

Week 17: Seeking God's Will

Hook



Main Point: Even when things seem certain, a godly person seeks God's will.

Leaders, facilitate your groups through a game of choices. You'll present your group with a choice, and they'll choose one of the two options. To make their choice known; you can have people stand up and move to either side of the room, raise either hand, etc. Here are some prompts for you; feel free to make up your own as well.

- Beach-side resort or hillside cottage?
- TV series or movies?
- Arctic or tropical?
- Pancakes or waffles?
- Receive \$10,000 or give \$1,000,000 to charity?
- Tacos or wings?
- Cats or dogs?

Transition Some decisions in life seem easy. Today, David's course of action seems clear; however, before he makes a move, David will first inquire of the Lord.

RECAP: This is the last week of this section of our study (weeks 8–17), the period of time when David was on the run from Saul. It's been a long period in our study and in the text

because it was a long period in David's life – eight years. Throughout this whole period, the text contrasts Saul and David, showing David's integrity and trust in the Lord. In the text from last week, Saul died and David showed great respect and honor in mourning him. Now that Saul was dead, it would have been easy for David to assume it was time for him to take the throne. And yet, he inquired of the Lord.

It is during this time that David wrote most of the psalms that are labeled in relation to particular events in his life (Psalm 56, 34, 57, 142, 52, 63, 54). Other psalms may have been written during this time as well, but they are not specifically labeled as such. This season of David's life, particularly, taught him to lean on God as his refuge and fortress.

Week 17: David: Seeking God's Will

Book

Main Point: Even when things seem certain, a godly person seeks God's will.

2 Samuel 2:1–11 and Psalm 25:4–15 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Godly people seek the Lord's will, no matter what they think may be best for them personally.

Q: What does it say about David that, even though Saul had died, he still waited and inquired of the Lord before making a move for the throne?

Now that he had properly mourned Saul, David had to decide what to do next. God had chosen him to be the king, and Samuel had anointed him many years earlier (at least 15). The text tells us David was 30 years old at this point (2 Samuel 5:4), and he had been just a "lad" – between eight and 15 years old – when he had been anointed king.¹ David could have easily assumed this was his moment and just stepped in and taken over the throne. But the text tells us he inquired of the Lord, asking if he should "go up into" any of the cities of Judah" (2:1). As a vassal of King Achish of Gath, he was living in Ziklag (1 Samuel 27:1–7). David wasn't just asking to go to one of the cities of Judah to visit; he was asking if he should go live there.² Based on the way this is written, it's implied that David used the ephod of the high priest to inquire of the Lord, as the king of Israel typically did.³

David asked about going to a city of Judah because that was his family's tribe. Going back to his own tribe seemed like a good first step. David went up to Hebron, which was not his hometown, but was the most distinguished of Judah's cities. It was a city set aside both for the priests/Levites and as a "city of refuge" by the Mosaic Law, a safe place set apart for those who had been falsely accused of murder, which some would have done to David (Numbers 35:6; Joshua 21:13).⁴ When David arrived at Hebron, the elders of Judah anointed him king over the tribe of Judah. But Abner, Saul's general, declared Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, king so he could stay in power.⁵ He declared authority over "all of Israel," but Judah followed David – the only tribe to do so – while the other tribes followed Ish-bosheth (2:8–11).

David inquired of the Lord while Abner tried to maintain power for himself by declaring Saul's son the next king. We will find out later that Abner knew God had promised the kingship to David (3:9), yet he still worked against it because it benefitted him personally. Abner not only didn't inquire of the Lord, but he also intentionally went against what he already knew was God's will. But David, even though he knew God's will was for him to become king, still asked God if it were the right time before he made a move. He had already been waiting 10 to 15 years for things God had *promised* him, but he was willing to wait even longer if it wasn't in God's timing.

How often do we do what we think is best for ourselves without seeking God's will for our lives – or even intentionally go against what we know is God's will because we want something different? God calls us to seek His will, trusting that His plans will always work out for our good, even if they aren't what we think would be best for us. This kind of attitude takes great humility, not only submitting to God's will above your own, but also putting others' needs ahead of your own. Abner sought what was best for himself, not what would have been best for the whole nation of Israel. God's plan requires us to let go of what we think is best for ourselves (more power, wealth, status or influence) and do what He is calling us to do. We must learn to trust that His will always turns out best for us in the long run (Romans 8:28).

Q: Describe a time you chose God's will over what seemed best for you personally. What happened as a result?

Q: Without an ephod or prophets, how can we know what God's will is today?

2 Samuel 2:12–3:39 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people show love toward their enemies.

Q: What does the way he treated Abner say about David?

Joab, David's general, and Abner met at the pool of Gibeon, in the very south of Ish-bosheth's territory but close to Judah, so a sort of "meeting in the middle." In that challenge, 12 young soldiers from each army fought each other individually and each pair "fell down together" so that all 24 died (2:16). Because no one won, a very fierce battle broke out, with David's army winning (2:17).

After the battle, Joab and his two brothers pursued Abner. The fastest, Asahel, caught him, but Abner stabbed him with the butt of his spear, not the blade. This sounds crazy, but it was an old soldier's trick when someone was being chased. While running, Abner stopped short and thrust his spear backward, which would have caught Asahel by surprise, and Asahel's own momentum from running so fast would have impaled him.⁶ Joab and his other brother continued to pursue Abner until he got to the rest of the tribe of Benjamin. Abner asked Joab for a truce, calling them all "brothers." So, Joab commanded his army to stop pursuing them. David's army only lost 20 men, but Abner lost 360.

