

2nd Samuel Chapters 2-3 – John Karmelich

1. This lesson is going to read like a made for television soap opera. If you like sex, violence, deceit, corruption, and sinful practices, you've come to the right place. ☺
 - a) The question, of course, is why is any of this stuff in the bible? What does God want me to learn from all of these details and how do they apply to my life?
 - b) Let me start by summarizing the entire chapter in a few sentences: David rose to power from a fugitive to the king of all Israel. This happened by civil war. Much of these chapters focus on the two generals working under both sides of the civil war. Eventually, all the leaders opposing David were killed. David eventually became king of all Israel.
 - i) There, I just summarized chapters 2-5. We're done for the next two lessons. ☺
2. So again, why all of the details? These chapters are essentially subplots in the story of the rise of King David. We are going to read of David's leaders and the opposition's leaders. We'll read of war, double-crossing, corruption, and just plain old sin. Since the bible records all of these details, God must want us to know them and apply them. What is their purpose?
 - a) For starters, this is the way life works. It is rare when one becomes successful at anything overnight. It usually involves hard work, struggles, temporary failures and a lot of pain. From the end of Chapter 1 until David becomes king of all Israel in Chapter 5 is a seven and one-half year period. Let that sink in for a moment. That means over seven years of struggles, and wars just to get "God's will" done of David becoming king.
 - b) I have a friend whose father was a pastor. His father's tag line was "People are no damn good". What he meant by that is people are imperfect. Christians are imperfect. Christians are no better people "internally" than nonbelievers are. Corruption is going to happen within the church as well as outside.
 - i) That ties here to this story. All of these characters, more or less, fear God and are accountable to God. Despite that, the allure of power corrupts them and draws them away from God. One lesson to watch in this chapter is the danger of power.
 - ii) In fact, we'll read of David himself making mistakes in this chapter, and part of the reason is the allure of power.
 - c) If I had to pick the most important lesson to get out of this chapter, it is the simple phrase, "God's-will, will be done". Decades earlier, God made an unconditional promise to David that he would be king one day over all of Israel. When God makes such an unconditional promise, you can count on it, period. Despite all of the horrible, on-going soap opera like stories that take place here, God's will, will get done.
 - i) Was God aware of all of David's faults and sins? Of course. Was God aware of all the things that David will do wrong in his life when God made that promise to David? Of course. Despite all of that, God made promises that David would be king and God keeps His word.
 - ii) My point is that God poured out all of these wonderful blessings despite the corruption we read of David's life in these chapters. Here's the kicker": God wants to bless you and I the same way. What God is looking for are people who want to commit their lives to Him and be zealous for Him. Does God expect perfection? Look at David's life and there's your answer. David, (like us) had to suffer for all of his mistakes but David never stopped seeking God despite his faults. That made him a "man after God's own heart".
 - d) OK, two chapters and lots of drama to discuss. ☺ Let's get going.

3. Chapter 2, Verse 1: 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.
 - a) When we last read of David, he just heard the news of King Saul's death. He was still living in a Philistine town. That town was ruined as it had been sacked while David and his men were away. David recaptured all that was stolen, but the town was ruined.
 - b) David did what we should do when we don't know what to do next: Ask God.
 - i) That is what Verse 1 is all about. Personally, I don't think the bible ever misses an opportunity to point out when someone seeks God. God desires communication with us. The bible seems to go out of its way to point out every time someone takes the time to inquire of God.
 - c) This verse is David inquiring what to do next. David asks God two specific questions:
 - i) Question #1: Shall I move out of my present location? Remember that David was living among the Philistines. This is David asking in a sense, "Is it time for me to stop being a fugitive?"
 - ii) Question #2: Where shall I go? Somehow, somehow, God said, "To Hebron". Hebron was the largest town in the territory of Judah, which was David's tribe. It was centrally located in that territory. It would be David's headquarters as king for the next seven-plus years.
 - iii) How God spoke to David was a bit of a mystery. The text doesn't say.
 - d) This leads to the question, how do we discern God's will? Why can't we just ask God a direct question and get a direct answer?
 - i) I take the view that God answers all our prayer requests. Sometimes the answer is no and sometimes the answer is "wait".
 - ii) Sometimes learning God's will is "instinctive". It is as if an internal voice is telling you what to do. I am also very leery of such things and a big point is one never follows such a "voice" if it violates any sort of biblical principal.
 - iii) Let me give an illustration of God's will getting done through "instinct". My car "died" a few days ago. My wife and I prayed, and then had to research and shop fast. Once I was down to my final choices, God led me (I'm convinced of this) to a dealer 30 miles away, passing others that were much closer. There was a one-year old car with a 100,000 mile warranty in tact. It was in my price range, and it was the one I wanted.
 - a) What's my point? There was no audible voice from God telling me to buy this car. There was no audible voice telling me to drive pass dozens of places and go to this one. Somehow, we just picked this place to go and the next thing I knew, I was driving my new (ok, new to me!) car. My point is God can lead us "instinctively" once we ask for His will to be done.
 - iv) Seeking God's will mainly comes down to praying often, reading your bible often and then "go live your life". If you desire to please God, if you are constantly aware that you are accountable to God, then you are doing God's will.
 - v) In moments of big decisions, God is quite aware that those decisions have to be made. I have found that stopping to pray and then "going forward" gives God an opportunity to be glorified by whatever happens. A great prayer in such times is "God, bless it or block it". Then watch and see what happens and be willing to accept the results.
4. Verse 2: So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.³ David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns.
 - a) David heard God's orders and David acted upon them. He took his wives and everybody under his command and moved to Hebron "and its towns" (suburbs).

