



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 SAMUEL

Week 3

The Spreading Stain

2 Samuel 13:23-39–14:1-21

OPENING
up to the Word

Are there people around you who are dangerous or destructive that you ought to avoid?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Absalom plots revenge. Did David seem to reflect a lack of judgement in this situation (13:23-27)?

2. Absalom, like a cobra, waited cunningly for the right moment to strike. How did his crime get reported (vs. 29-33)? What happened to him (vs. 34-38)?

3. Why did Joab support Absalom? What was Joab's back-door strategy to turn David's heart back to Absalom (14:2-3)?

4. What was the essence of the tale told by the woman from Tekoa (vs. 4-17)? British statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) once said that in approaching royalty you must lay on flattery with a trowel. Are there any examples of this in the woman's speech (v. 17)?

5. David saw through Joab's gambit (vs. 18-21), but his heart seemed to overrule his head—Absalom was allowed to return (v. 21). Both David and Joab would pay dearly for this.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you known people who are so blinded by parental love and concern that they cannot see defects of character? Is it easy to give advice to such individuals?

2. David could have used some good advice regarding Absalom—perhaps 1 Peter 5:8. What other advice could you have given David that day?

3. Do you have a strained or broken relationship with anyone in your life? Is there anything you can do to bring about a reconciliation?

From Bad to Worse

DAY 16

2 Samuel 15:1-12

Have you had any experience with lawbreakers or criminals? Were you tempted to follow them or did you try to persuade them to change?

1. What were three of Absalom's strategies for gaining advantage over his father (vs. 1-6)?
2. *If I were in charge things would be different!* Absalom cunningly exploited the weaknesses in David's administration (v. 4). How long did he spend in cultivating his conspiracy (v. 7)?
3. Why did Absalom choose Hebron to launch his rebellion—other than the fact that he probably spent his childhood there? Did it have anything to do with earlier events in David's life (vs. 7-9; 2:1-4)?
4. Again we see how the narrator tied the action together through the use of geographic place names that recalled earlier incidents. Ancient middle eastern cultures tended to look to the past for guidance as much as we look to the future for hope of improvement.
5. Absalom "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." Did he have most of the people with him (vs. 10-12)? Why weren't people more loyal to David?

1. How many "Absaloms" have you known in your life? How did you deal with them?
2. Have your words been appropriate the past several days? Do you participate in subversive conversations or gossip about anyone?
3. James 3:1-12 is a good spiritual antidote to rumors and slander.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

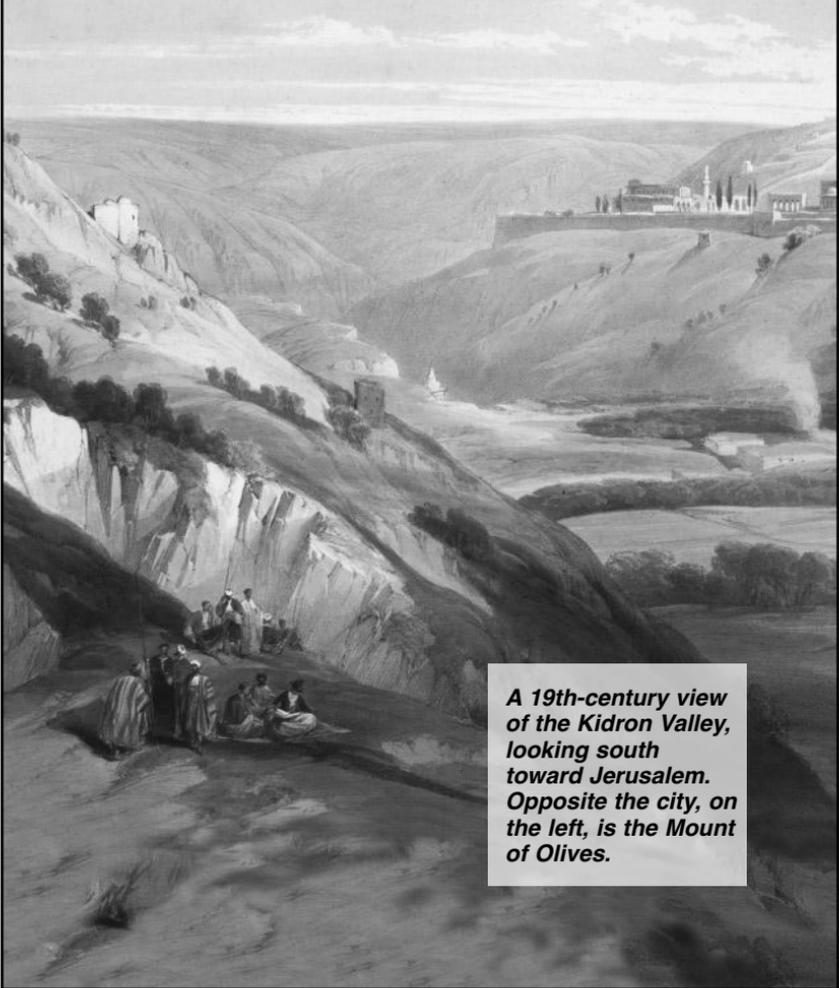
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

