

1. My theme for this lesson is “emotions and decisions”.
 - a) This is about how we let our emotions dictate the decisions we make in life.
 - b) Let’s start with the disclaimers. ☺ Emotions are a good thing.
 - i) God created us with a set of emotions and they affect upon our lives. For examples, in dangerous situations, we have a built-in fear instinct and if used “rationally”, we can make good decisions that would save our lives.
 - ii) For example, if we are walking along a cliff, there is a natural instinct to be scared and hopefully, it will cause us to walk carefully or walk away.
 - iii) Another example is that when we have emotional love for one another, we do things for others just out of that love.
 - iv) We often make good decisions based on “gut instinct”. Such instincts are usually a mixture of emotion and experience.
 - c) The issue-at-hand is about letting the emotions-of-the-moment cause us to make bad decisions. The human maturity process of life is often about making rational decisions as opposed to emotional decisions.
 - d) For example, if little children had their way, they would only deserts. I remember asking my two year old daughter what she wanted for breakfast. She replied, “ice cream”. I then said you can’t have ice cream for breakfast. She then replied, “popcorn”. ☺ It takes a parent to teach children that they need better types of food for substance.
 - i) It is the job of the parent to teach right-and-wrong, as opposed to what is “fun” or whatever appeals to the emotions of the kids for the moment.
 - ii) As a Christian adult, we constantly need to think in terms of “What is pleasing to God” as opposed to what is pleasing to ourselves.”
 - e) I may be stating the obvious here, but in these two chapters of 2nd Samuel, we’re going to read of many good and bad decisions made. The bad decisions are made because the “emotions” of the person negatively affected the decision.
 - i) For example, Chapter 18 focuses on David’s son Absalom. This guy had a big ego. That ego led to his downfall and death. Absalom put himself first, over what God desired for his life. Absalom disobeyed God’s commandment to honor his father and mother. The emotion of “wanting everything for myself now” as opposed to living how God wants us to live caused his downfall.
 - f) This leads to the topic of the bible as an instruction book. Those rules and examples are there for our happiness. It is God’s instruction book for our lives. The problem is our human nature always wants to put our own desires over God’s desire for our lives.
 - i) The reason Christianity encourages a regular, systematic study of God’s word is to remind ourselves just what God requires of us for the sake of our own happiness. It is a guidebook on how to make good decisions as we go through life.
2. With all of that in mind, I can now summarize these two chapters of 2nd Samuel:
 - a) King David’s son, Absalom, is rebelling against David.
 - b) Absalom is trying to kill David, who is now on the run.
 - c) In about half a chapter, Absalom will be dead.
 - d) The rest of Chapter 18 and all of Chapter 19 are the “clean up operation”.
 - i) It is about those who rebelled against David and how they ask for forgiveness.
 - e) Some of the minor characters we have read over the past few chapters will ask David for forgiveness. Their actions lead back to the topic of “emotions and decisions”.
 - f) Further, David’s top general (Joab) kills Absalom despite a direct order by David not to do so. Joab let his emotions affect his decision and he disobeyed a direct order.

- g) David also has some guilt in this chapter. In his grief over his dead son, he fails to be a good leader and is scolded for his action. Again, this is about “emotions and decisions”.
 - h) Now that we’re all good and confused on this topic, it’s time to start the lesson. ☺
3. Chapter 18, Verse 1: David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. ² David sent the troops out--a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."
- a) We left Chapter 17 with a civil war about to happen in Israel. On one side is exiled-King David and several thousand people who left with him. The other side is led by one of David’s sons named Absalom. The majority of Israel sided with Absalom.
 - b) We know from Verse 1 that the number of soldiers loyal to David is in the thousands. We also get the impression from Verse 3 that the number was less than 10,000.
 - c) In Chapter 17, Absalom decided to raise up a large army to go after David. Therefore, there is a time gap between Chapters 17 and 18 while Absalom raised this army.
 - d) These verses state David divided his army into three separate groups. One third was to be lead by “General” Joab, another third by Joab’s brother Abishai and the final third by an outsider (non-Jew) named Ittai the Gittite. We were introduced to Ittai in Chapter 15. Apparently, Ittai was some sort of exile from his homeland and became loyal to David. When the treason began, Ittai declared his loyalty to David, and now David made Ittai one of the top three generals.
 - e) Now let’s get to the key line: David says, “Surely I will march with you”.
 - i) That is David saying he wants to be hands-on involved with this war.
 - ii) In the next verse, the army decides it will be best if David stays back as the only goal of the “other side” is to capture and kill David.
4. Verse 3: But the men said, "You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city." ⁴ The king answered, "I will do whatever seems best to you." So the king stood beside the gate while all the men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands.
