

# Joshua

In the book that bears his name, Joshua succeeds Moses as commander-in-chief of Israel and leads the people across the Jordan into the promised land, marking their beginning as a settled nation. The first half of the book (chapters 1–12) recounts three military campaigns spanning seven years, in which Joshua meets and defeats more than 30 enemy armies. The second half (chapters 13–24) relates the settlement of Canaan, the fulfillment of God’s age-old promise to Abraham.

FOCUS	CONQUEST						CONSOLIDATION					
DIVISIONS	Preparing for War		Beginning the Conquest		Completing the Conquest		Allocations for Five Tribes and Caleb		Allocations for Seven Tribes and Levites		Joshua’s Final Challenge and Death	
	1	5	6	8	9	12	13	17	18	21	22	24
TOPICS	Securing the Land						Settling the Land					
	Warlords in Canaan						Landlords in Canaan					
PLACE	Both Sides of the Jordan											
TIME	7 Years						18 Years					

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# Preparing for War

*Key Passage: Joshua 1:1-8; 3*

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5
Preparing the People for Battle				
Spiritually	Militarily	Geographically	Historically	Ceremonially
“Be Strong”	“Go View”	“Cross Over”	“Remember”	“Circumcise”

**OVERVIEW** Moses has died, and Joshua is appointed by God to take the reins of leadership. The people are poised within view of the land promised to their ancestors and denied to their unbelieving parents. The time has come to cross over, conquer, and possess. But will they succeed where their fathers failed? The task seems impossible: a swollen, turbulent river to ford; foreign terrain to cross; mighty, walled cities to conquer. So God begins to prepare His people for the days of warfare just ahead. He reminds Joshua that careful attention to His Word brings blessing and success. Spies are sent to survey Jericho, the first obstacle in the land. The priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, lead the people across the rampaging Jordan without even getting their sandals wet! The stage is set for conquest.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** God specializes in dry sandals. He loves to start with an impossible situation in your life—then do the impossible.

When the nation of Israel approached the Jordan River, God demanded a step of obedience before they could cross. The priests, like drum majors leading a marching band numbering in the million-plus range, had to hike to the brink of the flood-swollen Jordan and take that first step into the water. Then—and only then—would God perform a miracle, roll back the waters, dry up the puddles, and send the people across kicking up dust at every step. Dry sandals followed trusting obedience.

Where is God waiting for you to take that first step of faith? Think about the obstacle you are facing (your Jordan) and the step of obedience God is asking you to take (your dry-sandals experience). Trust Him for the unexpected, and let Him surprise and delight you by doing the unexplainable.

**INSIGHT** A Mighty Little River

The Jordan, a winding, muddy river more than 200 miles long (and only waist-deep in some places), carries biblical significance much greater than its size. It is mentioned more than 50 times in Joshua and more than 160 times in the Old Testament.

*God will lead  
you to no  
waters He  
cannot part,  
no brink He  
cannot cross.*

# Beginning the Conquest

*Key Passage: Joshua 6:1-7, 13; 8:1, 25*

CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8
Obedience Brings Victory	Disobedience Brings Defeat	Restoration Brings Victory
Jericho	Ai (Round One)	Ai (Round Two)

**OVERVIEW** Joshua employs a textbook strategy for military victory: “Divide and conquer!” He attacks the middle of the country first, dividing the enemy forces in half, before mopping up resistance among the isolated troops in the south and north. His stunning victory at Jericho shows the importance of following God’s directions down to the smallest detail, no matter how trivial they may seem. The lesson is painfully reinforced at Ai, where disobedience leads to defeat and death. But after disciplining His overconfident people, God patiently encourages them and leads them to victory in the rematch with Ai.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** The true test of an obedient child comes not when the parent’s orders make good sense (“Don’t touch the stove or you’ll burn yourself”), but when there seems to be no good reason for the command (“Be home by 11:00,” or “Eat your spinach”). A parent’s wishes may be changeable or based on a whim, but God’s will is never that way (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17).

God’s command to Israel at Jericho to destroy what was not consecrated to Him contradicted “good human judgment.” It seemed wasteful to the people and unnecessarily cruel. Joshua did the “sensible” and “prudent” (but disobedient) thing by sending only a small army against Ai. And the result was a rout for Israel and the needless death of 36 soldiers.

Pick a command from God’s Word that you have been tempted to label impractical, unnecessary, or irrelevant (you might try Ephesians 5:22, 25; 6:1, 5). Write it down, along with these words: “Where I understand the will of God, I will do it; where I do not understand the will of God, I will trust Him . . . and do it anyway!”

## **INSIGHT** The High Cost of Covetousness

The gold and silver pieces Achan took (7:21) were worth only a few thousand dollars. In exchange, they cost the lives of 36 soldiers, a humiliating defeat for the nation of Israel, and death by stoning for Achan and his entire family.

*True  
obedience  
has no lead  
in its shoes.*

# Completing the Conquest

*Key Passage: Joshua 9, 12*

CHAPTER 9	CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12
Deception of Gibeon	Destruction of the South	Defeat of the North	Description of the Battle Plan
Compact	Coalition		Conquest

**OVERVIEW** In many ways, Joshua’s military is dictated more by the actions of his enemies than by his own plans. First, the king of Jerusalem forms an alliance of kings in the south and attacks Gibeon (the nation which had tricked Israel into a treaty of protection). True to her pact, Israel comes to Gibeon’s defense, smashing the southern coalition. A similar alliance now forms in the north, led by Jabin, king of Hazor. And once again, “The Lord gave them into the hand of Israel” (11:8). Finally, Joshua squelches resistance throughout the entire land until the hills, valleys, plains, and mountains (see 11:16) are secure, ready to be allotted to the waiting tribes.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Nothing is as exasperating to a parent as the newfound independence of a 3-year-old. “Let me do it . . . don’t help . . . I can do it myself” are all expressions of a dependent child exercising his awakening sense of independence. The parent’s help may no longer be wanted, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t needed.

When faced with the unexpected problem of Gibeon (chapter 9), the leaders of Israel responded in immature independence. “We can handle this one on our own. No need to consult God about such an elementary matter. After all, we’ve made tougher decisions than this before!” The foolish peace pact with Gibeon, made without consulting God, was based on false appearances and deceiving words. In the years ahead it would be a source of heartache to Israel.

What decision are you tempted to make without giving God a single thought? Talk to Him first. God delights in guiding those who acknowledge their need of Him (Proverbs 3:5-6). And the consequences of ignoring Him can’t be overlooked.

**INSIGHT** A Hungry Homeland

Earlier the spies described Canaan as a land that “devours those living in it” (Numbers 13:32). During the seven-year conquest, Joshua’s army destroyed 31 kings and most of the Canaanites, making the spies’ statement ironically prophetic.

