

In our studies, "Back to the Beginning: Studies in Genesis," we saw God establish Israel as a distinct group of tribes that would one day form a nation. After Israel's enslavement in Egypt for approximately 430 years, God raised up Moses to lead them out of bondage and into the Promised Land.

Once they finally entered the land under the guidance and direction of Joshua, they formed a new nation. God would direct this new nation through the laws that He would reveal to them. As Joshua grew old, Israel failed to fully possess the land that God desired for them. A couple of the tribes even settled for land outside the Promised Land. In general, Israel-as a nation-fell short of possessing all that God had for them.

While Joshua and the elders, who witnessed the works God performed in their days, were still alive, the people held tightly to and followed the Lord. However, when they died, Israel began to become corrupt. Yet God didn't give up on His people. He provided deliverance and guidance for them out of His grace. The theme of this time period is well summed up in Judges 2:10-19. This is especially evident in verses 17b-19:

They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings or from their stubborn way. (NKJV)

The last and greatest of the judges was Samuel, whom God raised up as both prophet and judge over Israel. Yet when the people saw that Samuel was aging, and that his sons were corrupt, they got tired of the system that God established. They instead desired a king to rule over them. This wasn't God's perfect plan. For Israel's motive was to be like the nations around them.

Samuel was greatly grieved by this. Despite this, God told Samuel to do what they asked, because He was going to do a work through them. God then reminded Samuel, "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7).

The king that God allowed them to have was Saul. He seemingly was a logical choice. Saul was tall and handsome. He was naturally attractive and charismatic in character. Although Saul got off to a good start as a leader, uniting the people against the Philistines, he slowly began to compromise. Saul became self-seeking and cowardly. God revealed to Samuel that He would bring about the type of king with which He desired to replace Saul. This can be seen in Samuel's rebuke of Saul after his ungodly disobedience:

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be (1 Samuel 13:13-15 NKJV)

The man after God's own heart would be David, the subject of this year's studies.

## Why Study David?

David was born about 10 years after Saul began his reign,<sup>1</sup> at God's perfect timing. Although at the time David seemed like a nobody, even to his own family, God was working to establish His perfect plans through this man. He was preparing.

David was born in Bethlehem, about six miles from Jerusalem. Bethlehem was in the midst of a very fertile area and was fittingly called, "The House of Bread." Though it was a small city, it was very prosperous.<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, there is nothing that exciting about David's life. In a sense, this humble beginning is fitting. If this is the case, what are some reasons that we should invest a season of our studies in examining this man? There are several.

The first reason is the sheer volume of information about David within the Scriptures. David's name is mentioned over 1,000 times in the Bible, which is more than Abraham, Moses, and even more than Jesus Christ. Christ is even called "the Son of David" twelve times in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Messianic typology and prophecies regarding David is vital in our understanding of how the coming of the Messiah would unfold.<sup>4</sup> Thus we can learn much about our Lord as we examine the life of David in the overall scheme of God's plan. If this is not enough, David is also alluded to in the "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11:32).

Through studying David, we can also learn about ourselves and our personal walk with God. As Gene Getz points out, David is a man much like us.<sup>5</sup> He succeeded greatly, but also failed greatly. How he dealt with both success and failure will serve as great examples to those in the 21st century. David grasped and lived in the grace of God, just like we must. David was also a worshipper of God, as demonstrated in the Psalms that he penned and played unto the Lord.

We can learn much about our own personal worship of God through the way David worshipped and sought to magnify the Lord with his life. We also will learn how God builds our lives through the circumstances and trials we face, much like David experienced.

Probably the most important thing we can glean from our studies on David is how to become men of God, men after God's own heart. Being a man after God's own heart doesn't mean achieving some great level of perfection or super-spirituality. None of us will ever reach that state in this life due to our fleshly nature. Concerning his own walk with God, the Apostle Paul said this:

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14 NKJV)

Becoming a man after God's own heart is a lifelong pursuit of knowing Him and becoming conformed to Him and His desires. Charles Swindoll very simply yet profoundly defined this for us:

Being a person after God's own heart means living in harmony with Him; being burdened by His burdens; obeying His commands to go to the right, to the left, or to stay right where you are. In a nutshell, it's having a heart that's completely His.<sup>6</sup>

It is also simply defined as "one who had the will to obey God."<sup>7</sup> Prayerfully, we will close these studies several months from now all the closer to and more in harmony with the heart of God. Prayerfully, we will have that desire to obey God's will above all else in our lives.

