

The Weekly Word

June 5-11, 2017

Happy June everyone and Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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Monday, June 5: 2Samuel 16- Allowing God time to build our character...

I am amazed how humble David is. He knew God had anointed him. He certainly could have entered this episode with a puffed out chest and a touch of arrogance. But not David...

When Shemei verbally attacked David, David took the tongue lashing insults and pelting with rocks with grace, answering those who wanted to harm Shemei strongly. *But the king said, "What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'"* David then said to Abishai and all his officials, *"My son, my own flesh and blood, is trying to kill me. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will look upon my misery and restore to me his covenant blessing instead of his curse today"* (10-12).

David gave this answer in the midst of duress fleeing for his life.

When we are under pressure (tired or sick), those are times when we often do not operate to the best of our character. However, David is showing extraordinary grace and humility. This speaks to me all the more loudly that David is a man after God's own heart.

How does a person grow a heart so faithful and strong? I wish there were some quick 3 step plan to faithfulness. But there isn't. It grows as the result of years of faith-filled living.

David had been faithful in little... shepherding his father's flocks.

David had been faithful with much... his years as king in Hebron and now Jerusalem.

David had been faithful in maintaining his connection with the Lord... writing psalms and praising the Lord with lyre and song.

David had remained faithful even after sin... seeking forgiveness and accepting the Lord's rebuke.

Over the years his heart grew strong... so in this time of duress the character God had formed in him came out. The character God had formed in David was now David's baseline character.

If I want to be a man of godly character then I, too, must be faithful in all seasons, allowing the Lord to work in my life and transform my heart into one that mimics His in good times and in troubled times...

Lord, continue to form me... work on me so that I grow to be a man after Your own heart. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, June 6: 2Samuel 17- What do I need to engender loyalty?...

The silent hand behind this account is the Lord, who is answering David's prayer to frustrate the plans of Ahithophel. Absalom's uprising is part of God's judgment upon David for his Bathsheba-sin, but God never removed His hand from David. So today's story is also an account of God working His will in the life of David. God can and does regularly work many angles at one time.

Even more than the silent hand of God working throughout this story I was struck by how many people were willing to risk their lives for David. Hushai, who schemed to thwart Ahithophel's advice, along with the priests Zadok and Abiathar and their two sons who risked their lives to tell David the plans of Absalom. Then there was the woman who hid the priests' sons as they were escaping from Jerusalem to go to David. Each of these people, and likely others, put their lives in mortal danger to help David.

What respect, love and devotion David garnered from people around him. He must have been quite the leader and man of God to cultivate such loyalty.

I wondered if my character was such that I would engender even half the loyalty, love and devotion David did.

What elements of my character do I need to be developing to be a man like David? Such were my thoughts this morning in God's Word...

Create in me, Oh God, a man of character, a man of love and a man of devotion to You. May my life shine reflecting You in my life, like the moon reflects the light of the sun. May my life point others to You, Jesus, Lord, and giver of life. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, June 7: 2Samuel 18- Questions and wonderings...

A number of thoughts hit me during my reading. Let's see where the Lord takes me.

David submitted to the wisdom of his men about NOT riding out with the troops. His men were right, David was worth 10,000 soldiers. The death of David would mean victory for Absalom.

One of Absalom's vanities was his undoing. His hair, glorious and full, was a cause for his death. It seems that there is a message in that statement. How often are our vanities our downfall? Those things about self or life, and not the Lord, that we prize become the hole that swallows us up.

I also wondered why Absalom was fighting without armor bearers or others alongside. Why was he alone? Was he arrogant? Did he get lost in the forest, which were the downfall of so many (8)? David would never have been alone in battle.

I was amazed that so many fled with and rallied around David that he had to appoint leaders of hundreds and thousands (1). Oh, the love people had for David.

I wondered how David could have so much feeling for Absalom that he gave the orders to go easy with him. Absalom had killed a brother and usurped the throne. Did David have a blind spot for the evil aspects of Absalom? Was he forgiving? I wondered what drove David in this.

This morning my thoughts are filled with wonderings. Sometimes when I spend time in the Word, answers are not readily apparent and questions and wondering remain. Still God meets me. God fills me. God is present with me as I spend time in His Word. God's ways are higher than my ways so I cannot expect to always understand fully...

Still I love the Lord. Still I keep coming back to His Word for truth and direction and presence. I always find the Lord in His Word, just not always the ways I will expect to find Him.

Oh, Lord, thank You for the treasure of Your Word. Thank You for the treasure of men and women who have followed You, whose life and stories are in Your world. Thank You that those women and men were real people with strengths and weaknesses, people from whom I can learn. People who teach me about a life devoted to You. I love You, Lord. Walk with me today in my questions and in my answers. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, June 8: 2Samuel 19- Listening to advice...

