

Reading Schedule for November 13-19, 2017

This is a sad transition for me, because it means that Jonathan was killed, along with his father Saul, in a battle during our reading this week. Even though David becomes king, there is a heaviness to this scenario because of Saul's disobedience and Jonathan's innocence. God had been preparing David for his anointed role as king. There is an intensity about the transition, and you will read about that this week.

November 13 – 1 Samuel 29: “But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, ‘Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master’s favor than by taking the heads of our own men?’” (v.4) This is the key verse in a short chapter about David’s disguise among the Philistines. David had history that would reveal his loyalty to the Israelites. The commanders would know that David had slayed their champion, Goliath, over ten years ago. He had killed many Philistine soldiers and was the hero of the Israelites, as recited in verse 5. They quote the song that the people sang in tribute to David. I think David continues his undercover by appearing to be upset. It is actually amazing to me that the Philistines didn’t kill David because of his history against them. How do you understand this chapter? What stands out to you?

November 14 – 1 Samuel 30: “David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God.” (v.30) This verse has given me encouragement during challenging seasons in my life. I know that David’s challenge as a leader is greater than any of the challenges that I have ever faced. Since he found strength in the Lord through such a difficult situation, I can too. It is very hard when you believe people are loyal to you, and then something difficult happens and they turn the other direction. His men wanted to stone him. But David did not run; rather, he was strengthened in his relationship with God and came up with a solution that would demand great courage, but would end up uniting the people even more so. There is much to this chapter that gets my attention. I appreciate how God leads David and the assurance that in the most difficult times, the Lord provides a way out. What do you appreciate about this chapter? How does it inspire you?

November 15 – 1 Samuel 31: “Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.” (v.13) This wraps up the Book of 1 Samuel, and has a very heavy ending, wouldn’t you say? The people longed for a king and this is how it seemingly ends. Saul’s death was the death of an ideal. Israel could no longer believe that having a king like the other nations would solve all their problems. The real problem was not the form of government, but the sinful king. Saul would sometimes try to please God, and then he would act on his own and try to be heroic. He was very jealous and insecure, at the same time. The most important lesson that I have learned is that leadership without submission to God is not spiritual leadership. There is a very important principle in the Old Testament that encourages us to inquire of the Lord. Saul got ahead of God so often, and neglected to inquire of the Lord. How do you respond to this dark chapter and the close of the book?

November 16 – 2 Samuel 1: “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.” (v.26) There is no doubt that David had a great affection for Jonathan. He had not

experienced the kind of loyalty that Jonathan shared with him, even among his wives. David was not implying that he had a sexual relationship with Jonathan. Homosexual acts were absolutely forbidden in Israel. Leviticus tells us that homosexuality is detestable to God. We are learning about a brotherly love and a faithful friendship that meant so much to David. He was grieving the loss of his dear friend. I feel a sadness as well, even as I mentioned in the introduction. What stands out to you from this chapter of lament?

November 17 – 2 Samuel 2: “In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ he asked. The Lord said, ‘Go up.’ David asked, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the Lord answered.” (v.1) I told you that the principle that rises to the surface so often is the importance of inquiring of the Lord. Even though he had been anointed king, he did not get ahead of God. Was this the right time to go up to the towns of Judah? Even though moving ahead might have seemed obvious, he first wanted to bring the matter to God, whose timing was always the best. He would soon be crowned king of Judah, as you read in this chapter. I encourage you to inquire of the Lord, to seek his guidance, and to not get ahead of the Lord’s plans or timing in your life. How do you respond to that principle?

November 18 – 2 Samuel 3: “Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel . . .” (v.2) This is an interesting list. It may seem harmless, but it has all kinds of heartache and complication connected to each and every person. Even though polygamy was socially acceptable, it did not serve David well. The numerous sons born to David’s wives caused him great trouble. The list is dark and discouraging; Rape, murder, rebellion and greed. There were jealous rivalries. Even his successor would be stuck in this practice that would eventually ruin Solomon as well. Do not think that many wives was ever God’s plan? The Lord will work, even when the culture goes in the wrong direction. Be encouraged by that fact. How do you respond to this chapter of resentment and revenge? What stands out to you?

November 19 – 2 Samuel 4: “How much more—when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!” (v.11) I actually had a hard time deciding on what to say about this chapter. I was recalling the loyalty that David had for Mephibosheth. He was one of Jonathan’s sons. Ish-Bosheth was also one of Saul’s sons. David has sworn loyalty, through Jonathan, to protect Saul’s family. People were taking revenge on behalf of David, and yet he did not want revenge. However, it looks like David returned the favor and killed the assassins. I don’t know what to make of this story, other than God protecting David as the line to the Messiah, and all those with opposite motivation would need to be dealt with. Some of these practices are confusing to me. But God’s purposes are accomplished as David becomes king over Israel, as we will read in the next chapter. David is displayed as a strong leader; the kind of leader the people needed. No doubt the Philistines were still a threat, and David’s military reputation would help unify the people. How do you respond to this week of readings? Does anything continue to stand out that God might be using in your life to help you or challenge you? How so?

Prayers: Pray for the biggest food bank of the year as we bless people with food this coming Saturday before Thanksgiving. There is ample opportunity to make a spiritual impact as well.