

Times of Preparation and Testing: Five Seasons in David's Life

I. WHY WE SHOULD STUDY THE LIFE OF DAVID

- A. The life of David is a dramatic and inspiring story, with heroic virtue, scandal, power, etc. It is a must-read. The Bible tells us more about David's life than any other except Jesus.

*We want to look at five different seasons in the life of King David because David is called **the man after God's own heart** by God Himself. One can identify five cities in his life that relate to five very specific seasons, and each one of these seasons had particular tests in which David was to respond to God in the right way in the midst of those tests, and he did.*

*When I say that he responded in the right way, David had many failures that are recorded in the Bible. So I am not talking about a person who never had flaws or temptations or struggles or failures, but I am pointing to the fact that he kept coming back to full dedication. When he would stumble, he would rise back up. He would repent of his failure and stand with confidence in the presence of the Lord. God called him **the man after God's own heart**.*

- B. God called David "the man after God's heart." By studying David's life we learn what God is looking for and how David developed the "spiritual root system" in his secret history in God.

¹⁴The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart. (1 Sam. 13:14)

In 1 Samuel 13:14 it says, "The Lord sought for Himself a man after His own heart" The Lord was searching for David. We know that the eyes of the Lord search across the whole world, and God is still searching for His Davids. David was only a teenager in 1 Samuel 13 when God called him "a man after His own heart." When God called him, he was just a teenage boy, which means God was taking the dedication and commitment of a teenager very, very seriously. Sometimes we think God does not take our dedication seriously because we have weakness, and we have failure, and we have immaturity in our life, but the Lord does take it very seriously. The Lord named him this from the beginning, knowing that David would participate with Him to sustain that grace of God operating in his life for decade after decade.

It is one thing in the early days of our spiritual life to make these radical commitments. It is another thing to sustain those commitments through the grace of God and doing our part to participate in it. God knew David would sustain it by participating in the grace of God, doing his part. So the Lord named him that at the beginning of his journey. What a powerful name from the lips of God over a person that was still alive on the earth! It is not something God said after he died. It was while he was still living.

Now if I had to give you what I believe to be the core definition of what it means to be a man or a woman after God's heart, it would be that the primary vision of our life or the primary dream of our heart would be to walk out the first commandment—to love God with all of our heart. I believe that David in his youth determined that he was going to receive the love of God and return love back to God. The primary vision of David's heart, the primary dream, the thing that preoccupied him, I believe, in his inner life with God was, "I want to walk in the grace of God in this arena. I want to love You with all of my heart."

*It was Jesus who would later say after David, a thousand years after David, Jesus called loving God the first commandment, and He called it the great commandment. So Jesus added those two words, the **first** and the **great**, so we know loving God is the premium thing that God is after.*

I have three points here that being a man after God's own heart includes. David obeyed the commands of God's heart, David studied the emotions of God's heart, and David was contending for the full purpose of God in his generation. So I believe that having this vision to love God has these other components to it, such as that David searched out God's emotions. We find insight into God's heart all through the book of Psalms from the pen of David. He understood that God delights in His people. He saw the joy that is in God's personality. He saw the gladness. He saw the love, the affection, and the tenderness of God's emotion. David was a student of God's emotions.

1. To **obey the commands** of God's heart—setting our heart to fully obey God
2. To **study the emotions** of God's heart—cultivate an intimate relationship with God
3. To **contend for the purpose** of God's heart—to seek to the fullness of God's purpose in our generation. Find out what God is doing in your generation, and throw yourself into it.

³⁶***David...served the purpose of God in his own generation. (Acts 13:36, NASB)***

- C. God's eyes are searching the earth for something very specific: for people with a loyal heart.

⁹***For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. (2 Chr. 16:9)***

One hundred years after David died, the Lord was still searching. His eyes were searching to and fro across the earth for people who have loyal love to God. It says it here in 2 Chronicles 16. So it was not just a one-time deal when God sought for David or He sought for a man. He found David, but all through the generations of the human race God has been searching and looking for people that have that kind of heart response to Him, where the primary dream of their heart is to walk in the grace of God, to give their strength and all of their heart, all of their love to the Lord in relationship and to receive God's love back. It starts with receiving God's love and then responding by giving our love back to Him.

