." If you've ever done something you're deeply ashamed of, Psalm 51 can become your prayer too. Real repentance isn't just feeling bad or being sorry you got caught. It's agreeing with God about what you did, turning from it, and trusting His mercy. And part of repentance, when you've hurt someone, is making it right with them as much as you can.

But forgiveness doesn't erase consequences. Nathan says the child born to Bathsheba will die, because David's sin has given the LORD's enemies reason to mock Him. Soon after, the baby becomes very sick.

REAL TALK **Why Did the Baby Die?**

This part of the story is painful, and many readers struggle with it. Why would an innocent baby die for his father's sin? Christians have answered in different ways. Some emphasize that this was a unique judgment tied to David's public role as king, showing that God would not let the king's sin go unpunished in front of the nation. Some point out that in a fallen world, the sins of parents often bring suffering on their children, and that this story shows that painful reality honestly. Many also hold that young children who die are safe with God, pointing to David's own words later in the chapter. It's okay to find this hard. The Bible doesn't ask us to pretend it isn't. What it does

show is that sin is never private. It always hurts others, often the most vulnerable.

David fasts and prays for seven days, lying on the ground all night. His servants try to get him up, but he won't eat. On the seventh day, the baby dies. The servants are afraid to tell him. If he was this upset while the child was alive, what will he do now?

David sees them whispering and asks, "Is the child dead?" When they say yes, he does something that surprises everyone. He gets up, washes, changes his clothes, goes to the house of the LORD, and worships. Then he goes home and eats.

His servants are confused. He explains. "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will not be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

Many Christians have found comfort in those last words: "I will go to him." They see in them David's hope that he will be with his son again someday.

Then David comforts Bathsheba. The text calls her "his wife" now. She has lost her husband and her child, and she has endured all of this because of David's choices. Later, she has another son. "He called his name Solomon. The LORD loved him." God sends Nathan with a second name for the baby: Jedidiah, which means loved by the LORD.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Grace in the Middle of the Mess**

Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, becomes the next king, builds the temple, and continues the line of David that leads to Jesus. Matthew's genealogy even mentions Bathsheba, calling her "her who had been Uriah's

wife," a reminder of exactly what happened. God didn't approve of what David did. But He brought grace and new life out of a terrible situation. And Bathsheba, the woman who had no voice in chapter 11, becomes one of the most influential people in the kingdom, the mother of a king, who later speaks up boldly to make sure Solomon gets the throne.

The chapter ends with David leading the army to capture the Ammonite city of Rabbah, which is what he should have been doing back in chapter 11. But Nathan's words hang over everything that follows. The sword will never depart from your house. In the next chapters, we'll see how true they were.

KEY VERSE

David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin. You will not die."

2 Samuel 12:13 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Nathan told a story instead of accusing David directly?
2. Compare David's "I have sinned" with Saul's in 1 Samuel 15. What's the difference?
3. God forgave David, but there were still consequences. Why doesn't forgiveness always remove consequences?
4. Who is a Nathan in your life, someone who loves you enough to tell you the truth?

TRY THIS *Read Psalm 51 slowly this week. If there's something you need to confess, pray it to God in your own words, and if you've hurt someone, take one step toward making it right.*

CHAPTER 7

Tamar and Absalom

2 Samuel 13–14

Nathan had warned that the sword would never depart from David's house. Chapter 13 is where that warning starts coming true. It's one of the hardest chapters in the Bible, and we're going to handle it carefully. The writer tells it plainly, and he leaves no doubt about who did wrong.

David had many wives and many children. His oldest son was Amnon. Another son, Absalom, had a beautiful sister named Tamar. Amnon and Tamar had the same father, David, but different mothers. Amnon became obsessed with Tamar. The text says he "loved her," but as the story shows, it wasn't love at all. It was a selfish desire that made him sick.

Amnon had a cousin and friend named Jonadab, described as "a very subtle man," which means crafty. Jonadab gave him a plan to get Tamar alone: pretend to be sick and ask the king to send Tamar to make him food. David, without suspecting anything, sent her.

