



The Crown: Week 5

Enter The Unfit King

Big Idea: When apathy and ambition take over our lives it becomes impossible to live for God's kingdom.

Read the Bible:
2 Samuel 13-18

STUDY

*** Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. ***

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



Summary

In general, sin brings about two kinds of repercussions: spiritual guilt and earthly consequences. We saw how God removed the spiritual guilt that David's sin had brought when he put David's sin away. Despite God's grace and forgiveness, he did not remove the earthly consequences of David's sin. As life past David's moral failure moves on, the fall out ensues.

It starts with a horrible family dispute. David's son Amnon rapes his sister Tamar. In retribution, Absalom another of David's son kills Amnon and flees in exile. Through some political maneuvering, Absalom is eventually brought back into Jerusalem and has his relationship restored with David. However, that is just the beginning of this story.

Absalom is an ambitious young man. The young prince clearly believes that his father mishandled the situation with Amnon and Tamar and perhaps he is past his prime. So, Absalom begins a plot to take the throne for himself. He situates himself before the people as the king who would listen to their problems. He plots to gain the political power of the advisors, priests, and military commanders. Then, when the time is right, he makes a move for David's throne.

Where is David when Absalom is executing this hostile takeover? Great question. The biblical picture is of a king who is checked out. David has every opportunity to handle this fall out better. He could have corrected Amnon. He could have defended Tamar. He could have gone after Absalom. He could have corrected Absalom's overreach. Instead, he does nothing.

See the contrasting narrative. Absalom is ruled by ambition. David is ruled by apathy. Neither is living for God's kingdom. The result is devastating.

David ends up fleeing Jerusalem as he runs for his life. Only to have his resolve strengthened enough to ultimately turn and fight just before all was lost. Absalom is ultimately killed in battle. David's kingdom is saved at the expense of his family.

While this is a soap opera of a story we need to understand just where we fit in. We are Absalom ruled by ambition trying to build our kingdom instead of God's. We are David often checked out and ruled by apathy when we are meant to be pursuing God's kingdom. Ultimately what we see is that David, Absalom, and all of us need a Savior to save us from the never-ending fallout of sin.



Major Lessons

1. Ambition and apathy are both sins if they keep us from living for God's kingdom.

We live in a world that is bent toward ambition. We all want to advance ourselves and promote ourselves. We even have pages dedicated to that task now on social media. While ambition can sometimes be a good thing, when it leads us to lead for ourselves instead of God it is a sin that must be sleighed.

Luke 9:23: ²³ Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Apathy can keep us from living for the kingdom of God. When we decide to check out instead of pursue God's plan, the world can literally begin to crumble around us. Adam in the garden is the perfect example. While Eve is being tempted, where is he? With her. Checked out. Apathy leads to pain.

Ephesians 5:14-16

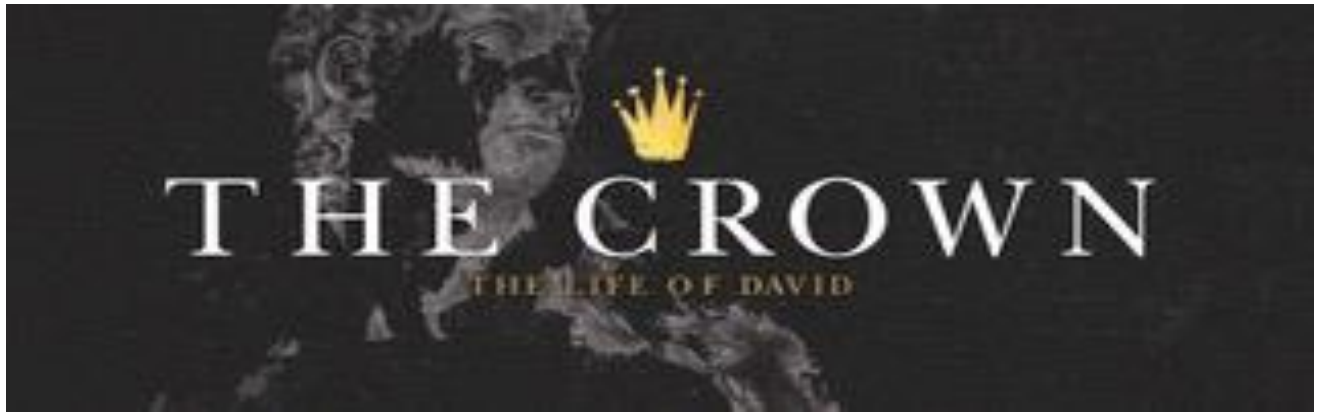
14 Wake up from your sleep, climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light!