- D. David is a witness or model for obedience and faith. We can identify five key cites and seasons in his life and the specific tests related to each season.

⁴***Indeed I have given him [David] as a witness [model] to the people. (Isa. 55:4)***

In Isaiah 55:4, three hundred years after David died, the prophet Isaiah says that God still had the same opinion about David. Three hundred years later through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says, "I have given David as a witness, as a model, as a picture of how I want My people to respond." Could you imagine God declaring you to be a picture that He wanted multitudes of people to look at, to see how it is that God wants people to respond to Him? That is a pretty bold, big statement particularly because David's weaknesses are recorded in the Bible as well.

So we are not talking about a man who did not have failures. We are talking about a man who was resilient to return to that place of seeking to live in that dimension of the grace of God in his life. Again, he sustained it for decades. He faced his failures. He faced betrayal of friends. He faced disappointing circumstances and adversaries. He faced prosperity, promotion, and favor that can distract you from the love of God or from cultivating your walk with God, just as other things can as well. Favor itself often gets in the way when people get captured by the favor, and they do not spend the quality time they spent before developing and increasing their relationship with the Lord like they did in the early days of their spiritual life.

In this short teaching I have identified five cities that relate to five seasons in David's life. Each season had a series of tests. I will mention a little bit on each season, just a quick overview. Every one of these tests was different. They were designed to test this: would David stay true to the vision of his early days with the Lord, that he would be that man after God's own heart, that the first commandment would stay in first place, as Jesus called it the first commandment and the great commandment, that David would see that as a priority even over his assignment in God.

His assignment was to be king, but the dream of his heart was to be a lover of God and to give himself to God in relationship in a way that deeply moved God. Again, throughout the generations God has been searching for Davids, male and female, young and old, those who would respond in loyal love to Him.

II. BETHLEHEM (1 SAMUEL 16-17)

- A. ***The Bethlehem years*** (David's teen years): David was tested by rejection and by being faithful in the mundane. He found his identity in his relationship with God as he focused on understanding that God loved him, and on cultivating his love for God. His sense of success was found in his relationship with God and in being faithful in small things. David had to overcome rejection by his family in this season (1 Sam. 16:7-11).

¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these."¹¹ And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep"...¹² He sent and brought him in...and the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (1 Sam. 16:10-13)

¹⁰ When my father and my mother forsake me...the LORD will take care of me. (Ps. 27:10)

¹¹ My loved ones and my friends stand aloof...my relatives stand afar off. (Ps. 38:11)

Let's begin in 1 Samuel 16, which is the first scene or episode of David's life that we see in the Bible. David is in his teen years, and he lives in the city of Bethlehem. The context here is that God tells the famous prophet Samuel to go to Bethlehem, this little rural town where nothing exciting ever happened. It was just a little rural town. Undoubtedly it was a sleepy town, probably a few hundred people in the little village.

God tells the famous prophet, the great prophet Samuel, the greatest prophet in the earth in that generation, to go to that little town to Jesse's house and pray for one of his sons and anoint him to be king of Israel. Jesse has eight sons, and Samuel the prophet is told by the Lord to go to Jesse's house. I assume he does not even know who Jesse is.

So Samuel comes to the town. You can read the details in 1 Samuel 16 on your own. The elders of Bethlehem are afraid. It says they are trembling. They are thinking, "Oh my goodness, this must be trouble!" I mean when the great prophet comes to your town, and you did not invite him, but he came because God sent him, there must be trouble brewing here somewhere. So the elders asked, "Is everything okay? Did we do something wrong?"

He says, "Well, yeah, everything is okay." Then he asks, "Who is Jesse? Tell me where he lives."

"Well, he lives over there."

"He has some sons, right?"

They say, "Oh yeah! He has a whole lot of sons."

