

Life Lesson 73
David and Absalom
Text: II Samuel 13-16

Introduction

David was king over Israel. All his foes had fallen and there was peace throughout the land. But, there wasn't peace in David's home. The worst things that can happen in a family happened to David and his children. Anger and bitterness grew in Prince Absalom's heart. Hatred turned into murder – and war in the family!

The Story

David had lots of wives and many, many children. The most promising of all David's children was Prince Absalom. He looked like a prince -- tall and strong, with long, thick hair and a handsome face. Everybody liked him.

David's oldest son, Amnon, wasn't quite so nice. In fact, he did something really cruel to Absalom's sister. Absalom waited to see what their father would do. David got mad, but he didn't do anything about Amnon's wickedness. Maybe David remembered how he had been bad, too, when he took Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Absalom waited two whole years – all the time growing more bitter and angry.

Bitterness never just goes away. If it isn't rooted out and dealt with, it just goes on and on until someone gets hurt. That's what happened in David's family. Absalom's bitterness grew until it turned into — murder! He made a sneaky plan.

"I'm having a big sheep-shearing," Absalom told his father, David. "We will have the usual big party afterward with lots of food . Come and join us."

"No," David said. "There are too many of us for you to feed. Thanks anyway, and have a good time."

"If you won't come," Absalom said, "Let all my brothers come instead."

“Why do you want them to come?” the king asked. But Absalom kept on until David said that all the sons should go to the sheep-shearing party.

Which is exactly what Absalom wanted. He planned to get his brother Amnon far away from the protection of the city. When Amnon was drunk with wine, Absalom gave his servants the signal. They rushed in and killed Amnon.

The other brothers were horrified and scared. They got on their mules and got away from there – fast!

King David was furious with Absalom and made him leave the kingdom.

A few years passed and David began to realize that instead of losing one son he had lost two. God had forgiven him of his great sin with Bathsheba, so maybe he should forgive Absalom. He decided to pardon his son and brought him back into the city.

Absalom didn’t sneak back home. The Bible says that he had fifty chariots go before him as he entered the city, and all the people rejoiced. It seemed that everything was fine now in the family.

But it wasn’t. David didn’t really forgive Absalom and wouldn’t invite him to the palace. Absalom still held bitterness in his heart because David hadn’t punished wicked Amnon for hurting Absalom’s sister Tamar. Even after Joab had helped them make up, they still didn’t really forgive. Absalom began to plan again.

“Everyone loves me and cheers for me. I don’t want to wait until my father dies to be king. I want to be king right now,” he thought. “My father doesn’t deserve to be king, anyway.”

So he devised a plan. Every day he went to the palace and stood at the door. When someone came to seek King David’s help, Absalom would stop him.

“I’m sorry, the king is too busy to help you,” he would say. “He doesn’t care about your little problem, but I do. Why don’t you let me help you?”

By doing this Absalom began to turn the hearts of the people against King David and poor David never even suspected.

Soon people were saying. “Don’t even bother to talk to King David. Prince Absalom is the one who really cares.”

After several years his popularity had grown so much that Absalom decided it was time to make his move. He sent messengers to go throughout the land of Israel to gather all those loyal to him to fight against David. It looked like there would be no saving David now. His people, led by his own son, had turned against him. A large army joined Absalom and they marched towards Jerusalem to kill David and take away the kingdom.

Someone told David what was going to happen and he had just enough time to escape into the hills.

Poor David, who had once been loved by all the people, now had to run for his life from his own son. He had spent 20 years living in caves, trusting that God was going to make him the king one day. Now he was headed back to the caves again. What a sad day it was. Just when it seemed that nothing could be worse – someone started throwing rocks at David.

“You are getting what you deserve! You are a terrible king!” A man stood on the hill preparing to throw another rock. “The Lord is laying upon your head the innocent blood you have taken!”

David’s most trusted soldiers had followed him when he left Jerusalem and they were angry.

“How dare you throw a rock at your king?” cried Abishi, the leader of David’s army. “Let me go and cut off his head.”

He grabbed his sword and started up the hill.

“No!” cried David, rubbing his head. “God has sent him to curse me, and what he says is true. My own son curses me and wants to take my life. What do I care if this man does the same?”

Even though things were so terrible, David didn’t lose faith in God.

“It is of the Lord’s mercy that I ever was King,” he told his men. “ Now I will pray to God for salvation. If he brings back my kingdom I will know that he has heard me. But if I never again am king, I know that He still hears me and is a sovereign God, but I deserve to be where I am.”

The Life Lesson

David had troubles – but they all started because of sin. He sinned with Bathsheba, so he didn’t punish his wicked son Amnon for doing almost the same thing. If he had punished Amnon, Absalom wouldn’t have become so bitter and angry and none of the dreadful things in this story would have happened.

Absalom was wrong, too, for taking matters in his own hands and killing his brother. David’s family was in a horrible mess.

Sin always leads to trouble, for us and for our families. Being bitter and trying to punish people ourselves doesn’t help. It only makes things worse. When we try to hurt others, we get hurt ourselves. Absalom found that out – as we’ll see in our next story.

Review Questions

What did Absalom look like?

He was handsome.

Why was Absalom mad at his brother Amnon?

Because Amnon had been cruel to Absalom's sister Tamar.

Did David punish Amnon for being wicked?

No.

Why did Absalom plan a big party?

It was a plot to kill Amnon.

What did Absalom do when Amnon got drunk at the party?

He killed him.

Why was Absalom angry with his father?

Because David didn't punish Amnon and wouldn't forgive Absalom and let him come home.

What did Absalom decide to do to David?

To take the kingdom away from him.

How did he influence the people to follow him instead of David?

He talked to them outside the palace and helped them with their problems.

What happened when Absalom gathered an army against David?

David had to run for his life and hide in the wilderness -- again.

Sin always leads to

Trouble and sadness