*We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us.*

# PLACING THE BOOKS OF Joshua–2 Samuel

TIME LINE	1400 BC	1200 BC	1000 BC
HISTORICAL BOOKS	JOSHUA (1405–1380)	JUDGES (ca. 1380–1050)	RUTH (ca. 1100) 1 SAM. (1050–1011) 2 SAM. (1011–971)
POETIC BOOKS	Note: More than 60 other psalms are ascribed to David but do not have the specific ties to his career that the titles of these psalms contain. Other psalms are anonymous, but their messages are clear in the general context of the history of Israel.		1 Chron. 2 Chron. Psalms 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 142 Psalms 3, 18, 30, 51, 60, 63, 142
BIBLE MILESTONES	Crossing the Jordan (1404) Jericho walls fall down (1404)	Deborah, only woman judge (1257–1237) Life of Gideon (1191–1151)	Life of Samson (1069–1049) Birth of David (1040) David and Goliath (1025) Death of Saul (1011) David and Bathsheba (990) Death of David (971)
ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD	King Tut rules Egypt (1366–1357) Shang dynasty in China (ca. 1300)	Greeks destroy Troy (1193)	Olmec Civilization in Mexico (ca. 1000) Phoenicians colonize Spain (ca. 950)

# Allocations for Five Tribes

*Key Passage: Joshua 14*

CHAPTER 13	CHAPTER 14	CHAPTER 15	CHAPTERS 16–17
Allotment to 2 1/2 Tribes	Allotment to Caleb	Allotment to Judah	Allotment to Joseph's Sons
East of Jordan	West of Jordan		

**OVERVIEW** Although Israel, under Joshua’s leadership, has conquered Canaan by destroying key cities and their kings, “there are still very large areas of land to be taken over” (13:1). To complete the task, Joshua assigns territories to each individual tribe with instructions to clear out the remaining pagan influence and to possess the land completely. Territories have already been assigned to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan. But before any allotments are made on the west side, Caleb asks for and receives the area promised him by Moses: Mount Hebron, a known Canaanite stronghold.

*The single most important characteristic of a Christian is not how much of God’s Word he knows, but how much he lives.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Probably as a child you either played with model planes, boats, and trucks or knew someone who did. List as many characteristics of a model as you can. Now think about some outstanding characters who emerge from the pages of Scripture, and ask yourself: “Apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, after which individual would I most like to model my life?”

Did the name *Caleb* cross your mind? Three times in seven verses we read that he “followed the LORD . . . wholeheartedly” (14:8-9, 14). Caleb knew what it meant to claim the promises of God, then move out by faith to possess what God had promised.

As you read chapter 14 today, did you notice what was said about Caleb—his age, physical condition, godly ambitions, steps of obedience? Select one way that Caleb’s life can become a model for your life today, and put it to work.

**INSIGHT** *God’s People and Long Waits*

Caleb was 40 years old when he, Joshua, and the other spies checked out Canaan. Afterward, he waited 45 years for God to fulfill His promise of giving him Mount Hebron. So, at 85, as long as God was with him, he wasn’t afraid to go into the hill country, drive out the Canaanites, and take possession of the land. Can you think of other biblical characters who waited a long time for God to fulfill His promise to them?

# Allocations for Seven Tribes

*Key Passage: Joshua 18:1-10; 21:43-45*

CHAPTER 18	CHAPTER 19	CHAPTER 20	CHAPTER 21
Allotment to Benjamin	Allotment to Other Tribes	Cities for the Innocent	Cities for the Levites
Reward		Refuge	

**OVERVIEW** With the moving of the tabernacle to the territory of Ephraim, Shiloh becomes the new center of Israel's worship. The remaining seven tribes now receive their inheritance by lot. But for the tribe of Levi there will be no territorial allotment, for their inheritance is the priestly service of God (13:14; 18:7). Instead, 48 cities are assigned to the three families of Levites (Kohath, Gershon, Merari), and six cities are reserved as places of refuge for accidental manslaughter. At last the task of dividing and distributing the land is complete.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Try to envision 22 godly men (Joshua plus three men from each of the seven remaining tribes) gathered together in a tent with 8,000 square miles of real estate at stake (18:4, 10). And how are they making the weighty decision as to which tribe receives which parcel of land? They are "casting lots"—the Old Testament equivalent of throwing dice!

Does it bother you that Joshua would leave such an important matter as the partitioning of the land to the "chance" roll of the dice? Then remember that in biblical times God often made His will known in the casting of lots (Leviticus 16:8; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:15-26). Notice the repeated phrase "in the presence of the LORD" in 18:6, 8, 10. This was no accidental division of the land, but a public acknowledgment that God's will extended even to the parceling of the land.

God's will for your life today can be known with just as much certainty as Joshua enjoyed thousands of years ago. Only now God has specified other ways of finding it besides the roll of the dice. Make a study of the following verses to learn how He wants to reveal His will to you today: Psalm 119:105; Romans 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:2. If God cares enough about a piece of real estate to guide Joshua's lots, then how much more must He care about you?

*Make this simple rule the guide of your life: to have no will but God's.*

**INSIGHT** *The End of a Six-Century Wait (21:43-45)*

In these three verses, at least three of God's promised blessings are fulfilled for the nation Israel. How many can you find?

# Joshua’s Final Challenge

*Key Passage: Joshua 22:10-34; 24:29-33*

CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23	CHAPTER 24
Memorial for the Future	A Challenge for the Present	A Commitment for All Time
Witness to Unity	Call to Consecration	

**OVERVIEW** After being commended for their faithful service in conquering the land of Canaan, the warriors of the tribes east of the Jordan are sent home. They recognize that the Jordan River (which forms a natural barrier between the tribes) may one day form a spiritual barrier as well. To prevent this, a memorial altar is built on the river bank—an act misunderstood and viewed with horror by the tribes west of the Jordan. Civil war nearly breaks out before the real motives behind the altar are revealed. The book closes with Joshua’s farewell address in which he gives the people an ultimatum: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (24:15).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Analyze the following situation, then select the correct response: A woman running breathlessly down the road is being pursued by an equally breathless man who is gaining on her at every step. The man is: (a) a criminal, (b) a bill collector, (c) a sports enthusiast. Correct answer: (c) The fellow is a runner, and so is his wife. They are out for their morning run, and he is just about to pass her. If you had been an onlooker, would you have assessed the situation correctly?

*Snap judgments would be all right if they didn’t come unsnapped so often.*

Motives are hard to read, but easy to misread. How can you avoid the kind of mistake made by the tribes west of the Jordan? When tempted to think the worst about another’s actions or attitudes, stop and ask yourself these two questions: (1) What would I want others to believe about me if I were in the same situation? (2) What damage might result if I don’t get all the facts and jump too quickly to the wrong conclusion?

**INSIGHT** “Just Look at His Track Record!”

Joshua wanted to ensure that his people would continue following the Lord wholeheartedly after his death. So he wove an incontrovertible argument for his God by recalling numerous instances of His goodness to Israel in the past, ending it with a personal exhortation to “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Did his plea bring results? Reread 24:31.



# Judges

Following the conquest of Canaan, Israel plunges into a 350-year period of national deterioration. A monotonous and deadly pattern develops: The people fall into sin; God disciplines them with foreign oppression; the people cry out in repentance; God raises up a deliverer; peace is restored. The cycle of sin repeats itself a total of seven times in the book. But God, ever faithful to His covenant people, extends His grace again and again by sending such leaders as Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.