*Samuel goes and calls on Jesse. He says, "I want to have a meal and spend time with your family. I am going to pray for your children. Bring all of your sons together." In verse 10 we pick up on this. It says that Jesse made the seven of his sons pass before Samuel. The problem is that Jesse had **eight** sons, but he only has **seven** of the sons come to the dinner. I mean this is the greatest event that ever happened to Bethlehem back in the Old Testament days, this visit of Samuel to the house of Jesse. It is the most important event that ever happened in Jesse's family. Yet when Samuel said to call his sons, he leaves the youngest, the eighth one, little Davey, out in the field to tend the sheep. He does not even invite him to the family dinner at the most important moment in their family's history!*

Well, in the little town of Bethlehem, this little rural town, David is going to be tested by rejection. What I mean by tested is that his primary vision to receive the love of God and respond in loving God with all of his heart will be tested. Is his primary vision going to stay focused on that in the midst of rejection? Or is he going to allow rejection to change the whole way that he carries his heart on the inside?

What happens is that people get so consumed by rejection, even people who love Jesus. In terms of their thinking and their imagination, they get captured by the person who is against them. We find out David stayed locked into the primary vision of his heart even in the midst of rejection. He did not get off course.

The other thing that is happening in this season of David's life in the Bethlehem years—I call it the Bethlehem years—is that David is being tested by small, mundane duties. Is he going to be faithful in the midst of the mundane and the routine? Will the mundane and the routine, just doing menial tasks, take him away from his primary life vision to be one that loves God with all of his heart and all of his strength and all his mind?

For a lot of believers, the sheer boredom of the routine and mundaneness of life sets in and actually affects their relationship with the Lord. They just cannot find anything that excites them, so they go into the coasting mode. Because their life seems a bit boring, their relationship with God sets into a tone of boredom, and they do not press in anymore. They are waiting for a great revival or a great miracle or something exciting or a big assignment in God that will draw a lot of attention or will seem really important. They are waiting and waiting for something exciting and big to happen, and their walk with God actually settles into a place of spiritual dullness.

We find out that David stayed true to what his life vision in the midst of those testings, and he had several others in the Bethlehem years. A lot of people are not really aware that David experienced rejection. He was rejected, but the spirit of rejection did not get into his emotions. He had many reject him, but he stayed preoccupied with the Lord. He managed the rejection, stewarded it, and responded in a way where he actually grew in his walk with God, instead of the rejection from people becoming a root of bitterness and preoccupying him on the inside of his life.

It might surprise some of you that David experienced rejection in his youth from his family, from his brothers, and that he experienced rejection all through his twenties, his thirties, his forties. There was never a season in his life, a prolonged season, where he did not have people unjustly attacking him, criticizing him, betraying him. I mean, when you read the book of Psalms, you see it happened all through his life. It was not "one rough summer," you know, in his teen years where it was a tough time. It went all the way through his life! One of the miracles of David's life and heart is how that did not get into his internal conversation with God in a way where it shifted his heart. I believe that rejection is probably the most painful human emotion. I would say that failure in our walk with God and rejection from people would be the emotions most painful to feel. David somehow used that kind of pressure actually to strengthen himself in his dialogue with the Lord.

Instead of wallowing in the pain of the rejection, the only place David could get comfort was by talking to the Lord. "Lord, You love me, and I love You, and my life vision is to love You, to be consumed with who You are and giving myself to You." God loves me, I love God; therefore, I am already successful. Beloved, the fact that God loves you and the fact that you have set your heart to love Him back in the primary sense of the word means you are already successful in life, in the primary way, from God's point of view.

Now there are the secondary ways we want to be successful in our life, such as in our circumstances, and in our assignment in the Lord. We want to be successful, but those are secondary from God's point of view. The very fact that the God of Genesis 1 loves you, and the grace of God has touched you, and you have responded to love Him back with all of your strength, beloved, that already sets you in a category apart. There are about a billion believers through history and on the earth today that live that way, and you and they are the successful ones of the human race from God's point of view. This is not to devalue the secondary arenas of our life, our assignment in God or other areas we want success in, but that is not the primary success of our life. We can have setbacks in those secondary areas, yet still have primary success in our life. That is what David knew, and that is what David was captured by.

