

4th Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Home!¹

Prepare the Lesson: Be prepared to share the video for the Information section: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/2-samuel/>. Before the session, invite class members to have paper and pens/markers for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship question: (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion, and to lead into the study):

How many houses have you lived in?

When my schedule settles down and I have time to catch my breath, I like to _____.

Information

In today's Bible story, the King of Israel, King David, finally has some time to himself. After years of serving in a king's court, then becoming a military leader, then marrying four wives, then running from the king, then becoming the king himself – David had a very busy life – he finally had a little time to rest and to reflect.

Let's watch this video that sums up David's life.

[Show the 6-minute video about 2 Samuel from The Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/2-samuel/>]

This video gives us the entire picture of David's adult life. For today's lesson, we will focus on chapter 7.

“[This chapter] occupies the dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus. Indeed, this is one of the most crucial texts for evangelical faith.”²

Have a class member read 2 Samuel 7:1-3.

Someone has said, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” Often, though, our lives are so busy or so complicated or so full, we don't make the time to ponder “the main thing.”

¹ This lesson is copyrighted by Dr. Rick Jordan, Great Bible Teachers, Inc, 2025. More lessons may be found at greatbibleteachers.com.

² Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 253.

Some people, however, have carved out times in the day or during a week for “nothing time.” There are no appointments or errands during this time. It is a period of silence and reflection. Do you have an intentional time for silence and reflection? How does that affect you? Or, if you do not, how do you think that might affect your spirit?

King David has a chance to catch his breath and reflect on his life. He has everything he needs and anything he could possibly want. As he considers his blessings, he surely remembers the Source of these blessings. What is it that David seems to have in mind? What do you think are his motivations?

“The old theological assumptions in Israel did not easily apply to David’s new urban foundation. Thus a different expression of legitimacy was required. The obvious answer to the problem of legitimacy characteristic of every ruler in the ancient world is to build a temple. Give God a permanent residence that will solidify the regime.... Temple building is undoubtedly a mixed act of genuine piety and self-serving legitimation.”³

The prophet Nathan endorses the spirit of David’s idea. But God says, “Not so quick...”

Have a class member read 2 Samuel 7:4-7.

What emotional tone do you feel God has in this rebuttal? Is God angry? Is God smiling?

What is illogical about David’s plan, according to God?

There are at least two dangers that make building a house for God a bad idea:

1. The temptation to attempt to manipulate God
2. The temptation to focus on the good but not the best that God wants of us.

“In principle a temple lives in tension with the ark. Whereas the ark articulates God’s freedom and mobility, the temple removes the danger and possibility that God might depart.... Yahweh will not be bought off, controlled, or domesticated by such luxury. Yahweh has been a free God and will continue to be. The royal apparatus is not able to make Yahweh its patron.”⁴

“Why would a prophet of God discourage well-intentioned work for God?... Why would anyone say no to an obviously God-blessed, God-ardent David?...[T]here are times when our grand human plans to do something for God are seen, after a night of prayer, to be a human distraction from what God is doing for us. That’s what Nathan realized that night: God showed Nathan that David’s building plans for God would interfere with God’s building plans for David.”⁵

³ Bruegemann, 254.

⁴ Bruegemann, 254.

⁵ Peterson, 160.

We sometimes call a church building “God’s house.” What is good about that phrase? What is not good?

The message of God to Nathan continues.

- Have a class member read 2 Samuel 7:8-11.

Count the times in verses 8-11 that God says “I (did or will do)”. How many are there? What are the “I _____” phrases? What is God’s point? (or points?)

“God is the first-person subject of twenty-three verbs in this message, and these verbs carry the action.”⁶

“David is given no credit and assigned no merit in this recital. David’s preeminence and power are all Yahweh’s doing.”⁷

Look back at verse 2. Does David say he is going to build a house for God? What does he say? What do you think was bothering him when he compared his house to God’s tent?

David has a magnificent house. Yet, in verse 11, God says to David, “the LORD will make you a house.” But God meant something more than a literal house.

“It is readily apparent that this chapter relies on a word play, involving the variant meanings of a single word, to convey its central theme. The common Hebrew noun (*bayit*) can, depending on context, mean ‘house,’ ‘dwelling,’ ‘place,’ ‘temple,’ or ‘dynasty.’ All of these meanings may play a role in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, but the crucial theological focus is on the relationship between temple and dynasty.”⁸

Have a class member read 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

Up to this point in Israel’s history and theology, God has made covenants with a people. Suddenly, God is now amending that plan of salvation and is now covenanting with one person, David. This is the turning point of the Old Testament.

“2 Samuel 7:14-16 offers the most extraordinary language to legitimate the fresh departure in theology and politics. The lead sentence of v.14 establishes a relation of God and king as father and son. The royal claim has now preempted Israel’s son status (cf. Exod. 4:22 [Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son’]; Hosea 11:1 [When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son]), so

⁶ Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over A Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 161.

⁷ Bruegemann, 255.

⁸ Bruce C. Birch, *1 and 2 Samuel*, The New Interpreters Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 1254.

that the son is now king and not Israel. The community is reduced to the king. The claims of the tribal confederation are now transferred to the state.”⁹

“The overriding ‘if’ of covenant faith has been abolished (cf. Exod. 19:5 [If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.]). Now this linkage is at bottom unconditional. There is, so it is claimed, no circumstance that will cause Yahweh to pull away from David and David’s family.... All the hopes and fears of Israel are met in David, and nowhere else!”¹⁰

“The promise to David does not remove the ‘if’ of moral demand that we associate with God’s covenant given to Israel at Sinai. Even kings may be chastised and made to suffer the consequences of their sins. This promise, however, does encompass the ‘if’ in a divine commitment that endures in spite of sin. God’s grace provides a bedrock of hope even in the midst of sin’s consequences.”¹¹

Compare the person who has an image of God saying, “I’ll stay with you IF...” to that of a person whose God says, “I will stay with you forever, no matter what.”

Did God keep his covenant? As we approach Christmas, we look forward to the time when we celebrate “God is with us!” (That is the translation of the name, Immanuel.)

- Have a class member read Luke 2:4-5.

Joseph was “from the house and family of David.” Jesus was soon to be the newest of David’s household.

Transformative Exercise

Draw an outline of your house, or where you currently live. It does not need to be a professional architectural rendering. You may draw as if you were a child again. Two walls, a roof, a chimney. Add a door and windows, if you like, and whatever else you’d like to add.

This drawing represents your “house”. We know that a family or a home is more than sticks and nails and bricks and mortar. A “house” is an identity and a heritage. There is love and there is promise.

God gave David a promise. “I will be with your house forever.” Use those words to create a cover (like a rainbow) or to surround (in a circle) the house you’ve drawn, as we sit in silence.

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *David’s Truth: In Israel’s Imagination and Memory* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 76.

¹⁰ Brueggemann, *David’s Truth*, 77.

¹¹ Birch, 1258.

After a period of silence and after everyone is finished, lead in a prayer something like this: *God, we thank you that you've said you will never leave us nor forsake us. We trust in you and in that covenant. Amen.*