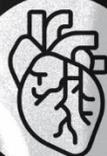




LIVINGHOPE

PURSUING GOD'S HEART

21 DAYS IN THE LIFE OF DAVID



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INTRODUCTION

If there is any Old Testament character that has inspired me right from my childhood Sunday School days at Fortwilliam Gospel Hall, Belfast, it was surely King David. As a young boy, the story of David and Goliath brought my vivid imagination to life and inspired me that God could use any of us, no matter how young, to accomplish His plans, and that the life of faith was both exciting and dangerous. I'm not sure, however, that I grasped what was going on in the story of David and Bathsheba. Only in later years as I too - along with every other man with a pulse - battled sexual temptation did I begin to realise the complexity and humanity of David of whom years earlier it had been said, "*the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart*". (1 Samuel 13:14)

But a sordid story of entitlement, adultery, deception, betrayal and finally murder thankfully didn't end there in abject failure as David learned how willing our God is to forgive when we confess, come clean, repent and turn away from sin. Unlike Saul, who lost his crown as he wanted to cover up his sin, David pens Psalm 51 - the chart-topping song of his day - and for millennia, humanity will see his sin, humility and the restoration which is available to all who will cry out, "*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight*". (Psalm 51:3-4)

For most people, these are probably the two most memorable stories from the life of David, however, there is so much more to explore including how he not only survived but thrived in the tough times; the heartbreak within his dysfunctional family when his son Absalom turns against him; how he became so gracious later in life evidenced in the amazing invitation to Mephibosheth rather than ending up a grumpy old man and defensive King, and much, much more.



Over 21 days and chapters, we're going to explore these and many other aspects of David's life in our daily devotions written, not only by pastors from Living Hope, but also by others in our Four12 partnering churches and good friends leading churches in the nations.

The Bible is never shy in placing before us the faults of the great heroes of the faith as will become quickly apparent in David's life, yet in spite of those faults, he still was man after God's heart who, even though knew failure, subsequently experienced saving and empowering grace and of whom the New Testament author Luke would record, "*Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep*". (Acts 13:36)

As we pursue God's heart together, let us allow God to search our hearts, as He did with David, and be those who also wholeheartedly serve God in our generation so that the Kingdom of God advances in our lives and among our families, communities and nations.

Jonathan Stanfield
Lead Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man
January 2021

THE FOUR 12 PARTNER RELIEF FUND

When they were little, one of our children's favourite stories was the Magic Porridge Pot. This is a folk tale of a starving family who finds a magic pot. All they had to do was say, "Cook, little pot, cook!" and it produced an endless supply of porridge until they said the words, "Stop, little pot, stop!" This discovery transformed their lives until they forgot how to make it stop and nearly drowned in porridge.

If you owned the magic pot and someone asked you if they could have some porridge, how hard would it be to give them some? It would be no effort on your part at all! Why? Quite simply, you would know that you were never going to go short of porridge; there would always be more whenever you needed it.

Amazingly, this is the picture Paul gives to the Philippian church. He writes, "*I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:18-19) They need not be concerned that their giving will cause them to go without. Instead, their willingness to give to Paul in his need will ensure that God meets their needs from His riches. This is not a matter of getting rich but meeting need.

The world has provided a distorted view of helping those in need. Our western culture lives with the concept of 'charity'. This carries the implication of a benevolent act of generosity that has cost us. This is not God's pattern for His people. As part of living under God's blessing, the Law expected Israel to ensure there was no one without, "*There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need.*" (Deuteronomy 15:11) This attitude continues in the new covenant as we see in the New Testament church, "*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one*

claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had...there was no needy person among them". (Acts 4:32-34)

For God's people, sharing with those in need is not charity but a response to how much He has given us. That's why Paul writes, "*Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account*". (Philippians 4:17) Sharing with those in need within the family of God is both an opportunity for eternal credit and a test of our hearts. Standing-by is not an option.

WHAT IS THE RELIEF FUND?

The Four12 Relief Fund was started in 2020 as a response to need in Four12 partner churches across the world, partly, but not exclusively, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is for food, shelter and medical needs. All the funds have been raised through partner church giving. So far, just over \$50,000 has been raised and all of that has been allocated to churches needing crisis relief.

Through Four12, it has been a privilege to share with churches in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa and India. More than 30 churches have been supported with the provision of food, seed and agricultural supplies. We have received many testimonies of how the support has been a blessing at such a difficult time, including for those literally facing the prospect of starvation. The Relief Fund is administered by some of the serving Elders on the Four12 Core Leadership and supported by the amazing team of regional co-ordinators serving the churches in these nations.

Sadly, there continues to be a great need and we require support. We know churches working hard to sow for the future but struggling to feed themselves and our heart is to live as Paul the apostle did, "*All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.*" (Galatians 2:10).

Here are just a few of the stories from the work of the Partner Relief Fund:

“We want to say thank you to you for partnering with us. Until now, we have assisted about 300 people with relief assistance; this includes 750 grocery and clothes hampers and financial assistance during this lock-down time. Twenty-six thousand meals went out to people. This is impossible for us to achieve on our own. We have seen the value of church partnership and friendship. Therefore, we are really grateful for every contribution that came from you, our partners, in order to fight hunger in our community. Behind all those numbers are grateful families that had food on their table during this crisis.”

Gary & Yvette Makamba
Kingdom Family Center International

“When this lock-down started, we had nothing in terms of income. We want to thank God for this partnership we have with Four12. We have been able to help some of our members financially who have been severely affected by this lock-down. There is one family I can specifically think of represented by their son. He has been with us four years now and he gave such a good testimony that he and his family had nothing during this time. We received courage and assistance from our brothers with this fellowship with Four12. It helped us a lot, and we were able to encourage those who needed courage. Thank God, and we praise Him for this partnership that we have, and we pray that the Lord keep moving us forward Amen.”

Ernest & Thandi Boo
Ark of Covenant Christian Fellowship Centre

“We want to say thank you to the Four12 relief program. We were so blessed that we did not once have to explain to our children that we don’t have food. We are grateful for that. We also had many people who came to us because they know we are leaders and pastors and asked for food and things like that. There was not a single time that we had to send them away empty-handed because we had food right from the beginning to bless others. Please keep doing this. Amen.”

Elvis & Lutho Feni
Ekklesia

“We were able to distribute aid to six of our partnering churches. This covered around 105 families with meals for a month as well as supplying 21 churches with essential PPE equipment such as masks, sanitiser, spray bottles and thermometers for these churches to meet again in person. An additional gift was given to 21 churches. It is difficult to capture in short testimony but the support certainly helped meet their most significant needs.”