- b) Here we read of David having two wives. Soon, we'll read of David adding more.
 - i) A command for a king of Israel is that he should not multiply wives (Ref.: Deut. 17:17). We don't read of David being "zapped" for violating this command.
 - ii) One of my favorite comments on the sin of adultery is as follows: "Sometimes God punishes the adulterer by letting him or her live with their new sexual partner" (paraphrasing Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel). Often the new sexual partner is a much worse person than the spouse you cheated upon. A person willing to commit adultery is not a God-fearing person. God is then punishing the adultery by saying, "You want that person? Ok, you've got them! I'll let you live with that person, that's punishment enough!"
 - iii) This leads back to David's multiple wives. We don't read in the bible of God ever punishing David for it. We do read of all sorts of problems in David's personal life because of it. We'll read of wives chastising David, of corruption among the stepbrothers and one of his sons committing treason and murder.
 - a) In fact, if you take any bible character that has more than one wife, you'll read of trouble and corruption due to that relationship.
 - b) In the Garden of Eden, God set the "one man, one woman" marriage as the ideal. God does call some to be single, but God does set the one-man, one-woman relationship as the ideal for the family structure. This is not about the topic of divorce. My point here is that God "punishes" polygamy by showing the suffering of the people who commit such a sin.
 - c) It's hard enough to make one wife happy. I can't imagine multiples! ☺
- 5. Verse 4: Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.
 - a) When David and his men showed up in Hebron, the people of Judah made David king.
 - b) Remember that when God told David to go to Hebron, there was no mention that David would be king at this point. David went to Hebron "on faith" and God rewarded him.
 - c) David didn't reject this either. David understood that Saul was dead and understood that he would be king one day. Given both, David accepted this responsibility.
 - d) The people of Judah also knew David was to be king one day. They understood Saul was trying to kill him out of jealousy.
 - e) Back in 1st Samuel 30:26, when David conquered the Amalekites, David sent some of the spoil to the people of Judah. David knew he was to be king soon and this was a "present in advance" to his fellow tribesmen of Judah.
- 6. Verse 5: When David was told that it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, ⁵ he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead to say to them, "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. ⁶ May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. ⁷ Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."
 - a) Let me paraphrase David, "Attention all of you people of the town of Jabesh Gilead. The body of Saul was captured by the Philistines (implied). You people went and captured Saul's body and gave it a decent burial. My God bless you for your brave deed. I want to bless you for your brave deed. I, David, just happen to be the new King of Judah and would like to be the king over all of Israel, hint-hint". ☺ David is being a politician.
 - b) Here's the important historical lesson. God didn't let David be king of all of Israel for another seven and one-half years. Despite this "cute little gesture", it was not God's will for David to be king of the whole land all at once. If it was, God would have allowed it.
 - c) The lesson for us is that God usually gives us our victories a little at a time. If God wants to raise you to a prominent position, then you have to be properly trained and educated before reaching that position. God is working on David's patience and timing.