FOCUS	DETERIORATION	DELIVERANCE						DEPRAVITY
DIVISIONS	Introduction to the Judges	First Five Judges	Gideon, the Hesitant Hero	Gideon's Son and Six Judges	Samson, the Carnal Champion	Two Examples of National Degradation		
	1	2 3	5 6	8 9	12 13	16 17	21	
TOPICS	Situation	Sin, Servitude, and Salvation				Shocking Decline		
	Religious Laxity	Political Uncertainty				Moral Anarchy		
PLACE	Canaan and Transjordan							
TIME	About 350 Years							

# First Five Judges

*Key Passage: Judges 2:6-23*

CHAPTERS 1–2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTERS 4–5
Background of the Judges	Three Early Judges Othniel      Ehud      Shamgar <small>1      11 12      30 31</small>	Deborah and Barak
God's Message	God's Messengers	God's Miracles

**OVERVIEW** Efforts by Judah, Simeon, and the other tribes to purge the land of its pagan inhabitants are not completely successful. Pockets of godless influence remain, always a source of spiritual stumbling to Israel. Over and over the cycle repeats itself. Israel falls into national immorality and idolatry, causing God to allow powerful neighboring countries to oppress and enslave her. When the people cry out in repentance, God responds to their renewed commitment by raising up yet another judge to deliver them. But the cycle soon begins again as the nation's spiritual temperature grows steadily colder.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Look up Romans 12:1-2 and read it several times. Now write your own paraphrase of what it means to be conformed "to the pattern of this world."

You will spend nearly every day of your earthly life surrounded by unbelievers. And when you stop to think about it, you really have no choice in the matter. To eliminate all contact with non-Christians, as Paul writes, would require leaving the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-10). Besides, how can you witness to unbelievers and lead them to the Savior if you spend no time with them?

But while you must have contact with the world, you are commanded not to be conformed to the world. That was Israel's problem. Her people not only had contact with sinners (as a result of their failure to obey God and destroy them completely), they also embraced the sinner's sin. They became indistinguishable from the heathen.

Complete this sentence: "One way in which my commitment to Christ causes my lifestyle to differ from the world around me is \_\_\_\_\_." Consult 1 Peter 2:9-17 for suggestions.

**INSIGHT** **Reconstructing the Colorful Period of Judges**  
An excellent way to trace the cyclical period of the judges is by color-coding your Bible. Select five colored pencils, and use one color to highlight each part of the "sin cycle": sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, silence (you'll use each color seven times).

# Gideon, the Hesitant Hero

*Key Passage: Judges 6:11–7:23*

CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8
Call of Gideon	Defeat of Midian	Rest for Israel
God's Man	God's Plan	God's Glory

**OVERVIEW** Israel's oppression under Midian is brief but severe, as Midian forcibly takes Israel's harvest. Gideon, called by a divine messenger to deliver God's people, is a reluctant savior and doubtful candidate for greatness. It takes a pair of confirming signs (first a soggy fleece, then a dry one) to convince Gideon that God can use him. But once his faith is sparked, Gideon watches as God removes all the props upon which he might have trusted: his army (reduced 99 percent); his weapons (reduced to pitchers, torches, and trumpets); and his military strategy (reduced to a single command: "Stand still!"). When a miracle of deliverance occurs, there can be only one explanation—God did it.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Are you a skeptic—the kind of person who never takes anything at face value, who asks a lot of questions, and who always requires confirmation of the facts? Then you will appreciate the life of Gideon.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22, Paul comments that "Jews demand miraculous signs," and such was the case with Gideon. Faced with an overwhelming assignment and equipped with rather dubious human qualifications, Gideon needed a bolstered faith. Nowhere in the passage did God chide Gideon for his request for a confirming sign. He gladly and patiently provided what Gideon needed.

When the will of God is clear, to demand a sign is evidence of unwillingness to obey. When God's will is uncertain, but you are earnestly seeking it (like Gideon), God will make it clear to you. Take a decision you are wrestling with today and ask God to confirm His will through the Bible, Christian counsel, circumstances, or inner assurance. Remember, delayed obedience is really disobedience.

*If seeing is believing, the true skeptic will refuse to look.*

## **INSIGHT** God's Unbeatable Team (7:22)

In Leviticus 26:8, God had promised Israel that "five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand." With Gideon's band of 300 men, God fulfilled that promise, proving He isn't concerned about the odds.

# Gideon’s Son and Six Judges

*Key Passage: Judges 11–12*

CHAPTER 9	CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12
God’s Retribution	God’s Rebuke	Jephthah’s Vow	Jephthah’s Vengeance
Abimelech	Tola/Jair	Jephthah and Three Other Judges	

**OVERVIEW** Abimelech, Gideon’s son by a concubine, is never called a judge in Israel, though he sets himself up as king and murders 69 of his 70 brothers. As Jotham (the only surviving son) predicted, Abimelech dies as violently as he lived. The brief records of two minor judges, Tola and Jair, are followed by a lengthy treatment of Jephthah in the days of oppression by the Philistines and Ammonites. In contrast to Gideon, who sought to appease the tribe of Ephraim, Jephthah ends up going to war against Ephraim. His action-filled reign as judge is best remembered for his presumptuous vow which seals forever the fate of his virgin daughter. The section closes with a brief look at three other minor judges who are most noteworthy for their enormous families.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Should Christians take oaths or make vows today? Those who respond “No!” will find ample support in the tragic result of Jephthah’s presumptuous vow (11:30-31, 34-40).

Vows are not to be taken lightly. But the real tragedy of Jephthah was his unwillingness to admit he had acted foolishly and had made a mistake. A willingness to admit errors and seek help is an evidence of maturity and strength, not weakness.

Is there a family member or friend you have wronged through a mistake? Admitting you were wrong, asking for forgiveness, and making restitution for any damage can open new opportunities for fellowship and service with him or her. God wants you to be an open, honest person with a realistic view of yourself—one who (unlike Jephthah) is quick to admit mistakes and knows when to seek wise counsel.

**INSIGHT** *A Deadly Slip of the Tongue*

The 42,000 Ephraimites Jephthah slew were identified by the fact that they said “Sibboleth” instead of “Shibboleth” (12:6). But they aren’t the only ones in Scripture who were betrayed by an accent. When Peter was in the high priest’s courtyard the night Jesus was arrested, he was accused of being a follower of Jesus because of his Galilean speech (see Matthew 26:73).

*No one can be called mature who does not learn from his own mistakes.*

# Samson, the Carnal Champion

*Key Passage: Judges 13, 16*

CHAPTER 13	CHAPTER 14	CHAPTER 15	CHAPTER 16
Manoah's Prayer	Samson's Power	Samson's Passion	Samson's Passing
Calling		Compromise	

**OVERVIEW** The life of Samson is a study in unfulfilled potential. The only child of an elderly couple, designated by God a Nazirite from birth, blessed with super-human strength, and commissioned to “begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines” (13:5), Samson instead spends most of his life fulfilling his own passions and desires. His lack of self-control eventually results in blindness and bondage. But God gives him one last portion of power, and in his death Samson destroys more Philistines than during his entire life of compromise.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Here are some of the wisest words ever penned by Benjamin Franklin: “Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you but even with him; forgiving one sets you above him.”

