

## The Life of David, The Sad Tale of the Stubborn, 2 Samuel 2-5:8, 6/29/25

### Footsteps of Paul Tour, interest Meeting after the service

Turn to 2 Samuel 2. It's been a minute since we've been back to our study through the **life of David** but we return for the rest of the summer. If the life of David were a TV series (which it is by the way- House of David on Prime, really good), We would be beginning season three today. And like a good series we've been waiting from season 3 to drop, and it's finally here. Let's recap the first 2 seasons. **Season 1- The Rise of David the Shepherd.** A true underdog story about a nobody shepherd boy who is anointed by Samuel the prophet to become the future king of Israel. And we learn that he is chosen not because he has the highest SATs, not because he squats 800 lbs like Jalen Hurts, not because he comes from the royal class...none of those things are the case, the Bible says it's because **David is a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)**. And this is the overarching theme that we've been studying through this series and this is our aim as Christians, and as a church.

**Season 2- A Man on the Run.** The jealous, crazed King Saul is chasing David around in the wilderness trying to kill him for the last 7 years. Even though David is the anointed King, David has committed himself to doing things God's way, not coming to the throne by taking matters into his own hands, even though he had multiple opportunities to do so. But David said, "I will not break the commands of God in order to achieve the purposes of God." This is one of the things that made David a man after God's own heart. Well eventually Saul comes to a tragic end in battle against Israel's archrivals, the Philistines.

Now we enter **Season 3: The Rise of David the King.** We have a lot of ground to cover today- chapters 2–beginning of 5, we won't have time to read and study everything in this chapter, read and study it on your own with a commentary to help with the tricky parts- [soniclight.com](https://soniclight.com)

**2** *In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up."*

*David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.* Saul is dead. Now what? With David's power and popularity he could have set his own course, his own political strategy to take the throne. But instead, he waits on the Lord, he seeks the Lord's counsel. David's life is surrendered to God's will and ways. David's posture is one of waiting on God, trusting in God to fulfill his purposes *in his time* and *in his way*. He doesn't figure out what he wants to do and then asks God to bless it; he asks God what God wants him to do and does it. That's the way of a man or woman after God's own heart, in stark contrast to the impulsive Saul.

God says go to Hebron. Hebron was where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived and were buried. God is taking David back to his covenant roots, the place that symbolizes God's long-standing promises, promises not only to David, but that are ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus. This is God signalling to David (and to us) that he will make good on his promises, we can trust his ways. So David and his family went up to Hebron. **4** *And the men of Judah came, and there they*

*anointed David king over the house of Judah.* This is a regional, a tribal kingship, and so it would seem that now David can ascend to the full kingship over all Israel just as God promised him, but it's not quite that simple, things rarely are that simple in a broken world with power hungry, selfish, sinful people. In the beginning of chapter 2 we learn that Saul had one son still alive who didn't go into battle with the Philistines (which is a signal to tell us what kind of leader he was, not a strong one). His name was Ish-Bosheth. We will call him Ish for short. And Saul's general, a guy named Abner, takes Ish and defiantly proclaims that he's the next king over Israel not David and so a civil war breaks out against the House of David and the House of Saul. The rest of chapter 2 tells one tragic story after another of pointless bloodshed between two rival factions that should be on the same team. It's really quite sad. Well behind the curtain we see that it's Abner pulling the strings. The Bible gives us a hint at his motives in *3:6 While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.* Abner is exploiting a weak king, poor Ish is just a puppet. He sees a political opportunity to establish himself as the king. But something he doesn't expect happens.

*7 Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?"*

*8 Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said. So he answered, "Am I a dog's head—on Judah's side?"*

*This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David.*

*Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman! 9 May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath*

*10 and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba."*

*11 Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.*

What in the world is going on here? Israelite kings having concubines was a sinful practice borrowed from Israel's pagan neighbors; concubines were treated like property, they were often used to bear more children of the royal bloodline. Now the Bible doesn't tell us whether this accusation was true or not, but I think the Bible is subtly hinting to us that it was true. Most Bible scholars agree, and say that this would have been a defiant way of asserting Abner's royal authority, it was politically strategic to see what Ish would do and possibly continue the royal line through Abner and Saul's concubine. But Ish confronts him, and Abner is appalled that this weak king would dare confront him, and in his pride decides to defect to the House of David.