Let's go look at verse 10 again. Jesse brings seven of his sons and makes them all pass before Samuel. The prophet is going to pray for them, one by one. As Samuel looks at each one of them, the Lord whispers, "This is not the one that I have chosen to be king." He goes through all seven. The oldest one, he is not it. The second oldest, he is not it. The third oldest, he is not it. He goes through all seven. He says to David's father Jesse, "None of these are the chosen one I came to pray and prophecy over." So in verse 11, the prophet Samuel says to Jesse, "Are all of your sons here? I mean, is somebody not here?"

Jesse says, "Well, technically there is still one, the youngest. There he is." Now notice the phrase, there he is, meaning that while they were having this meal together, they could see David taking care of the sheep just right down the way. So now they go whistle, "Hey David, come here!" I mean he was within the sight of the family there. David is watching them have the great meal, and he is left to tend the sheep.

The tending of the sheep is something that any teenage boy could have done. It was a menial task. In our context today it was like mowing the lawn when the greatest prophet in the earth is visiting. He is having dinner at your house, and he wants to prophecy over the family, but the family does not invite you at all. They say, "Would you mow the lawn while the great prophet is having dinner with us?"

I mean, hey Dad, can I mow the lawn tomorrow? "Can we get one of the neighbors to tend the sheep just for an hour or two?"

"No, no. You just stay locked in, and you stay focused, and we will talk to the prophet."

*Well, they finally bring David up, and God says to Samuel the prophet, "That is the man there." I don't want you just to see the anointing that happens on David on this day. I want you to see that **David was actually tested by the rejection of his family**. There are half a dozen verses that make this really clear in other places. He was really rejected by his family on a number of occasions and by his friends and leaders throughout his life. I do not mean all of them, but plenty of them. It was really an issue that he had to talk to God about. The reason I say that is that probably every one of us in this room is tested by that at times in our life, in very painful ways, by those that are near and dear to us or those whom we want to include us in something, but they do not want to include us, and we know that feeling.*

The enemy wants that feeling, that pain, to turn into a root of bitterness. He wants us to be consumed by that so we are not staying locked in to what our primary vision is, which is to be a lover of God, to love Him with all of our heart and with all of our strength.

- B. David was faithful to serve behind the scenes in mundane ways. He was responsible with small details like keeping the sheep and leaving his supplies in good hands (1 Sam. 16:10-11; 17:22).

III. GIBEAH (1 SAMUEL 18-20)

- A. **The Gibeah years** (from about age 18 to 22): David was tested by early success and popularity. After killing Goliath, he was promoted to national prominence. He married King Saul's daughter, moved into the royal court in Gibeah, and was celebrated by all Israel.

²***Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore...***

⁵***And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people.***
(1 Sam. 18:2-5)

After this time of anointing, when David is still in his teen years, probably seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, something like that, there is a great crisis that happens in the land, and it is the Goliath crisis. We all know the story of David and Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17, David is still living in Bethlehem, and the news is out that there is war. The Philistines, which is the nation right next to them, are attacking Israel. David is still a boy at home, and David's father, Jesse, says, "I would like you to run an errand and bring some food to your brothers who are in the military. There is a battle down the way, and they are drawing up the battle lines. That battle may go on for a while. Would you bring them some supplies and some food from home and tell your brothers that Dad loves them?"

So David is running an errand for his dad. He goes to the camp of Israel, the military camp, and he sees across the valley. One side of the valley is Israel's army, and the other side of the valley is the Philistines. The Philistines have a champion, Goliath. He is about almost ten feet tall, he comes down to the middle of the valley, and he challenges Israel. He says, "Israel, I defy your God! I defy the God of Israel! Send your champion down here, and let me go to war with him."

Whoever wins, it is like winner take all. The two champions would have a fight to the death, and the one that stands, his army is victorious, and the other army is defeated. Now that is a little bit odd to us because we think if two guys fight to the death, well, you know, we and the other armies are spectators. The unspoken idea is the God who exerts His power on behalf of the champion is the God who is going to defeat the army of the one that lost in that dual.