Revenge is one of the most natural—and destructive—of all human responses. Rather than trying to right a wrong by forgiving it, the most common reaction is to try to right a wrong by committing another wrong—namely, lashing out at the other person. Such was the problem with Samson. He spent much of his time burning with anger (14:19) and doing harm to those who had wronged him (15:3). But his temper only complicated the problem, never corrected it.

What is your response when someone has wronged you? Do you count to 10 before “blasting off”? Or do you “go into orbit” immediately? To help you cultivate a proper response to others, put this verse to work today: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). You’ll find it hard to express anger—or harbor it—when you whisper.

*Forgiveness  
warms  
the heart  
and cools  
the sting.*

**INSIGHT** **Nazirite or Nazarene—What’s the Difference?** Many confuse the two terms Nazirite and Nazarene. Jesus, a Nazarene, was so called because He lived in Nazareth. Samson, a Nazirite, was so called because he did not drink wine, touch dead bodies, or cut his hair—all prohibitions of a Nazirite vow. (For added details concerning this vow, see Numbers 6:1-21.)

# Examples of National Degradation

*Key Passage: Judges 17; 19; 21:25*

CHAPTER 17	CHAPTER 18	CHAPTER 19	CHAPTERS 20–21
Man-made Religion	Idolatrous Religion	Violent Immorality	Violent Vengeance
Religious Confusion		Moral and Civil Confusion	

**OVERVIEW** The closing chapters of Judges provide graphic snapshots of the spiritual and moral degeneration of a nation in which “everyone did as he saw fit” (17:6; 21:25). Chronologically these events belong with chapter 3, but thematically they form a fitting conclusion to the book. The spiritual decline is illustrated by Micah, who carves his own idol, consecrates his own son as priest, and hires a traveling Levite to minister on his behalf. The tribe of Dan confiscates both the idol and the priest to serve their own interests instead. The story of the Levite and his concubine is a grisly flashback to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the ensuing civil war, the tribe of Benjamin is decimated, and efforts to repopulate it result in little more than anarchy.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Is it possible one of the reasons the forces of evil and wickedness are so successful is that the children of God are simply naive?

When you read chapters in the Bible like Judges 17–21, your immediate reaction may be, “It can’t happen here.” No one wants to believe the veneer of civilization is really that thin and fragile. But until you recognize the problem, there is little hope of finding a solution.

Check up on your own I.Q. (Information Quotient). Do you know what the crime rate is in your area? What percent of your community is unchurched? How many unwanted babies were aborted last year? How many incidents of divorce, child abuse, and substance abuse were recorded? Knowing some of those statistics can help you pray more intelligently.

*Turn from evil and do good (Psalm 37:27).*

**INSIGHT** *My, How Times Have Changed!*

The Book of Joshua records the history of the nation of Israel in days of victory with faith in God, spiritual vision, strength, and unity. But as you read in Judges of Israel’s defeats, apostasy, worldliness, weakness, and anarchy, you may have thought you were reading about an entirely different nation.

# Ruth: Interlude of Love

*Key Passage: Ruth 1, 4*

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Ruth's Resolve: "I Will Go"	Ruth's Response: "Let Me Glean"	Ruth's Request: "Redeem Me"	Ruth's Reward: "A Son . . . Obed"
Ruth and Naomi		Ruth and Boaz	

**OVERVIEW** The Book of Ruth provides a beautiful interlude of love in the period of the judges in Israel—an era marked by immorality, idolatry, and war. This heartwarming account of devotion and faithfulness tells the story of Ruth, a Moabite widow who leaves her homeland to live with her widowed, Israelite mother-in-law in Bethlehem. God honors her commitment by guiding her to the field of Boaz (a near kinsman), where she gathers grain and eventually finds a husband. The book closes with a brief genealogy in which Boaz's name is prominent as the great-grandfather of King David, and an ancestor of Jesus.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Love is more readily demonstrated than described. Ruth demonstrated the true character of love when she willingly and steadfastly pledged her allegiance and devotion to her mother-in-law Naomi. Clearly, by traveling to a foreign country she had more to lose than gain. She was still young and easily could have remarried someone of her own nationality. But her primary concern was not for her own well-being, but rather for the well-being of Naomi. Ruth exemplifies sacrificial love—the kind that Jesus portrayed when He gave His "life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

How can you give of yourself sacrificially to someone around you—your spouse, roommate, employer, neighbor, or friend? Jot down a name in the margin, a specific act of selfless love you can do for that person, and the date when you will do it. Don't let your love be "Ruthless," or it will soon become useless (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

**INSIGHT** *Ruth and Esther—Alike and Yet So Different* Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named after women. Ruth, a Gentile, lived among Hebrews and married a Hebrew. Esther, a Hebrew, lived among Gentiles and married a Gentile. Both women were greatly used by God to bring glory to Himself.

*Duty makes us do things, but love makes us do things beautifully.*

# 1 Samuel

**B**y the end of the chaotic period of the judges, God’s people are clamoring for a king. The Book of 1 Samuel tells the story of Israel’s last judge (Samuel), its first king (Saul), and the early years of its greatest king (David). Because Saul lacks a heart for God, he is rejected by God. Young David—anointed to take his place—must flee to the wilderness to escape Saul’s jealous pursuit. At last, Saul and his sons meet death on Mount Gilboa, setting the stage for 2 Samuel and the golden age of King David.

FOCUS	SAMUEL	SAUL	SAUL AND DAVID
<b>DIVISIONS</b>	Samuel’s Birth and Call Samuel’s Rebuilding of the Nation	Saul, First King of Israel Saul, Disobedient and Rejected	David in the Court of Saul David’s Escape and Flight from Saul David’s Encounters with Saul Saul’s Final Downfall and Death
	1 3 4 8 9	12 13 15	16 19 20 23 24 26 27 31
<b>TOPICS</b>	Leadership in Transition		A Newly Anointed Leader in Exile
	From Judges to Kings		From King Saul to King David
<b>PLACE</b>	Israel in Canaan		
<b>TIME</b>	Approximately 60 Years		



# Samuel's Birth and Call

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 1:1-20; 3:1-21*

CHAPTER 1		CHAPTER 2		CHAPTER 3
Hannah's Petition	God's Provision	Hannah's Praise	Eli's Rejection	Samuel's Selection
Birth of Samuel		Childhood of Samuel		

**OVERVIEW** Like a ray of sunshine in the gloomy period of the judges stands the godly family of Elkanah and his barren wife Hannah. God hears Hannah's fervent prayer for a son—who would be dedicated to the service of God—and graciously provides Samuel (along with three more sons and daughters). In fulfillment of her vow, Hannah brings Samuel to Shiloh, where he begins his life of godly service under the tutelage of Eli the priest. But when Eli fails to discipline his own sons, bringing reproach upon both God and the tabernacle, Samuel is commissioned by God to declare judgment upon Eli's house.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Analyze the following statement: Being a good businessperson does not guarantee that you will be a good parent. Now substitute for the word *businessperson* each of the following groups of words, and then reread the statement thoughtfully: Bible study leader, Sunday school teacher, volunteer worker, civic leader, student, church leader.

