

Faithbuilders Devotional Series

Through the Bible in a Year
A Daily Devotional

April

Pastor Mike Fast & Pastor David Curtis

Day 120 – April 30th

2 Samuel 19:31-21:22; Psalm 7; 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 – Highs and Lows

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens wrote, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” David’s life as king had many similarities. A great time would come followed by a grueling time.

David’s anointing as king was followed by Saul trying to kill him. David would conquer one army only later to have another army take his family captive. David was honored with the loyalty of mighty men, but later returned the favor with murder. David experienced the joy of children, but later felt the sorrow of a child bent on destroying his kingdom.

Even in today’s passage we see both extremes. In chapter 19, David is returning to Jerusalem, the city he had to escape from earlier. The rebellion has been stopped. As he heads home, King David shows mercy to Shimei who had cursed him earlier. He shows kindness to Mephibosheth and also honors faithful Barzillai. Yet, before David even gets home, another revolt springs up.

If you can relate to highs and lows, remember our Sovereign God gives strength to the weary.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Continue imagining your perspective from that high vantage point. What were some of the things you learned along the way? Perhaps more specifically, what were some of the things you learned about yourself and God along the way?

Considering the list of descriptors from the May 1st devotional, what adjectives would you add to the list?

God helps us through those low points in our lives. However, what takes us to those low points? Can God take us there? Can poor choices take us there? Be specific.

As you consider some of the ways we can take ourselves to places we should not be (i.e. King David's complacency nearly resulted in the loss of Solomon's reign), what things, attitudes or decisions should you avoid? In making it specific and personal, it may be something different for each person.

We may have a unique view compared with God's, but each of us often has views unique from one another. Nathan and Bathsheba had a different perspective than David (May 5th reading). Do you ever wrestle with the fact that others have a different take on things than you do? Have you ever found yourself saying or doing something distasteful because of it?

Day 91 – April 1st
Judges 3:31-6:40 – Waiting for a Sign

When Gideon received his calling from the Lord, three times he asked for a sign to reassure himself that God was truly with him. Three times! Why would Gideon put the Lord to this kind of test? Does he doubt God and his promises or does he doubt himself?

You know sometimes, I find it very easy to criticize Gideon, but I know that if you and I are honest, we are sometimes just like him. We doubt God's calling and purpose in our lives.

So, how can you know God's will for your life? First of all, read scripture, for God's word reveals His will; "Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Second is to trust God at His Word; "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov.3:6 NIV).

Don't be like Gideon, wasting time looking and waiting for a sign. Rather, read God's word and live according to it, and then you can be confident that you are living according to His will and purpose for your life.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 14 – April 2nd8th

Judges 7-25; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1:1-8; 1 Chronicles 2:9-55; 4:1-23

After reading through these passages, the results of my brainstorming a theme run along the lines of: big things with little people, impressive with unimpressive, imposing with unimposing, splendid with simple, or heroic undertakings by humble people.

These passages address the fact that God can use the most unassuming person to accomplish all He has in mind. An individual does not need a long list of impressive credentials, terrific looks or great strength, but merely a heart willing to serve and follow God. May you be encouraged by this truth.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Psalms 139 discusses the knowledge God has of each of us and each moment being laid out by Him. It also tells us that, through His marvelous workmanship, He uniquely made each of us. Have you ever questioned how God made you? Have you ever wondered why God took you through Course A in life and not B?

How does your contentment (or discontentment) with what you are and where you are presently in life affect your service and ministry?

Paul's second letter to Timothy explains how we can best serve the Lord and minister to others. The emphasis is not on credentials, looks, or strength, but on faithfulness, work, honorable words and character, etc. "If you keep yourself pure, you will be a utensil God can use for His purpose. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

Week 18 — April 30th-May 6th

2 Samuel 19:1-23:7; 24:1-25; 1 Kings 1:1-2:12; 1 Chronicles 20:4-29:22; 29:26-30; Psalm 4-9, 11, 18

"Vision is looking at life through the lens of God's eye." – Charles Swindoll

It is natural and understandable that we most often view things from a human outlook instead of "through the lens of God's eye". However, it is amazing when we are able to view things from God's angle. Perhaps what is most amazing is the enormous difference between how we perceive something and how God sees it. There is often a remarkable twist and noticeable difference between the two. God's intentions and purposes are exciting to observe. This week's theme has much to do with our unique view of things.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Job said, "When I looked for good, evil came instead. I waited for the light, but darkness fell" (30:26). We have made similar statements in our life, e.g.: "When I thought this would happen, something else happened instead." "When I thought things were looking up they really weren't." Have you ever made a statement like these?

