

2 SAMUEL

Chapters 1–12





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**EXPLORE THE BIBLE: 2 Samuel—
Chapters 1–12**

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

Throughout history certain figures have been considered larger than life. Few Bible heroes hold this distinction more than David. This study of 2 Samuel reveals David's successes; however, we'll also discover that one of the Bible's greatest heroes wasn't without major flaws. Yet when God confronted his sin, David confessed and sincerely repented. As a result, God's gracious forgiveness—available to all who are willing to repent—is on full display.

Although most of us will likely never become a heroic figure, by studying 2 Samuel, we can still clearly relate to David. Even if we're far from perfect and our flaws are often evident, we can continually strive toward David's most positive attribute—a deep, profound faith in God.

The **Explore the Bible** series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT: This page explains the original circumstances and setting of the session's focal passage and identifies the primary themes.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: This page introduces the session's Bible passage, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

APPLY THE TEXT: This page helps you and your group members apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

DAILY EXPLORATION: Go deeper into God's Word, building on the group experience. Engage in these daily Bible studies, reflect on the questions, record your thoughts, and take action.

OBEY THE TEXT: These pages provide opportunities to obey the Scriptures you've studied by responding to questions, memorizing verses, journaling, and praying.

LEADER GUIDE: This final section provides discussion starters and suggested questions to help someone lead a group study.



GENERAL EDITOR

Jason K. Allen serves as the president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and as an associate professor of preaching and pastoral ministry. More broadly, he serves the church through his preaching and writing ministries. He's the author of *Being a Christian*, *The SBC & the Twenty-First Century*, and *Discerning Your Call to Ministry*. Dr. Allen regularly posts essays and hosts a weekly podcast, "Preaching & Preachers," on his website, jasonkallen.com.

ABOUT 2 SAMUEL

People are fascinated with royalty. Some are obsessed with kings and queens, both real and fictional, past and present. Many people love the story of King Arthur and his mythical court and castle of Camelot. Today the monarchs of Great Britain continue to capture the attention of the American public. Perhaps the popularity of royalty points to a human desire for a wise, powerful king who defends his people through virtue and goodness.

The Book of 2 Samuel tells the story of a dynasty that's grounded in this world yet decreed by the promise of God to endure eternally. It begins with a man named David whose kingly greatness is celebrated but whose human flaws aren't overlooked. The book introduces us to this great promise: God would establish David's kingship forever through His own Son, Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

Key themes of 2 Samuel include the following.

- › *The sovereignty of God.* At first glance the Book of 2 Samuel may seem to be about David's rise to power as the king of Israel and events that happened during his reign. In reality these events were recorded to show the way God was working. Second Samuel highlights the activity of God.
- › *The consequences of sin and God's grace.* David was divinely chosen to be the king of all Israel, yet God's favor toward him wasn't an unconditional license. When David sinned, God confronted him and chastened him. But the Lord was merciful even when dealing with sin. Second Samuel magnifies the grace of God that's greater than all our sin.
- › *The covenant relationship with David that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.* The entire book hinges on chapter 7, which records God's promise to establish the throne of David forever (see vv. 11b-13). The covenant that God established with David ultimately found its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:31-33).

