

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 1

August 4, 2024

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

"How the mighty have fallen." 2 Samuel 1 opens in the aftermath of Saul's death and David's victory over the Amalekites. We read first, ironically, of an Amalekite who brings news to David of Israel's defeat at the hands of the Philistines and of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David's anguish shows his genuine sorrow when he and his men mourn, weep, and fast for Saul, Jonathan, and the house of Israel. David ordered the killing of the Amalekite who deceitfully and dubiously implicated himself in Saul's death. David's beautiful lamentation depicts the heartbreak he felt over Saul and Jonathan and his elegy memorialized their importance in Israel's national story.

DISCUSS

1. The accounting of Saul's life can be a warning to us. He failed as Israel's king and suffered the just punishment of God because he "did not obey the voice of the LORD" (1 Sam. 28:18). He was a king "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), just what the people "asked for" (1 Sam. 8:19). On a scale of one to ten, rate your desire for the things of God and his will to be done in your life versus the things of the world and your will to be done in your life. Share your self-assessment. What could move the needle on your spiritual fervency?
2. How does the Amalekite's account of Saul's death vary from 1 Samuel 31? How do we explain these discrepancies? What do you believe the Amalekite's intentions were? Have you ever done something wrong you thought would be to your advantage only to suffer terrible consequences as a result? How did God use this in your life?
3. To say David's relationship with Saul was complex would be an understatement, and yet David lamented Saul's death with surprisingly gracious words. Is there anyone in your life with whom you have a complex relationship? What would it look like for you to extend grace to them as Jesus has extended grace to us? David speaks well of Saul despite Saul's obvious flaws and wrongs committed against David. What redeeming qualities does this person in your life possess that you can affirm and thank God for?
4. The grief David expresses in this chapter is sincere and deep. No doubt the loss of Jonathan was especially painful. And yet David expressed his grief using the prayer language of lamentation. Are you grieving a loss or trial in your life? Consider expressing it using the model described in Pastor Mark's book *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*: TURN to God in prayer, COMPLAIN about the pain you feel, ASK God for help and healing, TRUST God to work good from your pain. Share your lamentation with a friend or your small group.

PRAY

1. Praise God for his righteousness and just punishment of evil.
2. Ask God to expose unrighteousness in your life and grant increasing sanctification.
3. Ask God to help you desire his will above worldly influence and success.
4. Ask God to help you love people with whom you have a complex relationship.

5. Pray for people in your life who are grieving.
6. Thank God that he hears our most pain-filled prayers.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday's sermon, read 2 Samuel 2-3. Pray for the Spirit's help in understanding the text. Make a list of ways the stories in these chapters relate to the gospel.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 2-3

August 11, 2024

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

David has completed his period of mourning, and his reign begins in earnest in Judah. He was king in Judah for seven years. Yet, his complete ascension as king of all Israel would take time. The only way to gain the throne was in obedience to the Lord. David “inquired” of the Lord and was told to “go up” to Hebron. Upon arrival, David was anointed king over the house of Judah. In Hebron, David continued to trust in the Lord and to inquire of the Lord as he made decisions. But Abner, the leader of Saul’s army (1 Samuel 14:50), refused to accept Saul’s kingship had ended. His installation of Saul’s remaining son Ish-bosheth resulted in heartache and continued bloodshed. David had to make complex political decisions during the civil war to gain the throne.

DISCUSS

1. Verse 1 highlights a contrast between David and Saul. When Saul inquired of the Lord (1 Sam. 28:6), he received no answer. But David receives an answer. Time and again in the books of Samuel, we see David refuse to take matters into his own hands and attempt to elevate himself to the throne. He trusted God to fulfill his promise, and even here when it seems like the time has come, he still seeks the Lord’s affirmation. Are there circumstances in your life for which you need guidance or affirmation from the Lord?
2. In verse 6 David prays that the Lord would show “steadfast love” to the men of Jabesh-Gilead. These are Israelites east of the Jordan who were loyal to Saul (1 Sam. 11) and risked their lives to give him a proper burial (1 Sam. 31). Does it seem surprising that David, God’s king, would vow to show “steadfast love” to people who were technically his enemies? How is this a picture of Jesus, the Son of David, who showed “steadfast love” to his enemies?
3. Verse 1 in chapter 3 serves as a theme verse for much of what happens in the first few chapters of 2 Samuel. David grew stronger and stronger because he was the man after God’s own heart. He wasn’t perfect, but he knew himself as chosen by God and a recipient of God’s grace (2 Sam. 6:21-23). In what ways are you presently growing stronger and stronger in understanding and living out your Christian identity as a child of God chosen by grace?
4. Why do you think Abner, despite knowing of God’s promise to David (3:9), set up Ish-bosheth as king of Israel? Why do you think he took one of Saul’s concubines as his wife? Why do you think he went over to David after having led the war against David’s house (3:1)? Does Abner really desire to serve King David, or does he just want to accrue power and position? In what ways are we susceptible to Abner-like motives?
5. In 3:22-26, why do you think Joab took matters into his own hands and murdered Abner? What were his motives? What seems to be the narrator’s opinion of Joab’s actions in chapter 3? How did David respond? What principles from these verses can be applied toward our own human disputes?