What is it that makes our view so uniquely different from reality or God's view?

Imagine being able to stand at a high vantage point and look back over your life. If you could see each of the high points and low points, how would you feel? Were there benefits to the low points?

Day 118 – April 29th

2 Samuel 17:15-19:30; Psalms 3, 63 – Death Results from Sin

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given, they all died anyway...” (Romans 5:12-14a).

Absalom’s death was tragic and unnecessary. It deeply impacted his father, David, as is obvious from the narrative. Had either David or Absalom made some different choices, this tragedy could have been avoided.

The reality is that this instance of death and pain is representative of human life and history. Death was not a part of God’s perfect creation. Rather, death was introduced into the human race as a result of Adam’s sin. Death is wrong and this is why we grieve when it happens.

The hope that we have in Christ is because He defeated sin and death through His redemptive work on the cross (Col. 2:13-15).

My Prayer List:

Do you presently have some priorities flipped around? Are you working harder on your image with others or your identity with God? How are you serving God?

Are you living up to your potential? This touches on more than gifts and abilities. It also addresses self-discipline and work.

Thinking things through before you do them is more important than it sounds and also more difficult. We struggle with it from the age of 5 to 85. Discuss this point.

From life and Scripture, illustrate the effect of one’s sin on others.

What grabbed you the most from the book of Ruth?

Are you content with being a “behind the scenes” person?

Why does God love to use the simple to do the splendid?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 92 – April 2nd

Judges 7:1-9:21 – Little Gideon’s Big God

God gave Gideon a tremendous task: defeat the Midianites. Gideon asked how he—the weakest of the family from the weakest clan—could save anyone (6:15). The LORD emphasizes the point by even making Gideon’s army look rather weak.

The Midianites numbered 135,000 strong. Gideon’s army numbered 32,000 at its peak. Then 22,000 went home when Gideon allowed any of the frightened to leave. Next was the test for how they drank water (just another way of God thinning out the group), and finally only 300 men were left.

OK, what about weapons? I’m sure the men had swords, but the “weapons” list for each man was a horn, a clay pot and a torch. Three hundred men armed with pots led by an unfamiliar man who was first found hiding from the enemy (6:11) conquered a well-trained world power army of 135,000.

In the end no one could say the armies of Midian were conquered because of powerful warriors, or well-trained leaders, or the most modern weaponry. It could only be said that God saved Israel. God left no doubt.

My Prayer List:

Day 118 – April 28th

2 Samuel 15:1-17:14 – Quick to Forgive

We have all been there. We are at our lowest moment and someone says or does something to make it even worse. This must have been how David felt as he was fleeing Jerusalem and endured the insult from Shimei. How tempting it must have been to let Abishai kill Shimei. However, David exercises self-control and humility in not retaliating against Shimei. Not only did David exercise restraint at this moment, but he practiced forgiveness when Shimei met him at the Jordan River as David returned to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 19:18b-23).

How do you respond when you are wronged? Jesus forgave those who put him on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Stephen forgave those who stoned him (Acts 7:60). Scripture teaches us that there is a connection between receiving forgiveness and extending forgiveness (Luke 6:37; Mark 11:25; Matt. 6:15).

So how do you feel about forgiveness? Are you willing to forgive like David and others did? Would you rather take revenge and even the score? Do you trust in God’s ability to judge rightly and work it out according to His will when you are wronged?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 117 – April 27th

2 Samuel 12:26-14:33; 1Chronicles 20:2-3 – Real Consequences

“Don’t be deceived, God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows “ (Galatians 6:7).

David loved the Lord, but he also made his share of mistakes. Even though he was quick to confess his sin, that did not remove the consequences for his sin (2 Samuel 12:14).

Now, from this point on, David’s kingship takes a downhill turn especially within his family. As is apparent from today’s reading, David was no longer in control of his sons and had failed to instill in them a fear of the Lord. David’s mistakes were catching up to him, not just his sin with Bathsheba, but other sins related to fathering and mentoring his sons were having an impact now.