15 So watch your step. Use your head.

16 Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!

2. We need a savior to step into our mess.

The most obvious conclusion from this story is that we live in a broken world, and we need a savior to come and clean up our mess. Praise God that even as our world is broken and messy, Jesus Christ is coming to make all things right, soon.



Leading Your Group

Community Time – Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

Bible Study

Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting.

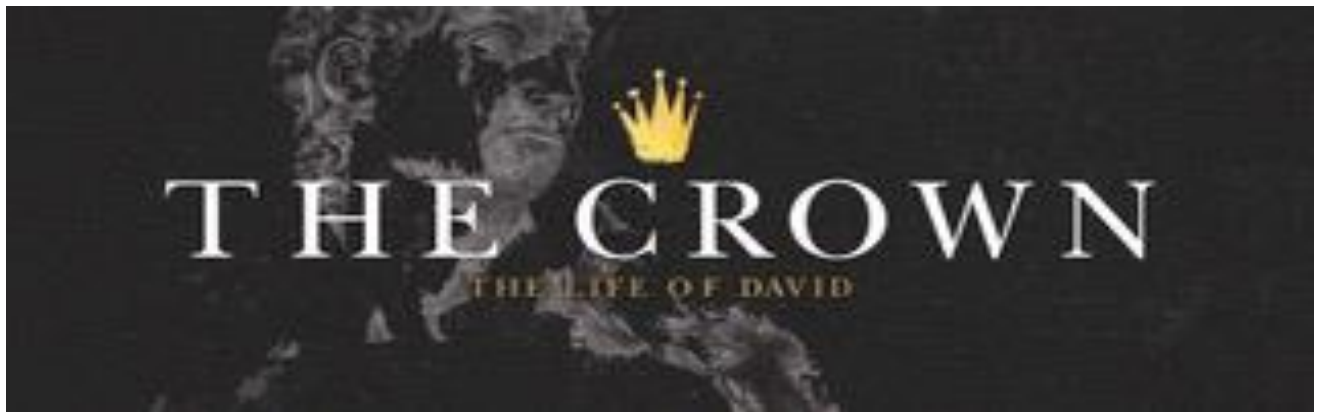
Start Group by Reading 2 Samuel 15:1-37 (Split the Reading among the Group)

Discuss (The following questions are meant as suggested questions to guide conversation.)

1. Which character do you most identify with in this story? Why?
2. What does God teach us in this passage about the danger of ambition and apathy?
3. Do you think David had the right response in trying to not kill Absalom in battle?
4. How do you think David should have handled Absalom's initial rebellion?
5. What does this story teach you about our need for a savior?
6. How does this story change the way we live our lives?

Teaching

1. Try to help your group identify unhealthy ambition in their lives (places where we are seeking to build our kingdom and not God's). Stress Luke 9:23 as the plan for the Christian life.
2. Help the group identify places where apathy rules in their lives. Where are we apathetic in our walk with the Lord and what needs to change?



Resources & Commentaries

The Teacher's Bible Commentary

Absalom's Conspiracy (2 Sam. 15:1–37)

The passage.—Absalom secured a personal bodyguard for protection and for appearance. He set about to undermine his father's throne. He sought popularity by claiming to have personal interest in those who found difficulty in getting to see David. He told every man that his claim was right and that if he were king he would hear him and grant his wish. When a man would bow before him he would kiss him and make him feel important. Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Claiming he wanted to go to Hebron to worship, Absalom secured permission to leave Jerusalem. Secretly he had arranged for those who wanted to make him king to meet him at Hebron. The conspiracy was strong, and the numbers with Absalom increased.

