



## Parkway Fellowship

2 Samuel: From the Height of Power, to the Depths of Dysfunction • A Sorrowful Victory •

2 Samuel 16:15–23; 17:1-29; 18:1-33 • 03/31/2019

### Main Point

The grace of God enables Christ followers to pursue reconciliation with our betrayers.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some examples—from the Bible, textbooks, or pop culture—of famous betrayals?**

**Come up with a list of ways people respond to betrayal. (Options may include: bitterness, anger, desire for revenge, grief, brooding, loss of faith in people, withdrawal from life, understanding, forgiveness.)**

Adam betrayed his heavenly Father in the opening act of human history (Genesis 3). Cain betrayed his brother Abel (Genesis 4). Peter also betrayed Jesus when he denied knowing Him (John 18). Secular history is replete with accounts of sons who murdered their fathers to replace them as heads of state. No human relationship is beyond the evil effects of the lust for power. Did Absalom write a new chapter in infamy by subversion of his own father? Not really.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 16:15-17:14.

**How did Hushai's advice compare to Ahithophel's? Whose counsel was followed?**

**What was the theological reason why Absalom followed Hushai's advice?**

Fortunately for David, Hushai convinced Absalom that Ahithophel's plan was wrong by appealing to Absalom's pride, his knowledge of his father, and David's military strength. Hushai argued that David would not be entrapped easily. Rather, he would fight like a caged bear. Hushai's advice was intended by God to lead to Absalom's defeat (17:14).

**Read 2 Samuel 15:31. What evidence do you see that God answered David's prayer?**

**Describe a time when you know God delivered you from a bad situation. What effect did that situation have on your relationship with Him?**

| Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 17:15-29.

**A relay system was used to convey the message of Hushai to David. Who were the men instrumental in getting the word to David? What role did each man play?**

As prearranged (15:34-36), Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests in Jerusalem who sent word to David of Absalom's plans. They advised David to take all the people with him and cross the Jordan River. David set up his capital in exile at Mahanaim, east of the Jordan. David is an example of seeking God's will but also using human wisdom at the same time. Hushai's courage is an example for us to take risks to do what is right.

**When have you been strengthened by the support of a trusted friend? Why is this a role the body of Christ is expected to play for one another?**

| Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 18:1-8.

**Why didn't David go with the army into battle? What was David's adamant instruction to the army in verse 5?**

**Look at verse 7. What impact did the conflict between David and Absalom have on the entire nation?**

David divided his men into three companies under the leadership of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. In the ensuing battle, David's experienced forces won a decisive victory over the larger but inexperienced army of Absalom. David had chosen the place of the battle well, for the forest proved a hindrance to Absalom's men. Twenty thousand men were lost in the battle.

| Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 18:9-33.

**Who was ultimately responsible for Absalom's death? Why do you think Joab deliberately disobeyed the king's order?**

### **Read verses 12-14 again. What does this tell us about Joab's true character?**

Human relationships mean little to the person whose entire life is dedicated to violence. Joab was indifferent to David's feelings for Absalom, or any personal guilt the king might have felt for the circumstances that had culminated in open conflict. Joab had been a supporter of Absalom, apparently convinced Absalom would succeed David. He may have supported the reforms Absalom sought. Now that it no longer appeared to be in his personal interest or in the national interest, the cold, calculating Joab had no reluctance about killing his former ally. The more we learn of Joab, the greater the evidence that his heart had been hardened to emotion.

### **What do we learn about David's feelings toward Absalom in verse 33 through his expression of grief?**

**Read 2 Samuel 13:37, 39; 15:30; 18:31-33. What were David's feelings toward his son as expressed in these verses? If David had demonstrated his deep love for Absalom earlier, might the outcome of the incident have been different?**

The news of his son's death struck David like an arrow. Even though messengers brought the news of a great victory, David's heart was heavy over the loss of his son. David isolated himself from the people around him and grieved. In his grief, he declared that he would rather have died than Absalom.

## **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**As Christians, what is our role in strengthening the relationships within our families? What impact do unhealthy family relationships have on the other aspects of our lives, most importantly our relationship with God?**

**How should God's people respond to someone who betrays or hurts them? How do the teachings of Jesus instruct us to live differently than the actions of those in this account?**

**Despite the people's selfish attitudes and actions, God was still working out His plan through them. How do we see God at work throughout this story?**

## **Pray**

Close in a time of prayer. Give your group members the opportunity to pray silently, confessing their sins to the Lord, specifically those related to relational conflict and a lack of forgiveness. After a few minutes, close the prayer, thanking God for the work of Jesus that enables us to live a life that pleases Him and honors others.

## **Commentary**

16:15 Now is probably better translated as “meanwhile” to communicate the fact that even as David was fleeing, Absalom and his supporters arrived at Jerusalem. The conspirators took the city without a fight because David’s forces had fled.

16:16 The account now picks up from 15:37. Hushai and Absalom entered Jerusalem about the same time, and Hushai’s greeting, Long live the king, was the beginning of his attempt to convince Absalom he was on his side.

16:17 Absalom questioned Hushai’s loyalty because he knew of Hushai’s faithful service to his father, David.

16:18 Hushai’s reply was more vague than Absalom realized. David—not Absalom—was the one whom the Lord had chosen (1Sam 16:12).