PRAY

1. Praise God for his faithfulness to his Word and fulfillment of all his promises.
2. Confess ways we are like Abner (power hungry) and Joab (vengeful).
3. Thank God for displaying his steadfast love and forgiveness to us in Jesus.
4. Ask God for help in making significant decisions in your life.
5. Pray that your walk with Jesus will grow stronger and stronger daily, weekly, etc.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday's sermon, read 2 Samuel 4-5. Meditate on the text by answering the following question: "How does this text speak to my current issue or problem?"

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 4-5

August 18, 2024

By Mitch DePoy, Pastor of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

In 2 Samuel 4-5, Saul's son Ish-bosheth, king of Israel, is murdered in his sleep by two of his kinsmen from the tribe of Benjamin. The violent scoundrels gruesomely carry his head to David in Hebron, who does not respond kindly to their vengeance. Nevertheless, God uses this unrighteous act to open the way for his people to be unified and David to become king. Despite being richly blessed, hints in the text remind us that David is deeply flawed. On our side of the cross, we understand that our hope is not in an earthly king or kingdom; it's in a heavenly one.

DISCUSS

1. In chapter 4, Rekab and Baanah use unrighteous means to usher in David's kingdom. Conversely, David won't take the kingdom but trusts God to give it to him. In what ways are you tempted to use unrighteous means for seemingly good ends? What promises do you need to trust God to fulfill in your life?
2. In chapter 5, the elders of Israel respond to the word of God (3:17) and make David their king. They recognize David as one from their own family (5:1) who saves them from their enemies (5:2), serves God as their shepherd (5:2), and makes a covenant with them (5:3). How do these verses point us to the gospel? How do they speak to us regarding Jesus's worthiness to be Lord of our lives? Is there an area of your life that is resistant to his Lordship?
3. In taking Jerusalem, David succeeds where the Israelites failed (Josh. 15:63), and he rids his kingdom of opposition to his rule (5:6). In what ways did Jesus succeed where Israel failed? Are there any failures in your life that are holding you back from following Jesus? How does Jesus's work on the cross (Heb. 12:1-2) and defeat of evil and shame (Col. 2:15) inform your faith in response?
4. David's taking of many wives (5:13-16) is an ominous sign for OT readers who would have recalled Deuteronomy 17:17. Despite its glories, David's kingship and kingdom are deeply flawed, pointing us to the need for hope in an eternal king and kingdom. Read Revelation 21:1-4 as a group and share with one another how future hope speaks to a present challenge in your life.

PRAY

1. Praise God for his sovereignty—that he can use even unrighteous deeds for kingdom ends.
2. Praise God as father and Jesus as brother, Savior, and shepherd.
3. Ask the Spirit to give faith in God's promises and obedience to God's Word.
4. Pray for those in your group or life who need kingdom hope in a present challenge.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday's sermon, read 2 Samuel 6 and pray consistently for a renewed reverence for God's holiness in your life and in the lives of your family, church, community, and nation.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 6

August 25, 2024

By Mitch DePoy, Pastor of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

David rallies the people to bring the ark up to Jerusalem from Kiriath Jerim where it had been since the Philistines returned it in 1 Samuel 6. Unfortunately, the first attempt ends in disaster, as Uzzah irreverently touches it and is struck dead by God. David and the people learn from this, however; and the next attempt is completed according to God's standards and with reverential and joyful worship. Not everyone is enthusiastic, though, as Saul's daughter Michal rebukes her husband, David, for humbling himself in a manner she deemed undignified for royalty. But David rightly cares more about spirituality than status. The main themes in this chapter are God's holiness and man's right response of humble fear and love.