## Studying the Life of David

Our examination of the life of David will cover approximately 22 lessons. We will not have time to cover his complete life. Therefore, we will begin by examining his early calling and establishment, and then the lessons found in his friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan. The majority of our studies will cover David's reign as king from the death of Saul in 1011 B.C. to his death and the reign of Solomon beginning in 971 B.C.<sup>8</sup> Our focus is primarily on 1 and 2 Samuel. Occasionally we will look elsewhere in the records about David. Summarized here is H.L. Willimington's outline of David's life.<sup>9</sup> This outline will help us see the whole of David's life, which you will want to refer back to from time to time:

<b>Life Topic</b>	<b>Passage</b>
David the Shepherd	1 Samuel 16:1-13
David the Singer	1 Samuel 16:14-23
David the Soldier	1 Samuel 17:1-58
David the Sought	1 Samuel 18-31
David the Sovereign	2 Samuel 1-10; 1 Chronicles 11-19
David the Sinner	2 Samuel 11
David the Sorrowful	2 Samuel 12-31; 1 Chronicles 20-21
David the Statesman	2 Samuel 21:1-14
David the Statistician	2 Samuel 24
David the Sponsor	1 Chronicles 22-29
David the Scribe	2 Samuel 22:1; 23:1-3
David the Sage	1 Kings 2

Specifically, each week's lesson is broken down into six days worth of study. Days one through five will take us through a study of the chapter(s) that covers the topic in David's life for that week. We begin our study with "Focus Questions", which are basic questions to help you get through the passage and think about its main points.

Completing the "Focus Questions" is the minimum required for you to participate in your group discussions. After the "Focus Questions", there will be at least one "Expanded Question." This is designed to help you expand on your day's study and understand it more thoroughly. It may also address an important thought, doctrine, or theme within the passage. We will also have a "Daily Life Point", which is more of an application question. This question is tied in specifically with the main point of the day's thoughts. On day six of our week, "Pursuing God's Heart", we will discuss general applications of the passage's truth and principles. This will help us tie it all together.

Please make every effort to get all the way through the study. Studying the Bible needs to be put into practice, or else it's a pointless effort. Your group leader is available to help you clarify areas of your lesson that may be difficult or a challenge for you to complete for some reason. We also will include additional comments in the lessons to help clarify the passage. This may include key words, phrases, or historical information that may be helpful for your understanding. Other members of your group will benefit from the things that you are learning. So don't hesitate sharing your thoughts and experiences. This will encourage each other as you grow toward becoming men after God's own heart.

We will also have a section each week called, "Parting Thoughts." Our intention this year is to focus in on David's psalms. We will close in meditating on what David wrote about concerning the particular experiences he faced. We may also close in meditating about some other important thought concerning the things at hand that week.

Another important feature is the memory passage for the week. Review the passage several times each day. In doing so, you will have it memorized by the end of the week. Remember that there are three important steps to memorizing God's Word and engraving it into our hearts: review, review, and review! In fact, one of the psalmists reminds us, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11, NKJV). It is His Word engrained into our lives that makes us men of God after His own heart. The Lord reminded Joshua of this when He said,

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8 NKJV)

Lastly, here are some further ground rules as you study. Please use a major translation of the Bible to complete the lessons if at all possible. These lessons are based on the New King James Version of the Bible, as used by Harvest Christian Fellowship. The author has used various other translations in preparing these studies. Paraphrases can be helpful, but please use a good translation of the Bible to help you in this. We encourage you to study as much as time permits. Please take every effort to put your answers into your own words. Avoid copying a verse from the Bible or an answer from a study book. May God bless you as you seek through these studies to become a man after God's own heart.

As we close, meditate on these words by Alan Redpath:<sup>10</sup>

The machinery of the church is put to very severe strain and is working overtime, but that production of modern industry—all kinds of goods, which attract the eye but have little lasting quality—is too often evident in the Christian church. In days like these I believe it is the quality and not quantity that is going to count. The Lord is still looking, as He did in David's time, for a man after His own heart.

## Notes

- 1 Charles R. Swindoll, *David, A Man of Passion and Destiny* (Dallas: Word, 1997), p. 3.
- 2 Ivor Powell, *David, His Life and Times* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1990), p. 17.
- 3 Gene A. Getz, *David, Seeking God Faithfully* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), p. ix.
- 4 Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 149-164.
- 5 Getz, *David*, pp. 1-2.
- 6 Charles R. Swindoll, *David, A Man After God's Own Heart* (Fullerton, Calif.: Insight for Living, 1988), p. 3.
- 7 *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Bibles, 1997), p. 86.
- 8 Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), p. 78.
- 9 H.L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1984), pp. 110-111.
- 10 Alan Redpath, *The Making of a Man of God* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1962), p. 11.