Sin has real consequences. While we cannot blame our sin for everything in life, much of the pain and grief we experience results from our own sinful choices and actions. Are you living with the consequences of past sin? Pray and ask God for strength and wisdom to deal with those consequences appropriately.

My Prayer List:

Day 93 – April 3rd

Judges 9:22-12:7 – Submissive Examples

Throughout the book of Judges we are introduced to often unfamiliar people whom God used to bring peace to Israel. We will read of twelve men and women referred to as the judges who bring deliverance to God’s people.

They were not as gifted, pure or special as they were willing to be used by God. The achievements of those submissive to God should stir our hearts to the same.

The story of Jephthah is an intriguing one. An illegitimate son; born of a prostitute; rejected by his family; led a band of rebels; led an army against the Ammonites; and thoroughly defeated them.

Jephthah made a rash vow to the LORD which meant the sacrifice of his only child, his daughter. Although we do not know all the particulars, we do know that this can be analogous with a figure of Christ, the great sacrifice: He was of unspotted purity and innocence, as she was a chaste virgin; He was devoted to death by His Father, and so made an anathema for us; He submitted Himself, as she did, to His Father’s will.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 94 – April 4th
Judges 12:8-15:20 – Potential

Here is the story of a man known for his astounding strength; yet, in the same breath, also known for his weaknesses. He battled pride and sensuality; he broke his vow and God’s laws; he trusted the wrong people; and did not use his gifts and abilities wisely. He wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed, but God used him to accomplish His purpose.

Samson had a miraculous start to life and tremendous potential. There is indeed a long list of things he could have done better. I know that the same was said of my life for a time. Perhaps the same was said of you. As disheartening as this story could be to us, we could look at it another way: God can use a person of faith in spite of his or her weaknesses.

I don’t know about you, but I find that encouraging. God can use me now, as I am. Paul declared, “I have not reached perfection. But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be” (Phil. 3:12).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 116 – April 26th
2 Samuel 5:14-16; 11:1-12:25; 1 Chronicles 3:5-9; 14:3-7; 20:1;
Psalm 51 – Confession

“If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong” (1 John 1:9).

King David sinned. It wasn’t just a simple sin, but a messy one of lust, sexual immorality, deception and murder. It was the kind of thing that anyone would look at and agree was wrong. How is it that a man who did all of this can still be referred to as a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) in the New Testament?

Confession.

David was not perfect and neither was Saul. However, the way that each responded to being confronted for their sins was markedly different.

Saul was defensive and blaming others, but David responded with a soft heart and quickly confessed.

Practicing regular confession is a key element to a healthy relationship with Christ. How do you respond to the realization that you have erred in some way? Remember David’s words in Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you will not despise.”

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 115 – April 25th

2 Samuel 8:15-10:19; 1 Chronicles 6:16-48, 50-53; 18:14-19:19 –
Grace for All

The devotional from April 15th was about how David fulfilled his covenant promise to Jonathan by showing kindness to his son, Mephibosheth. Today, we have been reminded of this act in the reading. As we think about this today we are going to consider David’s treatment of Mephibosheth in light of God’s treatment of us.

Mephibosheth had done nothing to deserve the kindness that David showed to him. It was an undeserved gift. Mephibosheth was the benefactor of David’s decision to fulfill his commitment to Jonathan.

God is not contractually or morally bound to save anyone.

Based on our actions, we are all deserving of his judgment. For our sake, God has chosen to extend grace to all who come to faith in Jesus Christ. “God saved you by His special favor when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it (Ephesians 2:8-9).

My Prayer List:

Day 95 – April 5th

Judges 16-18 – Finishing Well

Samson’s life did not seem to start or continue as one characterized by faith. To the contrary, he seemed to be self-absorbed and only concerned with the present. Eventually, his choices caught up with him and Samson found himself blind, in chains, pushing the wheel to grind grain in Gaza, the same place he had amazingly carried off the city’s gates.

We don’t know exactly how long he is enslaved, but obviously long enough for his hair to grow back, and yet, more importantly, long enough for him to do some serious thinking. I am sure he thought through his life, the choices he made, and the opportunities God had set before him to serve Him and help His people.

The Philistines falsely assumed their god and their power was in charge as they mocked Samson (16:24). Samson prayed to God. God heard and answered. God never leaves us.

