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Discover Your Bible Series

Discover **2 SAMUEL**



LEADER GUIDE

LEADER GUIDE

Discover **2 SAMUEL**



by
Steven L. Petroelje



Grand Rapids, Michigan

*“The LORD himself will establish a house for you: . . .
I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own
flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. . . .
Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before
me; your throne will be established forever.”*

2 Samuel 7:11-16

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To the Leader

Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist you as a small group leader but not to substitute for your own work. As you prepare to lead each lesson, work first through the questions in the study guide. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage. Prepare thoroughly before leading each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to notes. This approach will free you to concentrate on leadership responsibilities, keep eye contact with group members, and listen carefully.

Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in terms of questions. As you prepare to lead a lesson, ask yourself questions and try to discover the answers yourself. This will prepare you to anticipate group members' questions and thus help others discover truths from God's Word.

Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the group discussion. Draw out positive contributions by asking questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions into smaller, concise ones. Also use questions to respond to wrong or problematic answers. If you learn to lead others to truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of persons who may not yet seem to be applying the truths you encounter together. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to people's hearts. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying the Word in your own heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

While giving people the time and space to apply biblical truths as the Spirit leads them, simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Questions for reflection at the end of each session invite everyone to take time for personal reflection and optional sharing. Try to offer at least a few minutes for reflection time toward the end of each lesson, and encourage group members to do follow-up reflection at home.

Leadership Training

If more than one group in your setting is using this Bible study, we strongly encourage leaders to meet regularly for discussion of the lessons, for prayer, and for mutual support.

If this study is being used in a Coffee Break Small Groups program, each leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook*, a basic "how-to" guide for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season.

Leaders will also find it helpful to attend a leadership training workshop in connection with small group ministry.

For more information,

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail smallgroups@crcna.org, or visit www.smallgroupministries.org
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Land of Israel in David's Day



Introduction

The book of 2 Samuel continues to chronicle the change of leadership in Israel from the period of the judges into the era of kings. The reign of the first king, Saul, was an example of having a king “such as all the other nations have” (1 Sam. 8:5), who served himself instead of being a leader “after [God’s] own heart” (13:14).

In 2 Samuel, we discover more about David and how he eventually becomes king, having been anointed many years earlier but also having to wait patiently to be crowned, with all Israel supporting him as their ruler chosen by God. Sadly, there is significant conflict and bloodshed before that time arrives.

Then, although David becomes one of Israel’s greatest kings, he also falls prey to lust and power, dishonoring God and his neighbor. Yet through it all, God is faithful. The Lord leans on David, who confesses his sins and seeks forgiveness. David’s lasting legacy is his enduring faith in the Lord. The closing chapters of David’s life include praise and gratitude, honoring the covenant Lord who is the one faithful King over all.

The main message of 2 Samuel reminds us that no earthly king can replace God or serve perfectly. God is and always will be the true King—and through David’s life and lineage, God brought amazing blessings for all nations, preparing the way for the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ, to offer us mercy, forgiveness, and eternal life. (See Gen. 12:2-3; Matt. 1; John 3:16.)

Note: Because of the narrative (storytelling) nature of 2 Samuel, some accounts covered in the lessons of this study are lengthy, spanning two or more chapters of Scripture. This may call for more reading than your group is used to, so you may wish to read ahead in your Bibles at home before doing some of the lessons together.