Joab is a mixed bag. On the one hand he is, and has been, a loyal and able fighter, leader and confidant for the king for years, probably decades. On the other, he is a hot head with a violent murderous streak. More than once David has had to distinguish himself from some of Joab's killings.

In today's reading, Joab has the pulse of the fighting men and likely saves David's kingdom with his strong and pointed advice (1-8).

David is consumed with guilt over Absalom's death. His guilt and mourning has blinded him and he is making bad decisions. As a result his men, who just saved David's life, are sulking away feeling ashamed. Joab gets in David's face and rebukes him and gives him perspective. David immediately changes and acts as Joab directs and his men begin to rally around David once again.

Can I take advice from others? Will I consider comments and feedback from others, and like David, even from others who have a mixed track record, others I don't necessarily fully respect? David did.

David had the uncanny ability to realize and receive good advice. Some leaders take the 'my way or the highway' approach, advisors are 'yes' voices who don't provide honest feedback and reflection.

David was not like that. His ability to accept good advice was one of his great attributes as a leader and he did so while maintaining his integrity and without compromising his authority.

When someone has a bone to pick with me or a criticism of me or something I did or a position I hold, can I hear truth in the comments even if much of what is spoken to me is from a heart that may not be seeking my best?

David had to lay aside much, regarding Joab, in order to hear the wise word he was speaking this day. Can I do that???

I don't know...

I don't know, Lord. Can I? Am I man enough to admit when I am wrong, even when an 'enemy' points this out?

Oh, Lord, maturity is needed in so many aspects of life... spiritual understanding, personal living, interpersonal interactions and the use of the tongue.

Lord, I pray that I am open to wisdom, which is ultimately from You, no matter the source through which You send it. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, June 9: 2Samuel 20- tough people, tough times...

Joab is the anti-David. Where David is God fearing, humble and gracious, Joab is self-serving, violent and conniving.

Joab again strikes down an unsuspecting rival. Murderous. I wonder why David keeps Joab around. Maybe his ruthlessness makes him a good warrior? I just don't know.

Thinking about Joab and David makes me think how one needs to be able to get along with people who are very different. In many ways David trusted Joab particularly as a warrior, but David was never influenced by Joab to cheat or skimp on his personal integrity. David could employ Joab without succumbing to Joab's low standards.

I still don't quite get how they worked together for so long, but they did. Joab's bad traits never transferred to David. Sadly, David's good traits never transferred to Joab either. There are no guarantees when it comes to relationships that we can influence others for good.

I found myself musing about people I have had to work with who are very different than myself. There certainly were some trying times...

Thankfully the Lord saw me through...

Praise be to the Lord, who is with me (us) in all life's situations. He strengthens me during tough times and by His grace I grew during those difficult times. Truth is I probably grew more during tough days than golden ones.

Lord, Thank You for Your presence, Your guiding voice within. Thank You that by listening to You I have avoided some major disasters. Lord, when I blow it, You have always been there to pick up the pieces, forgive me and set me back on the right path again. Praise to You, Lord God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday, June 10: 2Samuel 21- Age changes perspective...

Ten years ago I don't think my heart would have lighted to the passage that jumped off the page to me this morning. Age changes perspective.

Once again there was a battle between the Philistines and Israel. David went down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he became exhausted. And Ishbi-Benob, one of the descendants of Rapha, whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels and who was armed with a new sword, said he would kill David. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue; he struck the Philistine down and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, saying, "Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished" (15-17).

Earlier in his life, David elected not to go out to war as kings do and it opened a door for sin. Now things have changed. David is older and he is no longer the warrior he used to be. Age is catching up with him. When battle almost costs David his life, his men say, "No More! NO longer will God's anointed go to battle with us!" And David listens; his fighting days are over at least during the heat of battle.

It struck me that David trusted the counsel of his men and they could see what he was not willing to see. Still he listened and his kingdom was preserved because David was alive to rule.

A question grew inside of me, "Do I have someone(s) who can tell me when my skills are diminishing and it is time to hang up certain aspects of my life?"

Driving a car is a universal issue for aging people. Giving up one's license is a BIG deal; it signals numerous changes and a loss of freedom and independence. Will you listen when the time come to give up your license? Will I? Have I cultivated relationships with people who can say to me, 'it is time,' without feeling like they might have to forfeit our relationship to do so?

David was man enough to understand life was changing...

Oh, God, I pray I will be such a man as well. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, June 11, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

[Click here](#) for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.