- a) This whole scene takes place in a town called “Mahanaïm” (Chapter 17, Verse 24). This is a gated city where David and the large entourage were based. It is about 40 miles northeast of Jerusalem, outside of the territory of the land of Israel.
 - b) To paraphrase what David’s troops are saying to him, “Look David, all that Absalom’s troops care about is killing you. If they do that, they win. Therefore, it is best that you stay here in Mahanaïm. (Try saying that fast ten times! ☺)
 - c) This gets back to my theme of “emotions and decisions”. Give David credit for listening to the advice of his men. If David had a big ego, he might have said, “I don’t care, I want to be there. We’ll contrast that to the fact that his son Absalom did go into battle and die.
5. Verse 5: The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.
- a) Here, King David is giving specific orders to his three generals not to kill Absalom.
 - i) This will become important as in a few verses, General Joab disobeys that order.
 - b) This verse shows the dilemma that King David is going through:
 - i) His own son is rebelling against him and wants to kill him.
 - ii) Despite that, David still loves his son and wants him to be alive.
6. Verse 6: The army marched into the field to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷ There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great--twenty thousand men. ⁸ The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword.

- a) These three verses are the only verses on the battle itself. The next few verses focus on the death of Absalom. What we learn here is that 20,000 men died in this battle.
 - b) Let' that sink in for a moment: 20,000 men died here.
 - i) None of this would have been necessary if Absalom never rebelled. Remember Absalom he was next in line to be king.
 - ii) I'm pretty positive none of this would have happened if David had never slept with Bathsheba and had her husband killed.
 - iii) When we willfully sin, we never stop to consider the long-term consequences of that sin and how it can affect others around us.
 - c) Onto some battle specific's: This battle took place in a thick, wooded forest.
 - i) The text says the forest killed more than the sword (Verse 8). I don't believe it means that soldiers died from running into trees. ☺ I suspect that means that as soldiers were running, they got caught in the thick aspects of the woods, or possibly in pits, and then those soldiers were "easy prey" for the other side.
 - ii) This also shows the military shrewdness of David's men. David's generals knew they were outnumbered. In such cases, you want to fight in a location that would help "even the odds" by being adverse to both. By David's men fighting in a forest, as opposed to an open field, David's men had more of an "equal chance" as the adversity of the forest caused problems for both sides.
 - iii) Don't underestimate how God was behind all of this. God wanted David back on the throne again and God was behind this victory. Verse 7 specifically states that David's men won this battle decisively.
7. Verse 9: Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.
- a) This would make a good scene for a movie. Visualize Absalom, leading this army, riding on a mule. The mule, in a full gallop, goes under a low tree. Absalom's head is stuck in the branches and he is left hanging in mid-air.
 - b) Many commentators go back to the physical description of Absalom in Chapter 14, Verse, 26. It stated that Absalom had thick hair, and he had it weighed when it was cut. Now, here is Absalom stuck in this tree. His hair could have been tangled as well, but that is a presumption. The "pun" here is that Absalom's "big head" was his downfall.
 - c) In a sense, the death of Absalom was due to his ego. Remember David had enough sense to not be personally engaged in the battle, as he knew the enemy wanted him only. Contrast that with Absalom who wanted to lead the charge into battle.
 - d) This gets back to "emotions and decisions". Absalom should have known he was the prime target of David's army. With his big ego, he wanted to be there, leading the army.
8. Verse 10: When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree." ¹¹ Joab said to the man who had told him this, "What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt."
- a) One of David's soldiers reported to General Joab that he spotted Absalom in the tree. General Joab replied in a sense, "Hey soldier, why didn't you kill him when you had the chance? Don't you know that if you killed Absalom, this war would be over! I would have given you a great reward if you had killed him!"
 - b) The specific reward was 10 shekels of silver and a "warrior's belt". The belt was a prize. It is similar to modern soldiers have medals on their chest.
9. Verse 12: But the man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lift my hand against the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.' ¹³ And if I had put my life in jeopardy--and nothing is hidden from the king--you would have kept your distance from me."

- a) Let me paraphrase what the soldier is saying, "Look, King David gave specific orders not to kill Absalom. Even if you paid me 10,000 shekels, I would not disobey a direct order from the king. King David would kill me if I killed Absalom."
 - b) Again, we're back to "emotions and decisions". This soldier didn't let the emotion of the war affect his decisions. This soldier wanted to defeat the enemy, which was Absalom. Yet this soldier knew not to disobey a direct order, even if "seemed wrong."
10. Verse 14: Joab said, "I'm not going to wait like this for you." So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. ¹⁵ And ten of Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.
- a) Joab replied in effect, "Whatever! I'm tired of this war and I'm going to end it here and now. I don't care about David's orders as I know killing Absalom would end this war."
