

OUR ROCK AND OUR FORTRESS

Finding God in 2 Samuel

by Glenn Newton



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Introduction

Life's circumstances have a way of coming at us in unexpected ways. They catch us unprepared and often leave us reeling in confusion. Our trials sometimes cause us to doubt God's power or His care or even His goodness. But it is in these same challenging life experiences that we find the "real" God.

Second Samuel covers the major events of David's life from his late twenties into his twilight years as king. Pressures from his job, his family, his enemies, and his own sinfulness threatened to obscure his clear view of God and His purposes. But with each challenge, David found his way back to the God of his youth. In his later years he could say that, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer (2 Samuel 22:2). May you find God in all the circumstances of your life.

About the Author

Glenn Newton has been serving as the preaching minister for the Lakeview church of Christ in Tacoma, Washington, since 2007. He has served in ministry since 1993 and has previously worked with churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Tennessee. Glenn actively speaks at lectureships, workshops, and meetings throughout our country; and has co-authored two other books. ("The Great Commission Part 2" with Steve Cummings, and "All in the Family" with his father Gene, and his brother Mark). He and his wife Regina have been married since 1991 and have three sons.



Lesson 1

Finding God In My Grief

2 Samuel 1:1-2:1

Key Verse:

I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women (2 Samuel 1:26).

WARM UP



William P. Young, in his book, *The Shack*, tells the story of a man trying to deal with the abduction and murder of his daughter, Missy. As the story progresses, we find Missy's father on a long journey to find God, and find answers. Although the book was a fascinating read, one could gain at least a couple of false impressions from it. First, you don't have to go on a long journey to find God. Secondly, answers are not always the ultimate goal.

In 2 Samuel 1, we find David in the middle of a real-life struggle with grief. Of all the places to start this study, grief would not be our first choice, but it's probably the right choice. Believers need to be people of depth and substance. We need to be people who are able to embrace not only the joys of life, but also the sorrows of life. God's believers are called to be a non-anxious presence in the midst of a

world that is all about temporal feelings. So, as we journey through these dark hours of David's life, we will find that God stands firm even when it seems like our world is falling apart. Admittedly, starting in 2 Samuel is a challenge. It's like watching a sequel without watching the first movie. First Samuel speaks of David's rise to power.

- David is anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16).
- David kills Goliath and gains a following (1 Samuel 17).
- Saul's jealousy for David deepens, and so does David's friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan (1 Samuel 18-21).
- Saul goes on a killing spree, killing the priests of God and attempting to kill David (1 Samuel 22-23).
- David has the opportunity to kill Saul, but relents. Saul is humbled and backs off (1 Samuel 24).
- Saul is back after David, but once again David is able to spare Saul's life while he and his men are in a "Lord-induced" slumber. Of course, Saul repents again, promising not to harm David anymore (1 Samuel 26).
- David is finally realizing that Saul is not to be trusted (1 Samuel 27).
- The grand finale of Saul's life. Saul goes into battle with his army and his sons and he dies by his own sword. David's best friend, Jonathan, doesn't make it out alive either, and the Philistines revel in the death of the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 29-31).

And so this script, which Mel Gibson couldn't have written any better, leads us into 2 Samuel, where David receives word of not only

the fall of the king, but the fall of his dearest friend. His reign begins with a season of sadness.

WORK OUT



How many times has the death of someone dearly loved by a leader been the breaking point of their life? Often, life's most difficult blow for the Christian is not their own death, but the death of those closest to them. "Bereave" means "to deprive ruthlessly or by force." The real agonizing pain of death is its earthly finality. Being deprived or denied the presence of somebody we love for the remainder of our lives is the most severe of all heartaches.

But we can learn much from the way David dealt with this painful blow. How can we find God in our grief? There are three important elements revealed in David's painful experience that contain practical lessons that can help us cope with our seasons of grief.

Our relationship with God must be strong before tragedy strikes (1 Samuel 30:6).