There was a long war between "the house of Saul" and "the house of David." Even though Saul was dead, and his son was king, the text is still contrasting Saul and David. David was growing stronger (3:1). Abner was also growing more powerful in Saul's house, and Ish-bosheth accused him of sleeping with Saul's concubine. This wasn't just a personal or moral issue; in their culture, it was an implicit way to lay claim to the throne.⁷

Abner was infuriated to be accused of treason. He said he had done nothing but show “steadfast love” for Saul’s house, the same phrase used in the Old Testament to talk about God’s faithful love for Israel. So, Abner committed to help David gain the throne, which he admitted was “what the Lord has sworn to David” (3:9). Abner knew that God meant for David to be king yet had actively worked against it!

So, Abner sent messengers to David to make a covenant with him. David agreed only if Abner gave him back his original wife, Saul’s daughter, Michal. The text includes the scene of Paltiel walking with her, weeping after her all the way. Abner sent him away before she got to David.

Meanwhile, David’s general, Joab, believed Abner was making this covenant only to trick David (3:25). He went behind David’s back to see Abner. Abner thought he was coming in peace, but Joab struck him in the stomach to avenge his brother (3:27). David claimed innocence before the Lord of the blood of Abner, but he cursed Joab and his house for it (3:29). Then David buried and mourned Abner, saying he died “as a fool dies” when, as a “prince and great man,” he deserved a more noble death. David fasted and spoke words of honor about Abner, even though Abner had been his enemy. He also publicly stated that he had been “gentle” toward Abner. As anointed king, he could have been severe with Abner, but he left vengeance in the Lord’s hands as he had with Saul (3:39). The people were pleased with the way David mourned Abner, and no one blamed him for Abner’s death (3:36), which helped him gain support for becoming king of all Israel.

David showed love and honor to his enemy, both in his willingness to make a covenant with Abner and in honoring him after his death. He treated Abner as he had treated Saul, leaving vengeance and judgment to the Lord and speaking only good things about him even though he had not been a faithful follower of God.

Q: In what ways has God convicted you to show love to your enemies?

Q: What has showing love to your enemies taught you? How does it help you greater identify with Christ?

2 Samuel 4 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people leave vengeance and judgment to the Lord.

Q: Why wasn’t David happy with what these two captains did?

When Ish-bosheth heard that Abner had died, “his courage failed” (4:1). He was afraid, just as his father had been throughout his reign. Two of his own captains came to his house, stabbed him in the stomach, and beheaded him, carrying his head to David at Hebron. They believed God was using them to avenge David for the way Saul had treated him (4:8). But David had always said he would let the Lord judge between him and Saul. He had let Saul live twice when given the opportunity to kill him.

When Saul died and an Amalekite, hoping for a reward, claimed to have been responsible, David had the man executed for laying a hand against the Lord's anointed one (1:15). Surely these men knew that story, yet they thought David would want them to kill Ish-bosheth now? David had never laid a finger on Saul or any of his sons, and he didn't want to start now, even if their armies had been fighting each other for years.

When these men brought the news to David, he reminded them how he had executed that Amalekite. "How much more," David said, would he not do the same to them, who had killed "a righteous man" in his own house. Especially while he was taking a nap in his own bed, a cowardly way to attack him, not like fighting him in battle.

David wasn't perfect, but he had a strong sense of right and wrong and was committed to doing his best to follow God. Again, David was faced with people who had taken things into their own hands. These captains thought they were doing the Lord's will, but they didn't inquire of the Lord. They just did what they thought was God's will. But David sought the will of the Lord and waited for His timing.

Q: Why is taking revenge so tempting? How does falling to this temptation impact our witness?

Q: Has there been a time in your life when you wanted revenge but instead chose to love your enemy? In what ways did God move in you and/or the situation?

Q: What does it look like for us to seek God's will in our daily lives?

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Took

Main Point: Even when things seem certain, a godly person seeks God's will.

Trying to discern God's will for our lives can be really daunting at times. Whether you are making a decision for right now or looking to map out the next five years, doing what God wants you to do is a good aspiration. However, we can sometimes make it more complicated than it actually is. God has given us His Word to instruct us on the right way to live and approach the struggles of life. So when you are in His Word, do your best to gather information about the situation, and pray for His wisdom; you'll see God's will laid out before you.

CHALLENGES

THINK: How can you know what God's will is for your life? What does it look like for us to seek God's will practically? What part does prayer play in discerning the will of God? The Bible? Other people's advice? Your circumstances? The Holy Spirit? If you seek the Lord's will but don't feel as though He is answering you right away, what should you do?

PRAY for God to reveal His will to you. Pray for His wisdom and discernment to know exactly what He is leading you to do. Ask Him to give you the strength and trust to wait on His timing. Pray for Him to give you the humility to seek what is best for the church, the world, and others, not just what you think is best for yourself.

ACT: Pray for discernment with others. Whether it's with a small group, a ministry team, a committee at church, or even your family, set a time to meet specifically to seek the Lord's will for your group's direction. Take time to pray as a group with one accord, to read Scripture together, and to discern His will.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we'll finally see David made king over all of Israel after more than a decade of waiting and trusting in Lord to be his refuge. We will see how God blesses those who wait on Him and His timing.

¹ Floyd Nolen Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*. (Master Books, 2005).

² Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

³ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁴ J. G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

⁵ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁶ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

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