When Tamar came and Amnon got her alone, he grabbed her. She said no clearly and repeatedly. "No, my brother, do not force me! For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Don't you do this folly!" She reasoned with him. She thought about what it would do to her and what it would make him. She even tried to buy time by

suggesting he ask the king. But Amnon would not listen, and because he was stronger, he raped her.

Then the writer shows what Amnon's so-called love really was. Immediately afterward, Amnon hated her even more than he had wanted her, and he had her thrown out and the door bolted behind her. Tamar tore the special robe that showed she was a king's daughter, put ashes on her head, and went away crying out loud. She didn't stay silent. She grieved publicly, as a way of saying: something terrible has been done to me.

SAFETY NOTE **Sexual Assault and Family Abuse**

What Amnon did to Tamar was a crime, and the Bible calls it what it was. It was not her fault. She said no, and he forced her anyway. Sadly, sexual abuse still happens, and often it's by someone the person knows: a family member, a relative, a family friend, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or someone in a position of trust. If someone has ever touched you in a sexual way you didn't want, or pressured or forced you, it is never your fault, no matter what you were wearing, where you were, or what happened before. You don't have to keep it secret, even if the person is family, and even if someone tells you to keep quiet. Tell a trusted adult, like a parent, a teacher, a school counselor, a doctor, or a pastor. If the first person doesn't help, tell another. In the United States, you can call the RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673 or visit rainn.org, call or text the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453, and in an emergency, call 911. What happened to you matters, and you deserve help and healing.

Tamar's brother Absalom finds her and figures out what happened. His response is painful to read. "But now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." He tells her to keep quiet. Absalom is secretly planning revenge, but in the meantime, his sister is silenced. "So Tamar remained desolate in

her brother Absalom's house." Desolate means ruined, alone, and abandoned. It's the last we hear of her in the story.

And what about David, her father and the king? "But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry." That's it. He was angry, and he did nothing. Some ancient manuscripts, including the Septuagint and a Dead Sea Scroll, add that David wouldn't punish Amnon because he loved him, since he was his firstborn. Either way, David didn't protect his daughter, didn't punish his son, and didn't bring justice.

> **REAL TALK** **Silence Is Not Neutral**
>
> Tamar was failed by almost everyone around her. Jonadab helped plan the crime. Amnon committed it. Absalom told her to keep quiet. And David, the king who was supposed to bring justice, was angry and did nothing. Maybe he felt he couldn't punish Amnon after what he had done with Bathsheba. Whatever the reason, his silence left his daughter without justice and his family headed for disaster. When someone is hurt, silence protects the person who did wrong, not the person who was hurt. Telling someone isn't betraying your family. It's standing up for the person who needs protection. If someone ever tells you they've been abused, believe them, tell them it isn't their fault, and help them get to a trusted adult.

Absalom waits two years. He never says a word to Amnon, good or bad. "For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar." Then he throws a sheep-shearing party and invites all the king's sons. He tells his servants that when Amnon is drunk, they should kill him. They do. The other princes jump on their mules and flee.

At first, a rumor reaches David that Absalom has killed all his sons. David tears his clothes and lies on the ground. Then Jonadab, the same crafty cousin who planned the crime against Tamar, tells

David that only Amnon is dead, and that Absalom had been planning it ever since what happened to his sister. Jonadab knew the whole time.

Absalom runs away to his grandfather, the king of Geshur, and stays there for three years. "David mourned for his son every day." The text says David longed to go out to Absalom once he was comforted about Amnon's death. But he doesn't go. Once again, David feels deeply but doesn't act.

> **REAL TALK** **Revenge Doesn't Heal**
>
> Absalom's anger at Amnon was understandable. His sister had been horribly wronged, and their father had done nothing. But murder didn't heal Tamar. It didn't bring justice. It just added more violence and more grief to a broken family. When someone we love is hurt and nobody does anything, the desire for revenge can be overwhelming. The right response is to seek real justice: to tell people in authority, to report crimes to the police, and to keep pushing for the person who was hurt to be protected and cared for. Revenge takes the place of justice, but it never does its job.