7. Verse 8: Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. ⁹ He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel. ¹⁰ Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David. ¹¹ The length of time David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.
- a) Back in 1st Samuel Chapter 26, we learn that Saul's top general and right-hand man was named Abner. I'll call him "General Abner" to help you remember. Back when David was on the run from Saul, David snuck in Saul's camp and stole Saul's spear and water jug. David then taunted General Abner for not properly protecting Saul.
 - b) Here we have Abner "out of a job" as Saul was dead. Since Abner was Saul's right-hand man, he must have heard the predictions of David being the next king. He saw David's rise to power. Abner saw David survive despite his best efforts to capture him.
 - c) Instead of General Abner submitting to David, he takes the last remaining living son of Saul and made him king. The new king of Israel was named Ish-Bosheth (try saying that one ten times fast! ☺). In the last chapter of 1st Samuel, it stated Saul's three sons died in the battle with Saul. Ish-Bosheth may have been a son of a concubine or some illegitimate son. The point is this is the last heir of Saul and he is now a "puppet king" with General Abner pulling the strings.
 - d) I warned you back in the introduction that this lesson is a soap opera of greed, power, and corruption. This paragraph is a prime example. This paragraph also indicates there would be civil war in Israel for the next few years until one guy is King of all Israel.
 - e) This reminds us of the classical saying, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". General Abner was accustomed to power. People are not willing to give up "the status quo", especially if it means losing power.
 - f) Verse 10 says King Ish-Bosheth ruled for two years over Israel (except Judah) and David ruled for seven and one half years over Judah. After that seven-plus year time frame, David would be the king over all of Israel. The question is, who ruled over Israel for the first five years after the death of Saul?
 - i) The answer is nobody. Remember the Israelites were defeated heavily by the Philistines. I suspect the Philistines gained control of most of Israel during that five-year time span. General Abner may have been busy during that five-year span collectively organizing the Nation of Israel once again from that defeat.
8. Verse 12: Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon. ¹³ Joab son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat down on one side of the pool and one group on the other side. Then Abner said to Joab, "Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us." "All right, let them do it," Joab said. ¹⁵ So they stood up and were counted off--twelve men for Benjamin and Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. ¹⁶ Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side, and they fell down together. So that place in Gibeon was called Helkath Hazzurim.
- a) Here we read of the first battle between the armies of Saul's son led by General-Abner, against the forces of King David and his top general named Joab.
 - b) Over the remainder of 2nd Samuel, we'll read a lot about Joab, most of which is bad.
 - i) In summary, Joab is a guy out for himself. He is loyal to David most of the time, but Joab's fault is Joab does what is best for Joab, instead of fearing God.
 - c) In Verse 13, we have a battle scene. As opposed to having both armies attack each other at once, both sides agree to have 12 men from each side engage in battle and see who wins. They agree, hoping that the loser will then accept defeat.
 - i) Some suspect the reason "12" were picked as it represents the 12 tribes of Israel.

- ii) The “12 on 12” battle ends up being a draw. Somehow, all 24 men die in this battle. They each draw a sword to each other and kill each other simultaneously.
 - iii) The location of this battle was a pool. Historians have found this spot. It is not a water-filled pool. It is a deep hole. Some may have died by falling into this hole as opposed to the death by the sword. Whatever happened, all 24 men died.
 - d) OK, what’s the point? Why did God want us to know this?
 - i) The answer is God “wanted” the war to be drawn out. Eventually, we’ll read of the death of General Abner and Saul’s’ last remaining son, King Ish-Bosheth.
 - ii) God did not want this “quick settlement” and everyone to live happily ever after. Let’s face it, if General Abner was not willing to accept David as the king back when Saul was alive. If Abner was not willing to accept David as king during the “post-Saul” years, the victory or defeat of these 12 guys won’t matter either. It had to be a long drawn out civil war in order for “God’s will” of David being king to be accomplished.
 - e) Why should we care about this stalemate? The answer is often God won’t let us have an easy victory or an easy defeat. God wants 100% control of our lives of every aspect. We can’t compromise and say, “Tell you what God, let’s do a little test. If you win, I’ll submit and if I win, I go my own way.” Even if God wins, we won’t submit, as we don’t want to let go of our old nature. It often takes a “full war” for us to change.
9. Verse 17: The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's men.
- a) After the “12 on 12” stalemate, everybody fought each other. David’s side won.
 - b) Notice that “General Abner” is mentioned in the defeat, but “General Joab” was not given credit for the victory. Instead, it says, “David’s men”. I believe that is a subtle hint that God was working behind the scenes to bless David’s victory. In other words, it wasn’t Joab’s brilliant strategy that won the battle, it was “God’ will” that David be king one day.
10. Verse 18: The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle.
- a) Here we are formally introduced to Joab and his two brothers. In 1st Chronicles 2:13, we learn that the three brothers were David’s nephews. Given that David was the youngest of 8 brothers (Ref. 1st Sam. 17:12), these three guys were more like cousins in that they were similar in age to David.
 - b) The primary focus of Verses 18-21 is on Joab’s brother Asahel. If you study all of Samuel, it implies that Joab was the “head guy” for David’s army. Therefore, Joab is more prominent throughout both books of Samuel. The focus of these verses is on Asahel.
 - c) What is poetically stated here in Verse 18 is that Asahel was known as a fast runner.
11. Verse 19: He (Asahel) chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him. ²⁰ Abner looked behind him and asked, "Is that you, Asahel?" "It is," he answered. ²¹ Then Abner said to him, "Turn aside to the right or to the left; take on one of the young men and strip him of his weapons." But Asahel would not stop chasing him. ²² Again Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me! Why should I strike you down? How could I look your brother Joab in the face?" ²³ But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit; so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died.
- a) In these five verses, the battle between David’s army and Saul’s sons army is still going on. Joab’s brother Asahel is running after General Abner, the leader of Saul’s forces.
 - b) It might be good to paraphrase this from General Abner’s perspective: “Hey, someone’s chasing after me! It’s Joab’s brother Asahel. Listen Asahel, stop chasing me, or I’ll have to kill you. I don’t want to kill you, mainly because I don’t want a blood feud between your brother Joab and myself. If you keep chasing me, I’ll have to kill you out of self defense.”
 - c) When Asahel kept chasing after Abner, he killed Asahel by running a spear through him.