Glossary of Terms

- Abel Beth Maakah**—a town located in the northern part of the territory of Dan (near Joppa and Aphek). It was apparently known as “peaceful and faithful in Israel” (2 Sam. 20:14, 18-19).
- Adullam**—a town in the western foothills of the territory of Judah (Josh. 15:35). David stayed in a cave near here while Saul was pursuing him to try to kill him (1 Sam. 22:1).
- altar**—a structure made of stones or clay with a flat surface where the offerings of sacrificed animals or grain could be laid.
- Amalekites**—descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16); they had attacked God’s people when they were weary and newly released from Egypt (Ex. 17:8-15; Deut. 25:7-19; 1 Sam. 15:2-3).
- Ammonites**—descendants of Lot through his younger daughter (Gen. 19:36-38).
- Arameans**—descendants of Aram, a son of Shem (Gen. 10:22).
- ark of God, ark of the covenant**—a wooden chest overlaid with gold that was placed in the innermost chamber (Most Holy Place) of the tabernacle (tent of meeting) or, later, in the temple (1 Kings 8). It symbolized the presence of God among his people (see Ex. 25:10-22). See also **cherubim**.
- Ashkelon**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, along with Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza.
- Baalah**—also known as Kiriath Jearim (see map; see 1 Chron. 13:6), where the ark of God was kept after the Philistines returned it (1 Sam. 7:1-2).
- Bahurim**—a town in Benjamin east of Jerusalem near the Mount of Olives (see 2 Sam. 3:16; 16:5; 17:18; 19:16).
- Beersheba**—often referred to as the southernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20).
- Benjamites**—Saul’s native tribe, the people of Benjamin (see 1 Sam. 9:1-2).
- Bethlehem**—the hometown of David (1 Sam. 16:1, 13); also the birthplace of Jesus, which by then was known as “the town of David” (Luke 2:4).
- Book of Jashar**—an early account of Israel’s wars (see Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) that is lost to history.
- burnt offerings**—sacrifices laid on an altar and completely burned.
- census**—an enrolling or numbering of the population in order to prepare for taxation or war.

cherubim—angel-like creatures usually represented as winged figures. God instructed Moses to make cherubim statues that faced each other on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-22). Cherubim are most commonly associated with God’s throne, as guardians and as throne-bearers (see Ps. 18:10; 80:1; Ezek. 1:4-24; 10:1-22; 28:14). See also **ark of God**.

concubines—secondary wives, acquired by purchase or as war booty, and protected by laws of rightful inheritance.

covenant—a mutually binding agreement between two parties; usually both parties agree to accept certain responsibilities.

Cushite—a native or descendant of people from Cush, a region in northern Africa.

Dan—often referred to as the northernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10); also the name of a tribe whose territory was located west of Benjamin and north of Judah.

David—the second king of Israel, beloved by God as a person “after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), a military genius, and the ancestor to the kings of Judah who ruled throughout the Old Testament. Jesus of Nazareth, a descendant of David, filled the promised role of Son of David, Messiah, Son of God.

Edom, Edomite—Edom was the region inhabited by the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Esau was also called Edom, and his descendants were the Edomites (see Gen. 25:21-34; 36:9).

ephod—a priestly garment of linen (2 Sam. 6:14) that resembled the special garment worn by the high priest for inquiring of the Lord (Ex. 28:6-14).

Gath—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashkelon**.

Gibeah—Saul’s hometown in the territory of Benjamin (1 Sam. 10:26). Its location is near Ramah but is not known (see Judg. 19:13-14). There was also a Gibeah in the hill country of Ephraim (Josh. 24:33), and another Gibeah in Judah (Josh. 15:20, 57).

Gilboa—a cluster of mountains near Jezreel where Saul fought his last battle (see 1 Sam. 31:1; 2 Sam. 1:6, 21).

Hebrews—descendants of Abraham. Abraham’s descendants through Jacob (Israel) became known as the Israelites.

Hebron—a city southwest of Jerusalem where David was anointed king (2 Sam. 2:4), where six of his sons were born (3:2-5), and where Absalom inaugurated his rebellion against David (15:10).

house of the Lord—the place of the worship of God in Israel. In the days of Samuel, Saul, and David this “house” consisted of a large tent (the tabernacle) that included chambers and exquisitely

crafted furnishings for use in worship. The ark of God rested in its innermost chamber, the Most Holy Place. David's son Solomon later built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle (1 Kings 6).

Israelites—the descendants of Israel (Jacob).

Jebusites—people who lived in Jerusalem before David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6-10). The ancient Canaanite name for the city was Jebus (Judg. 19:10), so its people were the Jebusites.

