

Leadership & Submission

– Sunday School Notes –

9 A Portrait of the Man David

Today we want to take a closer look at David. Among all the people mentioned in the Bible he is probably the one we know most about – maybe with the exception of Jesus. Half of the book of first Samuel and the entire second book of Samuel describes David, his character, his family, his achievements, and his rule over Israel. When we hear the name David, we immediately picture the marvelous shepherd boy who faced the giant Goliath and was victorious. The bible speaks of him as the man an after God's heart (**1. Samuel 13:14 / Acts 13:22**). He was the man who brought Israel back to glory. Most of all, he is pictured as *the* trusting and faithful servant of God. Certainly, every Christian can learn from his example.

But, surprisingly enough, David is also one of the best biblical examples of a passive and preoccupied husband. We know so many intimate details of his family life to know that he was, in fact, in many respects a distant husband and father.

It is hard to believe that these two factors describe one and the same person, but David's example is by no means atypical. There are many men around in this world who serve the Lord faithfully and are Christians that we can look up to. Yet, many a woman in this world had to go through the painful experience that sound doctrine and a strong faith alone does not make a good husband. She finds herself married to a man who loves the Lord but does not know how to love *her*. And the answer to that problem is *not* that her husband needs more piety or doctrine but that they both have to learn how God intends them to be and to work and live *together*.

David is proof that a man can make serious mistakes and be an absolute failure as a husband and father and still be respected by people and used by God. Looking into his life and the background that made him that way will show us that God often chooses to work and build with material that is quite poor from a human perspective, and that he can still use it to produce something magnificent. David wasn't born a superhero of faith, but God made him one. That is what grace is really about.

9.1 The Character of David

So let us take a closer look at the character of David. What is it that made him stand out so much as a servant of God. What do we know about him? Let's keep our Bible's open in first and second Samuel. ACTIVE PHASE!!

1. *Handsome, attractive* (**1.Sa 16:12**)
2. *Musical and lyrical talent* (**1.Sa 16:18, Psalms**)
3. A firm *trust* in God (**1.Sa 17:32–37, 45–46**)

4. *Faithful and reliable* (1.Sa 22:40)
5. *Loyal* (1.Sa 24:10–11, 26:10-11)
6. *Honors his opponents* (Saul: 2.Sa 1:14–27, Abner 2.Sa 3:27–37, Ish-Bosheth 2.Sa 4:9–12)
7. *Repentent* (2.Sa 12:13, Psalm 51)

So he really shows character and a strong faith, much more than I can say of myself.

9.2 David's weaknesses

But does all this make him a good husband? Unfortunately no, because he also had certain weaknesses, which sometimes resulted in sin and calamities. **ACTIVE PHASE!!**

1. David was, what we would call a *womanizer*:

He could not be faithful to but one wife but was constantly attracted by women. The Bible reports that he had 6 sons from 6 wives already in Heron (2.Sa 3:2–5) and besides that he had Michal, and Bathseba, and many more (2.Sa 5:13-14).

2. David was an *adulterer* who did everything to cover up his sin (2.Sa 11)

What David did to cover up his sin with Bathsheba is just absurd if you watch it from the outside. He did not only break the 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th commandments, but he also abused the power of his office as chosen king of Israel. While reading this, I always ask myself – how in the world can a man with such a strong relationship with the Lord be so stupid and commit such incredible sins? Well, he was human, after all.

Did this disqualify him as a Christian? No!

Did God take his kingdom away from him because of this? No!

But there *was* a penalty. The sword never departed from his house.

Does that mean that God loved him less than before? Certainly not!

We should keep all these things in mind when we get upset about our president's promiscuous behavior. Greater man than our president have fallen into worse sins, and they were still accepted by God. This doesn't excuse anything but puts it in the right perspective. Only God can judge the heart. It is not up to us to make quick judgments about the sins of others. As long as it doesn't disrupt our church we should leave the judging to God, keeping in mind what Jesus says in **Luke 6:37–42**.

I had to make this little detour because Christians who have their doctrine right are always in danger of becoming a little judgmental.

Well, there is more about David.

3. He was a *weak*, a very *passive father*.

David was not able to rule his own house. He would never have passed the qualifications for a deacon given in **1. Timothy 3:4–5**. There are three incidents that make this very clear.

- (a) In **2.Sa 13:1–20** we see that his oldest son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister Tamar. When David hears about this, he is furious but does nothing about this (**2.Sa 13:21**). He doesn't punish his son, he doesn't even confront him. So we ask ourselves – where is justice in the family?
- (b) Well, the brother of Tamar, Absalom, seems to ask himself the same. When after 2 years there is still no justice, he finds an opportunity to murder his half-brother (**2.Sa 13:23–29**) and then flees. David weeps about this but again he doesn't do anything to resolve the conflict (**2.Sa 13:36**).
- (c) In the next chapter we see that Joab, his friend and commander notices that something must be done. He tricks David into letting his son Absalom return to Jerusalem (**2.Sa 14:1–20**). But instead of straightening things out David first forbids him to come to him, and later, on his sons request allows him to come. But he doesn't resolve the issue – there is neither punishment nor forgiveness – he just hopes that the problem goes away by itself.