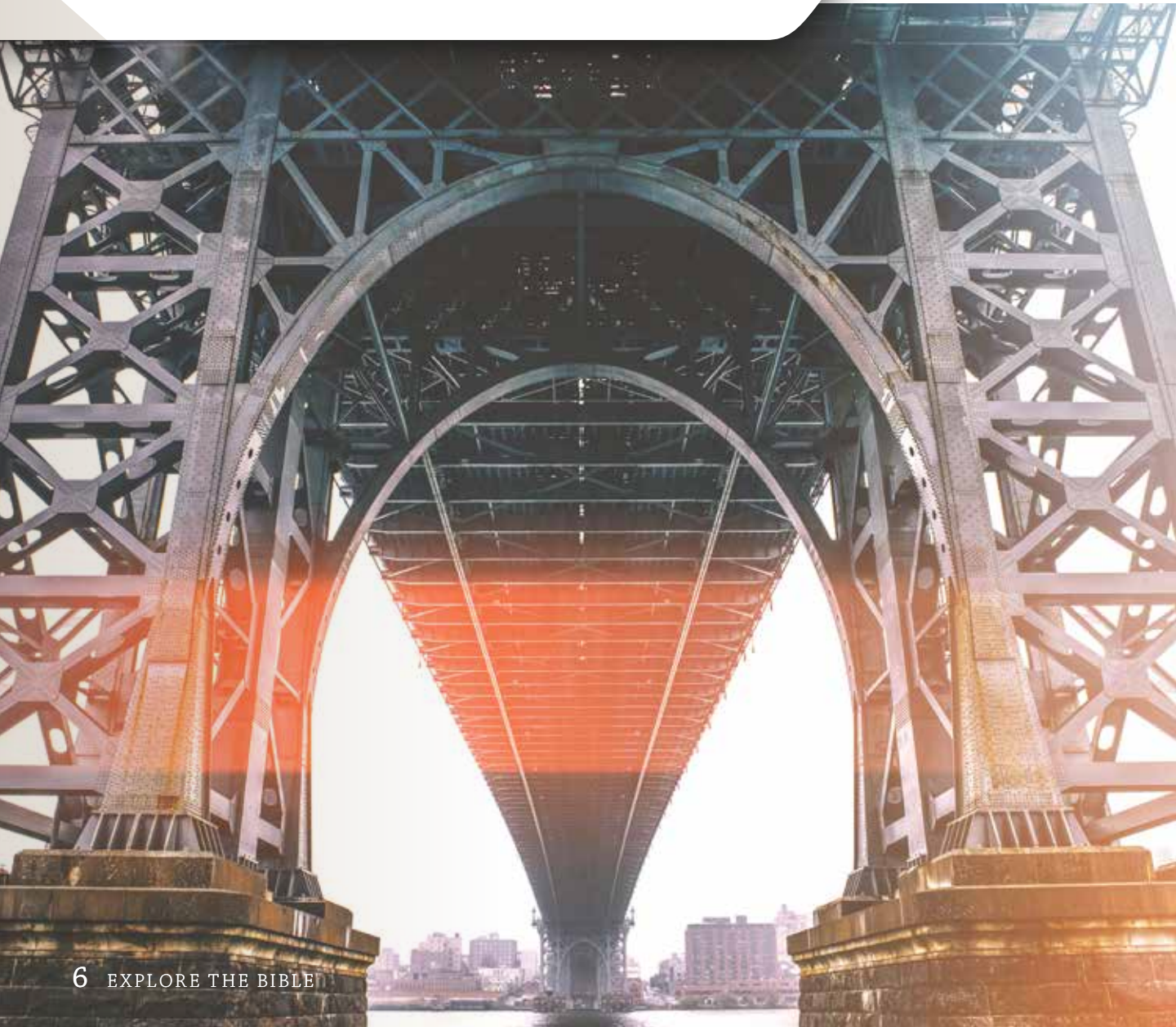


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Respected

God calls individuals to lead His people, and they should be honored as His chosen leaders.

2 Samuel 1:22-27; 2:1-7



Should all leaders be respected? Explain. What are the dangers of failing to respect leaders that God has placed over you?

God chooses to use human beings to accomplish His purposes. He could use angels to carry out His work. Presumably, God could deliver messages to His creation by writing them in the sky. He could bring His will to pass through a vast variety of methods. However, Scripture declares that God calls individuals to accomplish His purposes by leading His people. Those leaders deserve our respect.

► UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Second Samuel is a book about kings. While the desire for a king by God's people exposed an improper motive on their part (see 1 Sam. 8:4-21), the role of king was a part of God's purpose in Israel (see Deut. 17:14-20). Although some kings miserably failed in their role, the concept of kingship was a part of God's redemptive plan to bring Jesus to earth as the eternal King and Messiah.

Second Samuel begins where 1 Samuel left off—with the demise of Israel's first king, Saul—and it provides additional details about his death. Ironically, it details how an Amalekite killed Saul after the king attempted to take his own life. Saul's downfall began with his failure to completely annihilate the Amalekites (see Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:18-19). David, on the other hand, Saul's successor, sought to fulfill God's command against Amalek (see 1 Sam. 30:16-17; 2 Sam. 1:1).

Although Saul was deficient as a leader of the people of Israel, David showed respect for him and his office as the Lord's anointed (see 2 Sam. 1:14-16). And although the Amalekite messenger from Mount Gilboa paid homage to David (see 1:2), it was formal and ritualistic, probably designed to ingratiate himself to David. Ultimately, respect for God's leaders is a matter of the heart.

After dealing with the treacherous Amalekite and putting him to death for his rejection of and disdain for the Lord's anointed (see 1:15-16), David and his men began to mourn the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (see 1:17-27). Those who followed David modeled their behavior after him, which was a tribute to David's leadership. The dirge he composed in his grief was poignant and touching. In ordering that it be taught to the people, David taught them how to honor their leaders and affirmed the importance of kingship in ancient Israel.

► 2 SAMUEL 1:22-27; 2:1-7

22 Jonathan's bow never retreated, Saul's sword **never returned unstained** **A**, from the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty. **23** Saul and Jonathan, loved and delightful, **they were not parted** **B** in life or in death. They were **swifter than eagles** **C**, **stronger than lions** **D**.

24 Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxurious things, who decked your garments with gold ornaments. **25** How the mighty have fallen in the thick of battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.

26 I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. You were such a friend to me. Your love for me was more wondrous than the love of women. **27** How the mighty have fallen and the weapons of war have perished!

2:1 Some time later, David inquired of the LORD: "Should I go to one of the towns of Judah?" The LORD answered him, "Go." Then David asked, "Where should I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD replied. **2** So David went there with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail, the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. **3** In addition, David brought the men who were with him, each one with his family, and they settled in the towns near Hebron. **4** Then the men of Judah came, and there they **anointed** **E** David king over the house of Judah. They told David: "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul." **5** David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "The LORD bless you, because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord when you buried him. **6** Now, may the LORD show kindness and faithfulness to you, and I will also show the same goodness to you because you have done this deed. **7** Therefore, be strong and valiant, for though Saul your lord is dead, the house of **Judah** **F** has anointed me king over them."

Passage Outline

Commemoration
(2 Sam. 1:22-27)

Coronation
(2 Sam. 2:1-4a)

Commendation
(2 Sam. 2:4b-7)

Keywords

- A** Jonathan and Saul were brave in the face of battle, remaining focused on pursuing their target.
- B** Saul and Jonathan died fighting together.
- C** The word choice suggests an eagle going for food (see Jer. 4:13; 49:22; Lam. 4:19).
- D** Once a lion attacks, it doesn't back down until it has overpowered its opponent.
- E** David was previously anointed when the Lord chose him among his family (see 1 Sam. 16: 12-13). Here David was anointed over his tribe.
- F** The tribe of Judah anointed David as king prior to his becoming king of all Israel.

► EXPLORE THE TEXT

David celebrated the effectiveness of Saul and Jonathan in battle. They were great warriors whose competency protected the Israelites. Jonathan was a skilled archer (see 1 Sam. 20:35-38) whose bow had protected David at a vulnerable time in his life (see vv. 36-39). Jonathan never retreated but lived and served with courage and persistence.

It's interesting that David commended Saul for his competency in battle, while he praised Jonathan for a characteristic virtue. What David didn't say seems striking. Saul's great downfall was his lack of character, yet David chose to focus on his redeeming qualities. The fallen king was effective in battle, bringing military victory to Israel, and thus made a significant contribution to the people of God.