- d) This paragraph goes out of its way to mention the specifics of how General Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel. It does so because we'll read in Chapter 3 of Abner being killed in a similar fashion. I'm not saying Abner was wrong for killing Joab's brother. This is a war scene and it appears to have been done in self-defense. The point is God allowed all of this to happen as to get David to be king. If Abner had submitted to David in the first place, none of these events would be necessary.
 - e) There is nothing wrong with General Abner killing Joab's brother Abner. It was done in self-defense and the text goes out of its way to point it out. This text is mainly there to understand Joab's motive for revenge in the next chapter when Joab kills General Abner.
 - f) Meanwhile, back at the war. ☺
12. Verse 24: But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and as the sun was setting, they came to the hill of Ammah, near Giah on the way to the wasteland of Gibeon. ²⁵ Then the men of Benjamin rallied behind Abner. They formed themselves into a group and took their stand on top of a hill. ²⁶ Abner called out to Joab, "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their brothers?" ²⁷ Joab answered, "As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until morning. " ²⁸ So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men came to a halt; they no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore.
- a) The battle is still continuing after the death of Joab's brother. The other two brothers, Joab and Abishai, continue to pursue General Abner, the leader of Saul's forces.
 - b) Saul's troops under General Abner are now being set for another big battle. All of Abner's troupes line up on a hill behind Abner. Abner stops at this point and yells to Joab in effect, "Can't we all get along? Why can't we stop the fighting now?"
 - i) John's translation: "Our side is losing and I want to call for a truce".
 - ii) In war, it is usually the losing side calling for a truce!
 - iii) If you think I'm reading too much into this verse, in Verse 31 Abner counts his losses, and it is in the hundreds, while David's side only loss about 20 guys.
 - c) General Joab of David's side agrees to this truce. That is the statement of Verse 27.
 - i) This appears to be a mistake on Joab's part. Because Joab agreed to stop, the war continued for two full years.
 - ii) The application to us is sometimes a "peace settlement" is not God's will for our lives. Remember that God wants "full victory" over our lives. Being a Christian is all about God's will being done in every aspect of our lives. Our old human nature "loves" compromises. It is like our ego saying, "Ok, I'll agree to submit to God in this and that area of our lives, but let me be in control of..."
13. Verse 29: All that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, continued through the whole Bithron and came to Mahanaim. ³⁰ Then Joab returned from pursuing Abner and assembled all his men. Besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing. ³¹ But David's men had killed three hundred and sixty Benjamites who were with Abner. ³² They took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night and arrived at Hebron by daybreak.
- a) Here we read of the retreat of the two generals and a head-count after this battle.
 - i) Abner (Saul's army) retreats to the east end of Israel across the Jordan River.
 - ii) Joab (David's army) goes back to Hebron, where David was located.
 - b) Both sides count their losses. Game score: Abner loss 360, David's side lost 20.
 - i) That's a wipe out. You would think that fact would get Abner to ponder, "Gee maybe God does want David to be king". Of course, our pride is the last thing to die, and Abner won't give up.
 - c) The easy thing for us is to read this and think, "You dummy Abner, can't you see what is plain in front your face? ☺ God wants you to submit to David! Why don't you stop allowing all of these men to get killed and save us some grief?"