So the Philistines thought if their god showed himself in power and Goliath defeated the champion of Israel, then that means the god of the Philistines would triumph over the armies of Israel. If the champion of Israel beats our champion, then that means the God of Israel is exerting His power, so we better flee, we better get out of here. So it is a different view of a battle than we would have today in modern times.

So David goes to the battle camp, and he hears, as you know, the challenge. So David goes down there, and he kills Goliath, and in a moment's time this teenage boy—eighteen, nineteen, possible twenty years old when this happens—this teenage boy is the most spoken-about person in all of Israel. He is on the cover of every magazine. He is on the front page of every newspaper in the nation.

Gibeah is the city where the king Saul lived. It was the place for his military headquarters was there. It was his political capitol, Gibeah. So David kills Goliath, and Saul says, "Well, here is the new arrangement because you killed the enemy. Number one, you will marry my daughter, so you are now my son-in-law. Number two, you will move to the capitol, to Gibeah, and you will live in the royal court with me as my son-in-law. I will

make you a commander of the army. I will put you in the government.” In one day, so much changed in one day. The whole nation was talking about this young man.

So in this second city we see his second season, in this city of Gibeah. He is in the capitol, the political and military capitol where King Saul lives. David now lives in the capitol. I mean he moved from little Bethlehem to Washington D.C., and he now lives in the White House. Not only that, the whole nation is talking about him, singing his praise. In one day things shifted from mundane, routine, rejected David in the little town of Bethlehem to here he is, in the nation's capitol. He is a military hero, and everybody is singing his praises. He was accepted by everyone.

Now what was happening is that God was testing David with early favor in his life. What God was testing was this: would this promotion, this favor, and this new popularity—this increase of prominence—would it pull him away from his primary life vision? Would you get so distracted by all the new opportunities that you would no longer have the time to make your relationship with God the priority it was, which you committed to in the early days of your spiritual life?

We find that in the midst of this instant increase of favor David maintains his relationship with the Lord. Beloved, you can love the Lord, but in the season of favor your relationship with the Lord, though you love Him and value Him, your actual relationship with Him can go into second place. You are just too busy. The blessing of God is increasing, a lot of folks are looking my way, a lot of open doors, a lot of folks want my involvement in things, and it is the blessing of God. It was the blessing of God, but it was also a test to see if that blessing would shift him from his primary life vision.

- B. Early promotion can be part of one's preparation for future destiny. In this season some become too busy with the new opportunities and are distracted from their relationship with God.

²¹The crucible [is] for silver...but man is tested by the praise he receives. (Prov. 27:21, NIV)

It says in Proverbs 27:21 that man is tested by the praise that he receives. When you receive praise, or you receive favor, or you receive increase, will you leave your vision, the primary vision that you established in those early days of your spiritual life? Will you leave it because you are so preoccupied by the favor and all the new opportunities? The problem is that favor always brings attention, I mean a lot of undo attention. It brings more enemies with it as well. Now we know this from history, and it is obvious that popularity is only temporary. You can see what happens with the great athletes, the great movie stars, the great politicians, the great reformers; they are popular for a season. They may be well known all their life, but they only have popularity and favor for a season, and then that season passes—sometimes it is months, sometimes it is years—but it always does pass.

When people have a season of favor often they imagine it is the new way and that it will be this way for the rest of their life. Though it is the blessing of God—the favor is—there is a test in the midst of the blessing. Will you be more preoccupied, be more focused on and preoccupied with the favor? Will your walk with God become secondary?

In the Gibeah years I believe David proved himself faithful, even in the midst of unusual national prominence. You don't have to have national prominence and live in the White House for this test to be real. Maybe it is a very small promotion, but in context to your life it is a big one. Maybe nobody else knows about it, but now you are the leader of the group or you are promoted to a new place in the marketplace or a new place of favor on the team or whatever it is. With that favor comes responsibility, and with that comes pressures and temptations for our relationship with God, for that time we had for Jesus to be lost and taken away. We love Him, but we do not have the same dialogue with Him that we had in earlier times.