Jerusalem—David conquered this city of the Jebusites and made it his capital in Israel, calling it “the city of David” (2 Sam. 5:9). David also brought the ark of God to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6), and later Solomon built the temple there (1 Kings 6), making it the center of worship in Israel. Earlier, Jerusalem was also known as Salem, which means “peace.” In Abraham's time this city was ruled by a priest of God Most High whose name was Melchizedek, which means “king of righteousness” (see Gen. 14:18-20; see also Ps. 110:4; Heb. 6:20-7:17). His role, as well as David's, pointed ultimately to Jesus, who became the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), the ultimate High Priest and King of righteousness, our Savior from sin (Heb. 8-10).

Jesse—the father of David.

Kidron Valley—located just east of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives.

lament—a song, poem, or musical piece expressing grief, regret, or mourning. David composed a lament as he grieved the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

lentil—a small plant cultivated for food in all parts of ancient Palestine.

Moabites—descendants of Lot through his older daughter (Gen. 19:36-38). David's great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite who married Boaz of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 1:3; 4:10, 21-22).

Mount of Olives—a hilly grove east of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:30); this is the same place where Jesus poured out his heart to God on the night before his death (Luke 22:39-44).

Philistines—descendants of a grandson of Noah's son Ham (Gen. 10:6, 13-14) who, in the time of the early judges, occupied a strip of land along the Great (Mediterranean) Sea from Gaza to Egypt. By the time of Saul and David, the Philistines had grown powerful in metalworking and warfare (1 Sam. 13:16-22), and they continually attacked and often captured portions of Israel.

priests—officials from the tribe of Levi who served in the Lord's tabernacle and conducted worship for the people of Israel.

prophet—one who speaks God's message to the people.

Rapha, descendants of—imposing warriors who were apparently like giants (2 Sam. 21:15-22), perhaps related to the Anakites mentioned in Numbers 13:33.

Rephaim, Valley of—a valley bordering ancient Jerusalem on the west and southwest.

sacrifice—the act of offering something precious to God. In the Old Testament this was usually an animal (the best of the flock) or the firstfruits of a harvest.

Samuel—a faithful priest and prophet who was also the last major judge in Israel. He anointed the first two kings of Israel, opening a new era in the history of God's people.

Saul—the first king of Israel; he was not fully devoted to the Lord, so God rejected him as king and anointed David to succeed him (1 Sam. 15-16).

shekel—a common unit of weight in ancient times; forty shekels weighed about one pound (0.45 kg).

sheepshearing—a festive time in ancient cultures, similar to a harvest celebration (see 2 Sam. 13:23, 28).

Spirit of the Lord—In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon certain individuals to empower them to accomplish certain tasks or missions for the Lord (see 2 Sam. 23:2).

stronghold—a military location of strength and defense.

Tekoa—a town in Judah a few miles south of Jerusalem.

threshing floor—a flat place where harvested grain was spread out and beaten to separate the grains from the stalks.

yoke—a wooden frame by which a pair of oxen or other draft animals are joined at the neck for working together.

Zeruiah—David's sister (1 Chron. 2:16), whose mother probably married Jesse, David's father, after Zeruiah's father Nahash died; her sister was Abigail, whose son Amasa was appointed commander of Israel's army (2 Sam. 17:25; 19:13) and was later killed by his cousin Joab (20:10). Zeruiah was the mother of Joab, Abishai, and Asahel (2:18).

Zion—This name apparently first referred to a hill within the fortress of Jerusalem and later became a reference to the whole city, which became known as the dwelling place for God's Name (see 2 Sam. 5:7; 7:13; 1 Kings 8:1; Ps. 2:6; 9:11; 50:2; 76:1-2).

A Note About War in the Old Testament

Before engaging in your study of 2 Samuel it will be important for your group to understand the place of war for God's people in the Old Testament. This may be the first time some group members hear an explanation about the violence in Israel's settling of the promised land of Canaan.

God's command for his people Israel to take the land by force stands in contrast to the Lord's New Testament teachings about peace and loving our enemies. Without an understanding of Old Testament war, your group members might conclude they want no part of a religion that condones such violence and bloodshed. Or they might become confused and decide that only the New Testament is worth reading.