DISCUSS

1. The ark represented the Lord's nature and presence among his people (v. 2). David and the people were right to seek God's presence in verses 1-4 by bringing the ark to Jerusalem, but they failed to approach God according to the standards of his Word. Read the following verses and observe what errors were made: Exodus 25:13-15; Numbers 4:5-6, 15; and Deuteronomy 10:8. Considering this, how committed or casual is your own approach to God's Word in this season? Discuss with some strategies for kindling a love for Bible consumption and obedience.
2. Why did God strike Uzzah dead for his seemingly helpful act? What clues in the text suggest Uzzah should have known better? What happened the last time people treated the ark in a casual manner (1 Sam. 6:19-21)? In what ways do you see irreverence toward God in the world? In the church? In your own life? How do we cultivate reverence for God?
3. David asks a very important question in verse 9: "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" This is a similar question asked by the residents of Beth-Shemesh: "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God?" (1 Sam. 6:20). Reflect on verses 12-15. What can we observe in these verses about the proper way to experience and enjoy God's presence? What did the people do differently than before? How do these verses point us to Jesus?
4. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Is fear ever appropriate in a relational context? Why or why not? Are there other ways along with fear that the Bible encourages us to relate to God?
5. At the end of the chapter, Michal despised David in her heart and rebuked him for dressing and acting in way that was uncharacteristic of a king. Michal thinks kings should seek honor for themselves, while David seeks to honor the Lord even if it means looking foolish. Have you ever been criticized or opposed for taking God too seriously? Share your experiences and encourage one another from Matthew 5:11-12.

PRAY

1. Praise God for his holiness.
2. Praise Jesus for coming to us and making a way for us to stand before the Lord.

3. Confess ways you are tempted to seek status over spirituality.
4. Ask God to teach you to fear him and love him.
5. Pray for people in your life who do not fear the Lord.

PREPARE

Before Sunday, read 2 Samuel 7 and make a list of how God's promise to David connects to and builds upon his promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 17:1-8).

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 7

1 & 2 SAMUEL

September 1, 2024

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

OVERVIEW

The Davidic covenant explained in 2 Samuel 7 is one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament. Here, God lays out his plan for mankind's redemption through the house of David. God connects the covenants he made with both Abraham and Moses and funnels the hopes of these promises through the Davidic dynasty. The Davidic covenant is an expansion of God's previous promises to Israel and part of his purpose to provide redemption to the world through Christ Jesus. In Matthew 1:1, we see the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, who ultimately builds God's temple.

DISCUSS

1. Verse 1 begins with the fulfillment of God's promise to give his people "rest" in the land (Deut. 12:10). David wanted to perform a grand gesture for God in response by building him a "house." Nathan, the prophet, agrees with the sentiments (v. 3), but the Lord ultimately tells them both no (vv. 4-7). God has other ideas for this "house" of David. Has God ever closed a door in your own life regarding plans you had for him? What good and better plan did he ultimately have for you? Should Nathan have offered counsel to David in verse 3 without inquiring of God? Have you done this before? How did it turn out?
2. Consider God's words to David through Nathan (vv. 5-17):
 - a. God's words to David echo words to Abraham (2 Sam. 7:9; Gen. 12:1-3) and Moses (2 Sam. 7:10; Exod. 15:13-18). Why would this be significant?
 - b. What does God mean when he says, "I will build you a house" in verse 11? What kind of house is God talking about?
 - c. In verses 12-14, God refers to a singular person who will build a house for God and whom God will discipline when he commits iniquity. Who is God referring to here? What clues in these verses suggest both a near and far fulfillment such that another person is also in view?
 - d. Why would it be significant that the descendant of David whose throne is established forever is called a "son" of God and "offspring" of David? Read Genesis 3:15 and Romans 1:1-5 for clues. How does Jesus fulfill God's promises in verses 5-17?
3. In verses 18-29, David prays to God in response to the revelation he had been given. His prayer consists of praise of God for his works on behalf of his people and supplication of God to fulfill the promises he had made. What works has God done in your life for which he deserves praise? What promises are you presently asking God to yet fulfill?