Notice his defection is not on account of a theological discovery or spiritual surrender to the Lord's will, although he clearly knows it is God's will for David to be king. This is dirty politics, just like we have in Washington. He is attempting to solidify his own future with the team that is clearly winning at this point. Abner is a man consumed with power and selfish ambition.

From 3:13-20, We see that Abner is able to finagle his way into a meeting with David and he makes David an offer he can't refuse, he guarantees to get David his first love back, Michal, Saul's daughter, remember her? But also guarantees that he will broker a deal to have all Israel surrender and make David king. Of course, Abner is thinking, "Once I do this, David is going to make me second in command, the general over all Israel." Abner schemes, outwits, positions himself well...he thinks he's a made man...There's only one problem...a guy named Joab, David's current general. Not only does Joab not trust Abner's scheming, but for him, it's personal. "They say revenge is a dish..." That's right, well, that's Joab's mantra because during the civil war years early, Abner killed Joab's brother, Asahel, in battle. And so Joab does some scheming in the shadows too... **27 Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into an inner chamber, as if to speak with him privately.**

**And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.** It kind of feels like Shakespeare got a lot of his material from the Bible, huh? The Bible doesn't put any punches, it shows us just how dark and sinful the human heart really is apart from God's intervening grace.

**4:1 When Ish-Bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed.** Poor King Ish, and all Israel, know's there's blood in the water now, and that's when the sharks come. That's what happens, even among his own men. **2 Now Saul's son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Rekab.** These two guys figure it's over for Ish, they see how weak he is, Abner is no longer around, so they figure, "Let's kill him and bring his head to King David and we will get rewarded for doing David a favor." Now if you have been following the life of David in Samuel, you can predict that these men are in for a rude awakening. At every turn, when anyone takes matters into their own hands against those in authority, against God's anointed, even those who are David's enemies and rivals, David isn't happy. David is shocked that people would be so brazen to take the life of those in authority. So these men come with poor Ish's head to David, and David says, **v.9 "As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, 10 when someone told me, 'Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news,**

**I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news! 11 How much more—**

**when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!"**

**12 So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron.**

**But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron.** David carries out justice against these two men and sets them as an example of what happens when you take

matters into your own hands. David says, “I trust God to deliver me, not men.” And he honors Ish-Bosheth and Abner in their death, even though they were rivals with a proper burial.

Finally, as we get to the beginning of chapter 5, David receives what he has waited so patiently on God for, the fulfillment of God’s promise. **V.1 All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “We are your own flesh and blood. 2 In the past, while Saul was king over us,**

**you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’”**

**3 When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.**

Through testing and trial, through suffering and injustice at the hands of defiant men, God preserves David, raises him to an exalted position, and fulfills his promise. That’s as far as we are going to go in the story, because I want to talk about you and me.

Frank Sinatra famously sang the song “My Way”. And he sang it as a defiant boast, that he lived his life his own way, living for himself, putting his own ambitions, dreams, first, living by his own rules. My Way was the life song of Abner, much like it was for Saul. Abner lived for his own ambitions, his own glory. He lived according to his own moral rules, and was willing to backstab, finagle, scheme to get what he wanted. Even when he played along with God’s will, he used dirty politics to attempt to get it done, for his own selfish ends. And along the way he left a wake of destruction, of needless fighting and death, delaying the blessing that God wanted to bring to Israel through David and a through a united kingdom. Because he did things his way, Abner missed out on the opportunity to be on the right side of biblical history, and more than that he paid the price of his own death for it.

