

Is Blood Thicker Than the Bible?

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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This morning I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Samuel 2. Now as you and I embark on a new calendar year, as we embark on a year that I think most of us would agree is just kind of ominous, the year 2020, there's something ominous about that. You may have heard and/or noticed or seen and by the way, I advocate and celebrate this, that there are a lot of different, shall we say, avenues by which people can read through the Scriptures over the course of a calendar year, whether that's a plan that generally takes 15-20 minutes per day, whether it starts in the Old Testament or the New Testament, whether it focuses on the Gospels or whatever it may be, allow me to say this, I just encourage anybody and everybody to read through the Scriptures each and every day, but if you're a guest or visitor with us, we actually as a family of faith, we find ourselves today about the midway point through a three year Bible reading plan. Typically it's about a chapter a day as we walk through the Scriptures and as you turn to 2 Samuel, I can almost assure you that there's no other Bible reading plan available that's gonna start the calendar year in 2 Samuel and you may be wondering, "Why 2 Samuel? Why this text? Why at the beginning of a new year would we turn to 2 Samuel?" Well, as you begin to read through 2 Samuel, it is much like our calendar year. We see that it is a new beginning. There is a new direction. There is a new leader. Everything that we speak of and celebrate with the turning of a new calendar year is present here in 2 Samuel. The old has gone by the wayside and the new has risen to the forefront.

Before we go into chapter 2 of 2 Samuel, a little bit of the backstory as we catch up with our new year, new direction and new story. The Israelites, as they typically did, found themselves in rebellion. They cried out to God, "We want to be like the other nations. Give us a king." The Lord warned them, "If you have a king, he's gonna do what the heathen kings do, he's gonna take your children, he's gonna make them servants, he's gonna take your finances." And they said, "It doesn't matter. We want to be like everybody else."

The first king who rose to the forefront was a man by the name of Saul and even though the Bible says he was head and shoulders above everybody else and handsome at his appearance, we know that he had a heart condition, did he not? Not a cardiac condition but a true heart condition, for his life and his mannerisms were not of the Lord. Midway through 1 Samuel, he offers a sacrifice that was not ordained by God. His rebellion led to

the Lord pronouncing that his kingdom and his crown would be removed from him. Shortly thereafter, a young man in the field tending the sheep by the name of David would be anointed by Samuel the priest to one day be the future king of Israel.

As you walk through the rest of 1 Samuel, we see this struggle between the house of Saul and the person of David. By the time we get to the end of 1 Samuel, not only has Saul known that his kingdom will be removed from him, but he entreats the witch of Endor. He solicits communication from the dead and the Lord pronounces that in the very short future not only he but his sons will lose their lives in the field of battle. By the time 1 Samuel comes to a close, the first king of Israel is dead. His children are deceased and what they knew has come to an end.

As we turn to 2 Samuel, though, much like when we turn a new calendar year, there's something new on the horizon. We have the burial of Saul in chapter 1 and then in chapter 2 the one who was prophesied earlier, the one who the Lord said, "This is the one to lead you," is about to be named king. However there's a problem, not everybody in Israel is in agreement with what God has pronounced. Not everybody is in favor of the way God is doing it, in fact, we discover there are a lot of people much like us who think their way is better than God's way, and so as we come to 2 Samuel 2, it's not just the story of an incident thousands of years ago, believe it or not this is our story because even though we face a new year, even though we face a new calendar, so to speak, you and I have to fight the same old battle each and every day when we get up, do we believe what God has pronounced or do we listen to another voice?

2 Samuel 2, beginning in verse 1, it says,

1 And it came to pass after this [the burial of Saul], that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. 2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. 3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul. 5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. 6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

It appears that all is going well until verse 8. There's that word again: but.

8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; 9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10 Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

Now what we see is, shall we say, a political impasse. What we see are two groups of people who cannot see things the same. It kind of sounds like our culture, does it not? But what we really are seeing in this passage and what I want you to hear this morning from the word of God is this: this is not an issue of political divide, this is not an issue of a difference of opinion. The question that we must address this morning is this: is blood thicker than the Bible?

Now you know the old phrase we use in our culture that blood is thicker than water. What does that mean? That means if you have a discrepancy or a difference of opinion with somebody and they happen to be related to the person who will make the decision, you're going to lose. That's what it means. It means that those who we are related to, those who we have a relationship with oftentimes we know and allow those relationships to supersede not only a good but sometimes the best and the only decision that should be made. This isn't an issue of which family do you side with. This isn't an issue of did you like Saul better than David or David better than Saul. Here's the question at hand: do you agree with, believe and follow through with what God said or with what somebody else said? You see, that's the issue here. It's not about Saul's lineage and David's lineage, it's about the fact that God anointed David even though Abner is not a fan of it.