IV. ADULLAM (1 SAMUEL 21-31)

- A. **The Adullam years** (from about age 23 to 30): David was tested by adversity in the wilderness for about seven years as King Saul and 3,000 soldiers sought to kill him. The Lord was training David to be Israel's great warrior king. When God raises up a "David," He trains them in the "seminary of Saul" by using a demonized leader to mistreat them.

¹David...escaped to the cave of Adullam...²Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him. (1 Sam. 22:1-2)

The third city that I want to highlight is Adullam. David now is moving suddenly. Then his national favor and "everything-going-right" suddenly turns, overnight. The powerful King Saul who is his father-in-law, who is his boss—David works in the government, he works in the army with his father-in-law, he eats at the table with him every day—his father-in-law now is enraged with jealousy towards him because so much favor is on him. Saul gets angry and jealous, and he determines that it is best for the nation that he kill his young son-in-law. He tries to kill him because he figures David is going to have an uprising and it is not going to be good for the nation. I imagine that Saul rationalized it some way like that.

Well, this thing escalates, and Saul the king gets 3,000 soldiers whom he dedicates to searching out David. David escapes when he sees this. He says, "Uh oh, this is dangerous!" He leaves Gibeah, and he escapes. It says in 1 Samuel 22 that he escaped to the cave of Adullam.

Adullam is a city, and it had caves nearby in the foothills. The caves made a hideaway place, so he escapes. Now escaping is a new idea to David. He is used to favor, but now he is escaping. He loses his wife by leaving Gibeah the capitol, he loses his job, he loses his friends, and he loses his status in the nation. The report is out that he has a treacherous heart against the king, that he wants to take the king's role, and that he wants to usurp the king's position.

Suddenly overnight David is a fugitive; he is a criminal of the state. Now this Adullam season—he is not always in the cave of Adullam as there are many caves that he is hiding in as these 3,000 soldiers are chasing him from cave to cave to cave to cave—this season goes on approximately seven years. We do not know exactly the amount—six, seven, eight years, meaning it is not a summer or a semester where some people get mad at him. This goes on for six, seven years.

So David is about age twenty-three to about age thirty in this season. He has these amazing promises that he is going to be king over the nation, but now he is a fugitive and a criminal of the state. The whole reputation of David in the nation has shifted because the king has undoubtedly put the word out that David is wanting to usurp and divide the government to take over, and that this is treachery, a very evil and dangerous thing to happen to our precious nation of Israel.

So David is running from cave to cave for seven years with 3,000 men chasing him. Now he does not have 3,000 blogs written against him; he has 3,000 soldiers with weapons. What I mean is that some folks say, "Man, we are really being attacked ... I am really being hit by this or attacked by that in the marketplace or in ministry, even people are on Facebook are against me. I am like David. This is so hard to bear!"

I reply, "Well, you know, I understand rejection. It never feels good to be maligned. But I would not exactly put you in the David category exactly just yet, with a few blogs against you. I think David's situation was a little more intense. I mean when they start bringing knives and guns in their pursuit of you, and not just words and emails, then I think the thing is going to escalate to another level!"

Now the big picture of what is happening in David's life is that God has called David to be the great warrior king of Israel. As a warrior king he has to know the land, right? In fact, as a great warrior king, he was the greatest warrior king in Israel's history. If he is going to fight the other armies that attack Israel, he needs to know the geography of the land.

So years later, after David becomes king, he is sitting around with the military high command, and they got the maps on the wall. They say, "The Philistines are coming this way."

David says, "Ah, here is what we will do. We will go right, then we will go left, we will go over here, because I know there is a water source in that cave, and there is a little valley that you cannot hardly find. It is really small, and we can attack this way. The way the sun rises, it will be blinding if we are in this position and the enemy is in that position."

His commanders are saying, "How do you know all of this?"

He answers, "Oh, I hid in that cave, I know how the sun works there. I know of where the water is, and I know where the food is, and I know where the animals are. I lived there for seven years, from cave to cave."

Here is the point, when God was training up a great warrior king in Israel, He could put David in geography class or He could put David in the land. He says, "I think I will put you in the land, David. The reason you will know where the caves are—you are going to go live in them. I am going to train you at the heart level, but I am also going to give you insight and skill as a warrior how to do this."