In today's passage you were confronted by a sobering scene. Eli—a man who knew his job well as a priest and functioned adequately in his service before the Lord—was nevertheless a failure in his role as a father. Success in one sphere did not guarantee success in the other. And because of his failure as a father, he lost his influence in the spiritual realm as well.

Parents, take an objective look at how well you're doing in raising your children to glorify God. Are there some pressing areas of need? Your church library or local Christian bookstore offers a gold mine of resources to help you teach God's truths creatively and practically to your children. But only you can make parenting the priority it needs to be.

## **INSIGHT** Samuel, the Tabernacle Toddler

In the ancient Near East, it was common to nurse children until the age of four or five. Thus, since Samuel was brought to the tabernacle after he was weaned (1:22), he was already old enough to learn much from Eli about the Law and priestly duties.

*If you  
succeed  
everywhere  
else but in  
your home,  
you haven't  
succeeded.*

# Samuel's Rebuilding of the Nation

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 4, 6, 8*

CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8
Ark Taken from Israel	Ark Unwanted in Philistia	Ark Returned to Israel	Spiritual Renewal	Political Renewal
Returning the Ark			Rebuilding the Nation	

**OVERVIEW** In fulfillment of Samuel's prophetic word, judgment falls upon the family of Eli. Hophni and Phinehas die at the hands of the Philistines, along with 34,000 of their countrymen. Worse yet, the ark of God falls into enemy hands. Struck by the twin blows of national and family catastrophe, Eli falls over and dies a broken man. Upon the shoulders of young Samuel is placed the responsibility of rebuilding the shattered nation, both spiritually and politically. The Philistines return the ark (with a little divine encouragement), and the Israelites return to the worship of the one true God. But as Samuel grows older and his sons pervert their priestly office, the elders request a king to rule over them like all the other nations.

*When you pray, do you give God instructions, or wait for Him to give you yours?*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Be careful how you pray. God may give you what you ask for! Israel requested a king—a seemingly harmless request. After all, wouldn't a monarch be preferable to the corrupt priests who were making a sham of national worship? But God knew the people's motives were wrong (the desire to be like all the other nations), and the consequences would be devastating. Their sons and daughters would be inducted into the king's service, their lands confiscated, their possessions taxed and seized. In effect, they would become slaves to the king. Yet they insisted: "Give us a king!"

Examine your prayer life. Is it characterized by demands or requests? "God, heal me . . . bring my husband back . . . make me successful . . . give me what I ask for." Check your motives. Are you making requests with your comfort and convenience in mind, or His glory? And have you considered what might happen if God did answer your prayer? Could it be that God has something even better in store for you than the answer you would supply to your own prayer? Talk to Him about it right now.

**INSIGHT** *The First Circuit-Riding Preacher*

In his role as judge, Samuel made a yearly circuit from his home in Ramah to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh, and back—a journey of 210 miles.

# Saul, First King of Israel

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 10, 12*

CHAPTER 9	CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12
A King Appointed	A King Anointed	A King Accepted	A Kingdom Admonished
Saul's Coronation			Samuel's Counsel

**OVERVIEW** In response to the Israelites' persistent request for a king, God grants their wish. Saul, a handsome man from the tribe of Benjamin, goes searching for a lost donkey, but instead finds Samuel, who anoints him king over Israel. Saul promptly leads the nation in battle against the Ammonites, wins a decisive victory, and humbly refuses to punish those who would not acknowledge him as king. Although Saul honors God early in his reign, Samuel warns the people of the danger in not allowing God to be King of their hearts: "If you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away" (12:25).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** A rambunctious little boy was told by his mother to sit quietly in a chair. He grudgingly obliged, but after taking his seat he announced, "I may be sitting still on the outside, but on the inside I'm still running around!" His mother's authority was enough to control her son's body, but not his heart.

Such was the case with Israel. Like a little child, the nation was admonished by Samuel to continue in the ways of God, even though the people now had a human king of their own. Outwardly, they agreed to serve and obey God. But in spite of external compliance, their hearts remained unchanged.

God wants people who have bodies (actions) and hearts (attitudes) that are pleasing to Him. Take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. Over the left column write: "Things I do for God." Over the right: "Why I do what I do for God." Now begin to fill in the columns. And if you find you're doing some of the right things for the wrong reasons, ask God for a "heart transplant" today. That's His specialty (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

*God alone  
sees the  
heart.*

## **INSIGHT** God Doesn't Act Out of Character

God's promise that "for the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people," (12:22) meant that to abandon Israel would have been a violation of His covenant and a contradiction of His character. God is always true to His Word and His name.

# Saul, Disobedient and Rejected

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 13:1-14; 15:1-23*

CHAPTER 13	CHAPTER 14	CHAPTER 15	
God's Curse upon Saul	Saul's Curse upon Israel	Saul Rejects God	God Rejects Saul
War with Philistia		War with Amalek	

**OVERVIEW** Saul's promising beginning as king over Israel is all too brief. In today's reading he reveals attitudes and actions that ultimately lead to his rejection by God. Presumption, rationalization, pride, stubbornness, and outright disobedience mark the latter years of his reign, until finally Samuel delivers a make-or-break assignment: "Completely destroy the Amalekites." Electing to do only part of God's will, Saul saves the best of the livestock to "sacrifice to the Lord" (15:15), and spares Agag, the Amalekite king. When confronted with his disobedience, Saul passes the blame to the people, causing Samuel to deliver the verdict: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** The tragedy of Saul's life is the sharp contrast between what could have been and what actually happened.

Twice the Bible says that "the Spirit of God came upon [Saul]" (10:10; 11:6). After Saul's anointing by Samuel, "God changed Saul's heart" (10:9). After his rejection as king, "the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul" (16:14). These verses would indicate that Saul was a true child of God who was self-willed, proud, and rebellious against God (15:17, 22-23). He represents the Christian who has been equipped by God for a task, but whose willful sin disqualifies him from further service (1 Corinthians 9:27).

*The best leader is one who can follow God faithfully.*

You cannot hope to lead others effectively until you first are willing to be led by God. Is pride, stubbornness, or rebellion clouding your relationship with God today? Ask God where you need to change in order for you to be the instrument of godly leadership that He desires you to be. Then write your name and today's date in the margin of your Bible next to 1 Samuel 15:22.

**INSIGHT** *Saul in the Old, Saul in the New*

Both Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11) and Saul of Gibeah (1 Samuel 10:26) were from the tribe of Benjamin. But what a contrast! Saul (later called Paul) was a physically weak "giant" of the faith; King Saul was a tall, imposing giant of a man who ended his life by suicide.

