

The Kingdom Reaffirmed to David

Lesson Scope: 2 Samuel 19 and 20

Lesson Focus

Absalom's death left Israel in a state of frustration and guilt. The majority had forsaken their aging but seasoned king, who had delivered them from their enemies, to follow this popular young rebel. The insurrection had been crushed in the wood of Ephraim, and Absalom had met death at the hand of Joab and his armor-bearers.

When the messenger brought the news of Absalom's death, David responded with uncontrolled weeping and mourning, which confused his own loyal subjects. Joab's harsh rebuke moved David to take redemptive action. More bloodshed followed, but David wisely saw God's hand in the situation and did not press the people into subjection. He allowed the people to step out and reaffirm their loyalty to him.

God's people need stable leadership. Their varied needs and changing circumstances call for leaders who set a good example and give clear direction.

This lesson should build forbearance toward our leaders in the complex situations they face. The wisdom David showed at this time in giving opportunity for his people to express right loyalties instead of using force to make them bow to his authority. He won their respect.

The goal of this lesson is not to judge our leaders, but to help each member be a humble, supportive individual who makes the leaders' work easier. Let us be Barzillai's, who see needs and have all their goods at the Lord's disposal. Let us be Mephibosheths, who, even when wronged, are not overly concerned about their own affairs so long as the kingdom of God is prospering.

Lesson Aim: To identify some challenges that confront leaders.

Theme Verse: 2 Timothy 4:2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Lesson Text

Receiving Criticism

2 Samuel 19:1 ¹ And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 Samuel 19:5-8 ⁵ And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; ⁶ In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. ⁷ Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now. ⁸ Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

Discerning Motives

2 Samuel 19:16 ¹⁶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

2 Samuel 19:19 ¹⁹ And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

2 Samuel 19:23-24 ²³ Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him. ²⁴ And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace.

2 Samuel 19:29 ²⁹ And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

2 Samuel 19:33 ³³ And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 19:39 ³⁹ And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

Dealing With Threats

2 Samuel 20:1 ¹ And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2 Samuel 20:4-6 ⁴ Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present. ⁵ So Amasa went to assemble *the men of* Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him. ⁶ And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

Delegating Responsibility

2 Samuel 20:23-26 ²³ Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites: ²⁴ And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder: ²⁵ And Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests: ²⁶ And Ira also the Jairite *was* a chief ruler about David.

Questions for Study

Receiving Criticism

1. Evaluate Joab's concern and his manner of sharing it.
2. In what ways was David's response wise?

Discerning Motives

3. What basis did David have for forgiving wrongs rather than meting out justice?
4. How can leaders encourage the faithful without showing favoritism?
5. What can a leader do to nurture peace?

Dealing With Threats

6. Based on 20:1-6, what kind of transgression calls for immediate action?

Delegating Responsibility

7. What is the value of giving clearly defined responsibilities to individuals?

Analyzing the Passage

Absalom's rebellion and its aftermath seem clearly tied to God's judgment on David's sin (chapter 11). "The sword shall never depart from thine house" (2 Samuel 12:10-12).

The general tone of these chapters is one of rampant confusion and suspicion. (See 19:3, 9, 41-43; 20:2.) This helps explain some of Joab's actions, but even those actions were not always consistent.

"The king ... sat in the gate" (19:8). A city gate was a place of commerce and social interchange. David was making himself available and giving his people opportunity to communicate with him.

Shimei (19:16) had cursed David as he fled from Absalom (16:5-13). Now he makes a show of loyalty by hurrying to come along with the men of Judah, but his sincerity remains a question. Mephibosheth (19:24) had stayed behind when David fled Jerusalem, and Ziba had misrepresented him to David (16:1-4). Now as David returns, he meets Mephibosheth and learns the truth. Barzillai (19:33) was a very loyal subject and had provided sustenance to the king in exile (17:27-29).

Amasa (20:4) was the son of David's sister Abigail (1 Chronicles 2:15-17). He had served as Absalom's captain in the rebellion, but David had secretly set him over his own forces in Joab's place (19:13). Abishai (20:6) was Joab's brother, son of David's sister, Zeruah.

The Cherethites and Pelethites (executioners and couriers) were David's personal bodyguard (20:23).

Principles and Applications

Receiving Criticism

1. Leaders have the normal feelings of ordinary people (19:1). The brethren who understand this can sympathize with those who are over them and help to lighten their load. In addition, they will not be devastated if their leaders should fall short. David loved his son, but as a leader, he should not have allowed natural affection to blind him to the tragic effects of Absalom's self-will.

2. Leaders face the challenge of responding properly to hostile criticism (19:5). Not all will approve of the course of action leaders may choose to take. Some may respond with less than due respect. But a faithful leader recognizes that a critic does not always understand his own heart and strives to respond redemptively.