Mike Fast
Regional Co-ordinator: Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain and Philippi

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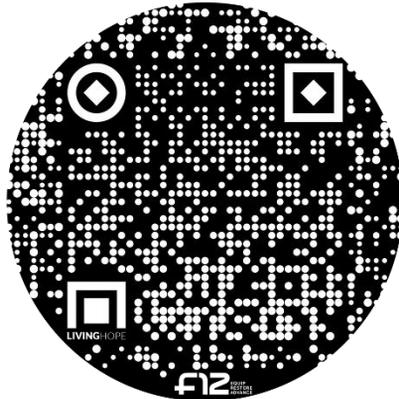
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BECOMING GOD'S MAN

(DAY 1)

KEY VERSE

“But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

1 SAMUEL 13:14

- **Read 1 Samuel 8:1-8; 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

Can a nation in turmoil and spiritual decline ever be changed?

In my recent studies on revivals, one of the most encouraging commonalities is God’s desire to use men and women who clearly are after His heart rather than the spotlight of society.

Whether it was the four young men who commenced a prayer meeting in Kells, County Antrim which clearly was a catalyst for the 1859 Ulster Revival or Peggy and Christine Smith, both in their 80s, one blind, the other crippled, who in spite of being unable to attend their church, committed themselves to intercession for the Hebrides and saw a mighty revival from 1949-52, it’s clear that God’s choice wouldn’t be our choice!

2020 wasn’t just the year of a global pandemic but also the year that God would dethrone and expose some high-profile Christian leaders who allowed themselves to be blinded by the perpetual spotlight and hidden sin rather than being pursuers of His heart. Samuel the prophet had appointed his sons as judges to rule the people but, much like his mentor



Eli, he had neglected to shape his sons' hearts and their spiritual sickness led the people even further away from walking in the promises of God. The people no longer wanted their governance and, even though God's plan had always been for Him to be their king, now they wanted a human king, just like the nations around them. Cf. 1 Samuel 8:7-8

And God gave them what they wanted! In Saul they had a 40-year-old man who was head and shoulders above everyone else but what was within soon surfaced - anger, depression, insecurity and even murderous thoughts. Unable to deal with his failures God's way, Saul loses his anointing and increasingly the people come to regret their choice.

God, however, steps in to save His people once more. Only, this time it will be a man of His choice. David was nothing like Saul as it's clear that in him God found three traits that He seeks in all men and women whom He will use for any great work throughout history.

1. **A Deep Spirituality** - God is seeking those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him. Cf. 2 Chronicles 16:9
2. **Humility** - when Samuel came to Bethlehem and asked Jesse about his sons, David was overlooked as he was faithfully tending the family flocks. Cf. 1 Samuel 16:11
3. **Integrity** - whereas society often promotes those who can "deliver the goods publicly" regardless of their private lives, David's heart and actions were aligned. Cf. Psalm 78:71-72

God is still seeking men and women to transform nations. Be one of the few who pursue God's heart.

Author: Jonathan Stanfield - Lead Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



A HEART THAT CATCHES GOD'S EYE

(DAY 2)

KEY VERSE

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”

1 SAMUEL 16:7

- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-28**

As Samuel stood with Jesse and his seven sons in Bethlehem, ready to anoint the next king of Israel but unsure of which son it would be, he was certain that he had found the answer. Eliab, the oldest and the most obvious choice, stood proudly before him. He would make a fine king, thought Samuel; he would be the man to fix the mess made by Saul. But while the thought was still running through his mind, God interrupted it. He told Samuel – and still tells us today – what He thinks about the outer wrapping of a person and what He thinks about the contents inside.

The nation's first king, Saul, looked the part of a leader in every way: he was a head taller than any of his contemporaries, an impressive man with an influential father. But he was also deeply insecure and lacked the personal integrity, depth of character and devotion to God that was necessary for the task. He had come gift-wrapped as a success, but was, in fact, a failure. So, God set the record straight. He was looking at the heart



of a person. To prove it, He chose the eighth son of Jesse; the youngest one, the forgotten one, the uninvited one. He chose him because that young man, David, spent his days tending sheep but also singing to the God he loved. Saul cared too much about man's opinion and not enough about God's. David simply delighted in the Lord when no one was watching.

In a world obsessed with achievements, public significance and physical desirability, God has made His own standards clear. Even Jesus, the very Son of God, was evidently unattractive (Isaiah 53:2), looked older than He was (John 8:57) and didn't even stand out among His disciples to those arresting Him (John 18:4-8). And yet God was pleased with Him in every way because of His reverent submission and obedience. He was a success in God's eyes and so when Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that he so loved, he reminded them that they were nothing special in themselves but had been chosen by God. It wasn't an insult; it simply set them free to view themselves fully through the lens of God's grace and then pursue what really mattered.

God looks for a heart devoted to Him, a heart that loves Him, a life committed to good works. Faithfulness, devotion and love are what catch His eye. Let's aim at that today.

Author: Shaun Brauteseth - Elder, Oxygen Life Church, Port Elizabeth



WORSHIP USHERS IN THE PRESENCE

(DAY 3)

KEY VERSE

“And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.”

1 SAMUEL 16:23

- **Read 1 Corinthians 16:14-23**

At a church conference several years ago, I remember witnessing a series of quite mind-bending demonic manifestations that to this day I am unable to fully explain. Strange things were happening to people I knew and loved. The atmosphere was dripping with the presence of the enemy; it felt heavy and claustrophobic. When pastor Jonathan approached me to play some worship music, I began to rummage around in my bag searching through my rather impressive catalogue of worship songs. Jonathan was clearly not particularly impressed with my lengthy search and asked, “What are you doing?” I responded, “I’m looking for the right song”. In true Jonathan-fashion, my pastor told me to, “Just sing about Jesus!”. As we sang, the atmosphere changed. There was a break in the overcast, demonic sky and freedom soon came to the latest victim of the enemy’s scheming deceit.

During the life of David, his king, Saul, was afflicted by feelings of deep jealousy towards our young shepherd hero. Saul would find himself

under the influence and weight of an evil spirit to which the only known remedy was the inspired worship music of young David. In Psalm 22, David reminds us that God is holy and enthroned in the praises of His people, Israel. In other words, God dwells where His people praise Him. When David played music in the courts of Saul, he effectively ushered Saul into the soothing presence of God. In the manifest presence of God, Saul found healing and freedom. In effect, David became like a priest for Saul; an interface between the then-veiled Holy of Holies and the troubled King Saul.