# David in the Court of Saul

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 16:1–18:4*

CHAPTER 16	CHAPTER 17	CHAPTERS 18–19
A Faithful Servant and God's Anointed	A Fighter and His Foe	A Fugitive and His Friend
Samuel and David	David and Goliath	David and Jonathan

**OVERVIEW** Samuel, still grieving over Saul's sin, is instructed by God to anoint a new king—an unlikely young candidate from the family of Jesse. David's obscurity is short-lived, however. After he is enlisted by Saul to play the harp in the king's court, David meets and defeats the Philistine giant, Goliath. But the more David seeks to serve the king, the more his reputation enrages Saul, leaving his very life in jeopardy. Not even David's close friendship with Saul's son Jonathan can bring him immunity from Saul's attacks.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How many close friends do you have? Not simply acquaintances or fellow workers or neighbors, but the kind of friend “who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24), and with whom you can share joy and heartache?

David found that having a true friend can be more than valuable—it can be lifesaving. When Saul conspired to kill Israel's future king, Jonathan put his life on the line by informing David of his father's murderous intent. Ignoring his own welfare, Jonathan put God's program first.

What kind of friend are you? Do you establish relationships with other people for what you can gain from them, or for what you can give to them? If you're having trouble developing close friendships, spend some extra minutes today reading John 15:13-15. There you'll find some characteristics of a growing friendship: sacrifice (v. 13) and communication (v. 15).

Pick someone who is only an acquaintance to you now and begin a “Project Jonathan” in that person's life today. Use the above principles to help you map out a friendship-building activity or two for the week.

*Wise is the man who fortifies his life with friendships.*

**INSIGHT** *A Working Definition of a Friend*

A friend is someone who knows you fully and still accepts you unconditionally. Your true best friend is one who is honest and tells you the “truth in love.” The wise words of Solomon remind us: “Wounds from a friend can be trusted” (Proverbs 27:6). Do you have a friend like that? Are you willing to be one?

# David's Escape From Saul

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 20*

CHAPTER 20	CHAPTER 21		CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23	
David's Friend	Nob	Gath	Adullam	Keilah	Wilderness
Jonathan			Journey		
1	9   10	15	1	12   13	29
	David's Flight to . . .				

**OVERVIEW** Jonathan promises to help David by discovering whether Saul's anger is simply a passing mood or a firm resolve. Jonathan finds the latter true, but in the process he incurs his father's wrath. There can be only one course of action if David is to live to take the throne: He must flee for his life. David's path of escape takes him first to Nob, where he secures food and weapons for his journey. From there he flees to Gath and then to the cave of Adullam, where a band of relatives and outcasts joins him. Driven to the Desert of Ziph by Saul's advancing search party, David finds his life in constant jeopardy.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Can you rejoice when others are preferred over you? Can you remain a loyal and sincere friend when someone else gets the promotion that by rights should have been yours? Are you willing to be content with God's place for you when it is less than your ambition desires, or even less than should rightfully be yours?

*The wealthiest person is one who is contented with the least.*

If you have trouble answering with a hearty "yes!" then consider the remarkable character of Jonathan. Humanly speaking, he was heir apparent to the throne of Israel, set to succeed his father Saul. Humanly speaking, he had every reason to hate David and to join his father in seeking David's death. Instead he loved David, befriended him, protected him, and accepted God's will for him, even though it meant taking a back seat to his own personal ambitions.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). Are you content today with your possessions, status, and situation? Read Philippians 4:11-13 out loud several times until God gives you the strength to make it the sincere prayer of your heart.

**INSIGHT** Jonathan—An Unsung Hero

Perhaps the truest test of a man's greatness is his willingness to submit to God's plans. As heir to the throne, Jonathan was a war hero (chapter 14) who possessed a kingly character. Yet he loved David as himself (18:1), sided with him against his own father, and bowed humbly to God's choice of David as king.

# David's Encounters with Saul

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 24, 26*

CHAPTER 24	CHAPTER 25	CHAPTER 26
David Spares Saul's Life	Abigail Spares Nabal's Life	David Spares Saul Again
God at Work in Avenging a Wrong		

**OVERVIEW** After a brief delay to deal with the Philistine problem, Saul returns to take up the pursuit of David. His renewed zeal nearly pays off as (unknowingly) he traps David and his men in a cave. Then miraculously the tables are turned as David stands poised over the sleeping form of Saul with the power of life and death in his hand. Though vengeance is within his reach, David refuses to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed king. Again in chapter 26 the scene is repeated, this time in the Desert of Ziph. Once again David must make a choice. Once again the source of David's anxiety is only a sword's thrust away. And once again David resists the temptation to play the role of God by snuffing out Saul's life.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** If circumstances alone formed the basis for determining the will of God, then Saul's life would have ended in chapter 24 and Nabal's in chapter 25. If counsel alone revealed God's will in a particular situation, then Abishai would have convinced David to rid himself of Saul once and for all in chapter 26.

Opportunity alone does not constitute the will of God. The counsel of others taken by itself is insufficient to determine God's will. These things must be balanced with what we know of the character and commands of God as revealed in His Word. David knew that God had said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" (Deuteronomy 32:35; see also Romans 12:19).

Have others wronged you and then placed themselves in a vulnerable position where it would be easy for you to get even? Try this instead. Look for a way to repay evil with good (Romans 12:21), and by an act of the will leave the settling of accounts with God. He will set things right in ways you never dreamed.

**INSIGHT** En-gedi (24:1-2)

En-gedi, from the Hebrew meaning "spring of the wild goat," was a desert oasis that served as a refuge for David in his flight from Saul. Located halfway down the western coast of the Dead Sea, En-gedi is a nature preserve and tourist attraction today.

*When you  
have your  
enemy over  
a barrel and  
you help  
him off, that  
pleases God.*

# Saul's Final Downfall and Death

*Key Passage: 1 Samuel 27, 29, 31*

CHAPTER 27	CHAPTER 28	CHAPTER 29	CHAPTER 30	CHAPTER 31
David and Philistines	Saul and Samuel	David and Philistines	David and Amalekites	Saul and Philistines
Friends	Forecast	Foes	Failure	Fatality

**OVERVIEW** The Book of 1 Samuel closes with a climactic series of events leading to the death of Saul and his sons, and clearing the way for David's ascent to the throne. Disheartened and no doubt weary, David defects to the Philistines for his own protection and settles in Gath—the very city from which Goliath came. He finds himself using deception to avoid siding with the Philistines in the growing hostilities against Israel. Saul, unable to find direction from God, consults a spiritist through whom God sovereignly delivers a chilling prediction of judgment and death.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** In modern English the word *tragedy* is used to describe any adversity, no matter its cause. But more specifically, a tragedy is “a calamity that results from a wrong decision based upon a flawed character.” Using this definition, Saul's life was a true tragedy. It held so much promise of success both for him and the nation, yet it ended in defeat and disgrace—all because of pride and self-will.

*God will not go forth with that man who marches in his own strength.*

Becoming a Christian doesn't mark the end of your battle with sin and temptation; in many ways, it marks the beginning. As a Christian you still have a sin nature that seeks to express itself in your daily actions. You also have a personal will that desires to direct your life. And both need to come under the control of Jesus Christ.

From a hymnal or the Internet, use the familiar words of Frances Havergal's hymn “Take My Life, and Let It Be” to renew your commitment to the lordship of Christ—from head to toe.