*“The whole countryside wept
aloud as all the people passed by.
The king also crossed the Kidron
Valley, and all the people moved
on toward the desert.”*

2 Samuel 15:23



***A 19th-century view
of the Kidron Valley,
looking south
toward Jerusalem.
Opposite the city, on
the left, is the Mount
of Olives.***

One Loyal Friend Makes a Majority

DAY 17

2 Samuel 15:13-37

Whom do you consider the most loyal person in your life? Who has stood by you when you were in trouble?

1. David moved quickly in the face of Absalom's uprising. What did he do?
2. David found that in this crisis his most loyal follower was a former Philistine mercenary. What was his name? How did this news effect David (vs. 19-22)?
3. What advice did David give the Levites guarding the Ark? What was there about his remarks that revealed David's desperate straits (vs. 23-26)?
4. In the midst of this pressing trial, David did not forget the value of good intelligence and strategy. What did he advise some of his closest friends (vs. 27-37)?
5. Note the mention again of Ahithophel (v. 31), the king's chief counselor (1Ch 27:33). He was also the grandfather of Bathsheba (2 Sa 11:3; 23:34). Why do you think he defected from David?

1. "A friend in need is a friend indeed." David had his enemies but he also had lots of loyal friends. Do you?
2. Do the people with whom you spend time demonstrate loyalty?

The **Gittites** were from Gath, where Achish had been king when David was in Ziklag. They probably served as David's close bodyguards.