 - b) Therefore, Joab threw three javelins at Absalom. Just to make sure Absalom died, ten of Joab's assistants then "finished the job" and killed off Absalom.
 - i) The Hebrew word for "heart" implies "central guts". Joab could have thrown the three spears say, just in the gut and Absalom could have still been alive. That is why Verse 15 mentions the ten other guys who made sure Absalom was dead.
 - c) One of the things you learn from reading the bible is that "God likes to use irony". What I mean by that is God often lets situations happen in ways that are reminders of previous situations. The way "things happen" in the bible are designed to teach us lessons.
 - i) And your point is? ☺ Absalom rebelled against King David. Absalom died because General Joab rebelled against David's direct orders not to kill Absalom. The irony is in the way Absalom died.
 - d) Onto the big debate question: Was Joab right for what he did? Did he do the right thing by killing Absalom? Killing Absalom did end the war, but he also disobeyed a direct command by King David.
 - i) The answer is Joab did the wrong thing. Joab forgot that David was in charge and not Joab. Yes, killing Absalom ended the war, but that was "David's problem".
 - ii) Again, this gets back to "emotions and decisions". Joab let his emotions of the moment affect his decisions and disobeyed a direct order.
 - iii) Soldiers are taught obedience over all other issues. The same should be said for Christians. God desires obedience to His commands, even when we think it is better to do something else. Again, this is about "emotions and decisions".
 - iv) Yes, there are situations of "higher law". Those are cases when someone gives us an order that is a direct violation of say, one of the 10 commandments. For example, if your boss tells you to cheat at work, you should disobey that command even if it means being fired over it.
 - v) Back to Joab, this is not a case of "higher law". What Joab did was "logical" and the right thing to do to end the war, but not at the price of disobedience.
11. Verse 16: Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. ¹⁷ They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. ¹⁸ During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King's Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, "I have no son to carry on the memory of my name." He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.
- a) David's troops were winning and the soldiers loyal to Absalom were on the run. Joab gave the order to stop fighting. While the Israelite soldiers were fleeing, Joab's men threw Absalom's body into a big pit.
 - b) Here's the point of all of this: Verse 18 mentions that Absalom built a big monument for himself. It is another sign of his ego. It was common in that era for pagan kings to build monuments for themselves while they were still alive (e.g., the pyramids). Remember that Absalom's mother was a foreign queen. (Reference 2nd Samuel 3:3).

- c) That monument will now never be used. Absalom was buried in a pit. This leads back to my short discussion of “bible ironies”. Absalom, who wanted to be remembered through all of history, in a sense “gets his wish”. Unfortunately, he is immortalized as the rebellious son who died by getting stuck in a tree. ☺
 - d) Verse 18 states that Absalom “had no sons to carry on his name”. Back in Chapter 14, we read that Absalom had three sons (14:27). It is probable they have all died by now.
 - e) If you travel to Israel today, they have a monument called “Absalom’s monument”. That monument does not date back to this time era, despite what the tourist guides tell you.
 - f) Let’s stand back and contemplate David’s sin with Bathsheba for a moment. Here is the long term consequences of that sin:
 - i) Bathsheba got pregnant from that sin. The baby died. (Chapters 11-12).
 - ii) David’s daughter Tamar was raped by one of David’s sons (half brother/sister).
 - a) That son, Amnon, then was killed by another son, Absalom. (Chapter 13).
 - iii) Absalom, years later, then rebelled against his father David and tried to kill him. Absalom was guilty of treason, rape, and murder. He was killed.
 - iv) In a sense, all of this happened because David lusted over Bathsheba.
 - a) Part of it was God’s sentence for David’s rebellion.
 - b) Part of it is a “natural output” in the sense the children rebelled as David had rebelled. The kids acted like the parents.
12. Verse 19: Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and take the news to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the hand of his enemies." ²⁰ "You are not the one to take the news today," Joab told him. "You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead." ²¹ Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off.
- a) We now move on a new story. This is the story of two “runners” who are picked to relay the message to David about Absalom’s death. Remember that David is residing in a nearby city away from where this battle is taking place. Somebody has to tell the news to David that they won the war, but his son was dead.
 - b) “Runner #1” is named Ahimaaz. “Runner #2” is an unnamed Cushite (i.e., a foreigner).
 - c) “Runner #1 (Ahimaaz) is anxious to be the runner. Joab picks “runner #2”, this unnamed Cushite instead. Joab picked “#2” because there was no positive news to tell David (see Verse 22). I suspect Joab was worried David might kill the messenger as it was a violation of David’s direct order. Therefore, Joab picks a foreigner, which was “runner #2”.
13. Verse 22: Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite." But Joab replied, "My son, why do you want to go? You don't have any news that will bring you a reward." ²³ He said, "Come what may, I want to run." So Joab said, "Run!" Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.