Joab can see that David is stuck. So he comes up with a plan. He finds a wise woman from the town of Tekoa and has her pretend to be a widow in mourning. She comes to David with a made-up story: one of her two sons killed the other in a fight, and now her family wants to execute the surviving son, which would leave her with no one. David promises to protect her son.

Then she turns it around, Nathan-style. If you would protect my son, why won't you bring back your own banished son? And she says something beautiful about God: "For we must die, and are like water spilled on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means, that he who is banished not be an outcast from him."

God devises means so that the banished don't stay outcasts. It's one of the most hopeful lines in the book. God is always working to bring people home.

David realizes Joab is behind it, but he agrees to bring Absalom back. But he does it halfway. "Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face." Absalom lives in Jerusalem for two years without seeing his father. He's back in the city, but not back in the family.

The writer describes Absalom like a celebrity. "Now in all Israel there was no one to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty." He had famously thick hair; when he cut it once a year, it weighed about five pounds. He's handsome, charming, and angry.

Eventually Absalom gets so frustrated that he sets Joab's barley field on fire just to get his attention. It works. Joab goes to David, and David finally calls for Absalom. Absalom bows to the ground, "and the king kissed Absalom." It looks like reconciliation. But there's no conversation, no confession, no real healing. Nothing about Tamar, nothing about Amnon. The wounds are covered, not cleaned. And under the surface, Absalom is planning something much bigger.

KEY VERSE

For we must die, and are like water spilled on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means, that he who is banished not be an outcast from him.

2 Samuel 14:14 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Tamar said no clearly and tried to reason with Amnon. Why is it important that the Bible records her words?
2. Absalom told Tamar to keep quiet, and David did nothing. What should each of them have done instead?
3. Why doesn't revenge bring healing? What does real justice look like?
4. David brought Absalom home but didn't really reconcile with him. What's the difference between avoiding a conflict and actually resolving it?

TRY THIS *Save the RAINN (1-800-656-4673) and Childhelp (1-800-422-4453) numbers in your phone, so you have them if you or a friend ever needs them.*

CHAPTER 8

My Son, My Son

2 Samuel 15–19

Absalom starts building his own following. He gets a chariot and horses and fifty men to run ahead of him, like a king. Every morning, he gets up early and stands by the road to the city gate, where people come to bring their legal cases to the king.

When someone comes by, Absalom calls out to them, "What city are you from?" He listens to their complaint, tells them they're right, and then sighs that the king has no one to hear them. "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice!" When people try to bow to him, he pulls them up and kisses them. He makes everyone feel seen.

"So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." He does this for four years. It's a masterclass in manipulation: flattery, fake humility, and constant hints that the current leader doesn't care about you.

> REAL TALK **Watch Out for Smooth Talkers**
>
> Absalom was handsome, charming, and great at making people feel important. He told everyone what they wanted to hear. And he used all of it to steal their loyalty for his own ambition. People like that still exist, in friend groups, in relationships, online, and in politics. They flatter you, tell you that you deserve better than the people in your life, and slowly turn you against

> those who really care about you. That's a warning sign, especially in dating. If someone keeps trying to isolate you from your parents, friends, or church, or makes you feel like they're the only one who really understands you, talk to someone you trust. Real love doesn't need to cut you off from everyone else.

Then Absalom asks his father for permission to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow to the LORD. David, as clueless as ever, says, go in peace. Absalom has already sent secret messengers to all the tribes: when you hear the trumpet, shout, "Absalom is king in Hebron!" And he sends for Ahithophel, David's most trusted adviser, who joins the rebellion. "The conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom."

When David hears, he makes a quick decision. "Arise! Let's flee, or else none of us will escape from Absalom." He doesn't want a battle in the streets of Jerusalem. So the king who captured the city runs from it.

