

GOING DEEPER STUDY (July 27, 2025) PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

Think back to, or think now about, your school days. Why did you choose, have you chosen, the friends you did, the friends you have? When I was in fourth grade I started spending time with a different crowd. They weren't necessarily bad ... it was fourth grade ... but even then I sensed they were moving in the wrong direction. I began to change. I wanted to fit in. I cursed more in my few months with them than I have in all of the rest of my years combined. (during those months my mom introduced me to the taste of soap ... those of a certain age know what I'm talking about.) Thankfully, about that same time, another friend, Mark Fischer, invited me to a Christian summer camp. Mark was a kid I knew from church. That summer, at Mt Hermon Christian camp in Santa Cruz California, all of the things I had heard about in Sunday school came together, made sense, and I embraced God's love in Jesus. When I came back from camp I didn't return to that group of friends. We remained friends ... but at a distance. How far would I have gone if I had stayed with that crowd? Does bad company corrupt good character? Does the company we keep shape us and affect our choices, our beliefs, how we treat others? What kind of friend, and influence, are we?

This morning's Bible passage involves David (who would soon be king of all of Israel), Joab (one of his military leaders), and Abner (an apparently decent man who led the army of Saul's heir to the throne). Alliances made, and broken, then would impact the lives of all three, and the nation too. Who are our friends? May we choose wisely!

Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives: David & Joab (2 Samuel 3:17-32)

(Verses 17-19 omitted here) ²⁰ When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. ²¹ And Abner said to David, 'I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.' So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace. (Verses 22 omitted here) ²³ When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, 'Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go, and he has gone in peace.' ²⁴ Then Joab went to the king and said, 'What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, so that he is gone?' ²⁵ You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing.'

²⁶ When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it. ²⁷ And when Abner returned to Hebron,

Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. ²⁸ Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, 'I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the Lord for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. ²⁹ May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!' ³⁰ So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon." (Verses 31-32 omitted here)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What do these verses tell us about David? About Abner?
2. What does this passage tell us about Joab and the reason he hated, and murdered, Abner? (read 2 Samuel 2:12-28)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. What does, "I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king ... that you may reign over all that your heart desires" mean? (verse 21)
4. What does, "May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house" mean? (verse 29)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

5. What value does our culture place on friendship?
6. Who do you think of when you hear the word "friend"?
7. What do you look for when choosing a friend?
8. Have you ever had a friend who wasn't good for you? Did that friendship change you? Discuss
9. What is the best part of having a good friend?
10. What kind of friend have you been to others?
11. How does (should) being a Christian change your friendships?
12. How can you be a better friend?
13. Who do you need to be a friend too this week?

As you spend time praying, remember that prayer is meant to be a natural part of your day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God and listening to God. Thank God for the friends you have (name them). Thank God for being your friend. Ask God to give you the strength to be true to Him, and to yourself, in the friendships you have. Ask God to show you who you should be friends with. God will help you, because He is your friend, and He loves you.