In his final victory, Samson destroyed more enemies than he had in his entire lifetime. Samson finished well. Samson’s faith was chronicled with others in the “Hall of Faith” section of Hebrews 11 (v. 32).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 96 - April 6th

Judges 19-21 – Think BEFORE It Is Done

Here is something to consider:. Imagine attending a marriage enrichment seminar and the speaker asks each person to list as many people as they can that would be affected by your having an extramarital affair.

Whether you’ve thought it through or not, you could literally affect the lives of hundreds in the present and future if you chose to commit adultery.

Sin is not a private affair. Your sin (any sin) will affect others. The passage today is a strong reminder of that fact.

This sin should have been dealt with appropriately and promptly, but it was not. Instead, it escalated into a tribal war. In the end, 65,000 soldiers lay dead, and women and children from the surrounding towns in addition to that.

The principle of poor choices affecting many is true of us as well. Unfortunately, we don’t often think things through very well in advance. Yet, that is what the truly mature thinker does. Maturity is the ability to weigh the consequences before the action. And if the actions are immoral, remember the consequences may be immeasurable.

My Prayer List:

Day 114 – April 24th

2 Samuel 7:1-8:14; 1 Chronicles 17:1-18:13; Psalm 60 – Turtle Syndrome

“For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12).

In writing Psalm 60, David is crying out to the Lord for help against the enemies that he is battling with. David makes the statement in verse 11 that “all human help is useless.”

This statement is especially true for the battle we face as Christians, for as Eph. 6:12 so clearly states, our battle is a spiritual one. In the spiritual battle that all people face, human help is indeed useless because of the turtle syndrome. Turtles are incapable of helping themselves if they are placed on their backs and, without outside help, they will die. We people are the same. Without outside help or someone to intervene, we will die. Fortunately, Jesus intervened and “died once to defeat sin, and now He lives for the glory of God” (Rom. 6:10).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 113 – April 23rd

2 Samuel 6:12-23; 1 Chronicles 15-16 – Quick Judgments

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matthew 7:1-2).

Making judgments about others comes natural to human nature; broken, fallen, sinful human nature that is. While, as Christians, we are not to ignore sin in the lives of our brothers and sisters, this action is always to be done in love (Eph. 4:15), aiming towards repentance (Gal. 6:1), and after proper self-reflection (Matt. 7:3-5).

In today’s reading we see David’s wife, Michal, make a quick judgment against David on an issue that did not involve sin. Unhappy with how David chose to worship the Lord before the Ark, she condemns David for this action.

These are the types of judgments that scripture teaches are not for us to make. When we pass judgments on others’ actions that are not clearly defined as sin by scripture, we are usurping God’s role as the righteous judge and ruler over all humanity. Instead of judging, we are to leave room for God to work.

My Prayer List:

Day 97 - April 7th

Ruth 1:1-4:12 – Not Overlooked

The book of Ruth is deeply admired by many for its literary style. It is a beautiful story of love and devotion.

Ruth is an amazing young woman of tremendous character. She has displayed kindness and loyalty to Esther as she leaves behind the security of her own land, the familiarity of her own customs, the simplicity of her own religion, the refuge of her own family and friends, and everything she has known. She vows she will “not allow anything but death to separate us” (1:17).

Ruth humbly goes to work in the field for Naomi. Ruth wants the best for Naomi, and she works to accomplish that. Ruth’s life is full of integrity, and God recognizes it as He provides for her in a wonderful way.

Ruth came to Bethlehem as a poor widow and, even worse, a despised Moabite. Yet, she becomes prosperous through the marriage to Boaz. She also becomes the great-grandmother to the great King David. Furthermore, she is listed in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5). God honors the humble servant.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 98 - April 8th

Ruth 4:13-22; 1 Samuel 1:1-8; 1 Chronicles 2:9-55; 4:1-23 –
Unfamiliar Names

Professional golfer Karen Permezel hails from Yackandandah, Australia. Finding that name to be a mouthful, writers sometimes ask Permezel where the town is located. Permezel is happy to be of assistance. “It’s near Mount Murrumbidgee, not far from Tangambalanga,” she replies. (Sports Illustrated)

Today’s passages list off plenty of names for us. Some of those names we’ve never read before in Scripture and may not read of again. Several of those mentioned did great things and walked with the LORD wholeheartedly, and yet much of their lives may not be elaborated on.

Consider the names you would have if you listed every member of your genealogy in the past 200 years. Although you may have a long list of names, you would not have the tremendous deeds and characteristics of many on that list.

