

Week 21: David's Success

Hook



Main Point: A godly person gives honor and glory to God for his or her success.

Candace Cameron Bure is an outspoken Christian who happens to be an actress, producer, director and author. You might know her as “D.J. Tanner” on the television series *Full House*. Bure’s faith has prevented her from pursuing, and some might argue, even being considered for some roles. However, while not everyone would identify her as a successful Hollywood A-lister, Bure is pleased with her career. Speaking of her faith, Bure said, “It has really given me the path that I have chosen and have been very intentional to choose all family-friendly projects and produce family-friendly entertainment.”¹ Although she may not be the star of summer blockbusters, the actress consistently graces the small screen during the Christmas season with a string of holiday romantic comedies. For instance:

The Christmas Contest (2021) – Exes Lara and Ben compete in a Christmas contest to win money for the charity of their choosing. The city watches them battle and choose what is more important, victory or love.

If I Only Had Christmas (2020) – At Christmas, a cheerful publicist teams up with a cynical VP and his eclectic team to help a charity in need.

Christmas Town (2019) – On her way to a new job as teacher, Lauren stops in Grandon Falls, where she meets and befriends single handyman Travis, his foster kid and many other locals in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

A Shoe Addict's Christmas (2018) – Noelle's life stopped when her boyfriend broke up with her on Christmas Eve three years ago. A handsome fireman moves in above her. She gets locked in at work in a department store all alone save for the ghost of Christmas past.²

Break into small groups, choose one of the titles below (or come up with your own), and create a plot synopsis for a potential Candace Cameron Bure romantic comedy Christmas movie. When completed, share your synopsis with the group.

Titles:

A Christmas Volcano

The Christmas Farm

The Holly Days

A Bon Voyage Christmas

Santa's Surprise

Q: Would you describe Candace Cameron Bure as being successful?

Q: What is your measure for success?

Q: What kingdom-minded opportunities does success present?

RECAP: This is a new period of David's life (lessons 18–22), when David is finally made king over all of Israel after 20 to 30 years of waiting. So far, we have seen how David inquires of the Lord at every step, we have seen his heart for worship as the primary, foundational thing in his kingdom, and we have seen God's covenant promises to David. This week, we'll see a summary of David's successes during his reign and how he gives all the honor and glory to God.

Week 21: David's Successes

Book (Note: 1 Chronicles 18:1–20:3 is parallel to this passage.)

Main Point: A godly person gives honor and glory to God for his or her success.

2 Samuel 8:1–6 and Psalms 60 and 108 [Read]

Talking Point 1: A godly person gives the glory and honor to God for his or her successes.

Q: Where did the Lord give victory to David?

Q: How does Psalm 60:12 say Israel would be able to win their battles?

This chapter is a summary of all of David's victories in battle, both against the Philistines he had already conquered and others he would conquer throughout his reign. These passages do not give a chronological account. This was, however, a legitimate way to record history in the ancient world. Even now, it is common for a history book to have some sections that are summaries rather than going through events chronologically. This chapter is still a part of the "David becomes king" storyline of the beginning of 2 Samuel (chapters 1–10). 1 Samuel is all about Saul's reign and David's journey to the throne – his anointing, his service of Saul, then running from Saul. This first section of 2 Samuel is about the golden age of David's reign, when he was following God, and everything was going well for him.³

In chapter 11, we will see his great sin with Bathsheba and things will start to go wrong. But in this opening section, we are just getting a summary of the good things about David's becoming king as a man after God's own heart. The late pastor Dr. J. Vernon McGee separates the book into two sections in his outline:

- 2 Samuel 1–10: Triumphs of David
- 2 Samuel 11–24: Troubles of David⁴

Chapters 8 and 10 together describe how David defeated many of the pagan nations around them in the Promised Land, finally fulfilling *almost* all of what God had promised the people of Israel when they came out of the Egypt and to the Holy Land almost 500 years before. That was a promise God made to Abraham back in Genesis, almost 500 years prior to the exodus (Genesis 15:12–21; Exodus 6:8). There were still a few places along the coast that David never conquered, yet because he conquered so much more territory than anyone before him, the history writers of Israel considered his reign to be the one that fulfilled this promise. If you look at a map of Israel at the beginning and end of David's reign, you can see he more than tripled the land of Israel.⁵ Second Samuel says, "The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went" (8:6, 14). David's reign and Solomon's, before he was led astray from the Lord, were considered Israel's golden age.⁶

