

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 4

Narrator: Nathan and Tamar

Primary Scriptures: 2 Samuel 13-24

Story Summary: David's family and its struggles

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1020-970 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Samuel 14:24, 17:14, 18:33, 24:14

David was famous for being a great warrior and king, but he could be equally famous for presiding over a dysfunctional family.

It's understandable, as David himself came from a somewhat dysfunctional family. He was the youngest of eight brothers and was sent to work as a shepherd at a young age. His brothers despised him, and his father had no time for him.

David's first wife was Michal, the daughter of his enemy, King Saul. Saul took her back from David, though eventually she returned. When she made fun of David for some of his actions, she was punished by remaining childless for her entire life.

While an outlaw in exile, David married again to Ahinoam, and sometime later, he married Abigail, the widow of Nabal. He eventually married a total of at least eight wives and had numerous concubines. From these wives and concubines, he had numerous children. This set the stage for following kings of Israel to have numerous wives.

It takes little imagination to figure out there were innumerable conflicts among the wives and children, especially when it came to determining which child would succeed David as king. The Bible gives the clear impression that David handled all of these conflicts by not handling them, ignoring them as much as possible.

Early on, it appears that everyone assumed the oldest son would inherit the throne. That assumption came into question when that son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar. Absalom, the brother of the half-sister, killed Amnon in revenge. Absalom was forced into exile, which confused things more because he was possibly the next in line by age.

When Absalom was allowed to return to Jerusalem, he overthrew David. In a subsequent battle, Absalom was killed and David returned as king. The next son in line, Adonijah, also attempted to usurp the throne, but was unsuccessful. Due to David's growing age and weakness, others outside of the family also tried to usurp the throne.

Somewhat out of the blue, one of David's eight wives, the infamous Bathsheba, came back into the picture. She used her wiles and influence to get David to designate one of her many sons, Solomon, as the successor to the throne. This ended the question of succession, but certainly did not end the long-term dysfunction in the House of David.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the indications that David's family was likely to have a significant amount of dysfunction?
2. 2 Samuel 13 does not place the story of Amnon and Tamar in time, but it appears to have happened well into David's kingship. Does it seem to you that David was so involved with being king that he didn't manage his family well?
3. David clearly had a blind spot when it came to Absalom. How did that work to the disadvantage of both Absalom and David?
4. Read 2 Samuel 24. Why did David sin in counting his fighting men? Why did he want to do so?

1. David came from a family that had dysfunction. He was the youngest son that appears to have been almost ignored by his parents, and was taunted by his older brothers. He had children by many wives and concubines. Whenever his children misbehaved, he did not punish them appropriately. David had favorites among his wives and children. 3. David did not discipline Absalom, so he did whatever he wanted and did not respect David. David could not see that Absalom was treacherous and dangerous, and that he hated David. 4. It showed that he did not trust God to protect Israel, and it showed his pride.

Application Questions:

1. Amnon was highly valued because he was the first son of David, and was likely slated to take his place. Tamar was not highly valued simply because she was a woman. What standards do you use to value children and friends?
2. Absalom's conspiracy against David failed because he trusted the wrong advisor. How do you choose your advisors? Do you prefer advisors who generally agree with your opinion or those who have their own opinions? Why?
3. In 2 Samuel 19, Joab chastises David for lamenting Absalom, who had rebelled against David and almost killed him. What lesson can you learn from Joab's well-deserved chastisement of David? In what ways might Joab have been too harsh?

Applications Questions for Teens:

1. David clearly had favorites among his wives and children. In modern times, what causes parents to have favorites among their children? What precautions could parents take to make sure they don't have favorites? Do you have a favorite parent? Why or why not?
2. Are you more likely to listen to the opinions of celebrities or to the opinions of your parents? Would you more likely listen to the advice of your parents or to your schoolteachers? Why do you suppose you prefer some advisors over others?
3. Read 2 Samuel 22. What can you learn about the nature of God from David's praise?