Many less-known people have done marvelous things and have lived exemplary lives. If the trade-off is receiving the praise of men here on Earth or, instead, receiving the rewards of God in Heaven (Matthew 6:1, 4, 5, 18), I am sure we would take the latter.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Why is regular confession important for Christians?

Why doesn’t God remove the consequences of sin when He forgives us for our sin?

Are you living with consequences from past sin? Would you be willing to share your situation with the group?

How do you respond when you are wronged?

Do you find it easy to forgive others? Why or why not?

How is the Christian supposed to deal with death?

Is all death tragic?

What must we do in order to receive God’s grace and forgiveness for our sins?

Week 17 – April 23rd-29th

2 Samuel 5:14-16; 6:12-19:30; 1 Chronicles 3:5-9; 6:16-48, 50-53; 14:3-7; 15:1-20:3; Psalms 3, 51, 60, 63

The theme for this week is sin. I know it is not very glamorous and not so fun to think about, but it is a reality that we all live with. This week's readings have us right in the heart of David's kingship. We will see him at his highest point and his lowest point during this week.

Some of the topics we will think about are judging, depravity, confession, forgiveness, consequences and death. Because of our broken nature, sin permeates our lives. We live with the impact of sin all around us. I hope that through the devotionals and Bible reading this week, you will have a better handle on how to manage the impact of sin in your life.

Bible Discussion Guide:

How can we balance helping other Christians in their struggle with sin and judging someone inappropriately?

How can we know when our judging of others is overstepping our bounds and moving into God's territory?

Why are we unable to win the battle against sin on our own?

How do you respond to the realization that you have sinned in some way?

Week 15 – April 9th-15th

1 Samuel 1:9-21:15; 1 Chronicles 9:35-39; Psalm 34, 59

The theme for this week is integrity. This week's readings will cover the last of the judges, Eli and Samuel. Following those two leaders we will meet the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David. All four of these men learned the importance of integrity through their experiences.

Integrity is something that we all can struggle with from time to time. Integrity is something that can be easily lost, but is not so easy to regain without God's help. As the four men we will read about learn, it is absolutely essential to being a leader in God's kingdom.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Eli did not leave a legacy of integrity with his sons. What are some of the things that we can do to develop a legacy of integrity?

Why is building a legacy of integrity difficult? In what ways is it worth the cost?

Think of a leader you have served or worked under that possessed integrity. What was your experience working for them like?

What about an experience you had with a leader who did not have integrity? What was that like?

Why is integrity so crucial to leadership?

Once it is lost, how can integrity be regained or restored?

How do you respond when someone attacks your integrity?

What do you find to be most difficult about maintaining your integrity?

Day 112 – April 22nd

2 Samuel 5:1-13,17-25; 6:1-11; 1 Chronicles 3:4b; 11:1-9; 12:23-40; 13:1-14; 14:1-2,8-17 – Resolute Leader

Four hundred years earlier the Israelites had been told to absolutely subjugate the Promised Land, yet it was never completely accomplished. David has been working to remedy that fault.

David knew God had a reason for asking the Israelites to carry out this task and he had seen the results of it not taking place. He knew the land had to be “cleaned up” from the enemies’ influence and presence for several reasons. One would be the constant threat of the nearby enemy. Another benefit to a land of their own was the unity which could be much easier to achieve.

Furthermore, the land of mixed religion only hindered the Israelites’ walk with God. The presence of false gods made an enormous negative impact on the commitment of Israel toward God.

David took his responsibilities of leadership very seriously and, in turn, made a tremendous impact on the positive history of Israel. President Harry Truman said, “Men make history and not the other way round. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still.”

What kind of leader are you?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 111 – April 21st

2 Samuel 3:6-4:12 – Vindicate Vindictiveness

Instead of David being able to rely on Joab to pave the way to a unified kingdom, he has to prevent a civil war due to Joab’s actions.

King David had found himself in a unique position. Multiple times now he has had men—in the name of loyalty—murder the innocent. Had loyalty merely become an excuse for revenge and murder?

David was dealing with some strong-willed people. David had to remain true and rule with discipline. These men illustrated well the human tendency to justify our actions.

I have to confess, I am guilty of the same response often. I find myself doing something out-of-line, questionable, or not-by-the-book, and then later I will find myself justifying why I did it. How pathetic!