- d) The hard thing is to personalize it. We all have areas of our life where our pride doesn't want to give up control. Occasionally when we are "losing" life's battles, we may have to stop and check if we are doing God's will or if our pride has taken over. Sometimes we have to lose battles to win a war. That's not the point. The point is about checking our pride in comparison to the results at hand.
 - e) I think of Peter in this situation. Peter believed Jesus was God. Peter's strength was his boldness. Peter was a "shoot first, ask questions later" kind of guy. Yet how did Peter stumble? By being too afraid to stand up for Jesus when a young girl asked if Peter was a follower of Jesus (Ref.: Matthew 26 and Mark 11).
 - i) My point here is Peter was willing to submit to Jesus on every aspect except his boldness. Peter thought, "I've got boldness covered and I don't have to pray about that aspect of his life." God will often let us "fall" in the areas of our lives we consider ourselves strong just to show we need dependence upon God for every aspect of our lives.
 - f) Getting back to Abner, the man wanted the status of being the top general. Because he refused to submit, he got innocent men killed and eventually himself.
14. Chapter 3, Verse 1: The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.
- a) This verse is a good summary of most of Chapter 2. It summarizes how David's forces were winning, and the forces loyal to the house of now-dead Saul were losing.
 - b) We're going to read of General Abner defecting to David's side in a matter of verses. It maybe that he saw the tide turning in the war and wanted to be on the winning side.
15. Verse 2: Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; ³ his second, Kileab the son of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah daughter of Talmi king of Geshur; ⁴ the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; ⁵ and the sixth, Ithream the son of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.
- a) We interrupt this war story to bring you an update on David's sex life. ☺
 - b) I promised back in the introduction that this chapter dealt with sex and violence and I meant it. ☺ In these three verses we read of David going from two wives to six wives. Further, David was now the father of a child of each of these wives in Verses 2-6.
 - c) I stated a few pages back about the problems of polygamy, so I won't go into all of that again. Just know that some of the children mentioned here will be guilty of treason, lying, murder, rape and incest later in 2nd Samuel. God didn't have to inflict any additional punishment on David. What will happen in the future is "punishment enough" and should teach us about the long-term affects of being disobedient to God's command.
 - d) It also says something about how David was occupying his time during this time of civil war. Notice back in the last chapter we read of General Abner versus General Joab. What was missing from those battle scenes is David himself. Now we know why. David was busy with his six-pack of wives. ☺
 - e) It also shows how David was "prospering" during this time era. The text says that these six children were born to David during the seven years that David reigned in Hebron. Despite the fact of a civil war, David "went on living" and had a growing family.
16. Verse 6: During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul. ⁷ Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?" ⁸ Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said and he answered, "Am I a dog's head--on Judah's side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman! ⁹ May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath ¹⁰ and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and

establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba." ¹¹ Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

- a) Now we have a new story in this soap opera. Let me give the highlights:
 - i) This paragraph focuses on the events on "Saul's side" of the war.
 - ii) Remember that Saul's side just lost a big battle. They lost hundreds of men.
 - iii) General Abner, decided, that he too needed "a sex break". ☺ He decided to go sleep with a concubine of Saul. The girl's name was Rizpah. A concubine like being a wife, without any of the privileges. (Gee, where do I sign up? ☺)
 - iv) Having sexual relations with a king's concubine is "making a public statement". It is saying that he is really the man in power.
 - v) Remember that the only remaining living son of Saul is (King) Ish-Bosheth. When Ish-Bosheth found out about this, General Abner, went on a verbal tirade. General Abner said to the king in effect, "Look your highness, I'm the one being loyal to you, fighting for you and have not handed you over to David to be killed. How dare you complain about "anything" that I do around here?"
 - vi) Verse 11 said King Ish-Bosheth was afraid of Abner. This again implies that King Ish-Bosheth was a puppet king and Abner was "pulling the strings".
 - b) We don't know Abner's motivation for doing this. I suspect from the text that he was "pouting" because he lost the battle. Abner knew that he was the real power for Saul's side and to have sex with one of Saul's concubines to "exercise" that power.
 - i) When Abner was confronted about it, he said in effect, "I can do whatever I want".
 - ii) It's like the final sentence of the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25, NKJV) To paraphrase: "Everybody did what the jolly-well felt like doing". (Alistair Begg)
 - iii) That's also a good summary of Chapter 3 and this soap opera. We don't read of people seeking and obeying God. It's every man for themselves.
 - iv) A point of this chapter is that "God's will" is getting done despite all the sin and deceit going on. Everyone has to pay for their sins, but despite it all, God's promises to David will come true and God's will, does get done.
 - c) Abner said in Verse 10, "If I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath".
 - i) Stop and think about it. General Abner was aware of the oath that God had made to David about being the next king. Abner was willfully disobeying God's promises by propping up King Ish-Bosheth and fighting for him. Why? Probably because he was afraid David would execute him. In Abner's mind, "He was fighting for his life as he has nothing else to lose".
 - ii) Little did Abner know the respect and kindness David had for him at this point. It is apparent that Abner is living based on his fears and disobeying God based on his fears. There's an application there, so I don't need to say anything more.
17. Verse 12: Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, "Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you."
- a) Here is a key turning point in our soap opera. General Abner wants to defect to David's side. What made him do this?
 - i) This is the guy who had all the power on Saul's side. He just slept with a king's concubine. Maybe his lack of respect for King Ish-Bosheth made him do this.
 - ii) Maybe it was the fact that his side was losing. General Abner figured it was time to change sides.
 - iii) In Verse 10, Abner admitted he knew that God had ordained David to be king.
 - iv) Personally, I think Abner is the kind of guy who is out for Abner. Notice he does not come to David unconditionally like a surrender. It is more like, "Hey David, let's make a deal and I'll end this civil war by bringing the enemy forces over to your side." I think Abner liked power and wanted some from David.

