

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Nov. 20

MONDAY

Cushi finally came running up to the city gates. He, too, reported a great victory, and David again asked about Absalom's well-being. Cushi replied saying that he wished the same thing would happen to all of David's enemies that had happened to Absalom. David understood this (and understood it rightly) to mean that Absalom had been killed. He went into a nearby room and cried, saying that he would have rather died than to have his son die.

READ: II Samuel 18:31-33

David's mourning is somewhat misguided, for his concern for his son's well-being overshadowed all else. Absalom would have most likely killed David and all his family (ie. all David's other children). He would have turned the kingdom up-side down and possibly turned the hearts of the people away from the Lord by his own rejection of God's ways. As father, husband, and king, David had other things to consider. And on the scales of eternity, David's 'blind love' for Absalom was not a good thing. Love should never be blind. It must be sacrificial. It must be unconditional. But it must never cause us to lose sight of the eternal.

TUESDAY

David mourned loud and long for his son. The celebration over the victory on the battlefield turned into a time of mourning. David acted almost as if he had lost the battle. Joab heard of David's strong and public remorse.

READ: II Samuel 19:1-4

Time goes by and David's inappropriate and insatiable mourning for his rebel-son continues. It would be understandable for David's initial response to be one of unmitigated sorrow, but to prolong the passion for a longer time was unworthy and unwise. In Genesis, Jacob did the same thing with the loss of Joseph. Both Jacob and David should have resolved to leave their sorrow behind and move on. "How is that possible? The vacant spot in the family will always stay vacant," someone may say. True enough, but other seats are filled with the living; they are filled with people who need a father, husband, friend, or leader. God turns our mourning into joy as we trust Him to heal the broken heart and serve those who are in our daily lives.

WEDNESDAY

Joab immediately confronted David and scolded him for his behavior. He told him that people had risked their lives for David's sake and that by his behavior, David was degrading their sacrifices. He added that David would seemingly have preferred that his own loyal soldiers had died, and that Absalom, a very real enemy, had lived.

READ: II Samuel 19:5-6

Joab strongly rebukes David for his behavior. The point is that Joab put his neck on the line. He risked everything when he confronted David so forcefully, but counted his responsibility to his king to be greater than own safety. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that we, too, will not be called upon by God to risk relationship with others. There may be times when a Spirit-directed rebuke becomes necessary. There may be times when correction is more needful than affirmation. May God guide us to know when, and then empower us to act.

THURSDAY

Joab continued to talk to David about his attitude towards Absalom's death. He exhorted David to go out and meet his troops. He warned him that not to do so may result in another rebellion even more threatening than the first - more threatening because, having been treated with such disdain in putting down the rebellion of Absalom, no one would stand with him if there were another up-rising. King David responded by going to the city gate to meet his men. Word spread quickly that he was there, and all the people who had fled from him now came out once more to meet him.

READ: II Samuel 19:7-8

David's response here is the model for us when we are rightly rebuked and corrected. It is against the old nature struggling within us to react this way - we want to have it our way and come out in control. But God has established a standard beyond that! He wants us to profit and grow from correction - both His and others'. Responding in the right way is a big part of why David is called "a man after God's own heart". David wasn't always right, and some-times, as here, very wrong, but his heart was soft towards God's correction.

FRIDAY

David was still over on the east side of the Jordan River. The people back in the Jerusalem area were uneasy. Although Absalom, whom they by-and-large supported in his rebellion, is now dead, King David has not returned to the capital and re-claimed his throne. The consensus is that they must welcome King David back with great ceremony.

READ: II Samuel 19:9-10

David could have easily returned to Jerusalem at the head of his little (but growing) army. Any opposition all but disappeared when Absalom was killed. But he did not. He waited, apparently, for the day to come when the citizens would desire him to return rather than simply submit to it. David will return, not armed to the teeth, but to the outstretched arms of his adoring supporters. How much better to wait for God to bring this response about than to force it upon the people! We probably need to do some waiting for what God is doing in our lives, as well, and maybe do some waiting for His work in others. To walk ahead of God is never a good idea.

SATURDAY

David sent a message to the leaders in Jerusalem. He asked them why, when people in other regions of the country were so eager to see him back on the throne in Jerusalem, they themselves had not insisted that he return. David reminded them that they were all brothers, and that even Amasa was a brother. To drive home his point, he offered Amasa a place of leadership in his army. The result of all this was that the leaders invited him to return. He immediately started out, moving west to the river bank.

READ: II Samuel 19:11-15

David has to lead the way in building up enthusiasm for his own return! How great is the responsibility of leading and inspiring others! David knew that many would follow in a good thing, but would not initiate it themselves. And he knew that stirring them up was a good thing! What about you? Who do you know that could use some stirring up today? How is God allowing you to get things going in the lives of those around you?