3. Humility allows the leader to accept advice on its own merits (19:7, 8).

It does not matter how great the personal faults or how little the experience of one's critic. "If the shoe fits, wear it" is a good rule to follow. A faithful leader does not respond with "Who does he think he is to tell me what to do?" Rather, he strives to sort out the good, if there is any, and let the rest fall to the ground.

4. Being available to their people requires special effort on the part of leaders (19:8). Pressing duties and church problems may incline them to withdraw into their own private world. But every leader must let his members know that he has time to listen and a personal interest in them.

Discerning Motives

5. Leaders set an example by readily forgiving personal wrongs against them (19:16, 19, 23). A leader has the power to crush or to lift those under his authority. Wise leaders will not use this power for vengeance or for personal advantage. Their spirit of grace and forgiveness sets the tone for interpersonal relationships throughout the group.

6. Resolving misunderstandings calls for impartiality and discernment (19:24, 29). It is often impossible to gather all the facts or to discover who is right or wrong. Many issues cannot be resolved without a word of authority. A fair and wise handling of such matters builds confidence and helps individuals lay down their grudges.

7. Alert leaders notice and encourage faithfulness in their people (19:33, 39). A good leader will not only look for problems but will also give appreciation where it is due, which helps his constituency to be more receptive to correction when it is needed. Spiritual people do not depend on compliments, because they serve the Lord out of love for Him. They may, however, grow "weary in well doing" if they do not feel support.

Dealing With Threats

8. Leaders face the challenge of deciding how and when to deal with problems (20:1, 4-6). Both acting too hastily and delaying too long will have a detrimental effect. The decision of who to involve or what action to take in a given situation certainly calls for consultation with other leaders and seeking divine direction.

Delegating Responsibility

9. The numerous details of administration call for constant oversight

(20:23-26). An established order of authority helps each member do his best in a smoothly-working brotherhood. By laying aside competition and carnal ambitions, faithful individuals can serve the Lord with joy in the beauty of holiness.

Important Teachings

1. Leaders have the normal feelings of ordinary people (19:1).
2. Leaders face the challenge of responding properly to hostile criticism (19:5).
3. Humility allows the leader to accept advice on its own merits (19:7, 8).
4. Being available to their people requires special effort on the part of leaders (19:8).
5. Leaders set an example by readily forgiving personal wrongs against them (19:16, 19, 23).
6. Resolving misunderstandings calls for impartiality and discernment (19:24, 29).
7. Alert leaders notice and encourage faithfulness in their people (19:33, 39).
8. Leaders face the challenge of deciding how and when to deal with problems (20:1, 4-6).
9. The numerous details of administration call for constant oversight (20:23-26).

Answers to Questions

1. Evaluate Joab's concern and his manner of sharing it.

Joab certainly had a legitimate concern, but his approach to David in his deep grief seems to have been totally devoid of compassion.

2. In what ways was David's response wise?

Despite Joab's tactless manner, David perceived that his advice was good. Joab helped him look past his immediate personal grief to the welfare of the nation. David exercised the virtues of humility and forbearance. As a result of following Joab's advice, the people rallied around their king again.

3. What basis did David have for forgiving wrongs rather than meting out justice?

David understood that the Lord had shown him great mercy in forgiving

his own sins. Why should he hastily judge another for a wrong committed against him personally?

4. How can leaders encourage the faithful without showing favoritism?

No doubt, every member in the church possesses some good quality or makes some contribution that is worthy of encouragement. Every member needs attention and support, but the weak and those with special struggles need more than others.

5. What can a leader do to nurture peace? A leader cannot just dismiss challenges and conflicts. He must be impartial when he is dealing with conflict. A leader needs to remember that both sides sincerely believe they are right. He will take time to discover truth and to listen to his constituency.

6. Based on 20:1-6, what kind of transgression calls for immediate action?

When blatant rebellion or a subtle spirit of anarchy is discovered, it must be exposed. Without prompt action, it will spread like leaven and take many others with it. This requires discernment of spirits and of individuals' direction of travel.

7. What is the value of giving clearly defined responsibilities to individuals?

Giving people clearly defined responsibilities, as David did, promotes order and maximizes the use of each person's talent. When confusion and duplication are kept to a minimum, good relationships are easier to maintain.

Summarizing the Lesson

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly" (Hebrews 13:17, 18).

Research Guide

1. Read the whole lesson scope and acquaint yourself with characters in the lesson and events that occurred before our lesson scope.
2. Read the following Scriptures related to leadership: Deuteronomy 17:14-20; Proverbs 25:1-7; 29:4, 14; 2 Corinthians 4:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.