

Week 26: David Returns to the Throne

Hook



Main Point: Godly people forgive others, confess their own sin, and make amends.

While sitting on a tarmac aboard a United Airlines flight, professional musician Dave Carroll was horrified to see his \$3,500 Taylor guitar being tossed around by baggage handlers. Upon deboarding, Carroll sought assistance from a United customer service agent only to be told “but hun, that’s why you signed the waiver.” Carroll’s guitar sustained \$1,200 worth of damages. And so began his plight to right the wrong. After nine months of communicating with the airline, Carroll was told that United would not compensate him for damages. Considering the tools at his disposal, the musician promised the airline representative that he would write three songs about his poor experience and post them on YouTube. The first of the trilogy, simply titled “United Breaks Guitars,” garnered one million views in four days and became the number-one music video in the world within a month. Suddenly, Dave Carroll was all over the media, and the reputation of United Airlines was suffering. It was widely reported that within five days of the song’s release, United took a 10-percent drop in stock price, constituting about \$180 million dollars.¹

Q: Have you ever had to navigate the customer service department of a large corporation? How did the interactions make you feel?

Q: To date, “United Breaks Guitars” has been viewed over 20 million times. Why do you think the video was so successful?

Q: If you could make a viral video about any company, detailing their poor service, which would it be?

Transition: Many of us are tempted to take revenge after being wronged. In today's story, David returns to the throne and must deal with those who turned their back on him. How will he respond?

RECAP: In the last few weeks, we have seen how David's great sin multiplied into the next generation in the sins of his sons and how one son, Absalom, rebelled against him and challenged him for the throne. David trusted God and let the Lord determine who should be king between him and Absalom. Though David wasn't perfect, the Lord chose him because he trusted in the Lord and desired to follow His will. This week, David returns to the throne and is challenged again, this time by a Benjamite, a member of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul.

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Book (Note: *1 Chronicles 20:4–8 is parallel to this passage. Now that we are past the period of David's sin and its consequences, Chronicles picks up the story again.*)

Main Point: Godly people forgive others, confess their own sin, and make amends.

2 Samuel 19:16–30 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Godly people forgive those who have wronged them.

Q: How did David treat those who had turned against him when he fled Jerusalem?

Q: Why do you think David believed Mephibosheth's story?

We're only reading sections of this story, so here is a summary of chapter 19:

- Joab told David to stop mourning Absalom, that it was ungrateful to his loyalists.
- The tribes of Israel argued about bringing David back. Judah was last to decide until David sent word to Zadok and Abiathar. David made Amasa general.
- David pardoned those who betrayed him (Shimei and Mephibosheth) and rewarded Barzillai the Gileadite, who gave him hospitality on the run.
- There was conflict over David between Judah and Israel, foreshadowing the divided kingdom.

David was devastated over Absalom even though he showed no love for David. David's general, Joab, did not always do what was right, but here he confronted David with the hard truth – his mourning over Absalom was ungrateful and disrespectful to those who had been loyal to him, and if he kept on, they would turn away from him (19:5–8). So, David pulled himself together and “took his seat at the gate,” which meant he was ready to stop mourning and resume his position as king (19:8).²

The first thing David did when he returned to the throne was to pardon Shimei and Mephibosheth, who had turned against him during Absalom's rebellion. Shimei was a member of Saul's family but not one of his direct descendants. (Mephibosheth was the only remaining direct descendant.) But Shimei was somehow related to Saul and was from the tribe of Benjamin. When David left Jerusalem fleeing from Absalom, Shimei threw stones at him, his servants, and his army and cursed him, claiming that God was using Absalom to avenge all the blood of the house of Saul. Even though David didn't kill Saul or any of his family, Shimei held him responsible simply because he took over the throne after Saul (16:5–8). David's reaction was unusual but showed his heart as one who trusted God. When Abishai, one of his advisors and Joab's brother, wanted to punish Shimei, David said no because maybe God had told him to curse David (2 Samuel 16:10). He let the Lord judge between them. On David's return, Shimei came right away to beg his forgiveness, bringing a thousand Benjamites with him. They were part of the first group of people to welcome David back to the throne. Shimei admitted he was

wrong and fell prostrate before him. Abishai again wanted to put him to death, but David forgave him (19:16–22).

Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul to whom David had intentionally shown the lovingkindness of the Lord to fulfill his covenant vows to Jonathan (9:1). When David fled, Mephibosheth's servant, Ziba, met him along the way, giving him supplies for the journey but telling him that Mephibosheth was staying in Jerusalem because he believed Absalom's rebellion would end in his regaining the kingdom as the rightful heir of Saul. David gave Ziba everything that had belonged to Mephibosheth, and he paid homage to David (2 Samuel 16:1–4). But when David returned, Mephibosheth told him that he had wanted to flee Jerusalem with David, but Ziba had lied to David about him. Mephibosheth had not groomed himself from the time David left until the day he returned, an act of mourning showing his loyalty and commitment to David.³

David had showed great trust in letting the Lord judge between him and Shimei and Mephibosheth. On his return, he showed great grace, lovingkindness, and mercy in forgiving them. He also rewarded Barzillai, who had shown him hospitality when he was on the run. The text again calls attention to the "heart" by emphasizing that David won over the hearts of the men of Judah (19:14). In his return as king, David again showed the heart of one who trusts and follows the Lord, a man after God's own heart.

Q: How can letting the Lord judge between you and another person give space and time for the truth to be revealed and prevent you from doing something rash?

Q: What has been your experience with forgiving people? How did it affect you?

Q: In what areas is God calling you to trust in Him right now?

2 Samuel 20:1–2 and 14–22 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people try to prevent bloodshed and violence.

Q: How did the wise woman of Abel prevent more bloodshed?

Again, we are only reading a section, so here is a summary of chapter 20:

- Sheba, another Benjamite, rebelled against David and Israel followed him.
- Joab killed Amasa, and he and Abishai pursued Sheba to Abel-beth-maakah.
- A wise woman negotiated with Joab, had Sheba's head cut off, and threw it to Joab.

We must look back at some of the parts we skipped in chapter 19 to get the full story of Sheba's rebellion in chapter 20. In chapter 19, some conflict arose between the tribes of the north and the tribe of Judah over David's return to the throne, which foreshadows the split that happened during the reign of David's grandson just two generations later. A kind of split had existed even from the beginning of David's reign. When David first became king, for seven-and-a-half years he reigned over only Judah before he became

king over all of Israel (2 Samuel 2:1–7). The sentiment among the tribe of Judah was that David “belonged” more to them than to the other tribes (19:41–43).

Also in chapter 19, we see that David was unhappy with both Abishai and Joab, who were brothers, and made his nephew, Amasa, his general instead of Joab (19:13, 22). In chapter 20, Joab killed Amasa in a manner much as he had killed Abner to avenge his brother Asahel’s death (3:27). Then he took command of the army again and pursued Sheba to the city of Abel-beth-maakah, where a wise woman called to him from the city wall while they were trying to batter it down. (“Wise woman” is the same phrase used of the wise woman of Tekoa whom Joab had asked to tell David a story to convince him to reconcile with Absalom when Absalom first returned to Jerusalem after having fled after killing his brother, Amnon, before his rebellion [14:1–21]).

Both of these wise women were trying to prevent more bloodshed and violence than was necessary. They used persuasion and wisdom to convince David to forgive and Joab not to destroy an innocent city, putting them in a class of many strong female characters in the Old Testament who made a huge difference in the course of Israel’s history, even those who were unnamed. In contrast to Joab, who generally tried to do the right thing for David’s army but kept taking his own violent revenge, these women showed that the wisdom of God can prevent unnecessary violence, even in the context of war.⁴

Q: How is it consistent with God’s character to prevent more bloodshed and violence than is necessary? What does that tell us about God?

Q: On an individual scale, when we experience conflict with others, how can working through conflict in a healthy way minimize the hurt and pain we cause?

2 Samuel 21:1–14 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people confess their sin and try to make things right.

Q: How did David respond to Rizpah’s grief?

This chapter describes a three-year famine, which the Lord told David was because of Saul’s bloodshed of the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were descendants of the Amorites, one of the groups God said He would drive out of the promised land during the conquest (Exodus 34:11). However, after Joshua fought the first few battles, the Gibeonites feared Israel, so they pretended to be distant travelers. They came with worn-out clothes, sacks, sandals and wineskins, and asked Joshua to make a treaty with them, which he did. Three days later, he learned they were actually nearby neighbors and one of the tribes that were supposed to be driven from the land, but because Israel had sworn an oath before the Lord, they had to let them live. The Gibeonites became woodcutters and water carriers, servants for the altar of the Lord (Joshua 9:1–21).