So as a father David is a total failure. He never actively controls his family but always just reacts to pressing events. But often he remains completely passive.

It is no wonder that his son still holds a grudge and thinks that his father is a bad leader. In chapters 15–18 we see how he rebels against his father and almost succeeds. But after doing a lot of harm and long battle, finally Absalom gets killed. And notice what David does. In **2.Sa 19:4–7** you find him weeping for his dead son. His men have fought a hard fight to regain the kingdom for David, but all he does is cry for his son.

All this wouldn't have happened if David had confronted his oldest son about the rape. His passivity cost the life of two sons and a lot of trouble for Israel.

So this is the other, the less shining side of David. What we notice here is not just a series of individual sins, but a weakness in David's character. He can be extremely faithful, trusting, and self-controlled. But in the next instant he turns around and does the most stupid thing a man in his position could ever do (see also **2.Sa 24**).

In other words, he is just like we are and that makes studying him so interesting. God did not give us all these details for nothing. It was written up for us so that we can learn from his mistakes and find ways to overcome our own weaknesses.

So let's try to find out what formed David's character. How did he become what he was? If we understand the factors that influenced his beliefs — and by this I mean his beliefs about the everyday world — we may find the key to unlock our own misconceptions, bring them before God and allow him to change us into the husbands we should be. Obviously, we need the help of our wives for that.

9.3 How did he become what he was?

As usual, David's home was the place that formed him. Home is the place where we learn who we are, what the world around us is like, who God is, and how we can make our own way through life. Most of our habits are formed in these early years and once they have formed they hardly ever change by themselves, because we are seldomly aware of the beliefs that continue to support them. Our actions are controlled by what we believe and unfortunately these beliefs are sometimes very, very wrong.

The Bible does not give us a complete account about David's childhood, but we know sufficiently much about his father and his brothers to recognize the influences on his personal life. How did his family treat him and what were the results?

ACTIVE PHASE!!

1. We don't know much about David's family life but we certainly know something about the esteem he was given. The first time we read about him is in **1. Samuel 16**, when the Prophet Samuel comes to Jesse's house. David was the youngest of eight brothers and the only person absent during Samuel's visit. He was out keeping the sheep.

Being the family shepherd was not the favorite job. Shepherding was dangerous – there were lions and bears around – and a job that most people looked down to. Shepherds were dirty, they smelled, and nobody liked to have them around. Compare this to how Jacob treated his youngest sons Joseph and Benjamin (see **Genesis 37:4,12–13**). In addition to having the dirtiest job, David was the missing man during Samuel's visit. The great prophet visits the house and his family does not even think it necessary for him to be there. I wonder how David may have felt about this.

Home is supposed to be a place of value and love that gives you a sense of security and significance. It shall help you to develop a godly and healthy view of yourself. For David, this was certainly not the case and later it becomes quite obvious that he had developed a very low self-esteem during that time.

2. On the other hand, we notice that David – probably because his status in the family was so low – developed a great faith in the Lord. He almost had to, when he was out keeping sheep all by himself. He was small, he knew that he wasn't strong, he knew that his family didn't think he was important and probably believed that himself. So he turned to his faith in God and to prayers during his lonely days in the fields, which cultivated a walk with God that was closer than most of us may ever experience.
3. But the fact that he grew up in a home that almost ignored him taught David several lessons, that made him become the passive husband and father he later turned out to be. The lessons communicated to him were “*Home is the place where they don't want me*”, “*Home doesn't meet my needs*”, and “*What I need*”

can only be found outside the family". That is the way he experienced it for years and that is how he believed the world to be?

Do you think he thought differently when he grew up? That he was able to enter close relationships and liked to be with his family? There is little evidence for this. Men who grow up with these beliefs tend to build little castles for themselves – job, power, prestige, money, even church life – anything but the home they actually live in. That is where they build their self-esteem.

Unfortunately the reaction of their wives and children to this behavior will often only confirm their wrong beliefs and draw them even further away from home. The incident in **2. Samuel 6:16–23** is a good example for that. Michal's strongly negative reaction to his "out of family activities" just made him withdraw more.

4. Neglect wasn't the only problem in his family. Just consider what it means to have 7 brothers. Children, particularly boys, love to fight and test their strength in comparison to their siblings. There is a constant battle going on.

The rivalry in David's family becomes quite obvious in **1. Samuel 17:26–29**. David, being sent by his father to the battlefield to bring food for his brothers, begins asking around "What shall be done who the man that kills this Philistine". Listen to his brothers reaction when he hears about this: "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the wickedness of your heart. For you have come down only to watch the battle".