OPENING

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Trouble Comes in Twos

2 Samuel 16:1-14

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up to the Word

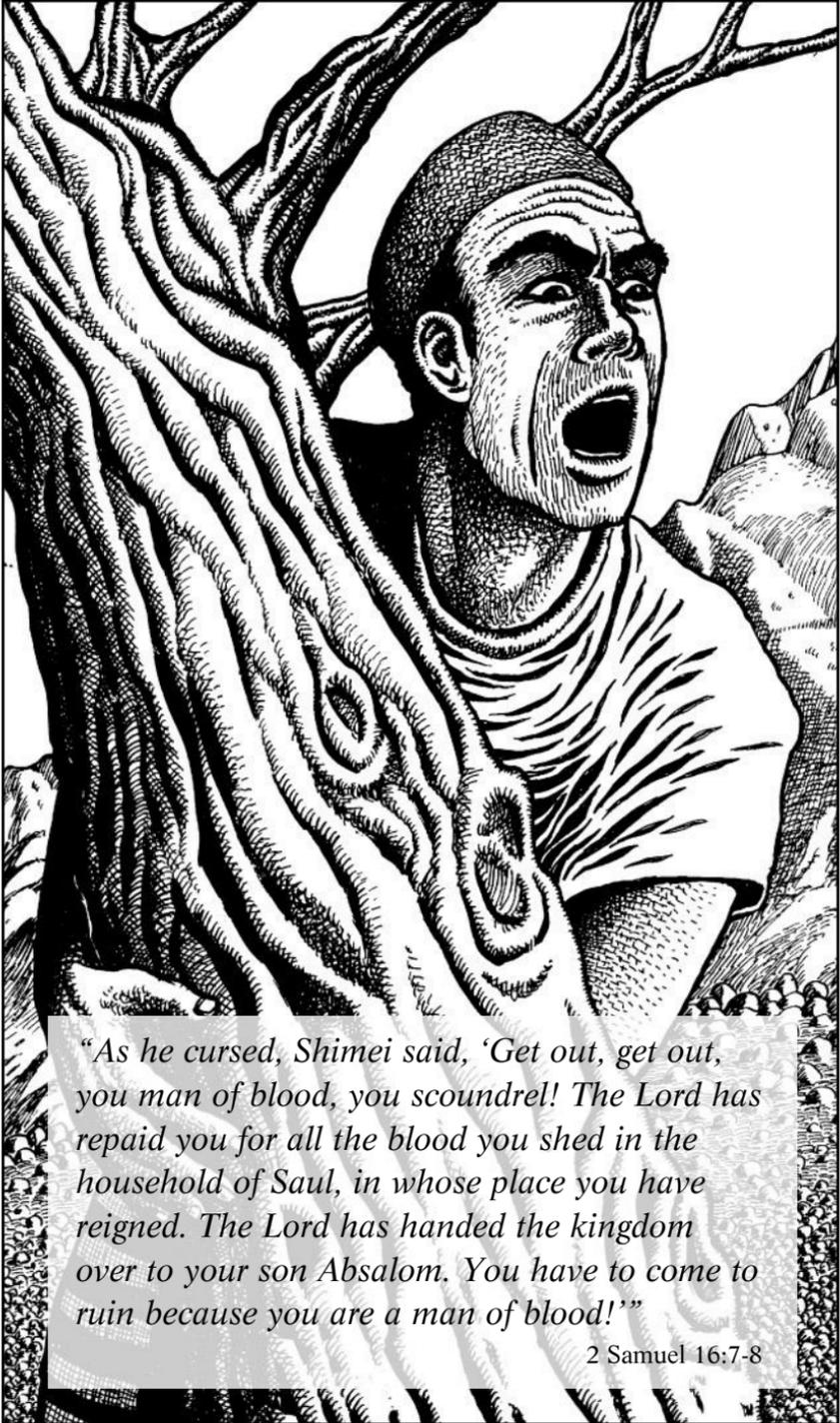
Have you seen anyone pick on someone who was having a rough time?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** In times of chaos and instability, there are always a few opportunists around. What did Ziba, the servant of the disabled Mephibosheth, tell David (vs. 1-4)?
- 2.** Later events would prove this report to be false. Ziba was ingratiating himself for selfish gain and David impulsively went along with it...for a while.
- 3.** Perhaps few events reveal David's humility and God-centeredness than the way he received criticism in this most miserable time in his life. Who was Shimei (v. 5)? What did he do (vs. 6-8)?
- 4.** What was Abishai's reaction (vs. 9)? What was David's reaction (vs. 11-12)?
- 5.** Whose idea was it to leave Jerusalem (15:14)? Did they escape Absalom's forces?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** How do you respond to criticism?
- 2.** What circumstances try your patience the most? Which people are you the most impatient with? Can you develop more patience?
- 3.** Do you know people who are adept at promoting themselves? Do you consider them to be a threat?



“As he cursed, Shimei said, ‘Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have to come to ruin because you are a man of blood!’”