If you have read 2 Samuel 1 lately, you may have noticed something: God is not mentioned. You don't see the Lord or His hand in this chapter, but we know He is there. Back in 1 Samuel 30, the text says, "But David found strength in the LORD his God." We know that God is in 2 Samuel 1, because David is in 2 Samuel 1. Wherever David is, God is present as his rock and fortress.

When facing grief, it is sometimes difficult to see the Lord. This is why God must be our fortress before tragedy strikes. Often, when our life with God is a causal, "Sunday go to meeting" relationship, we are ill

prepared for tragedies. We wonder “Where is God?” when it is not His whereabouts that is the problem; it is ours.

David’s relationship with God, although it was not perfect, was a constant and consistent part of his walk. In other words, it was not a “Saturday go to tabernacle” relationship. He worshiped; he wrote songs; he served; he prayed. Because his life with God was a constant, he was able to say without any doubts that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

An emotional upheaval during times of grief is common even to those who are walking closest to God (2 Samuel 1:11-12).

Psychologists often refer to the “Five Stages of Grief.” Christians sometimes view grief as a weakness or abnormality, yet we forget that these stages are evident even in the life of David. And remember, he is referred to as a man after God’s own heart. Notice the stages of grief in Chapter 1:

- Denial (1:5) – “Are you sure they are dead?”
- Grief (1:12) – “They mourned and wept.”
- Anger (1:14) – “WHY?????”
- Depression (1:26) – “Oh how I grieve!”
- Acceptance (2:1) – “I will go where you want me to go, Lord.”

Again, when we or other people are grieving, we often act as if these stages are not normal. Phrases like “I have to be strong,” or “They are at peace now,” or the even more popular, “This must have been God’s will, so I need to have faith,” are common during times of grief. But these statements are way off base. Grieving is not a sin. Even Jesus grieved! The challenge is making it from stage 4 to stage 5.

Healing is a process that at times can be slow, but is promised by God (2 Samuel 2:1).

David moved to the stage of acceptance by resuming his fellowship with the Lord. This can be difficult. Often people will have difficulty praying, opening their Bible, or walking in a church building while going through the grieving process. Much of this comes from being told, "It was God's will." We need to be careful not to blame God for something He didn't do, because it can give those grieving a negative impression of Him. Although the losses we face may not always be His intentional will, He can bring a blessing from it though (Romans 8:28).

David asked God, "Where shall I go up?" When we go through grief, we receive advice from every side. That advice is nearly always well-intentioned, but often wrong. Some of the best advice we can follow when grieving is to be still (Psalm 46:10). Only when we get still can we know that He is God. Only He can lead us to a place where our grief will be comforted by a fresh vision of His will for our lives.

COOL DOWN



Grief is certainly not the most pleasant place to start a study, but it is a good place. Before we can ever find God, we have to get rid of those things that are blocking Him from our vision. For many, that is grief. Grief from the loss of a loved one, grief from the loss of a job, grief from the consequences of a sin (yours or someone else's), grief from a divorce, even grief from a disappointment with God.

Second Samuel begins with David grieving. This will not be the last time we see David grieve, nor will your life be without seasons

of grief. The later years of David's life are a fascinating study because they are much like our lives. Maybe not as dramatic, but certainly just as frantic. As we continue this study, we will be comforted in the fact that God is our "Rock and our fortress, a very present help in times of trouble."

Discussion Questions

1. Why is grief a good place to begin a study on "Our Rock and Our Fortress?"
2. What words or phrases might you use to describe David's life in First Samuel? How is David's life different as we enter into the study of 2 Samuel?
3. "Wherever David is, God is present." What do you think of this statement? Can it be said about you?
4. What is wrong with the statement, "I have to be strong," when going through a grieving process?
5. Why is it sometimes difficult to seek God's will when grieving? What are the advantages of asking God, "Where shall I go?"
6. How has God guided you through grief? Where did He guide you? What did it look like when you got there?