This treaty was supposed to be eternal, but Saul had attacked the Gibeonites and put some of them to death (21:1–2). David asked the Gibeonites what he could do to make

atonement for Saul's sin against them. He sought to make restitution for the way his nation had treated them, even though he hadn't personally done it. They asked for seven of Saul's sons to be put to death. Now, Saul didn't have any legitimate heirs left other than Mephibosheth, but he did have sons by his concubines, who were still his sons, but would not have been legitimate heirs. And he had grandsons through his daughters. David gave them seven of those to be hanged as punishment. Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines and mother to two of them, stayed on the mountain. For months – from the beginning of the harvest (April) until the rains returned in the fall, signaling the end of the famine – she watched over their bodies, driving away birds and beasts of prey from attacking them.⁵

When David heard this, he retrieved the bones of Saul and Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had rescued their bodies from the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:10–13). He took their bones and those of Saul's seven sons and gave them a proper burial in Saul's father's tomb in Benjamin. The text tells us only after their proper burial did God respond to the plea for the land. This is the account of another strong woman who made a significant difference in the biblical story.

It is another sad story in which the sons paid the consequences for the sins of their fathers, as when David and Bathsheba's infant son died for David's sin. This may seem unfair to us, but God told Noah after the flood that He would demand an accounting for the bloodshed of human lives (Genesis 9:4–6). As God told Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground!" (Genesis 4:10). When we shed blood, whether our literal family or any other member of the human family, that blood cries out to the Lord. He is grieved over every human life (Genesis 9:5). It's significant to see that God only healed their land after David properly buried Saul and his sons, the very man whose murders he was making retribution for. God was grieved by the slaughter of the Gibeonites, *and* He was grieved by the death of Saul's sons, even though their deaths were the retribution for the slaughter. He was grieved at the death of Saul, too. God grieves at the loss of all human life and the sin that brings death.

When Jesus saw that Lazarus was dead, He wept for him even though He knew He was about to raise him to life. John also said He was "deeply moved," but what we don't get in English is the sense of anger in that word, which literally means to snort with anger (John 11:38).⁶ Jesus was angry at death and the sin that brought death into the world.⁷ God hates death. He hates bloodshed. He's not a wrathful, bloodthirsty, war-hungry God. He hates all of it, but it is all the result we bring upon ourselves when we turn away from Him. Making restitution for the wrong we have done to someone doesn't take away the pain or suffering we caused. Killing Saul's sons didn't bring the Gibeonites back to life. Yet God does call us to make restitutions for damage we have caused by our sin (Numbers 5:7).

Q: What has been your experience with making amends for the ways you have hurt people? Why is it important to make amends?

Q: How does making amends affect the other person? Your own heart?

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Took

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The first “Choose Your Own Adventure” book, *The Cave of Time*, was published in 1979. Readers had the opportunity to make choices that impacted the direction of the story; the book teased readers with 40 different storyline conclusions “What happens next in the story? It all depends on the choices you make.”⁸

What will you do next? Dwelling on past hurts or mistakes can rob you of joy and waste your days. Although you cannot change the past, you do have the opportunity to choose how you will respond.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Whom is God calling you to forgive? Do you need to confess your own sins against someone, and/or make amends for the ways you have hurt that person? How would having a heart of forgiveness and the humility to confess our own sins help to manage conflict with others?

PRAY for those who are struggling with conflict in their lives, maybe situations you know about or even ones you don’t. Pray for the conflicts in our world, wars and other kinds of fighting. Pray for conflicts in our country, in our communities, and in our churches. Pray for people to have the heart to work through conflict and forgive.

ACT: Make amends. This week, reach out to someone you know you have hurt, even if it was a long time ago. You don’t necessarily have to do a tangible thing to “make reparations” for what you did (though God may inspire you to do that). Reaching out and telling him or her you are sorry and want to make amends is enough. The Lord will lead the conversation and interaction from there.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we’ll look at the psalms of David that are included in the text of 2 Samuel 22–23. Chapter 22 is included here near the end of his story because it was written in response to the Lord delivering him from all his enemies. It is also the text of Psalm 18. Chapter 23 is included as the “last words” of David. There is more to the story chronologically after chapter 23, but these two songs serve to summarize David’s life and how he felt about what God had done for him.

¹ <https://www.marketplace.org/2019/07/05/a-broken-guitar-a-youtube-video-and-a-new-era-of-customer-service/>

² John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

³ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1–2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁴ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1–2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁵ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1–2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁶ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996).

⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991)

⁸ <https://www.amazon.com/Cave-Time-Choose-Your-Adventure/dp/0553269658>