Sibling rivalry often results in a strong desire to succeed. Boys learn that they have to prove their worth, often at the expense of others. They have a strong sense of competition, which makes it very difficult to enjoy the success of others. In today's society, it is very difficult to get out of this line of thinking once you got into it.

For David, this wasn't much different. He had to prove himself over and over again in the outside world and that did not leave much space in his heart for his family.

9.4 Is There Hope?

Now, is there anything that can be done to undo what happened during childhood? Can husbands who grew up in situations become active leaders in their families? They certainly can.

We obviously can't turn back the clock, but we can reset it and wind it up again. Great changes can be made if wife and husband work together in this. The husband must realize that home is the place where he is loved and valued as he is, and where his needs are filled. That takes some time but there are a few things that you can do. We discussed some of them already in previous lessons and they apply to husbands and your children equally well.

ACTIVE PHASE!!

1. First of all, it is absolutely mandatory to *stop the cycle of criticism*. Criticism just pushes him more into the feeling that home is not the place where he is wanted. If he has to defend himself whenever he is at home all is negative beliefs about home and family find confirmation and become even stronger.

The result? Instead of becoming what his wife wants him to be he will only withdraw and search for recognition outside his family.

2. Instead, *start expressing confidence in your husband*. It is surprising how much change can be achieved by expressing trust. If a man, or a boy, finds someone who believes in him, he will do a lot to keep it that way. He needs people who accept him as he is, so he will do almost everything to prove that their trust in him is justified.

3. Also, it pays to *know the life stages that you mate is facing*. Children and adults go through many stages of development in their life and each of these stages bring new hopes, expectations, challenges, worries, and fears. The problems of your husband may not be real for you but they are certainly real for him. His needs may be very different from your own desires but that doesn't mean they are irrelevant.

But how can you hear his cry for help if you don't understand the situation in which he is? Much has been written about the mid-life crisis through which most husbands have to go. But there are other "age-related" crises as well. Many wives believe they know their husbands very well, but this is often not the case because the situation has changed over the years.

We should take more time just to talk about the way we experience life and the pressures we face, to understand what they are doing and why — without giving our mates the impression that we want to judge their actions.

4. It is equally important to accurately *assess the talents and potential achievements* of our partners. Why spend years trying to have them develop a talent that will never be there to our satisfaction? If God has given your a husband with a sharp rational mind, don't expect him to become a poet.

5. Also, you should *know what your own expectations are* and how you got them. Do you have critical thoughts about your spouse? It may be that you are simply unrealistic in your expectations. So it might be a good step to find out what they are. How do you want the people around you to be? And why is this so? Are you running after a still unfulfilled dream and believe that your spouse doesn't give you enough to let you reach it? If so, is it more important for you to have this dream fulfilled or to have a blessed marriage?

6. Last, but not least, aim at *leaving positive impressions* on the lives of your family members. Don't just give them your work or presents, show them your

love through prayers and words that express your highest hopes – not just for their success in life but also for their character and joy. The work you did for them will be forgotten, presents will disappear over the years, but the memories of the things you said will go on and on.

9.5 Can we Raise David's Who Become Good Husbands?

Everything that we said above applies not just to our husbands whom we meet as adults, but to our children as well. We can raise David's who also become good husbands. We are going to talk about this in detail when we come to the last chapter of this book. But there are a few things that we can learn from the example of David's family.

First of all, *be a role model* for your children. What they see in you influences the way they will live their only family lives. As a father, let them see that you take a very active part in the life of your family. Don't disappear at work and let your wife handle all the responsibility for the discipline and modeling of your children. Be genuinely interested in the little things that your children bring up. If there is a vacuum, it will be filled by others – by siblings, classmates, teachers, or TV heroes – and that is usually not the best education they can get.

If you raise several children, make sure that sibling rivalry does not grow in your family. *Get involved*. If you don't intervene, their petty struggles will turn into a habit of fighting when they become adults.

You also need to maintain authority over your children, particularly over their attitudes. Be sensitive for attitudes of hatred and rage that are not expressed openly. You have to deal with that in a very loving way but you can't let this develop.

Finally, make sure that love is expressed in your family. Some parents believe that discipline is all. Children need to know and feel that they are loved – adults as well. If your family talks about the fact how they love one another whenever there is an opportunity, you will very likely raise very “healthy” children who are much better prepared for actually living a marriage in a way God intends it to be.

Schedule for the following weeks

Beginning in October, I will have to be out of town on several sundays. These are October 10, 24, November 7, and December 5. I have planned roughly two sessions for each chapter in the book, which means that we will finish about by the end of the year. We might want to think about what we want to study afterwards I am thankful for any suggestions.

Sept 12/19	David,
Sept 26, October 3	Anger
October 17,31	Big Boy
November 14,21	Manipulation
November 28, Dec 12	Raising different kids