In God's plan to send a Redeemer, first mentioned in Genesis 3:15, God made a nation of people through whom the Redeemer would be born, and God designated a place where that nation would live. The promise of land, descendants, and blessing was first given to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:16-20) and was repeated over the years to his son Isaac (26:1-5) and to Isaac's son Jacob (28:13-15), whose descendants became the twelve tribes of Israel. The location God chose for his people was the land of Canaan, and the various peoples who lived there were mired in wickedness and rebellion against their creator. They followed false gods, worshiped idols, devised immoral religions based on fertility and prostitution, and sacrificed their own children in ritual fires (see Lev. 18-19; Deut. 12:31; 18:9-13; see also Rom. 1:18-32). The Canaanites' practices were so vile that God says "even the land was defiled" (Lev. 18:25), so he "punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants."

In Deuteronomy 9:5 God said to his people, "On account of the wickedness of these nations . . . the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." About 700 years earlier God had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in this land after the sin of the peoples who lived there had "reached its full measure" (Gen. 15:16).

That time had come, and God brought his people into the land of Canaan through the leadership of Joshua. With the Lord going before them, the people fought many battles and overtook many cities, and this resulted in much bloodshed and death as God directed the Israelites to destroy everything (see Deut. 7).

Was this "holy war"? There is nothing holy about war. Through the ages people who have declared themselves to be involved in holy war have turned out to be driven by greed for power. No, this was God's war—a one-time event during this period in history for a purpose mandated by God.

Because God is holy, evil cannot stand in his presence (Isa. 6:1-5; Mal. 3:2; Rev. 6:12-17), so God also warned the Israelites that if they behaved like the Canaanites, they too would be “vomited out of the land.” And, sadly, many years later, after a long time of disobeying God, the people of Israel were exiled from the land God had given them (2 Kings 17; 25).

In any discussion of this topic, it’s important to point out that war is not God’s first choice. God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9), so he waited long for the sin of the Canaanites to reach “its full measure” (Gen. 15:16), at which point God would allow it no longer. Many years later, after the Lord’s own people had rebelled for many generations, God said to them, “As surely as I live . . . I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die . . . ?” (Ezek. 33:11).

Today we know that the Redeemer whom God sent into the world, who was born from the nation of Israel, died in our place so that we could have new life with God (John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-5). The books of history in the Old Testament show how God preserved that nation, again and again, so that eventually the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, could come.

—adapted from *Discover Judges* by Marilyn A. McGinnis
(Faith Alive, 2009)

Lesson 1

2 Samuel 1:1-2:7

David Becomes Ruler over Judah

Introductory Notes

The book of 2 Samuel picks up where 1 Samuel ends. Saul and Jonathan have died, the people of Jabesh Gilead have buried the remains of Saul and his sons, and the Philistines are celebrating their victory (1 Sam. 31). David is now back in Ziklag, a city given to him by the Philistines while he needed refuge from Saul (see 1 Sam. 27; 29-30). David has not yet heard of Saul's death.

Though David has already been anointed as the next king (1 Sam. 16:1-13), it will take some time before he is actually made king over Israel. First he must deal with resistance from Saul's supporters, and he must build up support among all the tribes of Israel. As 2 Samuel opens, we find much to think about as David maintains respect and honor for the Lord and his anointed.

If your group has just recently studied 1 Samuel, review together briefly the events preceding the action in 2 Samuel 1 (see 1 Sam. 27-31). We recommend studying *Discover 1 Samuel* before doing this study of 2 Samuel. If any group members have not studied 1 Samuel before, take some time at the beginning of this lesson to summarize the main events of 1 Samuel for them, and encourage them to read through 1 Samuel on their own within the next few weeks.

In addition, if any group members are unfamiliar with or become concerned about the violence and bloodshed described in these biblical narratives, be sure to direct them to "A Note About War in the Old Testament," included just before lesson 1 in the study guide and in this leader guide.

Optional Share Question

How have you felt and reacted upon hearing of the death of someone you have known well and cared about?

1. 2 Samuel 1:1-16

a. *As the story opens in 2 Samuel 1, who comes to David, and why?*

A man “from Saul’s camp” arrives (2 Sam. 1:2). His appearance is that of someone grieving (“clothes torn and dust on his head”—1:2; see also Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:11). He claims to have “escaped from the Israelite camp” (2 Sam. 1:3), and he reveals that he is “the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite” (1:13).