*Take my life, and let it be / Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my hands, and let them move / At the impulse of Thy love.*

**INSIGHT** *A Dubious Distinction*

Saul, the first king of Israel, ended his life by becoming the second recorded suicide in the Bible (31:4). Can you recall the first? (Hint: You read his life story earlier this month. His name also begins with the letter S, and he “brought down the house.”)



# 2 Samuel

The life story of King David—whom God called “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22)—unfolds in 2 Samuel. Following the death of Saul, David rules first over Judah, then over a united Israel. The greatest of Israel’s kings, David’s political and military victories bring Israel to a place of world prominence. But the secret sins of his personal life ultimately bring his downfall. A lustful look at beautiful Bathsheba leads to adultery and murder—then ultimately to insurrection, civil war, and unrest.

FOCUS	DAVID'S RISE			DAVID'S FALL			
DIVISIONS	David's Reign over a Divided Kingdom	David's Reign over a United Kingdom	David's Reign over an Enlarging Kingdom	David's Sin and God's Judgment	Absalom's Attempt to Overthrow David	David's Restoration to the Throne	David's Final Words and Works
	1	4 5	7 8 10	11	14 15	18 19	20 21 24
TOPICS	Triumph			Transgression	Trouble		
	Conflict in the Country			Conflict in the Court			
PLACE	David in Hebron	David in Jerusalem					
TIME	7½ Years	33 Years					

# David's Reign over a Divided Kingdom

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 1:1–2:7*

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
David's Consolation	David's Competition	Abner's Defection	Ish-bosheth's Death
Saul's Passing	Saul's Lingering Influence		

**OVERVIEW** The Book of 2 Samuel opens where 1 Samuel closed—with the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David's lament over the loss of his closest personal friend and of God's anointed leader is captured in a moving song with the repeated refrain, "How the mighty have fallen!" (1:19, 25, 27). Assured by the Lord that the time for his ascension to the throne has come at last, David is installed as king over Judah. But his acceptance as Israel's new national leader will be slow and painful. Ish-bosheth, Saul's surviving son, usurps the power in the north, resulting in civil war between Israel (led by Abner) and Judah (led by Joab). Intrigue, assassination, and defection result in the deaths of Asahel, Abner, and finally Ish-bosheth. With the opposition to David's rule removed, the way is cleared for David to reign over a united kingdom at last—more than seven years after Saul's death.

*Obedience to legitimate authority is one of the fruits and evidences of Christian sincerity.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Have you learned to separate personality from authority? God's commands are often based on a line of authority. Within the chain of command He has instructed children to obey their parents, young people to respect their elders, and citizens to submit to the ruling authorities—whether or not they like the personality of the one in authority over them. In the same way, David honored Saul as God's anointed king throughout his life. Refusing to carry a personal vendetta or to retaliate against Saul's family, David sincerely mourned Saul's passing and showed kindness to Saul's house, though Saul was no doubt never his "favorite person."

Whether or not you agree with the personality and philosophy of your civic leaders, you have a spiritual responsibility to submit to them, honor them, and—above all—pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Have you done that yet today? It will help them—and you.

**INSIGHT** *Family Feud, Old Testament Style*

In 3:1-5, six of David's sons are mentioned by name, each born by a different wife. David's moral laxity, so evident in these verses, would ultimately contribute to his downfall.

# David's Reign over a United Kingdom

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 7:1-29*

CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7
A Kingdom Reunited	An Ark Returned	A Request Refused
David's Greatness	David's Gladness	David's Gratitude

**OVERVIEW** The internal strife has ended at last, and David is firmly established as king over a united kingdom. Now in his first official act as monarch, he relocates the capital of the nation from Hebron to Jerusalem. In addition to Jerusalem's becoming the political center of Israel, David now makes it the religious center as well by transporting the ark from Gibeah. At last David is ready to see the fulfillment of a lifelong dream: the construction of a house for God. But through the prophet Nathan, God redirects those plans. Because David has been a man of war, it must be left to his son Solomon (whose name comes from the word for "peace") to build God's temple. But while David will not be permitted to build a house for God, God will build a house for David: a throne, a family, and a kingdom that will stand forever.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How do you respond to the death of a dream? When your most cherished ambition is shattered by a financial reversal, a physical injury, or an unexpected change of plans, what is your reaction?

After God curtailed David's plans to build a permanent house for the ark, David responded with gratitude (not grumbling) and praise (not pouting). He thanked God for all the good things He had done in the history of the nation, and reaffirmed God's sovereign right to veto David's plans: "Now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised" (7:25). Personal ambition yielded to sovereign direction.

Have you committed your dreams and ambitions to God? He may want to approve and confirm them, or He may want to change and refashion them into something you've never dreamed. That's His right as Creator. So give Him that right—right now!

*The hardest territory to hand over to God is the heartland of your dreams.*

**INSIGHT** Learning a Life-and-Death Lesson (6:3-7)

For perhaps 50 years, the ark had been considered little more than a piece of furniture. God's stern judgment upon Uzzah for touching it marked the beginning of a new era in which the people recognized again the sanctity of God's presence.

# David's Reign over an Expanding Nation

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 9*

CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9	CHAPTER 10
David Extends His Kingdom	David Extends His Kindness	David Extends His Justice
Moab	Mephibosheth	Ammon

**OVERVIEW** Once David has consolidated his nation politically and religiously, he turns to the task of being God's man of war. By subduing the neighboring nations, David extends the borders of Israel: Philistia to the southwest; Amalek to the south; Edom, Moab, and Ammon to the east; Syria to the northeast; Zobah to the north—each succumbs to David's withering assault. But though he is a man of war, David maintains a tender heart. He seeks out and befriends the sole surviving heir of Saul's dynasty, a lame grandson named Mephibosheth, by making him part of the king's family.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Insurance companies today have a name for those who apply for insurance while suffering from heart disease or who have a family history of premature death. Such individuals are "bad risks."

When a new king came to the throne in the ancient Near East, you might say the remaining family members of the preceding dynasty were bad risks. According to the custom of the day, they had two chances for survival: slim and none. The usual practice was for the new king to pursue and slaughter any possible claimants to the throne. That's why David's gesture of mercy and clemency to Mephibosheth was so amazing.

God's grace to us, which is illustrated by this story, is even greater. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). If you have not received God's grace, do so right now (see Ephesians 2:8-9). If you have, thank God anew for it. Then look for a Mephibosheth in your life who needs to learn about God's love and forgiveness.

**INSIGHT** *Just Call Me "Mephibosheth"*

A helpless cripple, heir of King Saul, and a self-proclaimed "dead dog," Mephibosheth was nonetheless welcomed with open arms into David's own royal family. What a beautiful illustration of God's grace to us—crippled as sinners, yet lifted from our shame and given an inheritance by the King Himself.