2 Samuel 16:7-8

There's Always Someone Smarter

2 Samuel 16:15-23

OPENING
up to the Word

Who is the most capable person you have ever known?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who was Hushai the Arkite (15:32-37; 16:16)? How did Hushai greet Absalom (v. 16)? But when Hushai says, "Long live the king," is it his master David that he has in mind?

2. Absalom is at first suspicious (v. 17). What does Hushai say to allay his fears (vs. 18-19)? Hushai cleverly plays to Absalom's vanity.

3. What did Ahithophel advise Absalom to do next (vs. 21-22)? In ancient times the seizure of the royal harem demonstrated possession of the throne.

4. How was Ahithophel's counsel regarded (v. 23)? There is no higher praise than that.

LIVING
out the Word

1. How important is it to use tact in telling the truth or when trying to help someone?

2. In the Bible *goodness* or *righteousness* is closely related to *graciousness*. One definition of courage is "being graceful when under pressure." Does Hushai's example illustrate this?

3. Some New Testament passages related to this topic are Matthew 12:35 and Colossians 4:6. How do they apply in the dramatic events of 2 Samuel 16?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The ancients prized **wisdom** as much as skill in war. In Hebrew culture wisdom (hokmah) and understanding (binah) were words used to describe a wisdom that is practical, not theoretical. Wisdom is the art of discerning the right approach to a problem to gain the best results. In the Bible, the seat of wisdom is the heart, the center of moral and intellectual decisions (1Ki 3:9-12).*

A Fool and His Folly

DAY 20

2 Samuel 17:1-29

Can you remember a time when you followed what turned out to be bad advice? What did it cost you?

1. What did Ahithophel advise Absalom (vs. 1-4)?
2. What did Hushai advise (vs. 5-10)? Did he keep subtly appealing to Absalom's vanity (vs. 11-14)? Was God really the one doing this?
3. What did Hushai do next (vs. 15-16)? Were his intelligence channels in place (vs. 17-22)?
4. How did Ahithophel react to all this (vs. 23)?
5. Absalom's army crossed the Jordan to hunt out David's army, which was now led by Amasa, not Joab. Who came to David's support at this crucial time (vs. 27-29)?

1. Do you consider yourself modest, or do you find yourself blowing your own horn?
2. "My mind is already made up, don't confuse me with the facts" could be Absalom's epitaph. What else would you carve on his tombstone? Would you consider Proverbs 12:15 appropriate?

*Ahithophel is one of very few **suicides** mentioned in Scripture. The other prominent figures involved in suicide are King Saul and Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus (Mt 27:5). Ahithophel's suicide was probably due to the fact that he had lost face when Absalom rejected his advice. He may also have foreseen where the young man's folly would lead.*

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“Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.”

Death to Traitors

DAY 21

2 Samuel 18:1-18

Have you ever had to pick up the pieces when your personal life has disintegrated? Did you turn to anyone for help?

1. Did David want to lead the army personally (vs. 1-4)?
2. What were his orders concerning Absalom (v. 5)?
3. Rebellion never occurs without costs. What were the casualties that day (vs. 6-8)?
4. How did Absalom meet his ignominious end (vs. 9-15)?
5. Absalom's only legacy was a grave deep in the forest. His three sons had apparently already died (vs. 16-18).

Sin has been described as a cancer. David had been driven out of his beloved city by his own son, as a result of his parenting and family failures. Were there any factors that may have encouraged him at such a time?

*"The forest claimed more lives that day than the sword" (v. 8). This **forest of Ephraim** was, in biblical times, far to the north and east of Jerusalem across the deep gulf of the Jordan River. It was a region of dense oak and pine woods. However, because the forest was in the territory of Gilead, some geographers refer to the scene of Absalom's demise as the woods of Gilead. David's earlier defeat of the Ammonites and the Aramaeans made that region secure, one reason why he fled to the prominent city of Mahanaim in Gilead where Abner had crowned Ish-Bosheth. The Jewish historian Josephus adds the detail that Absalom's long hair (14:25-26) got him entangled in the oak tree.*

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