The man falls to the ground to pay honor to David, which signifies a desire to receive favor. This man seems confident that David will be pleased with the news he brings, and it may indicate that he knows David is the one likely to become the next king. He then tells David that Saul and Jonathan are dead, and he gives an account of how Saul was killed.

b. *Compare the Amalekite’s report in 2 Samuel 1:1-10 to the account in 1 Samuel 31:1-6. How do these differ?*

In the 1 Samuel account, Saul takes his own life, preferring not to fall into the hands of the Philistines, who would abuse and torture him before killing him. The Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1 says that Saul asked to be killed after leaning on his own spear. The Amalekite claims responsibility for killing Saul.

- **Do you think the Amalekite is telling the truth?**

The Amalekite’s account is probably a lie intended to impress David. David, of course, does not know whether it’s a lie. The first part of the Amalekite’s story (1:6) meshes with 1 Samuel 31:3-4, but the account of the Amalekite taking Saul’s life seems a revision of what really happened. In 1 Samuel 31:5, we read that Saul’s armor-bearer witnesses Saul’s death by his own hand, and then the armor-bearer takes his own life. The Amalekite may instead have been a looter who managed to get to Saul’s body before the Philistines, and he has brought David proof that Saul is dead.

- **What does the Amalekite show as proof of his story?**

The Amalekite presents David with the crown and the armband of King Saul. This surprising detail raises even more questions. Because the man is probably lying, we cannot tell if anything he has said is true. Was he actually on the scene of battle when Saul died and the Philistines were bearing down on him? Or was he perhaps a captive (1:3) who managed to steal Saul’s crown and armband from the Israelites and escape to bring them to David? We simply don’t know. But the man probably does not expect the reaction he witnesses next.

- c. *How do David and his men respond to the news that Saul and Jonathan are dead?*

“David and all the men with him” grieve deeply, tearing their own clothes (1:11). They mourn and weep and fast till evening. They grieve not only for Saul and Jonathan but also “for the army of the LORD and for the nation of Israel” (1:12). Note together that 1 Samuel 31:7 reports that after the battle in which Saul and Jonathan died, the Israelite army fled, the Israelites in that area “abandoned their towns,” and the Philistines “came and occupied them.” This was an astonishing reversal for the Israelites who had come to live in the land Canaan about 350 years earlier. Saul’s kingship, in which he preferred to do as he saw fit rather than to obey God, resulted in a great disaster for God’s people. (See Judg. 21:25; 1 Sam. 8; 13; 15; 19; 22; 28; 31.)

Despite knowing that he would be the next king, David doesn’t celebrate Saul’s death; he has great respect and loyalty for the Lord’s anointed and the people of Israel. In response to this great tragedy, David and his men grieve in a solemn, ceremonial way, and they compose a great lament (vv. 17-27).

- d. *What does David finally do with the Amalekite? Why?*

After an initial period of grieving, David responds with harsh punishment. Because the Amalekite has claimed to have killed Saul, the Lord’s anointed king over Israel, David declares that this man has written his own death sentence: “Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, ‘I killed the LORD’s anointed’” (1:16). David then orders one of his men to kill the Amalekite.

Group members may be aware that there has been a longstanding conflict between the Amalekites and God’s people Israel. The trouble began as the Amalekites attacked Israel in the desert when they were a tired, weak nation just freed from slavery in Egypt. The Lord gave Israel victory over the Amalekites that day and declared he would “completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven” for what they had done to try to destroy his people (Ex. 17:14). Later, when Saul became king, God charged him to destroy the Amalekites, but Saul disobeyed (1 Sam. 15). In more recent events, David has just returned after routing the Amalekites, who again recently attacked God’s defenseless people (the families of David and his army, while the army was away from Ziklag). And now, after just a few days back in Ziklag, David receives a visitor—an Amalekite acting as a messenger, claiming to have killed Saul. (Note the irony in that an Amalekite makes this claim, for Saul was ordered to destroy the Amalekites.) Now, because this deceiving messenger claims to have killed the Lord’s anointed (Saul), David has

the man killed. Though the Amalekite was probably not really guilty of Saul's death, his claim showed total defiance against the Lord and his anointed, and this is the reason David gives for executing the man (2 Sam. 1:16). Recall together also that David himself honored God in the past by sparing Saul, the Lord's anointed, when he had opportunities to kill Saul (see 1 Sam. 24; 26).