It's one of the saddest scenes in the Bible. David crosses the Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem, and climbs the Mount of Olives barefoot, with his head covered, weeping. All the people with him are weeping too. The priests Zadok and Abiathar bring the ark, but David sends it back. "If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me again." And if not, "behold, here I am. Let him do to me as seems good to him." He's not trying to use God like a good-luck charm. He's surrendering to God's will.

Christians have noticed that, about a thousand years later, Jesus would also cross the Kidron Valley and go up the Mount of Olives on the night He was betrayed, praying in distress. A trusted friend would also betray Him. But where David was fleeing the consequences of his own sin, Jesus was walking toward a cross to pay for the sins of others.

When David hears that Ahithophel has joined Absalom, he prays a short, urgent prayer: "LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." Ahithophel's advice was so respected that it was like asking God Himself. Then, almost immediately, God provides an answer to the prayer. David's friend Hushai shows up, and David sends him back to Jerusalem to pretend to join Absalom and undermine Ahithophel's advice.

On the road, a man from Saul's family named Shimei comes out and curses David, throwing rocks and dirt at him and calling him a man of blood. David's nephew Abishai wants to cut off his head. But David says no. My own son is trying to kill me. Why not this man? "Leave him alone, and let him curse." Maybe, David says, the LORD will see my misery and repay me with good. David is humbled. He knows he isn't innocent.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Why Did Ahithophel Turn?**
>
> The Bible doesn't say why David's best adviser betrayed him. But many readers have noticed a clue. Bathsheba's father was Eliam, and a man named Eliam son of Ahithophel is listed among David's mighty men in chapter 23. If that's the same Eliam, then Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. He may have been holding a grudge for years over what David did to his granddaughter and to Uriah. That doesn't excuse betrayal. But it's another reminder that David's sin had consequences that spread far beyond one night.

In Jerusalem, Ahithophel gives Absalom two pieces of advice. The first is meant to make the break with David permanent: a public act that shows Absalom has taken over his father's household. It fulfills, in a terrible way, exactly what Nathan said would happen. The second is military: let me take twelve thousand men tonight and attack David while he's exhausted. Strike only the king, and

everyone else will come back to you. It's brilliant advice. It probably would have worked.

But Hushai convinces Absalom to wait, gather the whole army, and lead it himself. It sounds more glorious, so Absalom takes it. "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel." God answered David's prayer.

When Ahithophel sees that his advice hasn't been followed, he goes home, puts his affairs in order, and takes his own life. It's a short, stark verse, and it's heartbreaking.

> **SAFETY NOTE** **When Life Feels Like It's Falling Apart**
>
> Ahithophel had been the most respected adviser in the kingdom. When his plans failed and his future collapsed, he saw no way forward. If you've ever felt that kind of despair, after a failure, a loss, a public embarrassment, or a mistake you think can't be undone, please hear this: your life is worth more than your plans, your reputation, or your worst moment. Failures feel final, but they almost never are. Things can change, and people want to help you through it. Please talk to someone today: a parent, a counselor, a pastor, a doctor, or another trusted adult. In the United States, you can call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time, day or night. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. And if you've lost someone to suicide, it is not your fault, and you don't have to carry that grief alone.

David's army gathers east of the Jordan. Before the battle, David gives his commanders, Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, an order that everyone hears: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." Even now, David loves his son.

The battle happens in the forest of Ephraim, and Absalom's army is crushed. Then a strange thing happens. Absalom is riding his mule under a big oak tree, and his head gets caught in the branches.

Maybe it was his famous hair. The mule keeps going, and Absalom is left hanging in the air, helpless.

A soldier sees him and tells Joab. Joab asks why he didn't kill him. The soldier says, are you kidding? Even for a thousand pieces of silver, I wouldn't disobey the king's order. Joab doesn't care. "I'm not going to wait like this with you." He goes and kills Absalom, and his armor bearers finish it. They throw Absalom's body into a pit in the forest and pile a huge heap of stones on it.