PRAY

1. Pray with an open Bible and take the words that God has said or promised and confirm it back to God as a prayer to him.
2. Cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving by thanking God for your past blessings, your present life, and his future promises.
3. Thank God for his extravagant grace that is so hard to comprehend. Thank him for his love for you, which is the reason for everything we have.
4. Praise the Lord for what he has done and what he is like.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 8-10 and reflect on God's steadfast love in your life. Make a list of ways he has shown you undeserved kindness.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 8-10

September 8, 2024

By Jane Schuth, Women's Ministries Coordinator

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

David goes on the offensive and doubles the footprint of the Israelites' territory as he is victorious in battles in every direction. A personal side of David is revealed when he offers kindness to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, and to Hanun, son of Nahash the king of the Ammonites. There is a stark difference in how his kindness is received.

DISCUSS

1. Chapter 8 begins with "After this." What is this referring to? How might David have been feeling as he goes into battle? Prior to this, David's battle approach was primarily defensive, but now he is going on the offensive. Why might this be? What promises are coming to fruition? In what ways is God calling you to "go" in response to his promises?
2. How is God influencing this time of war? How would you characterize David's response to God's favor in verses 4, 7, 11, and 15? In what ways are you using God's gifts to bring honor to him? In what ways are you administering justice and equity in your own areas of leadership?
3. The Hebrew word *hesed* is found throughout the Old Testament. It refers to God's love, faithfulness, and undeserved favor upon his people. The word is translated as kindness (9:1) and loyalty (10:2) in these chapters. Why is David's love towards Mephibosheth surprising? In what ways is his kindness a picture of God's grace towards us in Christ? Read Isaiah 35:3-6 and Matt 11:2-6 for help. Are there people in your life that you need to model *hesed* love to? What are the barriers to both loving and obeying?
4. Compare and contrast Mephibosheth's response to David's kindness with Hanun's response in chapter 10. What is the result for each, and what do these chapters teach us about grace, repentance, and judgment? Read Romans 2:1-5 for help.
5. In 10:11-12, Joab encourages Abashai before their battle with the Ammonites. He appeals to his brother to be strong in the face of fear and to trust in the Lord's sovereignty. How is God calling you to trust him and obey in circumstances that seem overwhelming?

PRAY

1. Thank God for his attributes of love, kindness, protection, and loyalty.
2. Ask the Lord to help you live out Micah 6:8, to "... do justice, and to love mercy (*hesed*), and to walk humbly with your God."
3. Thank God for being with us in our "battles" against our enemies (challenging people, sinful behavior patterns, spiritual opposition, etc.).
4. Ask the Lord to help you identify people toward whom you can intentionally grow in loving in a way that models Christ's love.

PREPARE

Ask the Lord for fresh eyes as you read 2 Samuel 11-12. How could the events described in chapters 8-10 affect the actions of David in chapters 11-12? Reflect on the way Saul reacted to his own sin in 1 Samuel and how David reacts in these chapters.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 11-12

September 15

By Mitch DePoy, Pastor of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

Just when David reaches the high point of his royal success, he sins in the most grievous way. He commits adultery with Bathsheba and attempts to avoid public disgrace by having her husband murdered. Though he tried to hide his sin, it wasn't hidden from the Lord. God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, and the consequences he pronounces are severe. Astonishingly, however, God "puts away" David's sin and does not remove his steadfast love from David's house.

DISCUSS

1. In 11:1-5, the text tells us that David "saw" (v. 2) that Bathsheba was beautiful and then he "took" her (v. 4). This is the same language when Eve ate the fruit in Genesis 3:6. In both instances, David and Eve were ruled by desire rather than by God and his word. What goes through the human mind and heart at the point of resisting or succumbing to sinful desire? What lies are believed? How is sin rationalized? How can we resist it in these moments?
2. What begins with a lustful glance (v. 2) leads to an inappropriate inquiry (v. 3), an illicit meeting (v. 4), adultery/abuse (v. 4), scandal (v. 5), deceit (v. 6-12), drunkenness (v. 13), murder (vv. 14-16), loss of innocent life (v. 17), and coldhearted indifference (v. 25). How does this change your perception of sin? Does sin always have consequences? Can the consequences be avoided? If so, how?
3. In chapter 12, Nathan confronts David with his sin. Despite the deceitfulness of David's heart, God mercifully sent his word into David's life, exposed his sin, and led him to repentance. Has this ever happened in your life? What was hard about having your sin exposed? Why are you thankful for it? As appropriate, share with your group.
4. Consider 1 Samuel 12:13. What penalty did David deserve for his sin? What does it mean that the Lord "put away" David's sin? Does this mean David's sin did not have consequences? What does it mean, and why is this good news? How spectacular and undeserved is God's grace in the face of such spectacular failure.
5. The circumstances in chapter 11 are so spiritually dark that there is no mention of God, except for the last verse concerning his displeasure. Compare and contrast David's actions in chapter 11 to 12:13-25. What is different about David? What has brought about this change? What does it look like when people truly repent of sin? As appropriate, share examples from your own life.