16:19 Hushai promised Absalom that just as he had served faithfully in David’s presence, he now would continue to serve in the same way at Absalom’s side.

16:21 Absalom’s lying with his father’s concubines would be a visible sign to everyone that Absalom was taking over the kingdom (including the harem) from David (12:8,11). Doing so would also sharpen the division between Absalom and his father and encourage others to forsake David and join Absalom.

16:22 In the sight of all Israel fulfilled God’s words to David through the prophet Nathan (12:11).

16:23 The advice Ahithophel gave was normally like someone asking about a word from God. This time, however, his counsel was politically wise but immoral since David was still alive (Lv 20:11).

17:2 Ahithophel believed panic would envelop David and his followers if Absalom’s forces came upon them while the king was weak and weary. Rather than turning the battle into a civil war, Ahithophel would then strike down only the king.

17:3 Ahithophel thought if David could be killed quickly, all the people would accept Absalom’s kingship.

17:6 Hushai probably knew Ahithophel’s proposal would succeed. He had to convince Absalom to delay in pressing the attack against David.

17:8-10 Hushai cited David’s military genius. The king would anticipate Absalom’s quick strike and hence would not spend the night with the people but would hide in one of the many caves (or pits or ravines) on the northern edge of the Dead Sea. Further, any news of a setback among the people who followed Absalom could lead to popular support swinging back to David again.

17:11 From Dan to Beer-sheba was a distance of 110 miles. The two cities basically served as the northern and southern points of Israel, so Hushai is calling for a nation-wide muster. Hushai's proposal was much more extensive and time-consuming, giving David and his forces time to regroup.

17:12 Hushai suggested that David and all the men with him should die—well beyond what Ahithophel had proposed. This strategy might appeal to Absalom's vengeful pride.

17:14 The Lord guided the fateful discussion to answer David's prayer (15:31).

17:16 Having received some escape time through Hushai's counsel to Absalom, David's forces needed to put distance between themselves and Absalom's forces as quickly as possible. Of course, if Absalom decided to follow Ahithophel's advice after all, Hushai's advice to David was all the more urgent.

17:17 En-rogel was a spring in the Kidron Valley about one-fourth of a mile from Jerusalem where the Kidron and Hinnom valleys met.

17:23 Ahithophel knew that since his advice had not been followed, David would regain the throne. And when David was reestablished, Ahithophel would be considered a traitor. Thus he committed suicide.

17:24 Mahanaim was more than 30 miles from Jerusalem. So David and his men may have been about 20 miles from Absalom when he crossed the Jordan.

17:28-29 These men of influence knew about David's quick flight from Jerusalem, and they brought him food and supplies. These provisions restored the bodies and spirits of the king's group.

18:1 The phrase commanders of hundreds and of thousands shows that David had been able to rally considerable support for his cause.

18:3 The people considered David's suggestion to march out with them too risky, so they prevailed on him to support them from the city—to stay away from direct confrontation with Absalom's forces.

18:5 The text makes it clear that David gave specific instructions about Absalom's treatment, and it emphasizes that all the people heard the king's orders.

18:7-8 David divided his troops into three groups. This allowed him to spread Absalom's forces thinly over the entire region, preventing their united stand in the open country where their superior numbers would give them the advantage. A forest presented natural obstacles or threats such as wild animals, pits, low branches, and marshes.

18:11 Joab learned about Absalom's defenseless position. David's general had once again determined to take matters into his own hands for what he believed to be the king's own good.

18:12 This soldier was not ready to disobey a charge that David had given his generals. He also repeated David's charge; the writer is making it clear that Joab knew David's command.

18:13 The warriors did not trust Joab. If they killed Absalom, they thought Joab might let the blame fall on them.

18:14-15 Now at the place where Absalom was hanging alive in the oak tree, Joab and his men surrounded him, struck him, and killed him in violation of David's order.

18:16 Joab then blew the ram's horn to assemble the troops (2:28; 20:1,22). With Absalom dead, the battle was over.

18:17 All Absalom's supporters fled, uncertain what reprisal might come from David's victorious forces. Absalom's body was taken down and thrown into a large pit in the forest and covered with a huge mound of stones, thus denying him a place in his family's tombs and dishonoring him in his death (Jos 7:26).

18:19 Ahimaaz had been David's trusted messenger throughout the ordeal, and now he wished to carry the good news of David's victory. He also may have thought he could more gently break the news of Absalom's death to his father than another messenger could.

18:20 Certain runners brought good news and others brought bad news. That way, as soon as a runner was recognized, the people knew the basic outcome (v. 27). Sometimes a solitary runner indicated good news and two runners together indicated bad news (vv. 25-26).

18:29 David's question revealed the focus of his concern. Ahimaaz, who knew the truth, suddenly found himself at a loss for words.

18:32 After the Cushite responded essentially as Ahimaaz had (vv. 28,31), David's further inquiry specifically about Absalom brought the reply the king did not want to hear. The kingdom was David's again, but he had lost another son.

18:33 The gate chamber over the gate provided isolation for David, though the sound of his wailing could be heard by others (19:1).

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK:

2 Samuel 19:1-8; 2 Samuel 20:1-26