Two runners carry the news to David, who is sitting between the gates of a city, waiting. The first runner avoids the question. The second answers clearly. David's only question is, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" Not, did we win? Not, is my kingdom safe? Is my son okay?

When he hears, "The king was much moved, and went up to the room over the gate and wept. As he went, he said, 'My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!'"

> **REAL TALK** **A Father's Grief**
>
> David's cry over Absalom is one of the most heartbreaking moments in all of literature. Absalom had tried to kill him, stolen his kingdom, and humiliated him in public. And David still wished he could have died in his place. Maybe part of his grief was guilt, knowing how much of this started with his own sin and his own silence. But mostly, it's a picture of a parent's love that doesn't stop, even when a child goes terribly wrong. If you're in a hard place with your parents right now, it may be hard to believe, but many parents feel that kind of love even when they're angry, disappointed, or failing to show it well. And Christians see in David's cry something even deeper: God the Father didn't just wish He could take our place. In Jesus, He did.

David's grief is so overwhelming that the army sneaks back into the city like they lost the battle. Joab finally confronts him harshly: your men just saved your life, and you're acting like you'd rather they were all dead and Absalom alive. Go out and encourage them, or nobody will be left with you by tonight. David pulls himself together and goes to sit at the gate.

On his way back to Jerusalem, David shows mercy. He spares Shimei, who comes groveling. He hears Mephibosheth's side of the story. And he tries to rebuild a broken, divided kingdom. But the damage has been done, and the tension between the northern tribes and Judah will soon break out again.

KEY VERSE

The king was much moved, and went up to the room over the gate and wept. As he went, he said, "My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!"

2 Samuel 18:33 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. How did Absalom steal the hearts of the people? Where do you see that kind of manipulation today?
2. David sent the ark back to Jerusalem and said, let God do as seems good to Him. What does that show about his faith at this low point?
3. Why do you think David let Shimei curse him?
4. What does David's grief over Absalom show about a parent's love, and about God's?

TRY THIS *Write a note or text to a parent or someone who has cared for you, thanking them for one specific way they've loved you.*

CHAPTER 9

The Last Words of David

2 Samuel 20–24

The last chapters of 2 Samuel aren't in strict time order. They're more like an appendix, a collection of stories, songs, and lists that help sum up David's life. Some of them probably happened earlier in his reign. Together, they show both the best and the worst of the king.

First, the kingdom almost splits again. A troublemaker named Sheba blows a trumpet and shouts, "We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel!" The northern tribes follow him. Joab chases him down, and when Sheba hides in a walled city, a wise woman of the city negotiates with Joab from the wall and saves her town. Along the way, Joab murders yet another rival commander, Amasa. The violence of the sons of Zeruiah never really stops.

Chapter 21 tells of a famine and a painful story about Saul's descendants. In the middle of it is a quiet, powerful picture of grief and devotion. A woman named Rizpah, the mother of two of the men who were killed, spreads sackcloth on a rock and guards their bodies day and night for months, keeping away the birds and wild animals. When David hears what she has done, he is moved to give Saul and Jonathan and the others a proper burial. Sometimes one person's faithful love changes a king's heart.

Then comes chapter 22, David's song of praise. It's almost exactly the same as Psalm 18. It looks back on his whole life, especially the years when he was running from Saul. "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer." He describes being in deep trouble: "In my distress, I called on the LORD. Yes, I called to my God. He heard my voice out of his temple." And God came to rescue him like a storm, with thunder and lightning. "He drew me out of many waters." "He delivered me, because he delighted in me."

> **REAL TALK** **God Delights in You**
>
> "He delivered me, because he delighted in me." David wrote that line knowing everything he had done, good and bad. And he still believed God delighted in him. That's not because David was perfect. It's because God's love isn't based on our performance. Many teenagers carry a quiet belief that God is disappointed in them, or that He only tolerates them. The Bible says something different. If you belong to Him, He delights in you, not because you've earned it, but because He loves you. David also says, "For you are my lamp, LORD. The LORD will light up my darkness." If you're in a dark place, that's a prayer you can borrow.