PRAY

1. As appropriate, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5:16).
2. Pray Psalm 19:12-13 together. Ask God to reveal and forgive your hidden faults. Ask him to free you from the power of sins you continue to commit willfully.

3. Praise God for his spectacular grace and faithfulness to his promises. Thank God for showing us steadfast love and for using us despite our failures.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 13-14. In addition, revisit 2 Samuel 12:7-12. What connection is there between David's sin and the actions of his sons Amnon and Absalom?

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 13-14

September 22

1 & 2 SAMUEL

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

OVERVIEW

Some stories in the Bible make us weep. Tamar's horrible abuse at the hands of her brother is one of them. The litany of sins in these chapters is heartbreaking—rape, vengeance, betrayal, deceit, and more. The resulting family strife could rival any soap opera. By the end of these chapters, an innocent woman will be permanently shamed, one of David's sons will die, and the other will be exiled. And despite the connection between his own indiscretions and the events of this chapter, David does little to promote justice and righteousness. This story has much to teach us about the horror of sin and its consequences. And yet the promise and hope of grace still stands.

We recognize the realities of this chapter may be painful for some to read and discuss. Share with your group only as much as you sense the Spirit leading. Talk privately with your group leader, a trusted Christian friend, or counselor if you need healing.

DISCUSS

1. David's firstborn son, Amnon, develops a perverse "love" for his half-sister, Tamar. With the help of a "friend" he plans an elaborate scheme to get her alone where he does the unthinkable and rapes her. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? Describe how this story makes you feel.
2. What connections might you make between the events of 2 Samuel 13-14 and the consequences for David's sin foretold in 2 Samuel 12:10-14? This story and other passages (Jer. 32:18) teach the reality of generational sin. In what ways have you "inherited" sin from your family of origin? If you are a parent, in what ways have you or are you passing on sin and its consequences to your children? How can wounds from the past be healed and the cycle of sin be broken?
3. What is David's reaction to hearing of Tamar's rape? How do you think he should have responded? Why do you think David is reluctant to deal justly with any of his children in these chapters? In what ways does your own past inhibit you from confronting sin in others?
4. Absalom seethes and plots revenge for two years. Are his actions against Amnon justified? Why or why not? How should a Christian respond when tempted to seek vengeance? How have you applied Romans 12:17-31 in your own life? Why is God's vengeance a good thing?
5. Amnon was David's firstborn. After his murder, Absalom becomes heir to David's throne. Why is it problematic for Absalom to remain exiled? What is Joab's plan in chapter 14 to ensure an orderly succession? How does David's treatment of Absalom (v. 24, 28) lead to more problems? Can you think of examples from your own life when failing to address a problem made things worse?

PRAY

1. Praise God for his promise to exact perfect vengeance upon all evil.
2. Praise God that he “devises means so that the banished one may not remain an outcast” (14:14).
3. Ask God for wisdom and courage to confront sin in yourself and others.
4. Pray for the “Tamars” in your life who have been victims of abuse. Ask God to bring about justice and healing.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 15. Reflect on what it says about Absalom in light of Jesus’s teaching about leaders in his kingdom in Mark 10:42-45.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 15-16

October 13

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

The consequences of David's sin persist as seen through his family's continued dysfunction. Absalom is portrayed much differently in 2 Samuel than his father, King David. Absalom drove the chariots and judged at the gate. But he did not do any of the things that the Lord empowered King David to do. He fought no battles, nor did he give wise counsel like his father. Absalom never earned the right to sit in the chariot. Absalom's coup and attempted civil war against King David is more than a political act. He seeks the hearts of the people over his father and over the Lord who anointed David as king. Absalom's rebellion is in direct contrast to the Lord's plan which was for his rule and blessing to come through his anointed and appointed king. David rules under the authority of the Lord, and his job is to point the people back to the Lord and remind them of who God is.