- a) Verses 22 and 23 tell this strange little story how “Runner #1” wants to run away. Joab tells Runner #1 in effect, “Look, I just sent Runner #2, why do you want to run? Joab agrees to let the guy go anyway, even though Runner #1 had no news to deliver to David. (Hey, maybe #1 was just in the mood for a good workout and needed an excuse. ☺)
 - b) The story then mentions that “Runner #1”, the one that Joab didn’t want to go, was outrunning “Runner #2”.
14. Verse 24: While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. ²⁵ The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, "If he is alone, he must have good news." And the man came closer and closer. ²⁶ Then the watchman saw another man running, and he called down to the gatekeeper, "Look, another man running alone!" The king said, "He must be bringing good news, too." ²⁷ The watchman said, "It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." "He's a good man," the king said. "He comes with good news."
- a) Now we get the same story of the two runners from the perspective of King David:

- b) There is a watchman at the gate where David is staying. The watchman reports the two runners are approaching. The watchman recognizes the running style of "runner #1" (Ahimaaz) and gives David his name.
 - c) At this point, the runners have not actually reached David yet.
 - d) David responds to the watchman, with "Hopefully, the guy's got good news".
 - e) Let's move on to a few more verses and then tie it all together.
15. Verse 28: Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Praise be to the LORD your God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." ²⁹ The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and me, your servant, but I don't know what it was."
- a) Here is Runner #1", the one Joab did not want to send, reaching David. From the earlier verses, we know that Runner #1 did know that Absalom was dead. Runner #1 was proud to tell David that their side had won the war. However, when David asked about the health of Absalom, Runner #1 was too scared to tell David the truth.
 - b) Runner #1 responded to David's inquiry by saying in effect, "Uh, there was a great confusion and I don't know what happened". This was a lie.
 - c) The next set of verses is about "Runner #2" giving David the actual news. Before I get there, let's stop and contemplate all these "runner" verses for a moment:
 - i) There are more verses dedicated to the story of the two runners going to David then there are about the civil war and the death of Absalom.
 - ii) My question is, "Why is so much text spent on these two runners?" The bible could have just said, "And David got the news Absalom was dead." Instead, we have half a chapter dedicated to the story of the two runners.
 - iii) Again, we're back to the theme of "emotions and decisions": Runner #1 was full of energy and was a fast runner. When it came time to actually deliver the message, he didn't have the courage to do it. To deliver a message: (i.e., a lesson to preachers and teachers) is that not only do we need to have the energy and skill, but also the "boldness" to actual do what God has called us to do!
 - iv) The balance of course, is to not procrastinate forever. One is never fully trained in life and sometimes, you just have to start with the knowledge you do have.
16. Verse 30: The king said (to Runner #1), "Stand aside and wait here." So he stepped aside and stood there. ³¹ Then the Cushite (Runner #2) arrived and said, "My lord the king, hear the good news! The LORD has delivered you today from all who rose up against you." ³² The king asked the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man."
- a) Here we read of David actually getting the news that Absalom is dead.
 - b) David told "Runner #1" to stand aside while he hears what "Runner #2" has to say.
 - c) Notice the tact of the Cushite (Runner #2). He said in Verse 32, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man." To paraphrase, when David asked if Absalom was still alive, the Cushite said, "May your enemies now be like what Absalom is like now".
 - d) David got it. There was no need to be blunt about it. That is obvious by the next verse.
17. Verse 33: The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!"
- a) The idea of "shaken" is that David was so crippled by the news of his son's death he was physically and emotionally shaken all through his body.
 - b) Notice David's cry, "If only I had died instead of you."
 - i) Think about that: This is the son who ran David off the throne. This is the son who organized the rebellion. This is the son that wanted David killed.

- ii) Personally, I would have cut the guy out of my will by now. ☺ It shows the love of David as a father overshadowed the events at hand.
 - c) This is a key verse. David “the father” understood the grief. He knew that his son Absalom was a reflection of his own personality. David thought, “If only I could have talked to him. If only I could have told him of my mistakes and my rebellion. Maybe then, he wouldn’t have turned out this way.”
 - d) One of the greatest moments of grief is to realize what you “could” have done. One reason the death of a loved one is hurtful because you stop and think in hindsight of all the things you could/would/should have said.
 - e) I have to stop and give my wife credit here. She’s a big believer in stopping to enjoy life and not be too caught up our routine requirements. She has taught me many lessons about enjoying life. God forbid that if something happens to her or my children, I could at the least, say that I stop every now and then to enjoy my time with them and not have any regrets that I “forgot to say something” if something happens to them.
18. Chapter 19, Verse 1: Joab was told, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." ² And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, "The king is grieving for his son." ³ The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle. ⁴ The king covered his face and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"
- a) The first three words are important here: “(General) Joab was told”.