In what ways should a church celebrate its leaders, especially its pastors?

BIBLE SKILL: Compare related Bible passages. >> Read 3 John 9-10 and 1 Timothy 4:12-16, comparing Diotrephes and Timothy. What contrasting attitudes do these two persons illustrate about taking authority in the church? Which attitude is seen in David—the attitude of Diotrephes or Timothy? Explain.

One way David distinguished himself as a godly leader, in contrast to Saul, was to seek guidance from God before making a major decision (see 1 Sam. 23:9-12; 30:7-8).

In what ways do people typically respond when facing a major decision? In what ways do their responses reveal whom or what they trust?

Saul had rescued Jabesh-gilead from the siege of the Ammonites (see 1 Sam. 11:1-11), an event that was a catalyst for his ascension to the throne. Presumably from gratitude to Saul, courageous men from the city retrieved his remains and buried them in Jabesh (see 31:11-13). David learned about this event at the time of his anointing. David too had demonstrated respect for Saul and his family by twice sparing Saul's life (see 24; 26) and by putting to death the Amalekite who had killed him. Those God calls to lead His people do so most effectively when their actions align with their affirmations.

What are some appropriate ways to express loyalty and kindness to leaders?

No doubt the people of Jabesh-gilead grieved the loss of Saul. He had championed their cause and provided them with protection. He understood their grief, for he had experienced and expressed it himself. But David called them to rise above that grief, to be "strong and valiant" (2 Sam. 2:7), even in uncertain times. He communicated the possibility of Jabesh-gilead's recognizing his succession of Saul as king. Doing so would require courage on their part.

How is the goodness of the Lord reflected in His provision of leaders? How could someone be blessed by demonstrating respect to the leaders God places in the world?

➤ APPLY THE TEXT

- › Believers can celebrate the faithful service and friendship of the leaders God calls.
- › Believers must seek God and His timing.
- › Believers should honor the leaders God provides them, both in the past and in the present.

What are some vital spiritual disciplines you can practice that will keep you focused on the Lord's will and His timing for you?

Who has been instrumental in your coming to Christ and your growth as a Christian? How could you acknowledge this person's impact on your life?

Read Psalm 89:20. Discuss with your group ways to affirm your church leaders. Identify one action you'll take, based on this discussion.



► DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Believers can celebrate the faithful service of the leaders God calls.

Read 2 Samuel 1:23-24, noting ways David honored Saul and Jonathan.

As we read David's words, it's almost as if his memories of Saul and Jonathan come flooding over him. In his mind they were "loved and delightful" (v. 23). Though many times Saul harassed him because of insecurity, David never came to hate his king. He always respected Saul's office and felt affection for the man himself.

The late king and his loyal son "were not parted in life or in death" (v. 23). Perhaps David saw the Lord's hand of mercy in the fact that neither outlived the other. David could have been highlighting Jonathan's loyalty to his father. They made an effective military combination in their speed ("swifter than eagles," v. 23) and strength ("stronger than lions," v. 23).

Because of Saul's royal position David instructed the women of the kingdom to mourn for the passing of their king. In ancient cultures the women of a nation played a prominent role in its national and collective mourning. Because of Saul's military victories, in effect he clothed them and brought great prosperity to the nation.

David could have chosen to mention the less virtuous aspects of Saul's life and reign, but he didn't. His reticence shouldn't be viewed as deception. Rather, it's more of a statement about David than Saul. He honored the Lord's anointed because that was the will of the Lord.

In what ways should you celebrate your church leaders?

Day 2: Believers can mourn for their lost leaders.

Read 2 Samuel 1:25-27, considering the great friendship David shared with Jonathan.