David fled Jerusalem. He did not want the city to be destroyed in battle. He left only a few of his servants to care for the household. His faithful servants went with him.

The loyalty of Ittai the Gittite is best described in his own words in verse 21: "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for life or for death, there also will your servant be."

David insisted that the ark of God remain in the city of Jerusalem. He trusted God to bring him back if it was his will. One of the saddest passages in the Bible is the description of David's leaving Jerusalem, weeping as he went. He was barefoot and had his head covered.

As David was leaving Jerusalem, Hushai agreed to return to Jerusalem to keep David informed of things he might hear there concerning Absalom's strategy.

David Flees; Absalom Enters Jerusalem (2 Sam. 16:1–23)

The passage.—As David was leaving Jerusalem he crossed the brook Kidron and went across the Mount of Olives. A little past the summit he met Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. He had two asses saddled and some provisions. He claimed to want to help David by providing these things for his journey. He also claimed that Mephibosheth had remained in Jerusalem and hoped to take advantage of the confusion to make himself king and thus reestablish the throne of Saul. David rewarded Ziba by giving him all of the property that belonged to Mephibosheth.



Ziba's story appears to be false. Read 2 Samuel 19:25–27 for Mephibosheth's version of what happened. He gave an understandable explanation and accused Ziba of lying. After David had heard both stories, not knowing which to believe, he divided the property in dispute equally between the two men.

Shimei, a relative of Saul, followed David along as he fled from Jerusalem and cursed him continually. He threw stones and dirt at him. David's servant, Abishai, wanted to cut off his head for these insults, but David would not consent. He left vengeance to the Lord.

As Absalom entered Jerusalem he found Hushai there. He could not know whether to trust him or not. He asked where his loyalty lay. Hushai claimed he would be loyal to Absalom, the new king, but we know he was a spy for David.

Ahithophel was Absalom's advisor. He had gone with him to Hebron and returned with him to Jerusalem. He suggested that Absalom take possession of his father's concubines. This would be an open sign that Absalom despised his father and that no one should hesitate to follow him and fear he would compromise with David. The break between father and son was complete. The tent of the concubines was pitched on the roof of the palace and Israel's moral shame was public. David's sin bore still more bitter consequences.

Special points.—Absalom followed the advice of Ahithophel in taking possession of David's concubines. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba. Could he have been seeking revenge for what David did to her? Absalom was committing the same kind of immorality as that for which he had killed his half brother Amnon. Was it from the same rooftop where David's sin began? It may well have been.

David Is Saved by His Underground (2 Sam. 17:1–29)

The passage.—Ahithophel, Absalom's advisor, pointed out that it was David, and David alone who was the problem in Israel. He suggested gathering twelve thousand men to set out to kill David. He said all of Israel would return to Jerusalem like a bride for Absalom. At first Absalom thought the idea was a good one.

Absalom checked with Hushai. He said Ahithophel's advice was not good. He spoke of David's wisdom. He said he was angry and dangerous, like a bear robbed of her cubs. He was too wise to be caught with his soldiers, but would be well hidden. Hushai advised Absalom to wait until all Israel was behind him and then for him to go into the battle personally as the leader. Absalom accepted the advice of Hushai.

Verse 14 explains that God was watching over David. "For the Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom."



How the underground worked to keep David informed is shown in verses 15–20. Hushai worked through Zadok and Abiathar, the priests. They sent messages by a maidservant to David. On one occasion they were almost caught, but were saved when a woman hid them in a well and covered it and spread grain over it to disguise their whereabouts.

The Defeat and Death of Absalom (2 Sam. 18:1–33)

The passage.—David told his men to deal gently with Absalom. He knew he must defeat his son, but his love for him was strong.

Absalom, riding on his mule, became entangled in a tree. His head was caught and his mule ran from beneath him. He was left helpless, but alive. One of the men told Joab. He explained that he had seen Absalom but had not wanted to kill him because he remembered the words of David to deal gently with Absalom. Joab killed Absalom and ten others joined in the deed. Joab sounded the trumpet of victory. They buried Absalom beneath a great heap of stones.