2. 2 Samuel 1:17-27

- a. *In the process of grieving for Saul and Jonathan, what does David do to honor these leaders of Israel, and how does he involve his people?*

In his grief for his friend Jonathan, for Saul, for Israel's army, and for all Israel, David turns to music and song. He writes and teaches a "lament of the bow" concerning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. This song was included in "the Book of Jashar" (1:18), apparently a compilation about Israel's wars that is now lost to history (see also Josh. 10:13).

David was a man with musical gifts (see 1 Sam. 16:18, 23; 18:10; 2 Sam. 22:1-23:7; Ps. 18). As we noted in our study of 1 Samuel, many of the Bible's psalms are songs that David wrote (see, for example, Ps. 3-9; 11-33; 34-41; 51-65; and more).

- **How does music help or comfort you in times of sorrow?**

If there's time, you may wish to invite group members to share from their experiences how music can be a help in times of grief. Perhaps people have favorite hymns or other songs that speak to their hearts in times of sadness. Maybe your group includes some musicians who find comfort and peace through the playing of a piano or other instrument. Let people share as seems appropriate.

- b. *What does David say in this song?*

- **Whom does he mention, and how does David describe them?**
- **What is David's perception of the enemy's reaction?**
- **How should Israel react?**

David addresses the sadness that now hangs over Israel. The nation's mighty leaders (the king and his heirs) have fallen, giving Israel's enemies an opportunity to gloat and celebrate (2 Sam. 1:19-20).

David then speaks to the "mountains of Gilboa" (1:21), where the battle took place and where Saul and Jonathan died (1 Sam. 31:1-2). David pronounces a curse on the scene where death brought victory to the enemy.

There Jonathan and Saul did not shrink back or run away, but their ironic reward for bravery was death. So David offers up a tribute to Saul and Jonathan: loved and admired, they stood side by side in battle and in death, though their speed and strength were greater than the most fearsome and majestic beasts of prey—eagles and lions (1:22-23).

David calls the “daughters of Israel” to weep and mourn for their fallen heroes (1:24-25), and David adds his personal grief for the loss of his dear friend Jonathan (1:26).

Note together that the words “How the mighty have fallen!” (see 1:19, 25, 27) may have served as a refrain for choral singers of this lament.

c. *How should we understand the relationship between David and Jonathan according to the words in verse 26?*

It may be helpful to reflect on the following note that was included in the *Discover 1 Samuel* leader guide in reference to 1 Samuel 18:1-4:

Note: Some people have claimed that the relationship between Jonathan and David shows biblical support for homosexuality. They interpret “one in spirit” and “he loved him as he loved himself” (1 Sam. 18:1) in a romantic or sexual context. That mistaken interpretation, however, distorts the sense of commitment and healthy friendship we can share with others in Christ. The Bible often calls us to “love one another,” to “love our neighbor as ourself,” and to be “one in spirit” as believers in Christ (see John 13:13; Phil. 2:1-2; Col. 3:15). Jesus cited “love your neighbor as yourself” as “the second” greatest command in his summary of God’s law in Matthew 22:37-40.

When David says, “Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women,” he was of course honoring his and Jonathan’s friendship. At the same time, David may also have been reflecting on the earlier political promise from Saul about receiving the king’s daughter in marriage (1 Sam. 18:17-19:18). Because of his successes in battle, David was offered Saul’s daughter Merab, but David refused, pleading that he was not worthy to become the king’s son-in-law. Then, later, Saul offered his daughter Michal, who “was in love with David”; Saul did this, however, thinking that she could “be a snare to him and that the hand of the Philistines [might] be against him” (18:21). David eventually took Michal as his wife, but only after paying a bridal price of Philistine foreskins (twice the number Saul asked for while hoping David would be killed in the process—see 18:24-27). In contrast to this brutal process that tainted his reception of the love of his first wife, David had

received the immediate respect, admiration, and friendship of Jonathan ever since his battle with Goliath (1 Sam. 17:57-18:1). As Jonathan later proved to be a true friend and protector to him (1 Sam. 20; 23:15-18), David knew the integrity of Jonathan's love and friendship.