David on the other hand was the opposite. David’s song is “God’s Way.” We see this all throughout his Psalms which give us a vast vocabulary of trusting God’s way not our own. **Psalms 27:14 Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!”**

**Psalms 25:4-5 “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.”** David says, “God you want me to go to Hebron, I’m doing it God’s way. Even if it takes longer than I want it to, I’m doing it God’s way. Even if it’s painful, stressful and at times lonely, I’m doing it God’s way. Even if I don’t understand why God is allowing certain things to happen, or I can’t see how it fits together, I’m doing it God’s way.” The result? God exalts David, protects him, and blesses his life, and carries out his purposes for salvation history through him.

Abner and David represent the two ways we can live our lives, and there is no third option. **We are choosing either God’s Way or we are choosing My Way.** We are either seeking him, as Jesus taught in the Lord’s prayer- “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Or we are seeking ourselves, and say “My will be done.” We are either waiting on God’s timing, or we are taking

timing into our own hands. Living by God's moral standards in the Bible or our own. There is no in between friends.

One of the greatest temptations we are going to face in the Christian life is doing it our own way, in our own strength, our own wisdom. When trying to do it God's way there is always going to be a cheat code waiting for us- a seemingly easier way, the faster way, the less painful way to get what I long for.

*"God wants to meet my financial needs and bless my family, but it's not happening fast enough so I need to help him out by overworking, cutting corners, or scheming to make it happen."*

*"God wants me to be married but I'm tired of waiting for someone that shares my faith and values, so I'm going to lower my standards and do it my way."* I was talking with a young Christian recently in this situation and I said, "Brother at the heart of this issue is that you don't trust that God has your best interest at heart. You think you know better, and you need to help him along in getting you where you want to be." And isn't that what it is? We struggle to trust the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Many of us here have experienced the results of making *My Way* your life song. Maybe it's the trainwreck of a relationship that you knew God didn't want you to be in but you wanted to do it your own way. Maybe it was living the party life only to realize it left you broke, empty, and addicted. Or maybe refused to deal with conflict God's way by confronting and forgiving, and you did it your way and it just left you bitter, angry, and vengeful. I was listening to an interview with Bono from U2 last week, he said that Frank Sinatra originally sang *My Way* as a boast. But he said 20 years later, he heard a private recording of Frank singing the same song, same lyrics, but this time singing it as an apology.<sup>1</sup> Frank had regretted living his life for himself. Our way never ultimately delivers what it promises.

There are times in leading our church that I struggle to trust God's way is better, and I do it my way, and it inevitably results in regret. At times I'm tempted to handle a difficult conversation my way instead of God's way. Because God's way means I'm going to have to confront, or disappoint someone, or make someone upset with me. I'd rather make everyone happy, I'd rather do the path of least resistance. And whether it's in our careers, our money, our love life, our family, this is the temptation we all face.

But being a man or woman, being a church after God's own heart means we are committed, like David, to God's way.

You say, **"How do we know God's way?"** Let me give you four quick hand holds- **1- Search God's way through his Word.** Read it 95% of the most important choices and decisions you will make God has already revealed what his will is. **2- Seek God's way through Persistent Prayer-** James 1:5, Ask for wisdom. This is not a quick prayer and then, "Nothing? Ok I'm doing my thing." Seeking him, maybe with fasting, over a period of time and asking him to reveal his will, **3-**

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Rogan Experience, interview with Bono, May 30, 2025

**Listen to God's way through Wise Counsel.** Proverbs 15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, with godly advisors they succeed.

**#4 Follow God's Way through His Work.** One of the phrases I use a lot to discern God's Way- is borrowed from Henry Blackaby in his classic book *Experiencing God*, **"Find out where God is at work and join Him there."** And here's the thing, and we saw it in our story with Abner and David: God is going to accomplish his plans, even through imperfect people, with or without us, but don't we want to be part of it?

**The Barn** example.

David's heart is after God's own heart. And God's heart is revealed ultimately in Jesus Christ. Over and over again Jesus said, I've come to do the will of the Father. And that was tested before he went to the cross. In the Garden...Jesus says no my way, yours be done. **John 14:6 I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**