 - b) The rest of the paragraph is the “what” Joab was told: It was told that David is sitting around crying about the death of his son. The morale of the army is at a low despite the fact that they won the war. The morale of the king has affected the morale of the troops.
 - c) This is a good lesson in leadership. How we act affects others around us.
19. Verse 5: Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, "Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. ⁶ You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. ⁷ Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the LORD that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now."
- a) Personally, I visualize Joab chewing David out in these verses. Joab and David have been lifelong friends. Joab is angry that David is sulking and he isn’t afraid to tell him.
 - b) Let me paraphrase Joab: “David, I’ve had it with your sobbing. There are thousands of men out there who risked their lives for you. Many have died for you. Yet, all you care about is the death of your son. Look, we’re not stupid. We can all relate to the fact you’re grieving over the life of your son. This is a time to put life in perspective. Yes, you’ve lost your son, but there is an army outside that was willing to die for you. Now go out there, get a grip, and show some gratitude to those guys or you will lose them forever!”
 - c) This gets back to my theme of “emotions and decisions”. David was emotional over the death of his son. Who wouldn’t be here? Yet, the mistake was he let those emotions affect his role to be a commander in chief. Whether David liked it or not, God called him to be the king. That means he has to be a king. Yes, he can privately grieve over the death of his son. That pain hurts for a lifetime. You can’t let it rob you of your responsibilities.
 - d) The application is that God calls us to do things and God expects obedience. Yes, there are times in our life where it is painful and we need a break. God understands that and does not expect us to be workaholics. Yet, the balance can also go too far the other way, and we can let our emotions overwhelm us.

20. Verse 8: So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, "The king is sitting in the gateway," they all came before him.
- a) This is one of those versus that speaks volumes if you understand a little bit about the culture. The first sentence says, "The king got up and took his seat in the gateway". Translation: The king stopped sitting around feeling sorry for himself and went back to work. The "gateway" is the entrance to the city. This is where the leaders sit.
 - b) What is not said, but implied by this verse is David went back to being the king. He assumed leadership. Those who followed him understood David's grief. Who wouldn't? At the same time, David needed to show gratitude to those who followed him. Sometimes, a simple gesture like what David is doing here gets the message out.
21. Verse 8 (cont.): Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes.⁹ Throughout the tribes of Israel, the people were all arguing with each other, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies; he is the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines. But now he has fled the country because of Absalom;¹⁰ and Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"
- a) There is something implied here, but not bluntly stated: David did not go home to Israel.
 - b) David just "hung around" the city outside of Israel where he was based with his men. You would think that after David won the victory, he would be marching home with the troops shouting, "I won, I'm home, and I believe that's my throne over there." ☺
 - c) David understood that being a king is all about God's timing and not David's timing. When Saul died, David waited for the Israelites to make David king. David is doing the same thing here. David would only be king by "free-will" and not by force.
 - i) Yes, I can have a field day on that one. ☺ God wants to rule over us. He doesn't do that by force, but only if we choose to let God rule over us. When we turn away from God, He "patiently waits" for us to invite Him back to rule again.
 - d) Which leads us to these verses: These verses are about the Israelites saying to themselves in effect, "What do we do now? We rebelled against David. He might make us suffer if we invite him back to be king. Well, yeah, the guy did conquer all of the enemies around us, but when his son threatened his throne, he ran away. What should we do?"
 - i) That is the debate currently going on throughout Israel: "Do we, or don't we bring David back as king?"
22. Verse 11: King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: "Ask the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters?'¹² You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to bring back the king?'¹³ And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab.' "
- a) It is important to understand there is a good length-of-time in these verses:
 - i) There was a time span for the "losing" Israelite army to go home and report the news around the land that Absalom was dead.
 - ii) There was a time span for the Israelites to understand that David wasn't just coming home and the people had to decide whether or not to bring him back.
 - b) Now in Verse 11, we get the impression that the vast majority of Israel does want David back on the throne. Remember that Israel is divided into 12 tribes. Verse 11 implies that the leaders of every tribe but Judah "voted" for David to be king again. The only tribe that didn't "vote" for David was his own tribe of Judah.
 - i) It is understandable why Judah was hesitant. Remember Absalom was David's son and also of the tribe of Judah. The leaders who supported Absalom were led by the tribe of Judah. They probably feared repercussions.

- c) Back to “time spans”: In Verse 11, we get the impression that word got back to David, who is currently living, roughly 40 miles northeast of Jerusalem, that all the tribes except for Judah wanted David back as king again.
 - d) The remainder of Verse 11 and all of Verse 12 is David sending a message to the High Priest in effect, “Why are my fellow Judah “brothers” not willing to bring me home?”