Chapter 23 begins with "the last words of David," a short poem about what a good ruler should be. One who rules justly, in the fear of God, is like the morning light when the sun rises, like grass sparkling after the rain. David knows he hasn't always been that kind of king. "Isn't my house so with God?" he asks. But he holds on to God's promise: "Yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." His hope isn't in his own record. It's in God's faithfulness.

Then comes a list of David's mighty men, his most elite warriors, with short, action-movie descriptions of their feats. One killed eight hundred men in one battle. Another fought until his hand froze to his sword. Another killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day. And at the

very end of the list is a name that hits hard: "Uriah the Hittite." The writer doesn't let us forget.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Water from Bethlehem**

One story in the list of mighty men shows why they loved David. Once, when David was hiding in the cave of Adullam and the Philistines had taken over his hometown of Bethlehem, he said longingly, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" He probably didn't mean it as an order. But three of his mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, got the water, and brought it back. And David wouldn't drink it. "He would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD." He said it was like the blood of the men who had risked their lives for it. It was too precious to drink, so he gave it to God as an offering. Leaders who honor the sacrifices of the people around them inspire that kind of loyalty.

The book ends with a story that's both troubling and hopeful. "Again the LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he moved David against them, saying, 'Go, count Israel and Judah.'" David orders Joab to take a census of all the fighting men. Even Joab, who isn't exactly known for his spiritual sensitivity, objects. "But why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" David insists, and it takes nearly ten months.

Why was a census wrong? The text doesn't fully explain. Many readers think David was proud of his military strength and was trusting in numbers instead of in God. A census of fighting men was a way of measuring your power. Exodus also said that whenever Israel was counted, each person should pay a ransom so that no plague would come, and some think this was ignored. Either way, as soon as it's done, "David's heart struck him after he had counted the people." He confesses: "I have sinned greatly in that which I have done."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Did God or Satan Move David?**

2 Samuel 24:1 says the LORD moved David to take the census. But 1 Chronicles 21:1, telling the same story, says, "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to take a census of Israel." So which was it? Christians have understood this in a few ways. Many see both as true from different angles: God, in His sovereignty, allowed Satan to tempt David as a judgment on Israel, much as God allowed Satan to test Job. The Bible elsewhere says God "tempts no one," so God permitted the temptation but wasn't the author of the sin. Others note that Chronicles was written centuries later and may be making clear what Samuel left in the background, that the direct tempter was an adversary, not God. The Hebrew word satan can also mean an adversary in general, so some think Chronicles refers to a human enemy or an accusing angel. All these views agree that David was responsible for his choice, and that God remained in control.

The prophet Gad brings David three options for his punishment: famine, fleeing from enemies, or a plague. David's answer shows what he's learned about God over a lifetime. "Let us fall now into the LORD's hand, for his mercies are great. Let me not fall into man's hand." A plague comes, and seventy thousand people die.

When the destroying angel reaches Jerusalem, God says, "It is enough. Now withdraw your hand." The angel is standing by the threshing floor of a man named Araunah the Jebusite. David sees the angel and cries out, "Behold, I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me, and against my father's house." The shepherd king asks to take the punishment himself instead of his flock.

Gad tells David to build an altar on Araunah's threshing floor. When David arrives, Araunah offers to give him the land for free, along with oxen for the sacrifice and wood from the threshing sledges. But David refuses. "No, but I will most certainly buy it from you for a

price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing."

> **REAL TALK** **Worship That Costs Something**
>
> "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing." David understood that giving God something that cost him nothing wasn't really giving at all. What does your faith cost you? Maybe it's time you could spend on something else, money you could keep, a reputation you might lose, a habit you give up, or a hard conversation you have because it's right. Following Jesus isn't supposed to be a burden that crushes you; He says His burden is light. But real love always involves sacrifice. And remember, the greatest sacrifice was the one God made for us. Our giving is a response to His.

