

Life Lesson 74  
*The Fall of Absalom*  
II Samuel 16-18

Introduction

David was on the run again! He had spent years in the wilderness hiding from Saul. After faithfully reigning as king for many years, he was running from another enemy – his own son, Absalom.

The Story

Absalom and his men marched into Jerusalem and to the palace of the king. Friends had already warned David that Absalom and his army were on their way and the king had fled for the caves in the wilderness.

David was in terrible trouble, but he didn't give up. He prayed that God would return him to his throne, and he prayed for his son. Even though Absalom had been so wicked and hated his father, David still loved him.

After he had settled into the caves, David called his loyal advisor Hushai to him.

“I want you to go back to Jerusalem and serve my son,” David said.

“I would never do that,” Hushai protested.

“It's part of my plan,” David said. “I want you to go and pretend to follow Absalom. Ahithophel is his advisor, and he is very wise. When Ahithophel gives him good advice, talk Absalom out of it. You can be of great service to me if you will serve me in Absalom's court.”

Hushai agreed and went back to Jerusalem. He persuaded Absalom that now he had turned against David and was ready to follow the new king.

Absalom believed him and asked his advice.

“What should we do now? We have taken the city and my father has run away. Should we follow him and his followers or wait?”

“You have the advantage now.” Ahithophel said. “Follow your father while he is weak and disorganized and you will defeat him.”

Hushai knew that was good advice. David and his men weren’t ready to fight a battle at the moment. If Absalom attacked, it would all be over.

“I don’t think that is a wise plan,” Hushai said. “You are underestimating your father. Remember, he has been a great fighter since he was just a boy. If you attack now, you will be defeated and everyone will think you are a weakling. They will turn back to David. Better wait and get a strong army together first. Then go and fight.”

Hushai’s advice sounded good to Absalom, so that’s what he did. He waited until he had a large army – but by then David had a large army, too. Not everyone was willing to abandon David for the new king.

The day of the great battle came. They were fighting in the woods of Ephraim and David had given his generals orders. They were to fight to the death, but they weren’t to harm Absalom.

God gave David the victory that day and Absalom’s men had to run for their lives. Absalom was retreating on his donkey when it happened – the donkey went under a tree and Absalom’s long hair caught in the branches. The donkey ran on and left Absalom hanging there in the tree by his hair.

Even though David had said not to kill, Absalom, General Joab took his spear and drove it through the prince’s heart as he was dangling there from the branch by his long hair.

David won the victory – but it wasn’t a happy victory. He grieved for his son who had been so promising, but who had turned out to be a traitor. He was sorry that his son had hated him, and that his son was dead.

### The Life Lesson

For a while Absalom had all he ever wanted. He was king over Israel and everyone loved him. He was the richest and most popular guy around. But he quickly found out that living for those things will not satisfy. Living to please people may make us feel good for a little while,

but it is a pleasure that lasts only a moment. The Bible says that like a puff of smoke all the riches and things of this world will be gone. Absalom died without honor, looking silly hanging there by his hair until someone came and killed him. Something far worse happened after he died, though. Absalom had to face God. None of his popularity or fame helped him then!

David had not always been a good father. Did that give Absalom an excuse to bitter and to hate his dad? No, Absalom should have left David's punishment to God. We are each responsible for our own lives. We don't have to worry about making others pay.

Don't make Absalom's mistake. Don't be bitter and angry and try to take things into your own hands. Instead use all the abilities God has given you to serve God, and trust Him to deal with those who hurt you.

## Review Questions

Why was David running from Jerusalem?

*Because his son, Absalom, had taken his throne and wanted to kill him.*

What did David ask Hushai to do?

*To pretend to be on Absalom's side and give him bad advice.*

What advice did Ahithaphel give Absalom?

*To follow after David and finish him off.*

Did Hushai think that was a wise plan?

*Yes, he knew that David was weak and would be defeated if attacked just then.*

What did he advise Absalom?

*To wait and build a big army.*

Whose advice did Absalom take?

*Hushai's*

Who won the battle?

*David*

What command had David given?

*Don't kill Absalom.*

How was Absalom caught?

*His donkey ran under a tree and his hair caught in the branches.*

Who killed Absalom?

*Joab*