In the Psalms, David gave God the credit for his victories; it was God who trod down Israel's foes (60:4–5, 12; 108:13). In both Psalm 60 and 108, David used some of the names of the same places in 2 Samuel 8, when he said it was God who divided up the land (60:6). Some were tribes and cities of Israel, and some were pagan nations David conquered, telling us it is God who is in control of every nation around the world, not just Israel. David described the tribes and cities of Israel as His helmet and scepter but the pagan nations as his washbasin and the ones upon which he casts his shoe and shouts in triumph (60:7–8). The heading to Psalm 60 says it was written “for instruction.” The instruction is that when Israel was disobedient to God, He left them, and they were not successful in battle (60:1–5), but when God was with them, they did “valiantly” and did “tread down their foes” (60:12). This is what they saw from the beginning of the conquest. When they did as God commanded, such as at Jericho, He won their battles for them. When they did not do what God said, such as at Ai, He allowed them to be overtaken (Joshua 6–7).

Scripture tells us that David was successful because “the Lord was with him” (1 Samuel 18:14). David gave all the credit and glory to the Lord for his success. From the beginning, when he was a shepherd boy with just a slingshot, he recognized that it was the Lord who would prevail regardless of which soldier or army was stronger (1 Samuel 17:33–37, 45–47).

Do we give glory to God when we experience success, not just in ministry endeavors, but in all areas of life? When we have success at school or work, do we thank and praise God for giving us the skills and opportunity? When things go well at home or in our relationships, do we thank and praise God for His blessing and help? Do we remember that it is the Lord who provides all things, including our own gifts and abilities and the opportunities and connections we have?

Q: If we gave glory to God every time we had a success, no matter how small, how would that affect our relationship with God? How would it affect how the people around us view God?

Let's be careful about how we define “success.” David did have great military success, but he also went through great difficulty. Not everything in his life always went well. Yet he praised and trusted God through it all. Spiritual success doesn't mean everything in your life will go “right” – that you'll get the raise, win the game, or keep the relationship. Sometimes God uses the hard things to grow us to be more like Him. And that is *spiritual success*.

Q: When we think about success that way, how does it help us glorify God in every circumstance, no matter what happens?

2 Samuel 8:11–18 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people dedicate to the Lord what He has given them.

Q: How did David tangibly honor God with his successes?

Q: How did David honor God in the way he ruled Israel?

In addition to giving credit to God for his successes, David dedicated his spoils from battle to the Lord. He didn't just praise and thank the Lord with his lips, he put his money where his mouth was. Instead of keeping the spoils of war for himself, David dedicated them to the Lord, setting them apart to be used for the temple his son Solomon would build (1 Chronicles 26:26; 1 Kings 7:51). David didn't just give a part of the spoils; he gave it all to the Lord. This wasn't David "tithing" on his "income." It was David giving the Lord His due. If the Lord won the battle, shouldn't He receive the spoils? David also had other nations bringing him tributes of bronze, silver and gold, all of which he dedicated to the Lord, as Romans tells us to give our whole lives as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1–2).

David captured 1,700 horsemen, but he only kept enough horses for 100 chariots. This was because of God's commands concerning kings from Deuteronomy – that they not acquire "many horses," "many wives," or "excessive silver and gold" (Deuteronomy 17:14–17). David kept enough horses for a substantial enough army, but he didn't keep too many. By contrast, the Egyptian army had about 2,000 chariots. In the Exodus, Pharaoh took 600 "chosen" (best) chariots and "all the other chariots" to chase the Israelites who had left (Exodus 14:7). That was a massive army; David kept very few in comparison. Though he was Israel's greatest king, and this was Israel's golden age as a nation, he kept his army and his palace relatively humble.⁷

Samuel ended this chapter with a summary of David's reign – he was just and fair to all his people. This was another part of God's law concerning kings. A king after God's own heart was to have his own copy of the law that he read every day so that he would not turn aside from it and so that "his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers" (Deuteronomy 17:18–20).

Unlike most kings of the world, the king of Israel was not supposed to think of himself as greater than anyone else. He was called to be a servant leader, a shepherd of his flock (2 Samuel 7:8). Jesus said the same thing to His disciples when they argued about who would be the greatest in His kingdom. He said the rulers of the Gentiles lorded their authority over their people, but it would not be that way in His kingdom. Whoever wants to be great in the kingdom of God must be the servant, just as He came to serve (Matthew 20:20–28).

Though David made many mistakes and committed grave sins, he showed a humble servant-leader's heart. He understood that his role as king was to rule as God's representative, while God was the real king who deserved all the power, glory and honor. David dedicated all he had to the Lord and served the people with justice and righteousness. He was not a perfect king, but he tried to fulfill God's vision for what a king should be rather than follow the ways of the leaders of the world's kingdoms.

Q: What would it look like for you to dedicate to God all He has given to you?