In Jesus, the veil has been torn. The division between man and God has been removed. The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. When we worship, we are not exercising a magic formula that causes God to visit us. To believe this would place false merit on the works of man that God's word describes as no more than filthy rags. When we worship, we are reminding ourselves of the great love of God for us demonstrated in the gift of Jesus. As we remember and celebrate what Jesus has accomplished for us through His sacrificial life, His obedient death and His glorious resurrection, we do not so much "enter into His presence" but we become more fully aware with fresh revelation of the astounding nearness of our God. Worship doesn't change my position in Christ, it changes my appreciation of Him. When the taunts and lies of the enemy come, don't go rummaging in your bag for solutions, "just sing about Jesus".

Author: Euan MacRae - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GIANT-SLAYER

(DAY 4)

KEY VERSE

“Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”

1 SAMUEL 17:36

- **Read 1 Samuel 17**

I've worked out over five and a half decades as a believer, that God has two speeds: slow and suddenly and even in the suddenly, He takes His time! He obviously uses chronological time (*chronos*) but there are strategic times in a believer's life where God accelerates His purposes. We call these set times, opportune times of action (*kairos*).

David had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king but had bided his time in the field just doing what seemed to be the day-to-day mundane stuff but, it would seem, leaning into God as every day went by. You see, David was just like you - chosen for a purpose. Jeremiah would say it this way, “*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and before you were born, I consecrated you*” (Jeremiah 1:5). And the great apostle Paul would say it this way, “*even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him*” (Ephesians 1:4). David was chosen not because he could sing and dance (both of which he

could do!); he was chosen to fight. God had a Kingdom and a nation to establish before all the earth. He had battles to win and He chose this ruddy-complexioned shepherd boy long before his birth to be that man. This boy who would kill a lion and a bear with nothing but a rag and a rock, was now about to step into his *kairos* moment. This boy who had fallen in love with his God in the solitude of the fields. This boy who had come to know a God with whom nothing is impossible. This boy who had not despised the day of small or insignificant things and had seen every day and every circumstance, no matter how mundane, as an opportunity to move closer to His God. And when his moment arrived, despite having no armour on the outside, inside he had a steely resolve that would say, "My God can do anything."

Waiting on God is an interesting subject, one which I'm sure fills many-a-shelf in the bookstore. Can I remind us that when Jesus rebuked His disciples for not being able to deliver the demon-possessed boy and they enquired why they couldn't, He said, "*this kind doesn't come out but by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:21). He wasn't insinuating an immediate fast when we run up against this type of demon. Rather, He was promoting a lifestyle; one of growing while in the waiting. This was David's secret. It was Jesus' secret. Why not make it yours from today?

Author: Phil Emerson - Lead Pastor, Emmanuel Church, Lurgan, Northern Ireland



WE ALL NEED A JONATHAN

(DAY 5)

KEY VERSE

“As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.”

1 SAMUEL 18:1,3

- **Read 1 Samuel 19:4-5**

The story of David and Jonathan is a beautiful picture for us of Godly friendship and its fruits and teaches us how we can partner effectively in the gospel. God joined these two incredible men's hearts and their friendship not only blessed them but was a massive key in advancing God's kingdom!

David's life had taken a terrible turn for the worse. He had quickly gone from a national hero to a national outlaw and had lost all the favour that he had once held. King Saul had slandered David and was set on destroying him. In this terrible, adverse time, Jonathan comes to David's defence and shows us how we should love.

Proverbs 17:17 says, “*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.*” It is in adverse times that true, Godly partnerships and friendships are revealed and Jonathan portrays beautifully how all true friends should act. He comes to David's defence and protects his friend, standing in David's defence even at potential personal peril.



Godly love is revealed in the difficult, dangerous times, not just the sweet, good ones! In a modern world where the bible warns that people are “lovers of self”, this story is a glorious portrayal to us of how to love others as ourselves.

What a glorious picture to us also of Jesus! It was when all creation cried out against us for our terrible sins and guilt before God that Jesus rose to our defence and He covered us and provided what we needed, even though it cost Him His life! May we reflect this love in our friendships and partnership and always put others above ourselves. May we always, like Jonathan, come to each other's defence and may we be faithful, especially in the adverse times when everyone and everything is against our David. As we are faithful in our marriages, friendships and partnerships in the gospel, we can reflect Jonathan's (and Christ's) love and can glorify God.

Why not spend some time weighing ourselves in the light of this?
Who are the Davids which God has placed in our lives?
Are we acting in love as faithful Jonathans?

May we learn from this, reflect Godly love and be a Jonathan to our very own Davids because everyone needs a Jonathan!

Author: Andrew Selley - Lead Elder, Joshua Generation Church, Cape Town



LEANING ON THE LORD IN TOUGH TIMES

(DAY 6)

KEY VERSE

“And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him. And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him.”

1 SAMUEL 18:14-15

- **Read 1 Samuel 19:9-10**

“The king just tried to kill me... And not in secret or through the hands of another. No, he literally tried to kill me in front of everyone!” I can only image what thoughts must have rushed through David’s mind as he fled for his very life after King Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear (1 Samuel 19:10). David didn’t do anything wrong. In actual fact, he was busy in the service of Saul, playing gentle and soothing music on his lyre. David’s behaviour did not warrant Saul’s aggressive attempt on his life.

We tend to think that when God is with us, no evil will befall us. Surely if we are with God and God is with us, that means that nothing bad should happen to us. But I want you to note that even though 1 Samuel 18 shows that the Lord was with David, it didn’t guarantee the lack of trouble. The assurance we have as sons and daughters of God is not the absence of evil, pain, suffering, or strife, but rather that God will be with us through



all these seasons of our life. God was with David as Saul tried to take his life, not once but twice!

Think in this moment of David's conviction in his beautiful psalm, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4). David knew that he could lean on the Lord through the tough times of his life because he knew God as a faithful God and a good Father.

Jesus, on one occasion, said the following, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) Do you see what Jesus says? In this world, you will see trouble. Things will go wrong. At times, negative circumstances beyond your control will meet you. In this life, you will not escape disappointment, hurt, trials and troubles. Often at the hands of others, sometimes, as a result of personal decisions and life choices. However, Jesus makes it clear that in Him we will have peace. Peace regardless of what life may throw at us.

Like David, take heart.