*The more  
godly a  
person is,  
the more  
merciful  
that person  
will be.*

# David's Sin and God's Judgment

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 11–12*

CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12		CHAPTER 13–14
David's Recklessness	Nathan's Rebuke	David's Repentance	David's Regret
Root of Sin	1	12, 13	31
	Fruit of Sin		

**OVERVIEW** The course of a person's life can pivot on one small event. Such is the case with David. Idling around the palace when he should have been leading his troops on the battlefield, David sets himself up for disaster. A chance look leads to lust, which gives birth to sin, which in turn results in death. But even in his darkest moment, the "man after [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22) shows his true character. When confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet, David responds in wholehearted repentance. Though he experiences God's forgiveness, the seeds of sin have been planted. All too soon David will reap the harvest of that sin.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** The crash of the giant redwood could be heard for miles. But the question on everyone's mind lingered long after the sound had died away. There was no chain saw, no forest fire, no dynamite. How had such a mammoth tree come toppling down?

Silently, secretly, thousands of tiny beetles ate away at the very heart of the tree. The signs of decay went unnoticed until the crash took place, and then it was too late.

David's sin with Bathsheba was no sudden collapse of his moral values, but rather the outgrowth of an undisciplined life given to passion, polygamy, and idle pleasure. When the temptation came, David had no willpower to resist. He saw; he inquired; he yielded. And the crash could be heard for generations to come in the form of treachery, immorality, jealousy, and murder.

Where are subtle sins eating away at your spiritual vitality? If it is true that disaster in the Christian life more often results from a slow leak than a blowout, take time today to examine your life for any "slow leaks." You can't afford to ignore them.

**INSIGHT** *Solomon, the Peace Child (12:24)*

As part of the judgment upon David's sin, the child born of adultery died in infancy. But later God gave to David and Bathsheba another son, whom they appropriately named Solomon—"peace." In spite of his past failure, David was now at peace with his God.

*It is impossible to tell the full result of sin, just as it is impossible to tell which snowflake will cause an avalanche.*

# Absalom's Attempt to Overthrow David

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 15, 18*

CHAPTER 15	CHAPTER 16	CHAPTER 17	CHAPTER 18
Absalom's Plot	Absalom's Pride	Absalom's Pursuit	Absalom's Predicament
Starting a Rebellion		Squelching a Rebellion	

**OVERVIEW** Incest, murder, intrigue, rebellion—the story of David's family from chapter 12 on reads like a horror story. But the worst is yet to come. Absalom, David's favorite (and most undisciplined) son, seizes the opportunity to usurp his father's throne. After sowing discontent among the people, Absalom makes a dramatic and unsuspected invasion of Jerusalem, forcing David to flee for his life. In his flight David is deceived by Ziba, maligned by Shimei, and befriended by Barzillai. But he owes his life largely to Hushai, who remains behind in Jerusalem and counsels Absalom to mount a careful (and delayed) attack, rather than to pursue immediately. When the battle is joined in the forest of Ephraim, Absalom's dreams of power come to a "hair-raising" conclusion.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What do Monday morning quarterbacks and many politicians' speeches have in common? They are always right because they are always based on 20/20 hindsight.

Absalom would have made a good Monday morning quarterback. Certainly he was an outstanding politician, for he won the hearts of the people by second-guessing the decisions of the king and promising the people what they wanted, though he had no authority to grant it.

When a bad decision has been made, do not hesitate to give open, honest criticism to the person who's responsible. Wrong decisions cannot be ignored. But watch the human tendency to become an armchair general.

All statements beginning, "If I had been there . . ." are dangerous. Pick a church or civic leader and focus your efforts this week on positive support, rather than negative second-guessing.

**INSIGHT** Hair Today, a "Goner" Tomorrow

Absalom's luxuriant head of hair was the crowning glory of a vain egomaniac. How ironic that it became the instrument of his death, suspending him from the low-hanging branches of a tree.

*One nice thing you can say about egotists: They don't talk about other people.*

# David's Restoration to the Throne

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 19*

CHAPTER 19				CHAPTER 20			
Joab's Rebuke		David's Return		Sheba's Defection		Sheba's Demise	
1	14	15	43	1	13	14	26
Crowning a Ruler				Calming a Revolt			

**OVERVIEW** David's unceasing grief for Absalom (at the expense of those who risked their lives for the king) prompts an abrupt but effective confrontation with General Joab. A king's personal feelings must give way to the good of the nation. So, accompanied by his faithful followers, David begins his triumphal return to Jerusalem. His reestablishment as king in Israel marks the return of discontent to the nation. Jealousy between the tribes, an attempted coup by Sheba, murder in the palace guard—the violence is a continual reminder that "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Think back over the chapters you have read in 2 Samuel, and make a list of your impressions of Joab, David's general.

Every leader needs a man like Joab. For all his bad points (and there were plenty—he was brutal, bloodthirsty, vengeful), Joab had a side that was commendable. His devotion to David and to the nation was exemplary. He was a man who saw what had to be done and did it, regardless of how unpopular the action or how unwanted the rebuke. Though David often questioned Joab's actions, he never questioned Joab's motives—and rightly so.

Do you have the fortitude to do the unpopular thing when it is right and needs to be done? Do you have the courage to speak up when a voice needs to be heard? No one enjoys such roles, but they are a vital part of godly exhortation. Select an admirable trait from Joab's life (such as commitment, fortitude, selflessness) and use it as a pattern for your activities today. God will give you the strength and wisdom to be a Joab when the job calls for one.

*Courage is absolutely necessary for goodness.*

**INSIGHT** *David's Shrouded Grief*

After learning of Absalom's death, David "covered his face" (19:4), the customary way of expressing grief. The covered head symbolized the agony that shut David off from the world and also pictured the shroud of Absalom's burial.

# David's Final Words and Works

*Key Passage: 2 Samuel 23–24*

CHAPTER 21	CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23	CHAPTER 24
Military Adventures	Magnificent Psalm	Mighty Warriors	Meaningful Worship
David's Wars	David's Praise		David's Sacrifice

**OVERVIEW** Years of ruling the nation (and getting into and out of trouble) have taken their toll on David, leaving him faint in battle and feeble in old age. But though David can no longer pursue the enemy, problems continue to pursue him to the end of his reign. A broken treaty with the Gibeonites results in three years of famine; a sinful census leads to the deaths of 70,000 Israelites. But in each case, David repents of his sinful ways and assumes the familiar posture of a worshiper of God—the hallmark of his life. To the end of his days David remains a man after God's own heart.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** When called upon to support the work of God with your money, do you “give till it hurts” or “hurt when you give”?

David provides a valuable model in the matter of giving. When God plagued the Israelites because of David's proud census, the prophet Gad told David to set up an altar on Araunah's threshing floor. It would have been an easy matter for David to confiscate Araunah's property, or at least to accept Araunah's offer of free animals and wood for the sacrifice. But David refused, knowing that such an offering would not be pleasing to God. “I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (24:24).

Examine your own offerings to the Lord your God. Do you tend to give superficially or sacrificially? Are your gifts the overflow of a grateful heart? As you look forward to your next paycheck, think about increasing the amount you give to your church or a Christian organization you support. And remember, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

**INSIGHT** *A Mighty Man in a Curious Place*

In David's list of 37 mighty warriors (23:8-39) is one curious inclusion: Uriah the Hittite! Though David masterminded his death, he never forgot Uriah's exemplary conduct.

*Read  
Malachi 3:10,  
where God  
tells us to  
bring our  
tithes and  
then invites  
us to test Him.*