DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In today's text, 1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 9:1-13, we see the story of Mephibosheth, son of David's dear friend Jonathan (who was the son of David's nemesis, King Saul). We see how a childhood accident leaves Mephibosheth crippled, and we see how David later shows kindness to him.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

1. In 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 4:4, we see how Mephibosheth was injured as a child. What national catastrophe lay behind the story of his life-changing injury?

2. In the ancient Near East, it was not unusual for a king ascending the throne to wipe out all the descendants of the previous king so that no one would challenge the throne. Why did David show kindness to Mephibosheth, even though he was from the line of the king (Saul) who had repeatedly tried to kill David?

3. What did David do to show mercy toward the household of Saul?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

There is a postlude to our story that may shine a different light on Mephibosheth and on the servant old Ziba, who had served Saul himself. David has survived the coup sponsored by his son Absalom, and he now returns from the field of battle to Jerusalem to reckon with those who had not supported him. Read the story in 2 Sam 19:24-30.

What does this story suggest about the motives of both Mephibosheth and Ziba? What does it suggest about David's mindset toward Mephibosheth? Had it changed?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

Someone once described a gentleman as a man who is kind to people who can be of no possible use to him. The way we treat people who cannot reciprocate in kind (either for good or ill) may say more about us than any other test of character. In David's kindness to Mephibosheth, we see a powerful man show unexpected kindness to an outcast whose greatest hope is that David would forget about him. Instead of punishing Mephibosheth because of his grandfather's cruelty, David treats him with mercy and generosity.

1. **Think of the people in your life who are unable to earn your affection and loyalty.** They are those needy people who are totally dependent on the kindness of others to sustain their well-being. Do you experience mixed motives about loving and caring for needy people like that?

2. **Sometimes, to make matters worse, these needy have character flaws that make them difficult to love,** so their needs are compounded: they need others to love and care for them, but their poor social skills push others away. Do you know anyone like that (in your family, at work)? Again with the mixed motives: how do you manage your own feelings of compassion in conflict with your reluctance to help?

3. **Paul seems to be addressing these matters in his discussion of spiritual gifts in the body in his letter to the church in Corinth.** Read 1 Cor 12:12-26 (esp. v. 21-26). Ho do these insights from Paul help us think about how we must care for one another, even when we might not be naturally inclined to do so?