David buys the threshing floor, builds an altar, and offers sacrifices. "So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was removed from Israel."

And here's the amazing ending. That threshing floor becomes the site of the temple. 1 Chronicles says David declared, "This is the house of the LORD God." And 2 Chronicles says Solomon built the temple "on Mount Moriah," on the threshing floor David had bought. Mount Moriah is the same place where, a thousand years earlier, Abraham had been willing to offer his son Isaac, and God had provided a ram instead. The place where God provided a substitute for Isaac and where David's sacrifice stopped the plague becomes the place where sacrifices will be offered for centuries. And not far from there, Christians believe, God provided the ultimate sacrifice in His Son.

KEY VERSE

The king said to Araunah, "No, but I will most certainly buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

2 Samuel 24:24 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think the writer listed Uriah the Hittite at the end of the list of mighty men?
2. David wrote that God "delighted in" him, even after everything he'd done. Do you believe God delights in you? Why or why not?
3. How do you put together 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1? Which explanation makes the most sense to you?
4. What is something your faith costs you, or something you could give to God that would actually cost you something?

TRY THIS *Give something to God this week that costs you: time to help someone, money to someone in need, or giving up something you'd rather keep doing.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

Where This Points

2 Samuel ends with an old king buying a threshing floor and an altar standing on the site where the temple would one day be built. David was a great king. He was also an adulterer, a murderer, and a father who failed his children. The best human king Israel ever had couldn't save his own family, let alone the world. But God had made him a promise: a son of David would sit on a throne that would last forever.

Jewish readers treasure 2 Samuel 7 as the foundation of the hope for a Messiah, an anointed king from David's line, and many still pray for his coming. The New Testament writers, who were Jewish themselves, believed that promise came true in Jesus. When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would have a son, he said, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to his Kingdom." Peter preached that David, "knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him," spoke about the resurrection of the Christ. David took what wasn't his; Jesus gave what was His. David's sin brought death to others; Jesus' death brings life. David's son rebelled to take the throne; God's Son humbled Himself, and God gave Him the name above every name.

Here's what the Bible says about where that story leads, as plainly as I can put it.

1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He loves you. He keeps His promises, even when people fail.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (WEB)**

2 We've all sinned, even the best of us.

Even David, the man after God's own heart, did terrible things. The Bible says all of us have sinned.

> *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;* **Romans 3:23 (WEB)**

3 Sin has a real cost.

God is good, so He doesn't shrug off evil. 2 Samuel shows how sin spreads and destroys. The Bible says its result is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (WEB)**

4 Jesus is the true Son of David.

David's kingdom fell apart. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again, and His kingdom will never end.

> *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* **1 John 4:10 (WEB)**

5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

Mephibosheth didn't earn his seat at the king's table. Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*
> **Ephesians 2:8–9 (WEB)**

6 Turn and trust.

Like David when Nathan confronted him, admit your sin, turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life.

> *that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (WEB)**

So what do you do with that? You don't need perfect words. You can talk to God honestly, right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

> *God, I've sinned against You, and I can't fix that myself. Have mercy on me. Create in me a clean heart. Thank You for keeping Your promise to send a King from David's family. Thank You that Jesus, the true Son of David, gave His life for me, and that You raised Him from the dead. Forgive me, and give me a seat at Your table. I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I want Him to be my King forever. In Jesus' name, amen.*

If You Just Said Yes

Tell someone. A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

Read the real thing. Read 2 Samuel 7 and 12, then Psalm 51, David's prayer of repentance, and Luke 1.

Find your people. Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught and Jesus is honored. Ask about being baptized.

Find a Nathan. Everyone needs someone who loves them enough to tell them the truth. Find a wise friend or mentor who will, and listen when they do.

Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Keep asking. Keep reading. 2 Samuel doesn't hide anything, and you don't have to either. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if 2 Samuel is right, the God who kept His promise to a deeply flawed king is still keeping His promises, and there is still a seat at His table for you.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to his Kingdom.

Luke 1:32–33 (WEB)