David faced opposition for two very long portions of his life (1 Sam. 18-2 Sam. 4 and 2 Sam. 15-20), partly due to his own sin (2 Sam. 7:14). Yet his sufferings ultimately point to the sufferings of Jesus, who was *not* disciplined for his own sin but for ours. Thanks be to God.

READ

Assign smaller sections within 2 Samuel 15-16 for group members to read individually. Have each person summarize his or her section so that the whole group hears the entire storyline.

DISCUSS

1. Reflect on Absalom's actions in 15:1-12 in light of Jesus's teachings on leadership in Mark 10:42-45. Avoid turning your group discussion into a political debate but consider ways in which Absalom resembles so-called "great ones" of our day. How should disciples of Jesus lead in our various spheres of influence?
2. The words "passed by" or "passed on" occur seven times in vv. 18-24. The same verb occurs nineteen times in Joshua 3-4. The inspired narrator purposefully links this story to Israel's entrance into the promised land. This time, however, the movement is away from the city to the east. Why would this be significant? Where else in Scripture do we see people judged and exiled to the east? Though David was forgiven for his sin (2 Sam. 12:13), he still faced the consequences (2 Sam. 12:9-15). Has this ever happened in your own life? How does this reality make you feel about sin in your own life or the lives of others?

3. Read John 18:1-6 and Luke 22:39-48. What parallels do you see in this story with 2 Samuel 15? Why would the Gospels purposefully allude to the suffering of David? While David's suffering and betrayal is due to the Lord's righteous judgment, Jesus, the greater David, endured God's judgment so sinners could be forgiven, find favor in the eyes of the Lord, and be brought back into the Lord's presence. Reflect on this together.
4. Consider each of the people in chapters 15-16 and their response to King David. How would you summarize the response/posture toward David of each of the following people: Ittai, Zadok and Abiathar, Hushai (15:16:16-19), Ziba (in light of 2 Sam. 19), Shimei, and Abishai. In what ways do these people picture different ways people in the world respond to Jesus? Which of these people do you most want to be or not be like? Why?
5. Ahithophel was likely Bathsheba's grandfather (2 Sam. 11:3, 23:34). Why would it be significant that Ahithophel encouraged Absalom to commit such a despicable act "on the roof" (see 2 Sam. 11:2)? How did Absalom's act fulfill God's Word in 2 Samuel 12:11-12? How does the knowledge that Absalom's evil occurred within the sovereign foreknowledge and purposes of God serve as a comfort in the midst of a present life circumstance?

PRAY

1. Praise God for the wonders of his sovereignty even over human evil.
2. Confess any sinful ambitions to the Lord. Ask God to shape you into the person and leader he intends you to be.
3. Praise God for disciplining the children whom he loves.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 17-18. Reflect particularly on 2 Samuel 15:31 and 2 Samuel 17:14. List reasons why God's providence, even when unseen, is a comfort to you.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 17-18

October 20

By Mitch DePoy, Pastor of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

As chapter 17 begins, Absalom's rebellion against his father, David, has been irreversibly solidified with assistance of Ahithophel. David and his followers are on the run, but his friend Hushai remains in Jerusalem to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel. This is exactly what happens, as Hushai convinces Absalom to reject Ahithophel's "good counsel," creating an opportunity for David to organize a defense against Absalom's army. When Absalom attacks David near Mahanaim, his forces are routed by David's men and the prince himself faces divine and poetic justice at the hands of Joab. What should be a day of rejoicing, however, results only in sorrow as David weeps for his son.

READ

Assign smaller sections within 2 Samuel 17-18 for group members to read individually. Have each person summarize his or her section so that the whole group hears the entire storyline.