In Jesus, you will overcome. After all, in Christ we are, *"more than conquerors through him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37)

Author: Rousseau Moss - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



ESCAPING YOUR DARK CAVES

(DAY 7)

KEY VERSE

“David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.”

1 SAMUEL 22:1

- **Read Psalm 142**

A Pastor friend of ours describes a day when he was faced with a group of bullies who pinned him to the wall and taunted him, “Do you want some!? Come on, fight!” He was scared, out-numbered and out-gunned. The bullies were, however, stunned when suddenly he started threatening them! Why, in the face of over-whelming odds against him, was this small boy so confident? Unfortunately for the bullies, it was too late when they realised that his older brothers had appeared behind them and they were now in serious trouble!

David had lost everything - wife, job, best friend and his place at the King's table. His prophetic dream of the throne in tatters, he was hunted by the King's forces and hiding in a cave. Then, something unexpected happens; his family arrive and, *“all those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered round him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him”*. (1 Samuel 22:2) That means David became the commander of those under pressure; unable to repay debts; in ‘bitterness of soul’; wronged or mistreated. Not promising!

Incredibly this group of 400 emerge from the cave and, *“David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah”*. (1 Samuel 23:5) This group of bitter, depressed and discontented debtors had been transformed into a fearsome fighting force! What changed? Now they were:

1. Devoted to the true king, willing to risk their lives to get him a drink of water (2 Samuel 23:13-17)
2. Devoted to each other; becoming a band of brothers, and
3. Devoted to the king’s cause. In that cave they submitted their agenda to that of seeing David on the throne.

This story powerfully speaks into our situation. Jesus gave up a throne to die and be buried in a cave. When we commit our lives to Jesus, we bring all our bitterness, discontent and debts into that grave to die with our old self. Then we devote our lives to the King, His cause and to one another. As we submit ourselves fully to Jesus our commander, we can leave those things that kept us in a cave and emerge ready for the spiritual battle.

As our Pastor friend learned, it’s all about who’s on your side. Will you devote yourself and inflict heavy losses on the enemy? Here’s how:

- Devote yourself to Jesus as first love in your life
- Devote yourself to playing a pro-active part in His Church
- Devote yourself to the King’s cause of making disciples

A King who gave up everything for you wants your heart and that’s how we fight.

Author: Chris Staples - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



DON'T FIGHT YOUR BATTLES IN THE FLESH

(DAY 8)

KEY VERSE

“He said to his men, ‘The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.’”

1 SAMUEL 24:6

- **Read 1 Samuel 24:1-22**

It's amazing to look at Christianity around the world and know that we all, at varying levels, are going through battles. It's an apt reminder of Paul's words to Timothy, "*fight the good fight of faith.*" (1 Timothy 6:12) The fight can simply be the ability to trust God under what seems like insurmountable pressure, a decision that needs to be made, bills that need to be paid, confrontations that need to be had. Yet in the midst of it all we wrestle with, "what can we do to help"? when actually the wrestle needs to be around, "Lord help me step aside and trust you. You called and you will provide, you will open, you will remove the obstacles."

One of my favourite stories is that of John G Lakes' call to Africa, and how this man of great faith trusted God through the process. The part that challenged me was that even after John had seen God provide his ticket onboard a ship, there were more obstacles to come. Once onboard and crossing the ocean, John was informed of an amount of money he would be required to provide as a disembarkation tax. However, John had only



had enough for his ticket. Rather than approach others to raise the funds, he got on his knees to pray. In the midst of the prayer, He felt God tell him he need not worry and that God would provide.

He continued to sail and days past with no sign of the money he needed.

What would you do?

John rested in, "God had called and had said". When the time came to depart, knowing he did not have the money for the disembarkation tax, a stranger walked up to him with an envelope and said, "The Lord has told me to give this to you". Talk about the 11th hour!

Upon opening the envelope, he was surprised as there was around £35 extra than he had asked for. Upon disembarking, John found out he needed to catch a train to his accommodation. The cost for the ticket including meals? You guessed it £35.

When it comes to standing in faith, there's always a test and a battle, but every test passed and battle won is a foundation for bigger victories to come. Don't put on the boxing gloves when God has called you to pray, "*lifting up holy hands*". (1 Timothy 2:8) You may not see how; you may feel battered but lean into God and let your faith take you through to the fulfillment of God's promises.

Author: Martin Stockdale - Lead Elder, Impact Church, Adelaide



THE WISDOM OF A WISE WIFE

(DAY 9)

KEY VERSE

“Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. And she said to her young men, ‘Go on before me; behold, I come after you.’ But she did not tell her husband Nabal”.

1 SAMUEL 25:18-19

- **Read 1 Samuel 25:1-29**

The Fool, The Rash, and The Wise

When I was about 10, I did the one of the most foolish things in my life. One day, when my parents were out, I noticed a lemonade bottle hidden away on top of the kitchen cupboards and I reckoned it must have been the good stuff, because why else would it be kept hidden up there? So, I decided I would have a drink of it. I climbed on the counter and balanced on a stool. I reached up and wrapped my hand around the bottle. Excitedly, I opened the lid and glugged it back... and then the pain hit! The liquid burned my throat and I suddenly noticed I couldn't breathe. I ran out onto the street turning blue and was found by our neighbour who managed to bring me round and get me breathing again.

When my parents arrived home, our neighbour told them that I'd had an asthma attack but my mum said, “Adrian doesn't have asthma”. The truth came out when the bottle was found. This bottle contained



woodworm killer that was left over after the floorboards had been treated by Rentokil. Dad thought it was good idea to store it in a lemonade bottle.

That was the most foolish thing I have done my life, but everyone knows the wisest thing I ever did in my life was to marry Maddie!

In today's scripture we see:

Nabal: The Fool

David: The Rash, and

Abigail: The Wise

While David was in hiding, he had protected Nabal's shepherds from robbers that roamed the wilderness but when David was in need of food for his men, Nabal foolishly refused to help! David decided to teach Nabal a deadly lesson. In his anger he is about to make the rashest decision of his life which could have cost him his future crown. In this situation, both David and Nabal lacked wisdom. Enter, the wise Abigail. She rustles up a feast and, without her husband's knowledge, takes the food to meet David before his troops arrive at Nabal's camp. Wisdom wins the day!

Ephesians 5:15-21 begins, "*Look carefully how you walk, not as the unwise but as the wise*".