Who was Abner? Well, he was basically the Secretary of Defense for Israel. He was a man who was high in charge and he had great authority. So what does he decide to do? He decides that rather than David of the house of Jesse who by the way was the eighth of eight boys, surely the remaining son of Saul, the blood relative of the one who was mighty in size and in stature. This is the one. So what does he do? He solicits a variety of cities and personalities and he actually gathers people around him to support a king who's not ordained by God rather than the one that was.

Now before you think that's just a discussion of ancient days and ancient people, this is about everyday life. It may not be about anointing kings or selecting leaders but how often do you and I have a decision to make, do we agree with and side with what the Bible says or do we care more about somebody else's opinion in our life? Three issues or areas that I want to address in this passage that are so relevant to each and every day of our life and the first one is this: the circles of our life. In fact, I've used the personal pronoun "my," I want you to make this personal today, your circles, my circles of life. Notice what it says in verse 8, "But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul." In spite of the fact of what God had said, the relationship that Abner had with Saul, the relationship he had with his family, and the relationship he had with the current military superseded what God had said about David and I think sometimes we need a reminder of, shall we say, how impactful relationships can be on

our thinking, how impactful other people that we intersect and walk through life with can be on how we view things in the world.

Now I recognize there are those who have a whole lot more education and understanding in relationships than I do but I've kind of just broken it down somewhat simply for you today, and for those of you who are watching by way of media ministry or here in person, you'll be able to visualize this because I want to show you a series of relationships that you and I walk through each and every day of our lives whether we realize it or not.

Obviously the first relationship that you have kind of at the center of your world is you. Now I joke with people, you know, you talk to yourself and the problem is don't...you know, talking to yourself isn't a big issue, it's when you answer yourself that it becomes a problem, if you notice that. But you know, sometimes the greatest enemy you've got is you and the way that you think about things and how you're twisted. Let me remind you of James 1:8, "A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways."

And so we understand kind of what we deal with in our personal self, but then we have our family. You know, when I speak of family, and I know there's different structures and such and variety even in this present room, be it your spouse, your children, your grandchildren, what you and I call immediate family. How often do what those whom we live life with in the same residence impact how we view things, how we see things, how we interpret things?

And then we have just our relatives in general. Now we always like to joke that everybody's got that crazy uncle and I know that we all do, but we would have to agree that oftentimes because of what somebody who we're related to is either a walking through, bound up in or celebrating their life, sometimes we can side more with those we have to eat holiday dinners with than what Scripture says about a variety of issues and concerns.

Then there's the friends. You say, "Well, I understand friends that will diss that." It's not necessarily a blood relative but the Bible says in Proverbs that a friend sticketh closer than a brother and sometimes we value the opinion of our friends even more than our own family, and oftentimes those who we have a friendship with, whatever that level may be, oftentimes impact and influence our lives to a degree that they can sway us, they can move us, they can maneuver us to an opinion or an idea much like Abner did that's not ordained by God even though a majority of the people side with it. Did you notice that about this passage? The majority was with Abner. The minority position was with David. When we get to the end of the message, that's gonna be more apropos.

As we begin to walk up the diagram, we see not only our friends but our neighbors and associates. Let's deal with the folks that we work with, volunteer with, live life alongside of. You know, oftentimes you work with people and you'll spend more hours with them during the week than you do your own family. Oftentimes you will hear the voice of a coworker or a volunteer or someone who you're in school with more than even those you

share a residence with, and so oftentimes the, shall we say, the ideas and the philosophies of those that we go to the workplace with can impact us even more than Scripture.

Then there's acquaintances. An acquaintance really isn't a friend and here's why: an acquaintance is someone who you have a relationship with but oftentimes it's very occasional or seasonal. Allow me to give you an illustration. My wife and I have a lot of acquaintances thanks to our children, depending on what ball season it is, what parents we're sitting next to. Some of them are football parents and some of them are soccer parents and some of them are basketball parents, but not all of them are all those parents for all the same kids. And so there are some people who we will sit next to two to three nights a week for six weeks and then we'll see again next year. We have a relationship with them but it's somewhat distant even though at times it can be close.