Ahimaaz wanted to carry the news of Absalom’s death to David. Joab forbade him to do so. He enlisted a Cushite, probably a slave to go. Ahimaaz insisted that he be permitted to go, and finally Joab consented. He outran the Cushite and came first to David. His courage must have failed him, because he was unable to give David the news. The Cushite arrived and told the story.

David was overcome with grief. He went to his chamber over the gate and wept. His lament is one of the saddest in the Bible. He said, “O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (v. 33).

Special points.—David put his military men in an impossible dilemma. How could they win the victory for David and at the same time deal gently with Absalom? Perhaps David had hoped Absalom could be taken alive and that reconciliation could be made. Perhaps he had actually considered allowing Absalom to have the throne. Likely he himself did not know his own mind in the matter. Possibly only the father of a rebellious son could know his mixed emotions. The key to the question lies in the lament of David in verse 33.

Joab’s disregard for the command of David to deal gently with Absalom shows the power he had. His rebuke of David in the next chapter reveals his hard-hearted character. Nevertheless David was so dependent upon him and owed so much to him he was in an awkward position. Before David died he asked Solomon to make sure Joab was punished for the deaths of Abner



and Amasa. He did not mention his disobedience to his order about Absalom, but this could not have escaped his memory.¹

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

V 1–6: COMING Absalom ingratiates himself with the people by thinly veiled offers of acquiring judicial satisfactions for them, and by personal contact with them. He steals their hearts. **V 7–12: CONSPIRACY** Absalom deceives David, goes to Hebron, and pursues his conspiracy to become king. Ahithophel joins him. So do many others. **V 13–18: COMPULSION** When David is told the hearts of Israel are with Absalom, he is counselled to flee Jerusalem with his household and people, except for ten concubines whom he leaves behind. He flees to avoid personal ruin and to save the city. **V 19–22: COMMITMENT** Ittai, the Gittite, refuses David’s offer to go back to Jerusalem where he will be safe. Despite his very recent exile to Israel, he declares his obedience and loyalty to the king and marches with him. Such commitment and encouragement mean a lot at a time like this. **V 23: CRYING** As David proceeds by the Kidron valley to the desert, all the people weep as he passes by them. **V 24–37: CONSTRUCTIVE** Even in retreat and sadness, David thinks and acts constructively and strategically. Not only does he pray to God, but he plants key people, who go back to Jerusalem. Included among them are Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, and Hushai, his counsellor. As David’s eyes, ears and mouthpiece, they will play an influential role in future events. David is not finished yet.

The Bible Panorama: A Chapter by Chapter Guide

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

V 1–4: OPPORTUNISM Ziba, Mephibosheth’s servant, maliciously tells David that Mephibosheth has defaulted to Jerusalem. David grants him everything belonging to

¹ Tatum, S. L. (1972). [2 Samuel](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher’s Bible commentary* (pp. 187–190). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.



Mephibosheth, not checking his false story. **V 5–14: OPPOSITION** Shimei curses and abuses David. David refuses to have him struck down and leaves the matter with the LORD. **V 15–19: OPPORTUNITY** Absalom has reached Jerusalem. Hushai, David’s friend, joins him, pretending to be his servant. This will serve David well in the future. **V 20–23: ORACLE** Ahithophel persuades Absalom to lie with David’s concubines as a sign of contempt. Ahithophel is regarded as the very oracle of God. Before long, Hushai will take over from him, to David’s great benefit.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