Paul gives three ways to walk in wisdom:

1. Understand what the will of the Lord is: Take time before reacting, or when making a decision to seek God.
2. Be filled with the Spirit: Ask Him for the gift of wisdom (James 1:5)
3. Submitting to one another: Take advice from godly council.

By taking a moment before we speak or react, we can seek godly wisdom and that wisdom can save the day.

Author: Adrian Porter - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man

DEFEATING DESPAIR

(DAY 10)

KEY VERSE

“And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”

1 SAMUEL 30:6

- **Read 1 Samuel 27:1-7, 29:6-8, 30:1-6**

We hear in church the declaration, “God is good” and people reply, “all the time”. It is truth but not often said in time of despair. David was distressed, and many of us would be in the circumstances he found himself in. He experienced frustration with relationships, poor leadership decisions resulting in families being affected, rejection, wrong allegiance, rebellion, loss of his home, his wife and children taken and he had neglected his time with God. He didn’t resemble the figure who killed the lion, bear and Goliath. We can all find ourselves in tough circumstances, sometimes brought on by our own choices.

But in midst of being distressed, David knew the character of God. His journey had demonstrated that God is good. David had experienced God’s grace and knew the distress was not from God. He knew that his strength came from the Lord. He got honest with God and had a real, vulnerable conversation with the One who he knew loved him. He wept, repented, listened and reminded himself of God’s goodness.



David's priority to strengthen himself was intimacy with God before doing anything else.

As a believer in Christ, a new creation, we have been given, "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). We have also been blessed, "*with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*" in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, in times of despair we need to remind ourselves of who lives in us. "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" (1 John 4:4)

God is in you. The fullness of Christ dwells in you as a believer. Consider this truth, that God Himself desired to make His home in you. There is no circumstance that He is unable to strengthen you in, restore you from and see life flow. It is my responsibility, as David demonstrated, to strengthen myself first in the Lord. Yes, get others around you to pray for you, go to Church, go to Life Group, but I have to decide, based on the truth of my position in Christ, to access that strength which He has already given me.

- Remember your enemy "*comes only to steal and kill and destroy*" (John 10:10)
- Declare over yourself who you are in Christ.
- Remember to live by what is written in the Word, not what the circumstances are.
- Read your Bible and take time to meditate on it. Let it become part of you and "*keep [it] within your heart*" (Proverbs 4:21)
- Take time to pray, talk to God and have a conversation Him.
- Having done all stand on the truth.

Author: Heath Van Staden - Lead Elder, Liberty Church, Newport



THE DEATH OF A FOOL

(DAY 11)

KEY VERSE

“Then Saul said, ‘I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake.’”

1 SAMUEL 26:21

- **Read 1 Samuel 31:1-13**

I often get distracted and when my in-laws first came around for dinner this characteristic certainly didn't fail me. The embarrassment of them walking into the kitchen as I rushed to solve the inferno of melting plastic and smouldering spinach from a melting bag on the hob certainly left a lasting first impression! As we look today at the death of King Saul, I can see many similarities of a man who lived distracted from his true purpose and paid the ultimate price for many foolish decisions.

You can easily forget that Saul was a man of great potential chosen by God to be the first King of Israel. He was handsome and stood a head taller than any man in Israel. When he was anointed king, immediately the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him giving him a new heart. He led Israel to many military victories, starting his reign with great potential.

As you follow Saul's life, you clearly see how foolish decisions cost him his royal lineage and ultimately, his life. Proverbs 12:15 says, *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes”* and Saul's foolishness is a perfect example of this. Throughout 1 Samuel you see Saul's unlawful sacrifice (chapter

13), rash words putting Jonathan in trouble (chapter 14), disobedience to God (chapter 15), jealousy, plus two attempts to murder David (chapter 18) and finally, seeking a medium the day before his death (chapter 28). Decision after decision, you sense Saul's kingship ebbing away as he continually makes foolish decisions.

Our key verse today comes from Saul's second attempt to hunt and kill David who was hiding in the desert. Both attempts failed spectacularly with David having opportunities both times to kill Saul but choosing not to harm the Lord's anointed. Proverbs 26:11 says, "*As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his foolishness.*" Saul is the perfect example of a man returning time and time again to his foolishness, neglecting his royal duties. Although Saul's plea seems heartfelt, David refuses to believe Saul and he withdraws to a foreign land knowing that Saul would soon return to his foolish hunt of him. Saul's life even ended in a foolish manner not befitting of a king. He was struck by an arrow before falling on his sword and dying on the battlefield alongside his sons whose bodies were publicly humiliated. Proverbs 3:35 sums this up well, "*The wise will inherit honour, but fools get disgrace*".

Today, as believers with a great God-given potential and purpose, fix your eyes on Jesus. Live a godly life, throwing off all that hinders. Avoid all foolishness, remove all worldly distractions and chose to follow Christ with a full, unhindered devotion.

Author: Matt Rees - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



WORSHIPPING GOD'S WAY

(DAY 12)

KEY VERSE

“Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the Lord our God burst out against us. We failed to ask God how to move it properly.”

1 CHRONICLES 15:13

- **Read 2 Samuel 6:1-23; 1 Chronicles 15:1-13**

The God who commands us to worship Him has prescribed the way in which He wishes to be worshipped. God reveals His love language in the description of how He wants to be worshipped throughout scripture. We must wonder if we worshipped in any other way, would it be accepted by God?

Romans 12:1 (NIV) urges us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God and then it goes on to say that this is our true and proper worship. Therefore, true worship involves us offering our whole lives over to God; it is not just about singing, dancing or lifting our hands. True worship is about sacrifice and giving our whole bodies to the Lord. This is what pleases God.

Through our scriptural lesson today from 1 Chronicles 15, we see that we should not try to worship God in our own way. David tried to bring God's presence in his own way and it resulted in death. David had to consult with the scriptures to find the true and proper method as prescribed by God to bring His presence back into Jerusalem. Our ways



will always result in death. God's ways will always result in life so let us seek the Lord and find out from the scriptures how we might please Him.

In John 4, Jesus tells us that God is a spirit and those that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for God seeks those that will worship Him. God is seeking true worshippers and the only way that we can truly worship Him is to do it in spirit and in truth according to God's word.

True worship always involves sacrifice. In the Old Testament, animals or birds were used, however, God then demanded a sacrifice be brought to the altar and killed; we know that this was fulfilled in the ultimate death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We realise that there is also a death to ourselves that God requires, and we do this by devoting our bodies and lives to God.