- v) We don't read of Abner seeking God for guidance. We read of Abner "trying to save his life". He knew that David's side considered him the enemy. He knew that David's general Joab would want him dead. This is politics.
 - b) A big-picture application of this soap opera is everyone is doing what is best for themselves and not seeking God. When we start going down that path, this leads to all sorts of sins, as we read in this chapter.
 - c) Living a life focusing on saving your life over seeking God leads one to ruin. Abner is interested in saving his own lives no matter what the affect on everyone else.
 - d) In a sense, this reminds me of Jesus line of "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39 NIV). Living for yourself will cause you to lose your life. Living for God and seeking God will cause you to have a happy and content life, no matter how long it lasts.
18. Verse 13: "Good," said David. "I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me." ¹⁴ Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins." ¹⁵ So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. ¹⁶ Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back home!" So he went back.
- a) Now we read of David's response to defecting General-Abner's request:
 - i) Does David require battle strategies? No. Does David require the death of rival King Ish-Bosheth? No. Does David request surrender? No.
 - ii) Instead, David wants the wife promised to him by King Saul back in 1st Sam. 18.
 - b) Apparently, David wasn't satisfied with a six-pack of wives. He wanted one for every day of the week. ☺
 - c) I understand men. When men are owed a debt, they never forget. Time doesn't erase that. In this case, King Saul promised his daughter Michal to David about ten years ago. Saul demanded that David kill one hundred Philistines for the right to be the king's son-in-law. (Ref. 1st Samuel 18:25) David agrees. Saul then went back on his word and gave his daughter Michal to another man. (Reference 1st Samuel 25:44).
 - i) Despite the fact that David had six wives, he still wanted that debt paid. Despite the fact that God promised to bless David and make him king over all of Israel, he still wanted that debt paid. Despite the fact it was now about ten years and Michal was now married (probably with children) to someone else, David wanted her.
 - ii) I don't think this is about wanting another wife, this is about debt payment. The text does not say, "Bring me the woman I love named Michal". The text says to "Bring me the wife that I bought with 100 Philistine foreskins".
 - iii) Remember David is guilty of "multiplying wives" which is forbidden in Deut. 17:17. David is not worried about accountability to God with this action.
 - d) You have to understand the political motivation for doing this: David was trying to unite all of Israel under him. David figured, "If I marry one of Saul's daughters, then all of Israel will see me as the heir to Saul and accept me as king". (That doesn't make it right. That could just be David's motivation for wanting Michal back.)
 - e) The last part of the verses tells about princess Michal's soon to be ex-husband weeping as Michal is being taken away. The last part tells how General Abner told her husband in effect, "Stop crying and take it like a man and now go home".
 - i) Why was this mentioned in the text? I think part of it is to show the grief caused by David's actions. Maybe the guy loved her. Maybe he thought he was next in line to be the king as a son-in-law and now he's losing that power.
 - ii) Again, we're reading the details of a "soap opera" where everyone does whatever they fell like and don't worry about the accountability aspects to God.