 - e) If you recall from when David was first on the run against his son, Absalom, the High Priest named Zadok and “his right hand man” Abiathar wanted to go with David. David told them to stay in Jerusalem. David also asked them to be spies for him. (Reference: 2nd Samuel 15:24-29). Remember the High Priest has a lot of influence in Israel. He also has a “network” of Levite priests under him scattered through the land. David sends a message to Zadok to ask why the tribe of Judah won’t let David be the king again.
 - f) In Verse 13, the message to Zadok included another message: “If and when I (David) am king again, I will make Amasa the head general instead of Joab”. Why did he do this?
 - i) A couple of reasons: If you recall, Amasa was the head general under Absalom’s army. Amasa was a relative of Absalom and therefore, a relative of David.
 - ii) This was David’s way of saying, “The leaders of Judah will still be ruling with me if and when I am king again.”
 - iii) Finally, this is a punishment and demotion for Joab. Remember Joab deliberately disobeyed the king’s order not to kill Absalom. Therefore, Joab got this demotion if and when David was to be king again.
 - g) This also gets back to the idea of “letting the king rule over our lives”. God does fill the bible with “blessings and curses” about letting Him rule over us. Here David is making promises about what will happen if the leaders of Israel let David rule over them again.
 - i) Remember David could have just marched into Jerusalem and taken the throne. Instead, David is patiently waiting for an invitation. In the meantime, David is declaring his promise of forgiveness and restoration if David can rule again.
 - ii) Boy, I can’t resist preaching on that thought too! ☺ That’s the way God rules in our lives. He promises restoration. He promises forgiveness. He promises us blessings. All we have to do (and that’s a big all!) is be willing to submit our lives to God and let God rule over us. “Letting God rule” means living in obedience to what God demands of us.
 - iii) Let’s get back to the theme of “emotions and decisions”. Here is the tribe of Judah being scared to let David be on the throne again. That fear is real, as Judah is the tribe that led the rebellion. Here is David, as a word-picture of God saying, “I’m more than willing to forgive you and even bless you if you are just willing to submit to me!” The tribe of Judah needed to overcome their emotions (i.e. fears) in order to do the right thing.
23. Verse 14: He won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man. They sent word to the king, "Return, you and all your men." ¹⁵ Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan.
- a) The plan worked. The men of Judah got word to David to come on back. In these verses we read of David and his troops and his family reaching the Jordan River. At that point, there was a parade of people from the tribe of Judah at the other side of the river waiting to escort David home to Jerusalem.
 - b) Unfortunately, the “And they lived happily ever after” doesn’t happen here. ☺ In life, when we get victories, there is usually either new issues or “clean up issues” to deal with. That is the remainder of the chapter. The end of this chapter also lays the seeds of future issues to be dealt with over the next few chapters.

24. Verse 16: Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul's household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was. ¹⁸ They crossed at the ford to take the king's household over and to do whatever he wished. When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell prostrate before the king ¹⁹ and said to him, "May my lord not hold me guilty. Do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. ²⁰ For I your servant know that I have sinned, but today I have come here as the first of the whole house of Joseph to come down and meet my lord the king."
- a) In this paragraph, we are re-introduced to a character from a few chapters back: Shimei.
 - i) Back in Chapter 16, David was running out of town to get away from Absalom.
 - ii) While David was leaving town, we read of this man named Shimei cursing David on the way out. Shimei was saying in effect, "You brought this on yourself as you overthrew Saul as king". Shimei was partially right that David brought it on himself based on his actions with Bathsheba. Shimei was wrong in that he thought the reason David lost his power was because he overtook Saul as king. Shimei was a distant relative of ex-King Saul and thus made the accusation.
 - iii) To finish the background information, David's soldiers wanted to kill Shimei back in Chapter 16 because this guy was taunting David.
 - iv) David responded back then, "Let the guy curse away. I'm in real pain because my son is rebelling. In comparison, this guy doesn't bother me."
 - b) Now, here we are three chapters later:
 - i) David is about to become king again.
 - ii) Shimei realizes that he bet on the wrong horse. ☺
 - iii) Shimei realized his life is now in danger for cursing out the king.
 - iv) Here we read of Shimei coming out to greet David. Shimei figured he either had to go live in exile or else, bow down to the king and beg for forgiveness.
 - v) Shimei said in effect, "King David, I am truly sorry for what I did. I wanted to be the first person to greet you on the way home and ask for forgiveness."
 - c) The paragraph also mentions "a thousand Benjamites" and Ziba.
 - i) As to Ziba, we'll get to him in a few verses.
 - ii) As to the other members of the tribe of Benjamin, remember that ex-King Saul was a Benjamite. They must have all thought, "David's going to blame us for the rebellion because ex-king Saul was of our tribe. David's going to think we joined the rebellion because we lost the prestige of having the king from our tribe."
 - d) There is also a subtler message that will be clearer in future chapters.