True worship, God's way, is what will bring God's presence back into our churches, our cities and our countries; that is when we will see true revival.

If you desire to worship God His way, ask God now and say: "Father, open my eyes to your word and show me how to worship you. Show me how to present my body before you as I live in sacrifice and show me how to worship you in spirit and in truth."

Author: Peter Nembhard - Senior Pastor, ARC, London



WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO' TO YOUR DREAM

(DAY 13)

KEY VERSE

“But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, ‘Go and tell my servant David, “Thus says the Lord: It is not you who will build me a house to dwell in.”

1 CHRONICLES 17:3-4

- **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29; 1 Chronicles 22:2-5**

A few years ago, I hosted a wonderful elderly saint who had been a faithful Christian for most of his adult life. He stayed with my family and me for a few days while we enjoyed our annual International Four12 Conference. During the course of his stay, we got to know each other rather well while eating together, travelling together, swapping life stories and generally sharing life. One afternoon was set apart for sightseeing and we found ourselves exploring a beautiful beach on the west coast of the Isle of Man. As we looked out over the Irish Sea, he started reminiscing about the purpose of his life. Although I can't recall the exact words, he said something to this effect, “I can't wait to see what God wants to do with me and through me. I am sure He has a great plan for my life”. Perhaps I misunderstood his sentiment in that moment, but I couldn't help sensing a measure of disappointment and even sorrow. This is the kind of thought one would expect to hear from someone in the prime of life, rather than in his or her “sunset” years. I remember silently praying, “Father, I don't want



to get to the end of my race, still waiting on Your purposes for and through me.” It seemed to me that this dear elderly brother was hoping for something that may never materialise. At least not in the way he anticipated.

What dreams do you have in Christ Jesus?

King David wanted to build a magnificent dwelling place for God but this was not to be. Our plans for life are seldom the same as God’s plans for our lives. However, His plans are always superior and ultimately for the glory of His name. This doesn’t mean that we should sit back and simply “hope” for the best. While we dream, we should do the following:

1. Wholeheartedly worship God daily!

We were created to know God and be known by Him. If we come to the end of this life having been extravagant and consistent worshippers of Him, we have done well!

2. Do the best with what is right in front of you!

Even if it seems irrelevant, work at everything as though you are doing it for Jesus (Colossians 3:23), knowing that he who is faithful with little, will be entrusted with much (Luke 16:10).

3. Equip others!

David didn’t build the temple, but he equipped, resourced and empowered his son, Solomon, to do so. You can be the catalyst for others to flourish in the Lord, and the inspiration for those around you to greatly advance His Kingdom.

Don’t let disappointment slow you down.

Author: Rousseau Moss - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



A HOUSE OF GRACE

(DAY 14)

KEY VERSE

“And David said, ‘Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?’”

2 SAMUEL 9:1

- **Read 1 Samuel 24:20-22; 2 Samuel 9:1-13**

Someone once said that humans are the only part of God's creation that when you pat them on the back, their heads expand. I've also observed that the older we get, we go one of two ways: gracious or grumpy. Recently, a friend retired after 40 years of very successful ministry. I was amazed by his humility as, for the final time, he addressed the church that he had led for the past 19 years, using three words as his outline:

Sorry... for not getting it right all the time and always responding the way he should have.

Thank you... to the church for their willingness to change and for their sacrificial contribution over the years.

Please... continue to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

He had built a church of thousands and none of the buildings on the site which had cost millions of pounds were there when he arrived 19 years earlier, yet every word he spoke was saturated with grace.



Saul is dead, King David is now on the throne. It's been such a long journey of highs and lows since he took down Goliath as a shepherd boy.

How will he handle himself?

I think one of the most beautiful pictures of grace in the Old Testament is when King David discovers that there is still a living relative of his friend Jonathan, Saul's son. In those days, new kings wiped out the entire families of previous rulers that had been deposed, just in case one would make a challenge for the throne. This man, Mephibosheth, was a cripple. When he was summoned to the palace, he thought for sure that he'd die – he'd be executed. But we read the contrary – it's a story of grace given freely.

*"Mephibosheth fell to the ground before the king. 'Should the king show such kindness (grace) to a dead dog like me?' he exclaimed... You and your sons and servants are to farm the land for him to produce food for his family. **But Mephibosheth will live here at the palace with me.**" 2 Samuel 9:8, 10. Instead of a death sentence, Mephibosheth received a royal welcome and a place at the king's table for life. David built a house of Grace. What a picture of God's passion for His people and His House! It's no accident that the first followers of Jesus were also known for their grace. "And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **great grace** was upon them all." (Acts 4:33)*

This was literally a house of 'mega' grace.

To whom do you need to show such grace today?

Author: Jonathan Stanfield - Lead Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



EVERY MAN'S BATTLE

(DAY 15)

KEY VERSE

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.”

2 SAMUEL 11:1

- **Read 2 Samuel 11:1-27**

In this chapter, we see David’s “fall from grace”; a pattern of escalating sin which he justified in his mind at every turn and it all started with him being in the wrong place. Verse one tells us twice that he wasn’t where he should have been – instead of being at war with his men, he stayed home. It was time for the kings to go to battle but where was he? Wandering around his rooftop terrace, looking for a distraction from his boredom and idleness.

Secondly, he was looking at the wrong things. Instead of overseeing his armies and perusing battle strategy, his eye was captured by the beautiful Bathsheba. But instead of looking away, he “took notice” (v2). The lust of his eyes very quickly led to adultery and, in turn, adultery shortly resulted in murder. Bathsheba became pregnant and her husband, Uriah (one of David’s mighty men) was sent to the front of the army; a position that guaranteed his death. All because David was in the wrong place, looking at the wrong things.



James 1:14-15 tells us: “*But each one is tempted, when by his own evil desires, he is lured away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*” These verses show us how things escalate from desires to enticement, to sin and then to death. Adultery or sexual sin doesn’t start in the bedroom; it starts with a chat at the photocopier, smiles across the school gates, WhatsApp messaging...

David was not where he should have been. Are you letting your mind go to places it shouldn’t? Are you physically, or virtually, visiting the wrong places or people? David “*took notice*” of the wrong things. What are you looking at? Instead of focussing on God and His word are you watching things on Netflix or the internet that cause titillation and “*evil desires*” rather than Holy Spirit desires for godliness and holiness?