19. Verse 17: Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, "For some time you have wanted to make David your king.¹⁸ Now do it! For the LORD promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.' "
- After David agrees to the terms, Abner tells the leaders of those fighting David, "Look, God promised David would be king of all Israel and we all knew it. Abner also made the statement that "For some time you have wanted to make David your king." That implies that the leaders of Israel wanted David as their king but were afraid to take on Abner.
 - Now we read of Abner saying in effect, "Look, you wanted David, "Now do it!"
 - In this lesson, I would only ask you memorize those three words: "Now do it".
 - God loves obedience. When you feel led to do something by God, go do it.
 - This is Abner's "charge" to the leaders of Israel. They are afraid. They are afraid that since they didn't make David king in the first place, they would be killed. Abner is trying to tell them, "Look, if God wants this, then "go do it". What are you waiting for?
 - This is Abner's high moment. We don't read of Abner confessing his sins or ever seeking God. We do read of Abner being a "preacher" here and telling the leaders to go do what's right. This is one of the few bright spots in a section of text that is pretty much all-sin.
20. Verse 19: Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.²⁰ When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men.²¹ Then Abner said to David, "Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.
- Here is Abner essentially telling the leaders opposing to David to surrender. Verse 19 said he talked to the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin in person as that was Saul's tribe.
 - Next, we read of Abner and his 20 top assistants coming to David personally. David greeted these guys with a big feast. Abner agrees to go back and be a diplomat to help convince people all over Israel to go side with David.
 - Give Abner a little credit here. This is the guy who spent years as Saul's' right hand man to try to kill David. David could have had him killed when they met. Instead, either out of forgiveness, or more likely out of politics, David greets him warmly and accepts him.
 - In a few verses, we're going to read of the death of Abner. David spends a few verses praising Abner. I believe David understood Abner's role as Saul's right-hand man and didn't hold any personal grudges.
21. Verse 22: Just then David's men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.²³ When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace.²⁴ So Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone!"²⁵ You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing."
- Now comes the big conflict scene: David's' top general Joab was out fighting some other battle. Joab comes back to David with a big pile of loot from this battle. Joab finds out that David accepted Abner's defection and essentially, gets jealous. Joab spends a few verses accusing Abner of spying. Joab says in effect, "David, you're trusting Abner? Don't you realize that guy is not trustable? He spent years trying to kill you! How do you know he was not here trying to spy you out?"
 - The answer to the last question is of course, that David met Abner "eye to eye" and trusted Abner. Abner was losing this war and both Abner and David knew it. Therefore, Abner wanted to switch sides to be on the winning side.

- ii) Joab understood that Abner was a top general. The fact that King David greeted Abner with open arms made Joab jealous. I suspect Joab was worried that his job was now in jeopardy as David's top guy. When Joab kills Abner in a few verses, this may have been an underlying motive.
 - b) Notice with every one of these sub-plots we are dealing with "fear of the unknown";
 - i) King Ish-Bosheth felt that David would kill the last remaining son of Saul and thus was part of this rebellion against David. He feared losing his life.
 - ii) General Abner rebelled against David, as he feared losing his life. It turns out that fear was unnecessary. It still doesn't excuse what Abner knew as "God's will" was for David to be king over all of Israel.
 - iii) All of Israel agreed (except the tribe of Judah) fought against David in a civil war due to the "fear of the unknown". Many died all out of disobedience to God's will that David be the king.
 - iv) This makes us (yes us) stop and ponder, "What are we afraid of "losing" that is not God's will for our lives?"
 - c) Meanwhile, back to the soap opera. ☺
22. Verse 26: Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it. ²⁷ Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.
- a) Joab did what Joab does. He took matters into his own hands. Joab murdered Abner when he got a chance to be alone with Abner. Joab stabs Abner in the same spot where Abner killed Joab's brother.
 - b) Some commentators make a big deal how Hebron was a "city of refuge". In Numbers Chapter 35, God told the Israelites to pick six cities and make them a place of refuge if a man is guilty of manslaughter. The man could seek refuge there and no avenger could kill him. The text implies that Joab met Abner just outside of the gate so "technically" Abner was fair-game for Joab to kill out of revenge.
 - i) Personally, I disagree. A "city of refuge" is only a safe haven if a person is guilty of manslaughter. Manslaughter is an accidental killing. Abner did kill Joab's brother, but it was in self-defense. There was no sin in that killing nor was it manslaughter. Abner did not live in Hebron out of that type of "refuge".
23. Verse 28: Later, when David heard about this, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the LORD concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. ²⁹ May his blood fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house! May Joab's house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food." ³⁰ (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)
- a) Joab is guilty of plain old murder. Joab killed Abner because Joab was angry that Abner killed his brother. This is revenge. Joab was not only guilty of murder, but of violating God's principal of taking vengeance into one's own hands. (Ref. Deuteronomy 32:35).
 - b) What is interesting to read is what does not happen: Joab is not put on trial. David does curse Joab as stated in Verse 29, but does not arrest him for this crime. The text will later imply that Joab is too powerful a general for David to "mess with" at this point in his kingdom politically. The fact that David does not have Joab killed will eventually come back to haunt David as Joab will be guilty of other crimes many years later.

