



The fall and rise of the king

2 SAMUEL

by Tim Chester

The fall and rise of the king
The Good Book Guide to 2 Samuel
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ISBN: 9781784982195

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Printed in Turkey

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Why study 2 Samuel?	5
1. Game of thrones	7
2 Samuel 1 v 1 – 5 v 5	
2. The house of the king	13
2 Samuel 5 v 6 – 7 v 29	
3. The victorious king	19
2 Samuel 8 – 10	
4. The failed king	25
2 Samuel 11 – 14	
5. The fallen king	31
2 Samuel 15 – 17	
6. The return of the king	37
2 Samuel 18 – 21	
Leader's Guide	43

introduction: good book guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

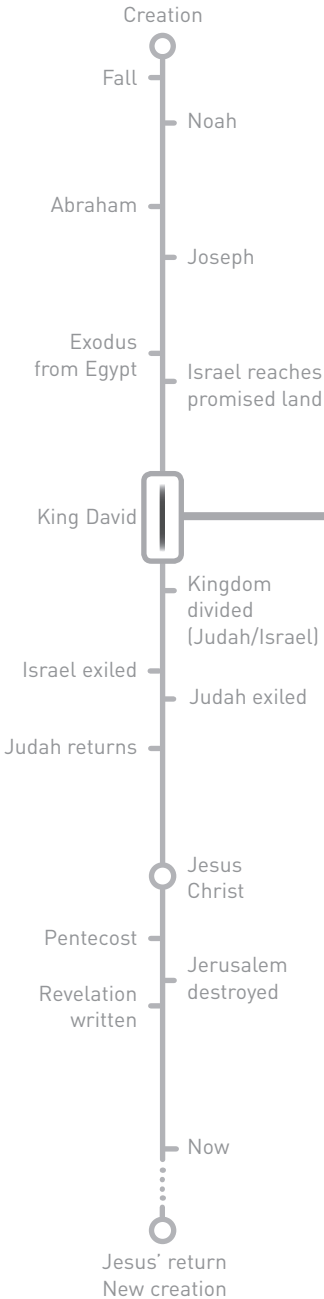
Why study 2 Samuel?

2 Samuel is full of powerful, dramatic, emotional action. We lurch from one electrifying moment to another. We move from victory to defeat and back to victory; from civil war to national victory and back to civil war again. We read of domestic dramas and national crises, miraculous interventions and faithful suffering. The big beasts of Israelite politics square off against one another on numerous occasions. It can all seem somewhat breathless.

And alongside all the action is a good deal of ambiguity. Yes, we meet heroes and villains. But more often we meet people somewhere in between. We encounter heroic loyalty and treacherous betrayals in the same person. We find people whose lives are both good and bad, ugly and beautiful, selfless and self-serving—people just like us, in fact.

But through it all we see the hand of God, who is the true hero of 2 Samuel. David sings a song at the end of his life in 2 Samuel 22. At the beginning, in the middle and at the end is the affirmation, “The LORD is my rock”. It’s the refrain of the song, the refrain of David’s life, and the overarching theme of the book of 2 Samuel.

But more thrilling than any of that, you’ll see Jesus Christ. And seeing him in and through 2 Samuel will enable you to see him with fresh colour and texture, and understand more clearly the privilege and joy of following him today—because Christians do not follow a flawed and capricious king who rules on a whim, and for his own personal gain. We are privileged to serve a King who came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of 2 Samuel fit into the whole story of God's word?

2 SAMUEL c1105 -1010BC

- c.1010 BC — Death of Saul. David reigns over Judah
- 1003 BC — Jerusalem captured. David king of Israel
- 997 BC — David's wars
- 991 BC — Birth of Solomon
- 980 BC — David's census
- 970 BC — David dies

1

2 Samuel 1 v 1 – 5 v 5

GAME OF THRONES



talkabout

1. Who is your favourite hero or villain—real or imagined? What is it about them that impresses you most? What are their flaws?



investigate

2 Samuel opens with a tragic and dangerous scene. King Saul and his son and heir, Jonathan, have both died in battle at the hands of the Philistines. David, the anointed king-in-waiting must prepare himself for the inevitable struggle over the throne

Read 2 Samuel 1 v 1-27

2. What's wrong with the messenger story (see 1 Samuel 31 v 4-5)? What did he hope to gain, do you think?

DICTIONARY

Amalekite (v 1): someone from the nomadic tribe of Amalek.
Lament (v 17): a mournful song about a tragedy or death.