The phrase James uses, “*lured away*”, is a fishing term which literally means “being baited”. The fish sees the bait and takes a nibble. Next thing, he is hooked (literally!) and finally, he is on the boat. At which point is it easiest for the fish to get away? From the boat? At the point he is attached to the hook? Or when he is swimming towards the bait? Of course, it’s when he’s swimming towards the bait. Please! Swim away from the bait, before you get hooked!

Be in the right place: Follow God’s path.

Look at the right things: Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Maintain wide margins between you and whatever bait is likely to entice.

Author: Euan MacRae - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



CONFRONTATION...CONFESSION... CLEANSING

(DAY 16)

KEY VERSE

“David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’”

2 SAMUEL 12:13

- **Read 2 Samuel 12:1-14; Psalm 32; Psalm 51**

In 2 Samuel 12: 1-14, we have the account of God sending the prophet, Nathan, to speak to King David. Nathan paints a shocking picture of wrongdoing. The story is of two men in a city; one extremely wealthy with everything money can buy and a poor man with nothing but a lamb - the most precious and only thing he owns. The story tells how the rich man steals the one thing that was most precious to this poor man. The sense of injustice is palpable and David is outraged. David's response is, surely, he “*must die!*”. Then Nathan confronts him with the truth: “*David, you are the man!*”

How would you feel if you were David? How would you respond? David responds by saying, “*I have sinned against the Lord*”. What's interesting is that David doesn't defend his actions, he doesn't try to excuse or to justify his behaviour; he immediately takes responsibility for his actions. With that one decision, begins the road to restoration. Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:13 goes on to say, “*The Lord also has put away your sin: you shall not die*”.



When we sin, mess up, step out of God's will (which we all do), our natural default, so often, is to defend our actions and make excuses. One step to restoration is confession. To own up and to be honest with God is an important step but we also need to move from confession to repentance, which is action. In essence, saying, "I turn from that way of living and that behaviour and I receive forgiveness". Repentance is more than a feeling. Emotion can be fleeting, but true repentance bears fruit of change.

1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"*. What is the result of repentance and confession? The greatest blessing of all: forgiveness! *"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven"* Psalm 32:1.

Understand that it was the Holy Spirit's work to send Nathan to speak to David. How does God speak to us today? He will use whatever means possible and because He does speak, the challenge is as relevant for us today as it was for David. How will we respond when the Holy Spirit speaks and God challenges us about things and attitudes in our lives? Will we respond with instant confession or resistance? May David's prayer be our prayer, as well. It's a prayer of humility, passionate devotion and dependence on God.

Psalm 51:10-12: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God."*

Let's be quick to confess and live every day in the wonder of forgiveness.

Author: Steve Fishpool - Lead Elder, CLC, Horsham



A HOUSE DIVIDED

(DAY 17)

KEY VERSE

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.’”

2 SAMUEL 12:11

- **Read 2 Samuel 16:21-22; 13:1-30; 15:14; 18:33; Galatians 6:7**

One of my mentors has recently gone to be with his Lord. Arthur Williams founded the Stauros foundation which ministers to people with addictions and offers support to their families. So, you won't be surprised if I tell you that Arthur was once an alcoholic from whom his family lived in fear. As Arthur came in the front door of the house drunk, his wife, Beth, and their children ran out the back door. His anger, aggression and mood swings made him impossible to live with. His excessive drinking led to Arthur being sectioned in a mental institute, however, it was there that he met Jesus Christ!

Arthur had never set out in life to be an alcoholic. In fact, the reason he left home was due to the alcoholism of his own father. He had vowed to never be like his dad. Arthur later discovered that his father's father had also been an alcoholic. There had been a pattern stretching back generations. God is the God of miracles and when Arthur came to Christ, that pattern was broken. Today, Arthur's son serves as a missionary, his



daughters are following Jesus and his grandchildren have grown up knowing Jesus instead of a pattern of destruction and abuse.

In our reading today, we see the same pattern of brokenness and sin reaching from one generation to the next. David opened a door to sexual sin and murder through his lust over Bathsheba and we read in the chapters following of sexual sin, violence, murder and division in the house of David with one son even plotting to overthrow his father and take the kingdom by force. If we choose to open the door of sin into our house, the Bible is clear that it has an effect, not just in the here and now, but also in the generations to come. *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”*. (Galatians 6:7)

A key verse for freedom in this area is found in Deuteronomy 30:19, *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live”*. Arthur made the choice to follow Jesus - to choose life. It transformed his life, and the life of his family. The choices you and I make today will impact the House - either to help it stand or cause it to be divided. Today, **choose life** by turning away from any sin that has entangled you and enter into the freedom found in Christ.

If this strikes a chord with you today, then please contact your Life Group leader or a Pastor and begin your journey to freedom.

Author: Adrian Porter - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



FRIENDS IN TROUBLED TIMES

(DAY 18)

KEY VERSE

“But Ittai said to the king, ‘I vow by the Lord and by your own life that I will go wherever my lord the king goes, no matter what happens - whether it means life or death.’”

2 SAMUEL 15:21

- **Read 2 Samuel 15:1-34; 17:27-29; 19:1-7**

There is great value in having true friends. True friends are those who care about you more than they care about themselves. They stick by you when it is not easy to be your friend. They add value to your life and encourage and support you to do what is right, even when times are tough. False friends, on the other hand, are only in it for themselves. They are only there in the good times and when times get tough, they become disillusioned and offended, leaving you to go in search of better things.

Ittai was a true friend to David. He hadn't known David very long. In fact, he only met David the day before, and yet, he devoted himself to David and was willing to suffer and even die for his friend. David's son, Absalom wasn't interested in a relationship with his father; he was only in it for himself. All he wanted was his father's kingdom; so much so, that he conspired to take it from him by force. Therefore, David and all his family were on the run from Absalom. They were headed into the wilderness; their future was uncertain. They stood to lose everything and yet, Ittai was willing to be David's true friend. Even though David was going through troubled times, he was willing to stick by him no matter what.



Jesus is a friend like this towards us. He suffered and died for us so that we can walk in friendship with Him. He is faithful even when we are not. He holds nothing back from us. In Romans 8:17 we are told that we are co-heirs with Christ. We stand to inherit everything in the Kingdom of God, together with our Saviour, brother and friend. However, this is dependent on whether we are willing to stand by Him through suffering. The second part of verse 17 says, *“provided we are willing to suffer with Him in order that we may be glorified in Him”*.