24. Verse 31: Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner." King David himself walked behind the bier.³² They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner's tomb. All the people wept also.³³ The king sang this lament for Abner: "Should Abner have died as the lawless die?"³⁴ Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. You fell as one falls before wicked men." And all the people wept over him again.³⁵ Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!"
- a) These verses are the funeral for general Abner. David organized a big state-funeral in respect for Abner. David ordered Joab to be there and to mourn for Abner. The verses mention that David also wrote a poetic ode to Abner. The last verse was about David fasting in remorse over the murder and death of Abner.
 - b) What is more interesting is what is not done: David did not dance at the death of the man who tried to kill him. Abner spends years being Saul's lead man in the hunt for David's life. Instead, we read of David seeking peace with those trying to kill him.
 - c) This is the move of a good political leader. David was trying to organize all of Israel behind him. Therefore, he organizes a big state funeral, and has everyone be aware of David cursing Joab the murderer and writing an ode to Abner.
 - d) These are good lessons in leadership. David's put aside any personal animosity he may have had toward Abner when Abner was willing to defect. Abner understood that David was to be the next king, and "did the right thing". Unfortunately, Abner died for his actions. Sometimes we have to pay for doing the right thing.
25. Verse 36: All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them.³⁷ So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.
- a) These verses state the purpose for David's action: To show David had no part in the murder of Abner. This action is all about getting all of Israel to trust in David. Notice the emphasis in these verses on how the people were "pleased". It is mentioned twice.
26. Verse 38: Then the king said to his men, "Do you not realize that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel this day?"³⁹ And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!"
- a) Notice the phrase, "these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me". Back in Chapter 2, Verse 13, General Joab and his two brothers are the "Sons of Zeruiah."
 - i) Joab led the armies to many victories, and had men that were very loyal to him.
 - ii) David's point here is that Joab is "too powerful" for David to arrest for murder.
 - iii) Therefore, David organized this state funeral and "punished" Joab in other means other than a direct trial for murder.
27. OK, time to stop and catch our breath. ☺ I've covered a lot of verses and my commentary mostly focused on summarizing the stories at hand without a lot of personal application.
- a) We've read of lots of sin, and things that are displeasing to God.
 - b) We don't read of anyone seeking God since the first verse of Chapter 2.
 - c) We are reading of a civil war. This is a horrible thing to live through. If that wasn't bad enough, we read of power struggles, murder, sexual sins and deceit.
 - d) So what is to be learned by all of this? A couple of closing thoughts:
 - i) First of all, God's-will, gets done on God's timing. God intended for David to be king and it happened, despite sin, rebellion and civil war.
 - ii) Second, when you live in fear of losing your life, that means you are usually turning away from God also. I've always argued that "fear" is the opposite of "faith". When you are focusing on your worries and are trying to solve problems yourself as opposed to seeking God's will, the results are usually a disaster.

- iii) Finally, there is the lesson of the power of forgiveness. David forgave Abner for rebellion and all the years of Abner leading an army to try to kill him. Before you take that lightly, imagine leading the life of a fugitive for years. The guy that tried to kill you now wants to submit to you. Instead of gloating or seeking revenge, you welcome him with open arms. That is what David did here.
 - a) God asks us to forgive others just as God forgives all of our sins. It is the only line of "The Lord's Prayer" that involves action on our parts. We pray for God's strength to perform that action (our forgiveness).
 - b) What does David do here? Forgive the man who spent years trying to kill him! That is a great example of forgiving someone who asks for it!
 - iv) Yes, Abner got killed, but I do believe he is in heaven right now. Abner eventually submitted to God's will of having David as king.
 - v) In fact, compare the funeral comments here in Chapter 3 for Abner with how Joab was remembered after his death. Near the end of David's life, David lists all those who helped him rise to power. Joab barely got a mention!
 - vi) The soap opera will come to an end with the next lesson. By Chapter 7, the focus changes to the ruling of King David. Hang in there until then!
28. Let's pray: Father, help us to apply these lessons to our own life and not just see them as historical stories. Help us to keep our focus upon you and give you our worries and fears. Help us to live our lives in ways that our pleasing to you. Help us to remember that you are the one who takes care of our problems. Out of Your love for us, You are our "avenger" and we don't have to take such matters into our own hands. May You be gloried by how we live and let not these lessons be wasted. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.