Then there's Person X. That's the person who if you and they walked in the room, they wouldn't have any idea who you were. You know, believe it or not, Person X in today's culture and thanks to technology, may have more influence and impact on your life than you give them credit for because when you put Person X to a name or a title, here's what you get: you get those who are media pundits, you get those who are celebrities, you get politicians and, yes, preachers at other places. Anybody whose voice you're willing to listen to that you don't have a personal relationship, how often do those we've never met but we see on our tv influence us more than even the Bible does?

You see, we're not different than Abner in 2 Samuel 2 because what happened when David got anointed by God, it didn't feel right to Abner. It didn't click with what he had hoped and desired. And so often it is the case in our life that what we want to be true is not advocated by God and what God advocates we don't want to neglect or reject in our lives. So what we see with Abner's relationship to Saul and to his children and to the military is that he allowed his relationships to dictate what he would do versus what God said needed to be and had been done.

So my circles are pretty impactful in my life. The next thing I want you to see is from verse 9, it's your convictions that you hold. Notice what it says in verse 9, he says, "And he made him king." That's a powerful statement because what Abner was doing was going completely contrary and opposite of what God had said. David had already been anointed king, it had been spoken that he would be king, even Saul's descendants declared that he would be king, but Abner didn't care. Abner made him king. What we see is oftentimes our convictions can betray us.

I'm gonna show you another chart this morning, it's something I call the worldview pyramid. You may have seen a version of this somewhere. I'm gonna work from the top to the bottom and then we're gonna reverse it. Basically all the behavior that you see in your life and somebody else's life, no matter if it's good, bad or ugly, it doesn't matter, all behavior is actually just a manifestation of a decision that has been made, a decision to speak, a decision to go, a decision to stay, a decision to stay quiet, whatever it may be, and every decision you make in life is based on a conviction that you hold in life, a dearly held truth or belief in your life, and your convictions are based on what you believe. Now

today we don't have time to discuss and disseminate between all the different kinds of "beliefs" that people can possess so for the sake of the majority of the audience, I'm gonna work with the belief of biblical Christianity through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let me unpack that. When I talk about belief today, I'm talking about someone who understands that Romans 3:23 is true, "For all," and all includes you, "have fallen short of the glory of God." All of us have sinned. All of us have messed up. We realize we have a sin problem and that Jesus Christ was not only the fulfillment of the prophecies of the coming Messiah but he fulfilled them, every single one of them so that his life, his death and his resurrection is the only means by which our souls can be saved and our sins can be forgiven. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, so today in this context when I'm talking about belief, I'm not talking about the atheist who has the website, I'm not talking about the person of a different faith system, I'm talking about Bible believing, born again by the blood of Jesus Christians. Hopefully I'm speaking of you. As that belief, you will build upon that convictions in your life. In other words, what you hold to be true or not true based on the fact [unintelligible], your convictions about life based on Scripture, in other words, if you believe without a shadow of a doubt God says that's what's true and it doesn't matter how many people are contrary to it, then you [unintelligible]. If you say, "Well, it's subject to opinion, interpretation and now the majority feels about things," then you side with [unintelligible].

You see, both Abner and David in their own heart and mind wanted the best for Israel but go into chapter 3 and see what happens. Look in verse 1 of chapter 3, it says that the house of Saul, that's Abner, and the house of David began to have battles with each other. Look at what happens. David's house increases and Saul's decreases. By the time you get to chapter 5 of 2 Samuel, David isn't just the king of Judah, he's the king over Judah and Israel, the northern and what we know as the southern kingdom. It reminds me of Gamaliel in the book of Acts. When challenged by the early dissenters or the early [unintelligible] Christianity, they said, "Everybody's going around talking about this Jesus guy, that he rose from the dead and that he can change our life and he's gonna change the world. What do we do about it?" Remember what Gamaliel said? "If this is of God, you're never gonna stop it. If this is of man, it will fade away just like everybody else." Look what happens to Abner. He fades away. Why? Because man's opinions, man's philosophy, man's ideals over time fade away to the truth of what God has said and we discover today as born again believers in Jesus Christ that the decisions we make will be based on the convictions we hold and that is based on how we see the Bible that is in our hands.

It's a difficult question to ask in the 21st century, do we side with "Thus saith the Lord," even though it's politically incorrect? Do we side with "Thus saith the Lord," even though we're the statistical minority? Do we side with "Thus saith the Lord," even if our family, our friends, and Person X have a contrary opinion? Now you see, you and I find ourselves in 2 Samuel 2. Here we are, do we go the way of David or do we go the way of Abner?