So God is raising you up as a warrior, He could send you to warrior class or the warrior conference. You know what He is going to do? He is going to put you in the land. That is what He is going to do. You are going to find out how to defeat the enemy by actually doing it. He is going to train your hands for war, not just in a classroom, but actually in the land itself. That is what God does.

Now it is always interesting to me that when God is raising up a David, He uses the seminary of Saul to raise them up. I mean Saul is a demonized king! I hear young people say, "I want to be a David." I love it. I want them to say it.

But I say, "You do realize not only was David raised up in favor and blessed circumstances and everybody liking him and everything going well, but he was also raised up in the seminary of a demonized king who chased him for seven years?"

"Oh, I do not think I want to be that kind of David. I want to be powerful, anointed, have everybody like me, and have only a few little challenges, but I do not want too many, I just want to be David—the other version of David, the one that is not in the Bible."

- B. Notice that 1 Samuel describes how a young David was mistreated by an older, jealous leader—King Saul, while 2 Samuel describes how an elderly David was attacked by a young, ambitious leader—Absalom. Nobody could stop God's will in his life but David—not Saul, not the Philistines, nor any other.

V. **HEBRON (2 SAMUEL 2-5)**

The Hebron years (from age 30 to 37): David was tested by receiving only a partial fulfillment of the promises for which he had long labored and waited. In Hebron, he was king over the tribe of Judah. This was only one of the 12 tribes that God had promised him about 13 years earlier.

¹David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “Where shall I go up?” And He said, “To Hebron.” (2 Sam. 2:1)

Suddenly King Saul dies. David is thirty years old, and suddenly now the season shifts again. After King Saul dies, David moves to the city of Hebron. Instead of running from cave to cave, he is now living in Hebron. This is a very interesting test. This Hebron season is very important because in Hebron David is tested in a very different way; he is being tested by receiving only the partial fulfillment of what God promised him. What do I mean by that? God promised David he would have authority over all twelve tribes of Israel, all twelve tribes. When he goes to Hebron, he ends up ruling over only one tribe, the tribe of Judah.

David goes to Hebron because the Lord told him to go there, and he lives there instead of going to Gibeah, the capitol. He is only going to be over one-twelfth of the tribes that God promised him. One-twelfth of the authority is what he is going to walk in for the next seven years from age thirty to thirty-seven. Now the reason this is so remarkable to me, this test that he passes it so well, well, let's just read it here in 2 Samuel 2. David inquires of the Lord, which means he prays. He asks the question because Saul just died. While Saul's younger son, Ish-Bosheth, still lived and could be considered the physical heir of Saul, he was not a warrior like David. All the leaders of Israel knew that David had been anointed by Samuel as God's next choice for king over Israel 2 Sam 3:17 so David could have easily have taken the kingship after Saul if he would have gone to Gibeah.

One might say, “It is obvious, David. You've been going from cave to cave, and now you are living in Ziklag. So just go to Gibeah.” Move into the White House. Go to Washington D.C.; do not go move to Chicago or some other city. Just go to Washington D.C.

David says, “Okay, God, all the obstacles are gone, and everything that would hinder me is out of the way. Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?”

Now the normal question should have been, “Should I just go to Gibeah? Should I go to Washington D.C. and move into the White House?” That would be the normal question that we would ask. David asks, “Is there another city You want?”

I can imagine David's buddies, the guys that have with him out in the wilderness, they are saying, “What? Do **not** ask a question like that! David, that is obvious. Of course God wants you to go to Gibeah. Totally He does. Why wouldn't He want you to go to Gibeah? He already told you that you are going to be the king over all twelve tribes.”

David says, “Yeah, I know I will be, but what if that is ten years from now? I mean, what if it is not now?”

They say, “What do you mean, what if it is not now? The evil king is dead, and you were anointed by Samuel. What are you talking about?”

So David says, “Lord, where shall I go up?”

God says, “Just go to Hebron,” which means “only be over one of the twelve tribes for now.”