3. 2 Samuel 2:1-7

a. *How would you describe the political situation at this point in Israel's history?*

- **What does Israel's government look like, now that the Philistines have killed Saul?**
- **Who is loyal to David, and with whom does he seek to build an alliance?**

Because Saul is dead, Israel is without an acting king, and the Philistines have overtaken a number of towns in northern Israel, including Beth Shan (1 Sam. 31:7, 10).

As the reader knows, David has been anointed as God's choice for the next king (1 Sam. 16), but Saul's supporters, especially the Benjamites, will likely try to place an heir of Saul on the throne. We soon learn that Saul's son Ish-Bosheth will be named king to succeed Saul (2:8-9). (But don't mention that at this point; let group members discover that in the next lesson.)

David, of course, knows he is anointed to be the next king, so he asks the Lord whether he should go into Judah. Here David has likely inquired of the Lord through Abiathar the priest, who has the sacred ephod and has come to stay with David for protection from Saul (see 1 Sam. 22:20-23; 23:6, 9; 30:7-8; see also Ex. 28:6-30). God indicates that David should settle in Hebron, and there they anoint David "king over the tribe of Judah" (2 Sam. 2:3).

Hebron is also the place where Abram (Abraham) "pitched his tents" and "built an altar to the LORD" (Gen. 13:18). This was Abraham's center of operations in Canaan and where he and his wife Sarah were buried (Gen. 23:19; 25:7-10).

In Hebron, David learns more about the deaths of Saul and his sons, whose bodies have been treated respectfully by the men of Jabesh Gilead (2 Sam. 2:4-5). So he proposes making an alliance with them (2:6-7).

b. *How does David lead through trust in God and by making use of God-given opportunities?*

Our relationship with God is based first on his love for us, and second on our responding love toward him. Salvation and the very

sustaining of our lives is due to the glory and grace of God. As 1 John 4:19 teaches, “We love because he first loved us.” However, we are not puppets on a string. We are called in response to God’s love to show love to our neighbor as ourself. We are called to be “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1), for we are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that [we] may declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

David shows his trust in and obedience to God by first inquiring of the Lord (2 Sam. 2:1). He knows God is the one who must direct his paths (Ps. 119:35, 105). And although he has waited long for the Lord to make him king, David continues to honor God and to show respect for those whom God has placed in authority (2 Sam. 1:14, 22-23).

David also begins to use his God-given wisdom, leadership abilities, and people skills to serve effectively as king. The first evidence of this is clear in his proposal to the people of Jabesh Gilead. They were loyal to Saul early in his reign, and Saul had protected them (1 Sam. 11). And after his death they honored Saul, at risk to their own lives (31:11-13).

David knows he needs their support, and he seeks it by thanking them for their kindness to Saul. Though Saul mistreated David and pursued him relentlessly to kill him (1 Sam. 19-26), David nonetheless respected Saul as the Lord’s anointed and now seeks the kindness and loyalty of the people of Jabesh Gilead (who are strategically important in the northern region). David pledges ongoing favor in return for their support (2 Sam. 2:6).

As we noted in our study of 1 Samuel 27, David also was building loyalty among the people of Judah by routing their enemies while he lived in Ziklag in the land of the Philistines. David had even sent some of his plunder to the elders of Judah (1 Sam. 30:26-31). Further, God’s direction to settle in Hebron would be politically effective for David as king because his wife Abigail had been the wife of Nabal, a prominent landowner in the region, before he died (1 Sam. 25). Thus we see David building loyalty and support as God gave him opportunities to do so.

- **In what ways can we use opportunities and skills wisely to help build up God’s kingdom in our world today?**

Questions for Reflection

In this lesson, what have you learned about the importance of respect for the Lord? Patience with God’s timing for fulfilling his promises?

What can this passage and other scriptural references of lament teach us about healthy grieving and the grief process?

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