- Why is David's response just and right?

3. Although David's song (1 v 17-27) does not mention God, how does it reveal David's godly character and his attitude towards kingship?

▶ **Read 2 Samuel 2 v 1 – 3 v 39**

DICTIONARY

4. What do we learn, both positive and negative, about each of the characters in this gritty drama?

Judah (2 v 1): David's tribe; descendants from one of the sons of Jacob.

Hebron (2 v 1): the largest town in Judah.

Concubine (3 v 7): an official live-in mistress.

- Abner (2 v 21-22, 26; 3 v 6-12)

- Joab (2 v 27-28)

- Ish-Bosheth (2 v 8-9; 3 v 11, 14-16)

- How does David stand out (2 v 1-7; 3 v 2-5)?

➡ **apply**

5. What hostility or conflict do you face in your everyday life? How can you understand the causes of those conflicts, pray about them, and work to resolve them in light of what we have read so far?

- **Read Matthew 5 v 9.** David worked hard to heal the divisions in the nation (3 v 19-21). How can you be an agent to bring peace to others: at church, with neighbours or at work, for example?



getting personal

Those who have embraced God's eternal King, Jesus, have been given peace through his death on the cross. But the peace we have with God through Christ should flow out into our lives and hearts to others: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3 v 15).

Reflect on the different areas of life where we need to feel, live and promote the peace we have received through Jesus' death on the cross: read 1 Thessalonians 5 v 15; Philipians 4 v 7; Romans 12 v 18.



explore more

optional

▶ Read 2 Samuel 4

*What principle is David applying to his judgments (see 3 v 39)?
How do you feel when you read brutal stories like this in the Bible?
How might we answer those who say that the God of the Old Testament is a bloodthirsty, cruel tyrant?*



investigate

After Ish-Bosheth is murdered, David unites the tribes as their king.

▶ Read 2 Samuel 5 v 1-5

6. What details show how David's role as king will differ from that of other military dictators and warlords?

DICTIONARY

Covenant (v 3): a binding agreement.

Anointed (v 3): pour oil on someone's head to signify they are the chosen king.

7. What does the description of the king as a “shepherd” (v 2) imply about how a leader should think and behave?

- Read, recite or sing the words of Psalm 23. How might David have understood how he should regard his kingly duty, do you think?



getting personal

Read John 10 v 11, 14. How does the Lord Jesus show us perfect leadership?

If you are in any kind of leadership at work, with your family or in church, how should you apply the shepherd principle of leadership?

- What should be your motivation?
- Where should you get your strength from?
- Who should be your prime “mentor” and model?
- What should you be looking to achieve?

8. The storyline of this whole section is about how God’s chosen king is eventually recognized by *all* of Israel. What might this tell us about how God achieves his purposes in the world?



9. Why is it important to remember that God is the true hero of this story?

➔ **apply**

10. In the seven years between Saul's death and David ruling all Israel, there were many moments when nothing seemed to be happening, or else terrible, confusing and strange things were happening. How can this help us trust that God's sovereign power at work when our world or our lives are in a mess?

- How should we react when terrible things happen?

11. In light of these chapters, how can we encourage and help those who are our leaders and shepherds—at home, in our work, at church and in the world? What do we need to remember about all of them?





pray

Thank God:

- that he is in control, and that he works his purposes out, often in slow and invisible ways.
- for Jesus—the peacemaker and perfect shepherd of his people.
- for those who lead you in the various areas of your life.

Ask God:

- to bring his peace where there is conflict, and to help you be a peacemaker.
- to help those who lead to lead like Jesus—the good shepherd.
- to help you trust in his purposes for you, your loved ones, your church, your country and the world.