David says, “That works for me.” Because, you see, the dream of David's heart was to love God with all of his strength and to obey Him with loyal love. David's dream was not to be king. That was his assignment. He never cared about the kingship. He cared about his relationship with the Lord most. He was king because it was pleasing to God.

Now his men had a little different story, I just do not think they liked this. Maybe they thought, “David, you go talk to God on your own. I mean, come on! You know our jobs are related to your promotion, so let's get with it.”

Well, for seven years he is content to worship God and obey Him in Gibeah. Over only one-twelfth of the sphere of authority that God promised. That is a remarkable reality. A lot of folks do not think of this. They love God, but don't understand that every good opportunity is not an opportunity that is God's best for your life. Even though the Lord allows the opportunity, the Lord says, "I am testing you. Will you maintain Me as your number one goal in your life, or will this opportunity make Me second in terms of the way you carry your heart?"

VI. JERUSALEM (2 SAMUEL 6-24)

The Jerusalem years (from age 37 to 70): David was tested by the pressures related to walking in the fullness of the promises, blessings, influence, and prosperity that he received. David's season of greatest blessing was also his most dangerous season, spiritually speaking. David's greatest failures are recorded in Scripture during this season of his life.

¹¹Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments...¹²lest—when you have...built beautiful houses...¹³and your silver and your gold are multiplied...¹⁴when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD... (Deut. 8:11-14)

I will end with just one minute on this because not too many here are in the Jerusalem season of their life. This is when the fullness of the promises is taking place in his life, in the Jerusalem years. This is when everything that God promised all comes to happen in David's life. Here is the paradox of the Jerusalem years—because everybody wants to be in the Jerusalem years. Everyone wants to be where everything that is promised happens. Well the blessing does come—but the Jerusalem years, are actually the most spiritual dangerous time in David's life because, with the increase of favor and responsibility, the attack of the enemy is greater. It is like one preacher said, "New levels, new devils." New levels of favor bring new devils attacking you. The temptations are greater, the pressures are greater, and the enemies are greater. There is much more danger in the place of full blessing.

*A lot of folks do not really do the math on that. When you read the life of David, actually his greatest failures were during the Jerusalem years. You may wonder, if he had failures in Jerusalem, then why those other four seasons? Because I think his failures in Jerusalem would have been ten-fold more **if** he had **not** been trained and prepared through those seasons of testing. I believe his failures in Jerusalem were minimal compared to what they would have been if God would not have strategically held his hand and tested him in each season, tested him with rejection, tested with mundaneness, tested him with temporary early favor and success, tested him with adversary, tested him with partial promises.*

In each one of those seasons, as God holds his hand and is with him, David is realigning himself to be the lover of God with all of his heart. So then in the Jerusalem hour, though he did have some stumbling, I believe it would have been ten-fold greater if he had not had those years of preparation.

So different ones of you are in different seasons. Some of you say, "Well, I think I am in Bethlehem."

Others, "I know I am in Adullam."

Another, "Maybe I have got one toe in Hebron, maybe one-twelfth of my inheritance."

Still others, "I do not know where I am at...I am in a couple of cities at one time." That is okay. It does not overly matter that you can define in which of these seasons you are, because you might be in a couple of seasons at the same time.

What matters is that you understand the test. You understand that God's agenda for you in that season, in any season, is to keep the vision to be the wholehearted lover of God with all of your strength and all of your mind.

That stays primary. Your assignment, your blessing, or even your pressure is secondary; that is what the test is all about.

Amen and amen, let's stand. I want to invite folks all across the room. We are going to take just a few moments, just sixty seconds. I would like you to close your eyes for just a moment so we are not distracted. This is a time for us to say, "Lord, I want to make the first commandment—loving You with all of my heart—I want to reestablish that as first in my life. I want to realign my heart."

Beloved, we have to realign a thousand times a thousand on this subject. I have to constantly, over the years, realign my heart to that vision. Just take a moment and talk to Him. Say, "Lord, I want to do that. I want to be like David. I do not want to be lost in the mundaneness or the adversarial relationships or in the setbacks or in the promotions. I do not want to be lost, meaning I do not want to lose my relationship with You, the freshness of it, the tenderness of it."