David's mournful refrain lamented Saul and Jonathan's death, saying, "The mighty have fallen" (v. 25). Jonathan was especially the object of David's grief because of their great friendship and commitment to each other (see 1 Sam. 20:41-42). The poignant aspect of the story was the sad truth that their dream of leading Israel together wouldn't be fulfilled (see 23:15-18).

Typically, the best remedy for grief is time. David allowed the healing of his heart by observing a season of mourning. This was also the appropriate public demonstration of his grief for both Saul, his former father-in-law, and Jonathan, his dear friend.

What did David teach you in these verses about how to grieve and what to say when someone dies?

Day 3: Leaders should seek God's guidance.

Read 2 Samuel 2:1-4a, looking for ways David sought God's guidance.

In seeking God's guidance, David demonstrated great respect for the office of king. Even though Samuel had previously anointed him (see 1 Sam. 16:12-13), David didn't make any assumptions but yielded to the Lord's will about the next king of Israel. By his actions David assumed the throne without dishonoring Saul.

Gathering his family, David went to Hebron. The reference to his caravan's settlement "in the towns near Hebron" (2 Sam. 2:3) indicates the large size of the group, perhaps as many as a thousand people. There probably wouldn't have been sufficient housing within the walls of the city, so some of David's family would have been forced to find accommodations in the surrounding areas.

The men of Judah recognized David as their king, signified in their anointing him. In the Old Testament, anointing was done to set someone apart for an important task. People who were anointed were expected to pursue and fulfill God's purpose (see Isa. 44:28–45:1). The title Christ is the English rendering of the Greek word *christos*, which means "anointed" (see Luke 4:16-21; Acts 10:38).

When have you taken responsibility and acted during a crisis? Was it an act of ambition or a response to God's guidance?

Day 4: Godly leaders pattern their behavior on the Lord.

Read 2 Samuel 2:5-6, identifying ways David commended the people.

To affirm the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul, David sent messengers to them with a blessing. In particular, he affirmed the special kindness they had shown to Saul. The word David used to denote kindness was the Hebrew word *hesed*. It conveys the ideas of loyalty and love, along with kindness.

David elaborated on the blessing he gave to the men who honored Saul.

- 1 David asserted that the Lord would bless them by showing "kindness and faithfulness" (v. 6) to them. The same Hebrew word, *hesed*, is used in both verses 5 and 6.
2. David assured them that he would "also show the same goodness" (v. 6) to them. David demonstrated a great quality of godly leaders.


How has the Lord shown His goodness to you in His provision of leaders? How can you be blessed by demonstrating respect to the leaders God places in the world?

Day 5: Believers should honor leaders who honor God.

Read 2 Samuel 2:7, underlining the word anointed.

David was sincere in his words to the men of Jabesh-gilead. His affirmation wasn't a calculated political move to garner support for his dynasty. Granted, he informed them of his establishment as king of Judah, saying, "The house of Judah has anointed me king over them." However, the daring enterprise of rescuing Saul's body might have exposed those men and even the town to reprisals from the Philistines. David promised his support for the town, not just an empty compliment; this was truly a win-win situation, good for both the king and the people. A wise move such as David's doesn't equate to self-centered political maneuvering.

How can you know that David was sincere in his commendation as opposed to being politically motivated? How can we make sure our motives are pure as well?



A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the press of the external situation.

A. W. TOZER

➤ OBEY THE TEXT

Reflect on the truths found in 2 Samuel 1–2 and record your responses to the following questions or discuss them with two other members of your Bible-study group.

What's the difference between respect for someone and wrongly revering that person? What's the difference between respecting someone and following him or her without question? What other distinctions guide you to respect someone in a godly way?

What decision did David discuss with God in these verses? Give examples of small and large decisions we discuss with God.

Ponder the work and influence of leaders from your past and present. Name at least two leaders, along with an action and a phrase that honors each.

MEMORIZE

I have found David my servant;
I have anointed him with my sacred oil.

PSALM 89:20

MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from this session's group experience and daily exploration.

MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