Does the end justify the means or are the means and the end judged equally? Truly, the bottom line engages the entire process. Your character is defined by your consistent actions. “Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence.”

My Prayer List:

Day 99 – April 9th

1 Samuel 1:9-4:11 – A Legacy of Integrity

To say the least, Eli’s sons were lacking in integrity. They disrespected the Lord’s offerings (2:12-17), carried on immoral sexual relationships with the young women serving at the tabernacle (12:22), and they didn’t honor or listen to their father (12:25). I think we are safe to say that, somewhere along the way, Eli dropped the ball as their Father.

Why is integrity so essential? As I write this devotional, our nation is mourning the loss of President Gerald Ford. As I have heard of all he did, the one thing that was mentioned the most was his integrity. He may not have been the greatest leader or accomplished as much as other presidents, but he stood out because of his integrity.

Our integrity, or lack of, leaves a lasting impression on the people around us, especially our families. “The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children after them” (Proverbs 20:7). Are you living a life of integrity? What kind of legacy are you leaving behind?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 100 – April 10th

1 Samuel 4:12-8:22 – Leadership Requires Integrity

Samuel was a man of God and a good leader for Israel. However, for all that he did right, he failed in one area. He did not learn from the mistake of his predecessor, Eli. 1 Samuel 8:1-3 reveals that Samuel’s sons were lacking in integrity much the same way that Eli’s sons were. We then see this lack of integrity result in Israel demanding a king to rule over them.

When it comes to leadership, integrity or personal character is what gives you the trust of the people. According to Christian leadership guru John Maxwell, “Trust is the foundation of leadership...People will forgive occasional mistakes based on ability. But they won’t trust someone who has slips in character.”

Israel could not trust Samuel’s sons, Joel and Abijah, so their opportunity to lead the nation was taken away. How is your character? Would those who know you best say that you are a person of integrity? Fortunately, God is able and willing to work in your life and help you grow in this area if you ask for His help.

My Prayer List:

Day 110 – April 20th

2 Samuel 2:1-3:5; 23:8-39; 1 Chronicles 3:1-4a; 11:10-47 – Mighty Men

Young Billy earned his blue belt in judo. One day Billy gave the class bully a bloody nose. When asked which judo technique Billy had used, he replied, “I stuck out my foot and tripped him.” That’s probably more my style and it would most definitely NOT earn me a spot with “David’s 30 mighty men.” The weakest of these guys could take on 100 by himself and the strongest could take on 1,000.

These men fought valiantly. Some of the exploits include: single-handedly defeating 800 warriors, holding back an entire army, destroying giants and chasing a lion into a pit and killing it on the snowy ground.

You would have to feel pretty secure being surrounded by men like these. Yet, what I find most impressive is not their strength, but their loyalty. They literally stood by David’s side through anything (2 Sam. 23:9-10 says Eleazar stood by David’s side defeating the Philistines after the Israelite army ran away).

One of the men on the list was so loyal to David it cost him his life (Uriah).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 109 – April 19th

1 Samuel 30-31; 2 Samuel 1:1-27; 4:4; 1 Chronicles 9:40-44; 10:1-14; 12:20-22 – Painful Experiences

Years have passed since David was anointed king by Samuel. Those years have been spent running from King Saul, the very one he would succeed. So, when David gets the news Saul has died, is his response joy, excitement and relief? No. Quite the contrary.

David mourned Saul's death. His sorrow was genuine and intense, so much so that all of his men mourned with him over the death of Saul and Jonathan.

David, who was a master of the sword, was also a master of the pen. The man who wrote so many psalms now composed a funeral song for Saul and Jonathan.

David could have responded with a critical self-righteous attitude thinking Saul got what he deserved, but he didn't. And instead of joy he lamented deeply. David knew God was the true judge. He also knew that Saul was God's anointed. David respected authority. He felt compassion. He knew pain and loss.

Although he is not yet officially king, David is maturing rapidly through experiences. God takes us through experiences with the intent of maturing and growing us into something great and genuine.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 101 – April 11th

1 Samuel 9-12 – Integrity Restored

In 1 Samuel 8:6-9 the Lord reveals to Samuel that Israel was ultimately rejecting God Himself by asking for a king. In 12:16-19 Samuel reminds the people of their wrongdoing in asking for a king and then uses a sign to reveal to them the level of God's anger.