 - i) A "split" is coming among the 12 tribes of Israel. Two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin will be loyal to David and his descendants. Ten of the tribes will form a new nation at the time of David's grandson. The "early warning signs" of a split-by-tribes starts here with only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin coming out to greet David. Know also that Benjamin was relatively small tribe in terms of numbers. "Benjamin" is often described (or implied) as being part of "Judah" because they are so small in population.
25. Verse 21: Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said, "Shouldn't Shimei be put to death for this? He cursed the LORD's anointed."
- a) Back when Shimei was cursing David "on the way out", Abishai, one of David's generals wanted to kill him. (Chapter 16, Verse 9). Now that David's "on the way in", the same guy (Abishai) makes the same request to kill him. David's response is the next verse.

26. Verse 22: David replied, "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? This day you have become my adversaries! Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" ²³ So the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king promised him on oath.
- a) We're back to the topic of "emotions and decisions". David said in effect here, "Nobody is going to die today, not Shimei, nor anyone else from the tribe of Benjamin (i.e., "Sons of Zeruiah" as mentioned here.) Look, I, David, am the king again. It's time to forgive. It's time for me to forgive you for treason. Let's move on in life."
 - b) What we are reading here is David in his security as king. David was forgiven and David forgave others. David understood the principal of letting God deal with his enemies and David was not about to break that oath at this point.
 - c) Let's get back to the theme of "emotions and decisions". There is an interesting epilogue to the story of the cursing-Shimei and David. When David's was on his deathbed, he gave a set of instructions to his son Solomon. Among them are:
 - i) "When he (Shimei) came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will not put you to death by the sword.' But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood." (1st Kings 2:8-9 NIV)
 - ii) Interestingly enough, those were David's final recorded words before his death. Apparently, David either regretted that decision or Shimei didn't change his behavior after he was forgiven. It is possible, the "emotion" of David being the king again led David to forgiving Shimei without any sort of punishment.
 - iii) Later in Chapter 2 of 1st Kings, we read of Solomon devising a mild punishment for Shimei. When Shimei disobeys that punishment, Solomon has him killed.
 - d) The great mistake David made with Absalom was he forgave him (from earlier sins) without any sort of significant punishment. The results? Absalom committed treason. Remember God forgave David of his sins and God punished David. The results? David never had another sexual affair.
 - i) My point is often forgiveness usually requires some sort of discipline action. If not, people think, "Well, David (or God) just forgave me. I can go ahead and sin again and I'll have to do is sincerely ask for forgiveness again." Often, some sort of punishment is necessary simply so the person doesn't commit the same act.
 - ii) Remember when David sinned with Bathsheba, David asked for forgiveness and God forgave him. Yet, God still pronounced punishment on David for those sins.
27. Verse 24: Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. ²⁵ When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?" ²⁶ He said, "My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, 'I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.' But Ziba my servant betrayed me. ²⁷ And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever pleases you. ²⁸ All my grandfather's descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who sat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?"
- a) Now we come to another character from a previous chapter: Mephibosheth.
 - i) This is Saul's grandson and the son of David's late best friend Jonathan.
 - ii) Mephibosheth was a cripple since he was a child. In Chapter 4, David made a promise to Jonathan to show kindness to his sons when David became the king. David fulfilled that promise by letting Mephibosheth live in David's palace. We also read of a character named Ziba, who was a servant of Mephibosheth. God ordered Ziba to provide for Mephibosheth.

- iii) When David was leaving town in flight, Ziba greeted David with some gifts. He lied that Mephibosheth was loyal to Absalom. At that moment, David said that the land belonging to Mephibosheth would now belong to Ziba. (2nd Sam: 16:1-4).
 - iv) All of that is background to these verses.
 - b) Here, beginning in Verse 26, we read of Mephibosheth coming out to the Jordan River to greet David. After the groveling by Shimei, we now have Mephibosheth's turn to grovel.
 - c) Mephibosheth says in effect, "My Lord David, everything Ziba said about me is false."
 - d) To prove his sorrow, Mephibosheth lived a life of visual sorrow. Verse 26 says he "didn't care for his feet, trim his mustache, or wash his clothes". These are all cultural signs of remorse. I give credit for David forgiving this guy. He must have smelled terrible. ☺ Personally, I would have the guy walk under and through the Jordan River a few times before talking to him. ☺
 - e) It is now "decision time" for David. When David was fleeing the country, Ziba told him that Mephibosheth was the guilty party. Back then, David told Ziba that all the land that belonged to Mephibosheth now belonged to Ziba. Now here is Ziba, claiming his innocence and that Ziba is the guilty party.
28. Verse 29: The king said to him, "Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the fields." ³⁰ Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has arrived home safely."