DISCUSS

1. Compare and contrast Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom (vv. 1-4) with Hushai's (vv. 5-14). What does this exercise, along with Ahithophel's suicide in verse 23, reveal regarding Ahithophel's true motives? What did Ahithophel ultimately desire? How are we susceptible to similar motives in our own lives?
2. Read 15:31 and 17:14 as a group and then consider the events of 17:15-27. Do the characters seem to be aware of what God's will is? What evidence of God's providential provision do we see in these verses? Has God ever shown up and provided for you in a troublesome time?
3. What is ironic in 18:9-18? What symbolism do you notice regarding what happens to Absalom, particularly in light of 2 Samuel 14:26, Deuteronomy 21:23, and 1 Kings 1:32-33? What thoughts come to mind as you consider God's judgment on those who oppose his anointed king? What response does this stir in your heart?
4. Why do you think David seems to be so consumed by grief over Absalom that it clouds his vision of God's own will (17:14) and the good of David's own kingdom? Read 2 Samuel 12:10-11 for help. In what ways does guilt keep you from moving forward in your life? What does the gospel have to say about this?

PRAY

1. Praise God for his sovereignty and justice.
2. Confess ways you desire control and influence more than what God desires.
3. Thank God for his grace in saving us from judgment.

4. Pray for those in your group who are weighed down by grief and/or guilt.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 19-21. In what ways does David's restored kingdom fall short of the glory of God?

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 19-21

October 27

By Mitch DePoy, Pastor of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

This section of Scripture features the return of David as king of Israel following the rebellion of Absalom. In chapter 19, arrangements are made to return David to the throne in Jerusalem. David makes efforts to reunify his kingdom, replacing his own general Joab with the rebel commander Amasa, demonstrating leniency toward Shimei, restoring Mephibosheth, and rewarding Barzillai. Chapter 20 shows that not all is well, however. As resentment between Israel and Judah deepens, another rebellion breaks out under Sheba, and Joab (again) defies his king in the name of vengeance. While David's former kingdom was characterized by justice and equity, this one raises many questions. Chapter 20 begins the conclusion to the books of 1 and 2 Samuel with two stories offering some hope. God's judgment on the nation for a broken covenant is appeased through an atoning sacrifice and his anointed king keeping a covenant. Victories over powerful enemies offer hope that the ultimate enemy (Satan) will be defeated.

READ

Assign smaller sections within 2 Samuel 19-21 for group members to read individually. Have each person summarize his or her section so that the whole group hears the entire storyline.

DISCUSS

1. In 19:8b-33, David returns as king of Israel. Consider his treatment of Amasa (v. 13), Shimei (vv. 22-23), and Ziba/Mephibosheth (vv. 29-30). What do we know about these people from previous chapters? Why would David show them leniency? Does he treat them fairly? Is the picture of David positive or negative in this chapter? Are you dealing with any conflicts in your own life?
2. Consider Joab in chapter 20. How are his actions similar in this chapter to previous episodes (2 Sam. 3, 18)? Is Joab loyal to David? What motivates his actions? How does 1 Kings 2:5 inform your view of Joab? Are there any ways that you see yourself in Joab?
3. Compare 2 Samuel 8:15-18, which summarizes David's kingdom at its high point, with 2 Samuel 20:23-26, the summary of David's restored kingdom. What differences do you notice? What picture do we get of the restored kingdom as compared to the prior kingdom? How will the coming kingdom of Christ be different than David's restored kingdom in 2 Samuel 19-20?

4. Chapter 21:1-14 is a flashback of some prior time in David's reign. Why would God's judgment be upon the people for Saul's actions related to the Gibeonites? Read Joshua 9:19-20 for help. How is atonement made to appease God's wrath? Why is Mephibosheth, grandson of Saul, spared? Discuss ways in which this story has similarities to the gospel (i.e. a covenant is broken and sons die to appease God's wrath; God's anointed keeps a covenant to save a son that should have died).

PRAY

1. Praise God for his fullness of both love and justice.
2. Confess ways you are harboring resentment in your heart.
3. Thank God that his gospel creates reconciliation between former enemies.
4. Pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read 2 Samuel 22-23. Write down phrases from David's prayers that stand out to you. Pray those words for yourself and others.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 22-23

November 3

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

1 & 2 SAMUEL

OVERVIEW

2 Samuel 22-23 contain the final song and words of King David—the epilogue of his life. The books of Samuel provide a full picture of the man after God's own heart. He was a warrior, leader, poet, musician, worshipper of Yahweh, and Israel's greatest king. He was also a sinner, like us. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel point us to the true and ultimate King of Israel, King Jesus.

READ

Assign smaller sections within 2 Samuel 22-23 for group members to read individually. Have each person summarize his or her section so that everyone hears the whole text.