Q: What are some examples of servant leadership that you have observed? What difference does it make in the way things are run? In the way people respond to the leader?

2 Samuel 10 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people do their best, but trust the Lord to make His will happen.

Q: Why did David think he could trust Hanun, king of the Ammonites?

Q: How did Joab show both wisdom and trust in the Lord at the same time?

Chapter 8 summarizes David's victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Zobahites, Arameans, Edomites, Ammonites, and Amalekites. But then chapter 10 gives us the details of his defeat of the Ammonites. The war with the Ammonites is also the setting of the story of David's sin, so they happened at the same time. David was home to see Bathsheba on the roof only because he didn't go with his army out to war against the Ammonites (11:1).

When the king of the Ammonites died, David sent condolences to his son, the new king, but the new king's advisors told him that David must be tricking him and spying out the land to attack. So the king disgraced David's servants, shaving off half their beards and cutting their garments at the middle, which would expose their privates. Then the Ammonites hired the Syrians to help them fight David. David's general, Joab, devised a wise military strategy to try to defeat them and told his brother who fought with him to "be courageous" but ultimately, "may the Lord do what seems good to Him" (10:12). He didn't stand and do nothing; he strategized as best he could. He did his part with his human wisdom. But ultimately, he trusted the Lord to do what He saw fit.

Sometimes in battle, God gave specific instructions, such as with Jericho. He told them exactly how many times to march around the city, when to blow the trumpets, etc. In this case, God didn't give specific instructions, so Joab did what made the most sense to him but then said, "May the Lord do what seems good to him," implying "even if it means we lose the battle." He made his plans and did what he could, but then he turned the results over to the Lord.

Joab showed trust in God, but he was also willing to do whatever he could in his own strength and wisdom to fix the situation. Too often, we lean too far one way or the other. We sit back and do nothing to try to fix the situation, "trusting God" to bail us out. Such as if we want a new job but don't put in any applications because we're "trusting God" to drop something in our laps. Is that trusting God or is it using God? Or on the other side, we try to control everything about our situations, including the outcome. We plan, strategize, and cling to our plans but don't really trust that God's will is what's best. Joab showed a good blend of trusting God and acting in wisdom.⁸

Q: Which side do you lean more toward, not acting or not trusting? Why is it hard to find a balance between them?

Q: How can we know what God's will is? What should we do if we aren't sure?

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Took

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Do you find yourself struggling to turn everyday conversations into Gospel conversations? Like an on-ramp to a highway, consider how you can use praise to quickly move the conversation toward Jesus. Practice this week.

Q: What are successes in your life that people notice and comment on?

Q: How have you turned those conversations – or how can you turn those conversations – to focus on Christ?

CHALLENGES

THINK: What successes, both big and small, has God given you? How has He used failures to teach you and grow you to be more like Him, which is a form of spiritual success? How can you honor God in your successes, both with your words and your actions? How might sharing your praise and thanks to God for your successes be a way to witness to those who don't know the Lord?

PRAY about how God wants you to dedicate to Him what He has given you. Not just giving back to Him a portion of what you have but truly dedicating all that you have to Him. How can you use what He has gifted you with as a living sacrifice, pleasing to Him?

ACT: Give God credit. This week, tell someone something God has done for you. It doesn't have to be something the world would categorize as "success," but something that has changed your life and/or who you are for the better. Give God honor and glory for what He has done and watch how it changes your heart, your actions, and your life.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we'll see David really display the heart of God by asking to show God's lovingkindness to anyone remaining of Saul's house to fulfill the covenant he had made to Jonathan. This really showed a God-like love because he was willing to show mercy to the family of his enemy. Yet, by God's grace, the only remaining son of Saul's house was his beloved friend Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who had been crippled when he was young. David brings him into his home and treats him like one of his own sons. In this act of care for the vulnerable as well as fulfilling his covenant promise, David shows himself to truly be a man after God's own heart.

¹ <https://www.movieguide.org/news-articles/candace-cameron-bure-my-faith-gives-me-so-much-peace-and-comfort.html>

² <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0121026/>

³ J. Vernon McGee, *1 and 2 Samuel, Through the Bible Commentary Series* (Thomas Nelson, 1996).

⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *1 and 2 Samuel, Through the Bible Commentary Series* (Thomas Nelson, 1996).

⁵ The ESV Study Bible has a very helpful map that shows the land of Israel at the beginning of David's reign and at the end (under the notes for 2 Samuel 1), which makes it easy to see how much more land David conquered than anyone in the whole time of the Judges and Saul's reigns.

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

⁶ J. Dick Fleming, *Israel's Golden Age: The Story of the United Kingdom* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907).

⁷ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

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

⁸ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).