The last thing I want to share about this story are the concessions, your concessions and my concessions. When faced with this dilemma, when faced with these decisions in life, the enemy, the world will ask you to make certain concessions so as to slide toward Abner's side. Allow me to give you some historical evidence. Back in the book of Exodus, the Israelites were led by a man by the name of Moses. You know the famous story, "Let my people go," and 10 plagues later they finally found themselves on the other side of the Red Sea. What's interesting about the story of Moses and Pharaoh and the discussions and battle that they had is that when Moses said, "Let my people go," if you read the fine print, all he was asking for is that their wives, their children, their cattle and their finances, that they could take them to the wilderness for three days and then return. Oftentimes we miss that detail. When Moses said, "Let my people go," he wasn't saying, "We're leaving and never coming back," he said, "We just want three days in the wilderness." You say, "Well, why would God say just three days in the wilderness?" Well, last time I checked, three days in the grave Jesus came back, it changed everything, did it not? So we have no idea what three days in the wilderness would have done, but 10 plagues later, they finally were removed from Egypt.

Here's what's interesting about that. In chapter 10 of the book of Exodus, Pharaoh comes to Moses and he says, "Okay, Moses, things aren't going well. I want to make a concession. Take your wife, take your children, but leave your cattle and your money here. Don't go all the way, just go part way. Go for a few days but leave all the substance here." Moses said, "No, I can't do that. I can't allow that to occur." Another plague comes, another plague goes. Pharaoh comes back and says, "Okay, take your wives, take your children, take the cattle but leave the money." In other words, what Pharaoh was doing is exactly what the world does in our lives, it tries to chip off the block one little bit at a time so that we'll give a little here, we'll give a little there. You've heard the old statement, you give the devil an inch and he will take an entire mile eventually over time, and that's what Pharaoh was doing in Moses' life. The concession was agree with the Lord on this issue but can you give us a little leeway on this one because this one's really popular right now? Or agree with the Lord on this one because the majority of people are in agreement with you but on this one, we need you to take a step back because that's not in vogue now. Can you leave this one here in Egypt?

You've noticed I've been very specifically vague because there are so many issues we don't have time to deal with them all today, and so the question becomes whether they're involving our families, whether they're involving our finances, whether they're involving even our culture, is do we render convictions and decisions based on what God said or based on what's the latest popular pragmatic opinion that's being propagated?

The last concession I want to show you is over in chapter 6 of 2 Samuel, a very famous story that we'll close with. David has won yet another battle. He is the king over all of the land. He is returning the ark of the covenant back to its rightful place. Interesting how things have come full circle by the time you get to chapter 6. Michal, his wife, Saul's daughter that was taken from him by Saul and pledged to another man, has been returned. The ark of the covenant has been returned. King David is king over all of the land. He begins to proceed with the ark of the covenant very gently into its new location and

David gets so excited about what God is doing, he actually breaks out of his Baptist mold and starts dancing. It's what he does. The Bible says he's in a linen ephod, he begins to dance, he begins to celebrate the goodness of God because the ark of the covenant has returned to its rightful place. He is on his rightful throne. Everything's going the way God said it would and should until you get to verse 20. It says,

20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said [by the way this is sarcasm that I'm reading], How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

Let me tell you what she's saying, "How dare you act that way!"

21 And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.
22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.
23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

Here's the last concession that I want to share with you this morning and this is the hardest one to speak of: sometimes, it happened in David's life, sometimes it happens in our life to have the convictions of God, to believe the Scriptures, to advocate them in our lives means the very people we love the most will turn their backs on us and we find ourselves all alone with the Lord.

You see, that's the concession that the enemy uses all the time. If you agree with this, if you believe what God said, you're gonna lose your friends. If you lose your friends over what God said, we have to question whether they were friends or not. You're gonna lose your relatives. Ask Job, it's not necessarily a bad problem at times. You're gonna lose your influence. You're gonna lose your income. You're gonna lose this. Interesting that today if you were to go to the Middle East to a place we commonly call Israel, in the oldest place of Jerusalem, they don't call it the city of Saul, do they? They don't call it the city of Abner. They don't call it the city of Ishbosheth. They call it the city of David. Oftentimes the hardest concession is being willing to lose the battle so that the Lord can win the war. If we're gonna subscribe to what Scripture says, sometimes that means we've got to walk the journey alone.