V 1–4: GOOD COUNSEL Ahithophel tells Absalom to let him lead 12,000 men to attack David while he is weak. Absalom and the elders of Israel are about to follow that plan. **V 5–14: GOD’S CONFUSION** For confirmation, Absalom asks the advice of Hushai the Archite, David’s ‘plant’. He advises him to muster all Israel under Absalom’s personal leadership, knowing that this will give David more time to escape. Hushai’s advice is taken. God purposes to defeat Ahithophel’s counsel by Hushai’s advice. **V 15–22: GUIDED CROSSING** Hushai gets word to David through Jonathan and Ahimaaz, themselves informed by Zadok and Abiathar at Hushai’s request, to cross quickly onto the other side of the Jordan to avoid any attack from Absalom. Jonathan and Ahimaaz narrowly escape capture. David and everyone with him cross over the Jordan before morning dawns. **V 23: GRIEVED COUNSELLOR** Ahithophel is so grieved by the rejection of his advice that he commits suicide. **V 24–26: GILEAD’S CAMP** Absalom, now with Amasa controlling his army, camps in the land of Gilead, on the other side of the Jordan to David. **V 27–29: GREATLY COMFORTED** David and those with him in Mahanaim receive bedding, necessary articles, and much needed provision of food from those whose support must give great comfort.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

V 1–4: WAR David conducts a census and then appoints Joab, Abishai, and Ittai as his military commanders in the war against Israel. He takes their advice not to go out with them to the battle. **V 5: WARNING** David commands his leaders to deal gently with Absalom, his son, for his sake as his father. All the commanders of the army hear this. **V 6–18: WILFULNESS** David’s troops win the battle in the woods of Ephraim, killing 20,000 of Saul’s army. Absalom rides his mule into the bough of a tree and is suspended there by his head. Ignoring David’s instructions,



and the protest of one of his men who refuses to kill Absalom, Joab plunges three spears into the heart of defenceless Absalom who is also struck by Joab's men. Joab calls off the battle. Absalom is put in a pit and covered by a heap of rocks. This is a sad contrast to the monument he has already built for himself. **V 19–32: WONDERING** While King David wonders what has happened in the battle, a decision is taken to send two runners to him. Ahimaaz insists that he should go, but when he is the first runner to reach David, he only tells him of the victory, and lies about the fact that he does not know what has happened to Absalom. A Cushite runner, who started before Ahimaaz but took longer to reach David, arrives soon afterwards and tells David of Absalom's death. **V 33: WEEPING** The lament of David over Absalom is one of the saddest parts of Scripture. He weeps as he goes to a room over a gateway, and is totally consumed with grief for the death of his wayward, but beloved, son. How much more did God the Father feel the death of His completely righteous and totally loving Son, who died for our sins?

CHAPTER NINETEEN

V 1–7: DIRECTNESS David's intense and public mourning of Absalom causes Israel to treat the victory like a defeat. There are no celebrations of the triumph. Joab, possibly not appreciating that David knows that he slew Absalom, warns David that if he persists in this way, all his men will lose heart and he will be without followers. His army will desert him. Joab's direct approach works. **V 8: DUTY** Duly warned, David assumes the duties of kingship and takes his seat in the gateway of the city. The people come to him. **V 9–10: DEBATE** The Israelites who fled from the battle when Absalom was slain, now debate about bringing David back as king of Israel. His cause is growing. **V 11–15: DEMONSTRATION** Through his friends Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, and through offering to Amasa the leadership place of Joab, David asks and gets the support of Judah to bring him back as king over all Israel. To demonstrate this, Judah invites him back and goes up to meet him at Gilgal, to bring him back across the Jordan. **V 16–40: DEALINGS** The welcoming party includes Shimei, who cursed David before, 1,000 Benjamites, and Ziba, Saul's old steward and Jonathan's supposed servant. David now has dealings with different people. He graciously allows Shimei to live, despite pressure to the contrary from Abishai. He restores his relationship with Mephibosheth on hearing that Mephibosheth was cheated by Ziba. He offers to share out between Mephibosheth and Ziba that which he gave to Ziba. Mephibosheth is so pleased to see the king back that he says he wants nothing else. David rewards his ancient supporter, Barzillai the Gileadite, by promising to deal well with his



nominee, Chimham. King David is in business in Israel! **V 41–43: DANGER** Dangerous tribal jealousies between Israel and Judah emerge. Both now want to claim David exclusively, who simply wants to rule over them all.²

² Chrispin, G. (2005). *The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* (pp. 145–147). Leominster, UK: Day One Publications.