Certainly the people did wrong in asking for a king. But Samuel makes it clear that God had not abandoned them as a result of their wickedness. Rather Samuel shared with them that God was willing to restore the integrity of the nation; "...make sure now that you worship the LORD with all your heart and that you don't turn your back on Him in any way...The Lord will not abandon His chosen people" (12:20b, 22a).

The same God that called Israel back and restored the integrity of the nation is the same God that we serve today. So, readers take courage that all is not lost when your integrity is compromised. The invitation to return to following the LORD is there for us the same way it was for Israel. Are you willing to humble yourself and return to following God so He can restore your integrity?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 102 – April 12th

1 Samuel 13-14; 1 Chronicles 9:35-39 – Taking Matters Into Our Own Hands

Can you picture Saul in the situation described in 1 Samuel 13? He had gathered Israel’s troops to battle the Philistines, but once they got a glimpse of the Philistine army, they were full of fear. Sensing the fear in his army, Saul becomes anxious and comes to the conclusion that the offerings to the Lord must be offered. However, Samuel has not arrived when Saul was expecting him. Thus, Saul takes matters into his own hands and violates the Lord’s command by assuming the priestly function.

Saul’s lack of integrity in this matter provides us with a three-part lesson:

- 1) Basing our decision on fear does not bring glory to God, for perfect love casts out fear.
- 2) Our timing is not always the same as God’s timing. Samuel was coming, Saul just lacked the patience.
- 3) Obedience is far more important to God than sacrifice or, for us, you could say it is more important than public worship.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 108 – April 18th

1 Samuel 26-29; 1 Chronicles 12:1-7,19; Psalm 56 – Battle Lines

The Philistines, David and Saul had all geared up for war. David was fighting guerrilla warfare style with the brutal tribes of Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites. The Philistines entered battle fiercely with enormous numbers (28:5). Saul seemed uncertain and consulted a medium from Endor to offer consultation concerning the war.

The history of war describes numerous strategies and techniques: frontal assaults, ambushes, offensive, defensive, short range, long range, etc.

The word “battle” occurs several hundred times in Scripture. In contrast to the more common physical encounters, many times the word is descriptive of spiritual battles.

How do you enter your battles? Are you geared up and ready or doubtful and uncertain? What are your tactics? How prepared are you for the battles the world and Satan will throw your way?

The Apostle Paul gives us a few tactical tips to prepare us. He tells us to be armed with the armor of God—truth, righteousness, share Good News, faith, salvation, Word of God (Eph. 6:13), and with the instruction of the Word and godly direction (1 Tim. 1:18).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 107 – April 17th

1 Samuel 23:13-29; 24:1-25:44; Psalm 54 – Providential Conclusions

The passage today describes three unfortunate encounters that had providential conclusions.

In the first situation, the men of Ziph turned David and his men's location over to Saul, yet God providentially sent Saul on another urgent task, which provided the opportunity for David and his men to escape.

In the second incident, Saul and an army of 3,000 searched the hills of En-gedi for David and were so close that Saul actually went into the cave the men were hiding in. However, because David spared Saul's life, Saul in turn spared his and stopped his pursuit.

On the third occasion, David and his men needed sustenance and they asked Nabal for it. Although Nabal owed it to them (customary and protection), he refused to give anything to David; yet, Nabal's wife, Abigail, intervened and provided for David's army.

We have a great advantage here in being able to read the endings, but often we find ourselves in a difficult spot and wonder how it could ever turn out for good. Be confident in God's plan as David was.

My Prayer List:

Day 103 – April 13th

1 Samuel 15:1-17:31 – Blame-Shifting 101

Saul was caught red-handed. He had again disobeyed the Lord and was confronted by Samuel for his actions. His response to Samuel's confrontation was worthy of an Academy Award. In verses 15 & 21 Saul declares that 'the people' are the ones who spared the animals, and then he further justifies the sin by adding the spiritual benefit of sacrificing the animals to the Lord. It takes Saul three times before he admits to Samuel his wrongdoing.