- a) David didn't know who to believe. David simply made the decision to split the land in half. Mephibosheth response is interesting. It is in effect, "Land? Who cares about the land? I'm just happy to have you back home David! Let Ziba have the land."
 - b) There is nothing more said about this decision. It is not known whether or not the land was actually split as the king ordered, or if Mephibosheth let Ziba have all the land.
 - c) The important application is Mephibosheth attitude. As far as he was concerned, the king is on the throne and "stuff" no longer mattered. That leads us back to "emotions and decisions". When we realize God is on the throne and God will take care of us, we need to be less concerned about material things and trust that God will provide.
29. Verse 31: Barzillai the Gileadite also came down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and to send him on his way from there. ³² Now Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years of age. He had provided for the king during his stay in Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. ³³ The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you."
- a) Now we have a new character named Barzillai the Gileadite. When David was in exile, he David and his men lived in a town called Mahanaim. Barzillai provided for David and his soldiers while he lived there. (Reference: 2nd Samuel 17:27).
 - b) Now Barzillai is off to say goodbye to David. David in his gratitude to Barzillai offers him the opportunity to come live with David in his palace.
30. Verse 34: But Barzillai answered the king, "How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? ³⁵ I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? ³⁶ Your servant will cross over the Jordan with the king for a short distance, but why should the king reward me in this way? ³⁷ Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king. Do for him whatever pleases you."
- a) To sum up these verses, Barzillai responds with, "I'm old. I'm 80. I'm happy where I live and I'm happy to live out the rest of my life there. Thanks for the offer, but no thanks."
 - b) Further, Barzillai then goes on in Verse 37 to say, "Tell you what David, if you want to pay me back, here is my servant Kimham. Take him and pay him back for me any way that you (David) see fit". Some speculate that Kimham was his son.

31. Verse 38: The king said, "Kimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever pleases you. And anything you desire from me I will do for you." ³⁹ So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and gave him his blessing, and Barzillai returned to his home. ⁴⁰ When the king crossed over to Gilgal, Kimham crossed with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel had taken the king over.
- a) David responds to Barzillai's offer in effect by saying, "If you don't want to come with me, I won't force you. If you want me to take care of Kimham, consider it done."
 - b) The whole purpose of this section leads back to "emotions and decisions":
 - i) This guy Barzillai probably spent a lot of money taking care of David, his family and his army. He only asked for a relatively small thing in return. He never asked for repayment or even to go live in the palace.
 - ii) That is a great attitude about serving God. We don't serve expecting "payment", although God does reward us based on our obedience. The key is attitude. God wants us to walk humbly before Him. "Humbly" means putting other's needs in front of our own. Barzillai is a great example of that.
 - iii) Notice that David was willing to accept Barzillai's terms. David didn't have a big ego and say, "I'm the king. If I say you have to live me, start packing!" ☺ David had the humility to accept Barzillai's gift with only a modest request in return.
32. Verse 41: Soon all the men of Israel were coming to the king and saying to him, "Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan, together with all his men?" ⁴² All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "We did this because the king is closely related to us. Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king's provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves?" ⁴³ Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king; and besides, we have a greater claim on David than you have. So why do you treat us with contempt? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the men of Judah responded even more harshly than the men of Israel.
- a) These last four verses are "setting the seeds" of another national split to come.
 - b) Let me summarize the verses: Remember that there are 12 tribes in Israel. The leaders of the 10 northern tribes were mad that only those from Judah and Benjamin went to the Jordan River to meet the king and parade him home to Jerusalem. Notice in Verse 43, the leaders of the 10 other tribes say, "we have 10 shares in the king (out of 12).
 - c) What is implied is that the leaders of Judah and Benjamin didn't invite the leaders of the other tribes to the Jordan to go meet the king.
 - d) You can almost hear David thinking at this point, "What does a guy have to do around here to get accepted as a king?" He finally gets the invitation to come back home, and already there is division because some leaders were not invited to the procession.
 - i) This is often the way life works. One set of problems is solved and a new set of problems is waiting in the wings for us to deal with.
 - e) These verses are a prelude to Chapter 20. In the next chapter, there will be another civil war as a new person, of the tribe of Benjamin leads a new revolt against David. That guy is killed in Chapter 20 and there are no more revolts against David.
 - f) What's the point here? Remember the "curse" placed on David after the affair with Bathsheba. Part of that announced punishment by God is that David will have trouble the rest of his life. David cannot live "happily ever after" once Absalom was dead.
33. OK, running long as usual. Let's wrap this up with a closing prayer. : Heavenly Father we thank you for these lessons on how to live a life that is pleasing to you. Give us discernment in the decisions we make. Help us so that our emotions do not overwhelm our decisions. Help us to make decisions that are pleasing to you. Help us to be obedient to your commands and let that guide us, and let our emotions follow. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.