In Proverbs we read that a friend loves at all times and that a brother is born for adversity. What kind of friend are you? Are you like Absalom who was only in it for himself? Or are you like Ittai who loved at all times? Jesus is still calling us to be His friends and is looking for friends who will remain true even when times are tough. The promise for true friends of Jesus is that they will share in His glory! It is interesting that later in the story, Absalom lost the kingdom and his life, but because of his friendship during tough times, Ittai was made a general in David's army.

Author: Denis Thompson - Lead Elder, 242 Church, Hull



SIN ALWAYS HAS A PRICE

(DAY 19)

KEY VERSE

“Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census of the people of Israel.”

1 CHRONICLES 21:1

- **Read 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21**

Whether you are a king in your palace or a pauper on the streets, you will experience temptation to sin. Sin is serving our independent nature and acting in ways against God’s will and Word. Rooted in satisfying our flesh through selfish desires, it certainly doesn’t come without consequence.

Even David, a man after God’s heart, finds himself tempted by pride and self-sufficiency, stumbling into sin. Sin always offers a promising reward yet never delivers. Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death”* and highlights the real reward of sin - eternal separation from our heavenly father. Sin always has a price, either on earth or in eternity. Thankfully, Romans 6:23 goes on to say, *“But the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”* revealing the gift of salvation found in true repentance.

Even though David owned his sin and repented, he still had to pay a price for his actions. Leaving the decision in the hands of the Lord, 70,000 men died because of David’s sin. This short passage teaches us that those with God-given authority over our lives carry a responsibility to live



upright, Godly lives, considering their ways. If you walk in a spiritual leadership role, either in Church, as a husband or as a parent, consider your God-given authority and how the consequences of your sin might affect those you lead.

There are a few incredible lessons when it comes to overcoming sin in today's story. Firstly, ownership. David was prepared to own the error of his ways. He was noted multiple times saying, "I have done this thing" and did not accuse any other of causing him to sin. Are you fully owning your own sin today? Secondly, we see David was unprepared to offer back to God something without cost. David ensured he paid the full price to make right with God at the threshing floor, and thereby sets us an example to do the same. Is our repentance and worship costly to our flesh or a token gesture of choice words, without intent to follow through? Thirdly, the burnt offering signifies the removal of sin and the peace offering a restoration of fellowship with the Father. Have you repented of your sin and discovered His abounding mercy and forgiveness? Are you living in peaceful fellowship with the Father today? Finally, don't forget Joab. He challenges the King directly in his desires prior to David falling into sin. If David had listened to Joab, he would have never had to face the consequences of his sin. Are you listening to the Holy Spirit and fellow believers around you when it comes to the way you are living?

Author: Matt Rees - Elder, Living Hope Church, Isle of Man



FINAL WORDS TO THE NEXT GENERATION

(DAY 20)

KEY VERSE

“Then David said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished.’”

1 CHRONICLES 28:20

- **Read 1 Chronicles 28:9-12, 20**

The passing of the baton

I recall summer 2016. The staff in the secondary school I was working in were preparing for the competitive annual 4x100m relay race. Various subjects made up a house, and these houses were to face each other in a relay race before a lively crowd of students. As the race started, I remember waiting to receive the baton from one of the older teammates, which felt like forever. My team came second out of six teams that day and everyone knew the person I was waiting to receive the baton from was the stumbling block in our team.

In a relay race, what comes before is crucial to what lies ahead.

It may be common sense but have you ever wondered why athletes run quicker in a 4x100m relay than in a 100m solo sprint? The former



Jamaican sprinter, Usain Bolt, is considered to be the greatest sprinter of all time yet it is said that Bolt ran 0.93 seconds faster than his world record in a relay race. The reason for these faster record times is because only one of the runners starts from a stationary position; the other three runners in the team are allowed to build up speed before they take over the baton.

In 1 Chronicles 28, Solomon is about to receive the baton from his father, David, in order to build the temple and lead the children of Israel. He was in a better position than his father to run faster and see the promises of God fulfilled. Solomon was able to stand on David's shoulders which would give him a head start into the plans and purposes of God. We can learn three lessons from David's final words to Solomon in order to pass the baton on to a next generation, giving them a head start into the plans and purposes of God:

1. 1 Chronicles 29:19 informs us that David had a plan written down. *It is imperative that we have a plan for the next generation and that our current work has a legacy, which lives on beyond us.*
2. 1 Chronicles 28:21-29:9 shows us that David provided Solomon with all his resources, personal treasures and workers. *We need to set the next generation up to win.*
3. 1 Chronicles 28:20 is the most important lesson of the three: It would be easy for Solomon to place his confidence in the plan and resources. However, David instructs him that the work will be completed because God is with him. Solomon needs to have his trust in God, much more than the plan and resources by seeking and serving God. *We need to cultivate spirituality in the next generation.*

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DAVID'S EPITAPH

(DAY 21)

KEY VERSE

"Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep"

ACTS 13:36

Epitaphs written on the graves of famous people can reveal important things about their lives. Spike Milligan, the comedian, requested an Irish inscription which translates, "I told you I was ill". Nelson Mandela wanted, "I would like it to be said, here lies the man who has done his duty on Earth. That is all". John Wesley's tomb victoriously proclaims, "After having languished a few days, he at length finished his course and his life together, gloriously triumphing over death". Billy Graham's epitaph will simply read, "Billy Graham. Preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ" accompanied by a single Bible verse, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

These words tell us what mattered to these men. One of the most poignant epitaphs, however, is that of Alexander the Great. It reads, "A tomb now suffices him for whom the world was not enough". This powerfully reminds us that the tomb swallows up and discards even the greatest human conquests. The legacy of a man is not what he leaves in a tomb on earth but how he has lived for God. "After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it." (1 Timothy 6:7)



Every person has a God-given purpose and the greatest tragedy is ending life without having found this, whether it is big, small, public or never to be seen. Ultimately the earth's riches and trophies have no meaning or value. The only thing that matters is being right with God through Jesus Christ. This is the perspective needed for living and dying in peace. Dreams may or may not be fulfilled but serving the purpose of God in our generation is the key to looking back on life with peace.

David was Israel's greatest leader. There has never been a king in Israel like him. He led the people into the favour of God, bringing unprecedented blessings and victories. Yet in his preach that we read in Acts 13, the apostle Paul highlights none of his military or political victories. Instead, he gives David the ultimate epitaph, "*he had served the purpose of God in his own generation*".

Even David had unfulfilled dreams of building the temple, "*The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors...*" (2 Samuel 7:11-12) but his focus was not on this; it was on what God had allowed him to do. With no regret or bitterness, he accepted God's purpose and died thankful and at peace.

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