You do not have to be perfect in order to maintain integrity. This is what the discipline of confession is for. Saul was unwilling to admit his sin and to ask for forgiveness. A person of integrity does the exact opposite. David was a prime example of this. David was not perfect, but when he was confronted by Nathan the prophet about his affair with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah, he confessed immediately. Both Saul and David made mistakes just like you and I. Are we going to respond like Saul, denying the sin and blaming others? Or will we respond like David with a soft heart that is quick to confess?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 104 – April 14th

1 Samuel 17:32-19:24; Psalm 59 – Crying Out to the Lord

David never did wrong against Saul, but he was constantly the object of Saul’s jealousy. Saul made multiple attempts to kill David or to have him killed by others. However, we recognize that David was innocent in all of this and never lost his integrity. So why the constant attacks? Why did David have to call out to the Lord for help and protection when he was innocent?

The reality is that innocence and integrity don’t always protect us from personal attacks and accusations from people. Our innocence and personal integrity will eventually come under attack as no result of our own.

How are we to respond to such attacks? David did not take the opportunity to exact his revenge against Saul (1 Samuel 24:1-7), but rather allowed the Lord to take care of His enemies. He called out to the One who judges rightly to deliver him out of the situation.

May you, like David, seek God first when your innocence and integrity come under attack.

My Prayer List:

Day 106 – April 16th

1 Samuel 22; 23:1-12; 1 Chronicles 12:8-18; Psalm 52, 57, 142 – Rough Start

Consider everything that has transpired up to this point: David has been anointed king. He has battled giants and Philistines. He has been the object of King Saul’s jealousy. He has been pursued by King Saul seeking to kill him. His friends and family have all been threatened by Saul, yet Saul is God’s leader for the time. Now, 85 priests, their families and their livestock have all been murdered because of Saul’s hatred toward David.

If it were me, I think I would be asking for time to rethink that whole “anointing” incident.

The Psalms David wrote were the songs he penned as he journaled the thoughts of his heart. David “cried out” to the LORD. David “poured out” his concerns to God. David was “overwhelmed.” David asked for “help.” David felt the pressures of this new position God had placed him in.

These Psalms also express the fact that David knew God had a plan, and it’s evident in his comments: “God will fulfill His purpose for me;” “He will send help from Heaven;” “My heart is confident in you, O LORD.”

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Although David may have “rested” in God’s provision, did he let his guard down? What were David’s activities and safeguards (his “tactics”)?

Describe the characteristics and qualities of David’s leadership.

After reading as much of the Scriptures as you have to this point, would you say the effect other nation’s “religion” had on Israel was greater than the effect Israel’s “religion” had on them? Were the enemy’s idols a threat to the commitment of Israel to walk after God? Did Israel’s commitment to God sway many nations to walk after the true God?

From these discussion questions, formulate a list of things you should involve yourself in and things you should avoid, or perhaps qualities you should possess and behaviors you should pass up.

Day 105 – April 15th
1 Samuel 20-21; Psalm 34 – Promises Kept

Jonathan and David had a special friendship. Chapter 20 gives us a little insight into how close the two were. Unlike his father, Jonathan was not jealous for the throne of Israel, but recognized that the Lord was with David. Thus, as part of their covenant of friendship, Jonathan asked David to continue to show “faithful love” to his descendants even if Jonathan died. David accepted this responsibility as part of their covenant.

Have you ever made a promise without thinking the consequences through? I think all of us as parents have done this at some point. So, how many of our promises are we to keep? If the Lord is the standard for

righteousness, then we are to keep them all, for “the LORD is faithful to all His promises” (Psalm 145:13 NIV).

What did David do about the promise he made to Jonathan? 2 Samuel 9 tells us that David, in fact, kept his promise to Jonathan by showing kindness to his son, Mephibosheth.

Are you willing to keep your promises like David did? What about when no one is watching? Do you still keep your promises then?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 16—April 16th-22nd

1 Samuel 22-31; 2 Samuel 1:1-6:11; 23:8-39; 1 Chronicles 3:1-4; 9:40-14:17; Psalm 52, 54, 56, 57, 142

The passages this week contend with David's introduction as king. Although David had been anointed by Samuel sometime earlier to be Israel's next king, he never rushed God's timing. From David's youth he knew God had a plan and purpose for everything. David respected and protected God's anointed—King Saul (although some had hoped he would take the matter into his own hands and rush it).

David led well in spite of some very difficult times. Knowing God had a plan helped David through the rough times, and it can do the same for us.

Bible Discussion Guide:

How can resting in the fact that God has a plan and purpose for the future help us in the present?

Could you rest contentedly for years not being king, yet knowing you had been anointed the next king?

How could journaling your thoughts, concerns, praises and answered prayers help your confidence in God?