DISCUSS

1. In 22:2-3, David speaks about God from firsthand knowledge. He truly knows the God of Israel and the song he writes is a personal one. Describe and discuss who God is to David. As Christians, we can relate to these titles for God as well. How has God demonstrated who he is in your own life?
2. In 22:21-25, it may be hard to see David as righteous given the situations of sin in 2 Samuel. Discuss instances from 1 & 2 Samuel when David was sinless or innocent. How did David demonstrate righteousness in these situations? How did God reward him? What lessons can we learn for our own lives?
3. Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2 foreshadows many of the themes in the books of Samuel and ultimately what God will do through Christ. What links do you see between Hannah's prayer; David's words in 2 Samuel 22-23; and Mary's song, The Magnificat, in Luke 1:46-56? How did you see some of the themes in these prayers play out in the books of Samuel? How were they fulfilled in Christ? What goes through your heart and mind as you contemplate the reality that "his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true" (22:31)?
4. Read 23:1-7 again. Discuss the ways Jesus fulfills this prayer. How are these words an encouragement to you knowing that we have a Messiah and Savior, Jesus.
5. Chapter 23 concludes with a list of thirty-seven of David's mighty men. Asahel and Abishai, Joab's brothers, are included. Why do you think Joab himself is not? We also see in the list Uriah the Hittite. Why is this significant? Why do you think the narrator puts a list of David's mighty men towards the end of these books?

PRAY

1. Lord, I love you because . . .
2. Lord, I experienced your deliverance when . . .
3. Thank you, Lord, for . . .
4. Lord, please . . .

PREPARE

Before Sunday, read 2 Samuel 24 and consider how God's wrath and his mercy relate to one another.

THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN

2 Samuel 24

November 10

1 & 2 SAMUEL

By Kimberly Miller, Director of Groups & Classes

OVERVIEW

2 Samuel 24 is a fascinating chapter in the Bible and the final story about King David in the books of Samuel. This chapter serves as a reminder of the consequences of rebellion, but it also shows how God responds to sincere repentance. David teaches us to acknowledge the mistakes we make and to repent. While the consequence of the plague that sweeps over Israel is horrific, we do see David interceding on their behalf. We see God's wrath but also his grace and mercy as he responds to David's contrition. God is gracious, providing the means for his wrath to be propitiated in order that sinners might be forgiven.

READ

Have volunteers read a few verses each from 2 Samuel 24. Ask a volunteer to summarize the story.

DISCUSS

1. God was angry with Israel and incited David to conduct a census. Why was God angry with Israel? Could the people's actions in 15:13 and 20:2 have something to do with it? Why did God hold David responsible for something he commanded him to do? Does God need to explain the reasons for his wrath?
2. David (and Joab) both see the wrong in conducting the census, although the narrator does not explicitly say why it was wrong. Why do you think David was wrong? Was it pride? Lack of faith? Do you ever find yourself depending on your own strength?
3. How do we reconcile the difference between 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1? 2 Samuel 24:1 says that God incited David to conduct the census while 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that Satan incited David. How can both be true? Where else in the Bible do we see God allowing evil but using it for good? How would you respond to an unbelieving friend who says, "I can't believe in a God who allows evil"?
4. When David realized his sin, he confessed to God. David was given a choice of three punishments. What were the punishments from which David could choose? All the options were horrific. Reflect on David's choice. What does this teach us about God's character?
5. Seeing the angel strike down the people caused David to have deep regret. What does this story say about the theme of repentance? How can we apply this to our own lives? Have you ever faced consequences for sin that you knew were from the Lord? How did you respond?

6. The prophet Gad instructs David to build an altar on Araunah's threshing floor. David buys the threshing floor and builds the altar, offering a sacrifice ending the plague. The threshing floor of Araunah (also known as Ornan) becomes the site where Solomon builds the temple (2 Chron. 3:1). How does this story relate to the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7) and the new covenant in Christ?

PRAY

1. Praise God for his sovereignty over evil and that all things work together for good.
2. Pray a prayer of lament over evil you or someone else is currently experiencing.
3. Thank God for revealing sinful and prideful inclinations of the heart.
4. Praise Jesus for becoming the sacrifice that ended God's wrath toward his people.

PREPARE

Before Sunday, review what you have learned about God, mankind, Christ, and yourself through the 1 & 2 Samuel sermon series. Pray about what God would have you do in light of the truth he has revealed.