

*The Life of David*  
2, 2018

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*David's Journey*

*What made David a man after God's own heart?*  
*Unrelenting Passion!*

How did David go from being a shepherd boy to the King of Israel and then become the man that God said, *“Was a man after His own heart?”* The answer is *unrelenting passion and seasons of preparation.*

David's life is a prophetic picture of how God brings us into the fullness of our calling by bringing us through specific stages of preparation, so we can inherit all He has promised us.

We know more about David's life than about any other biblical person in Scripture except for Jesus. We know that it was prophesied over him by the prophet Samuel at about age seventeen that he would be king of Israel. *(1 Samuel 16:)*

We also know that God then took him through a twenty-year prophetic journey of preparation. *They are the five prophetic seasons of David's life.* We all have Prophetic Promises and like David there purpose is to help us achieve the full measure of power and intimacy with God we seek. The seasons in David's life were a literal road map for him and for us on our own journey to maturity.

In David's life, each of these seasons was matched to a specific city *with* a specific lesson associated with it. We can easily apply the lessons he encounters in each of these cities to our own journeys as we seek to unveil the future that God has set for us.

*The five cities are: Bethlehem, Gilbeah, Addulam, Hebron, and Zion.*

*Bethlehem:* Like Jesus many years later, David was born in Bethlehem, which means *House of Bread.* The Hebrew Bible, says that the city of Bethlehem

was built up as a fortified city by Rehoboam, who was the fourth king of *Israel*. He was a son of and the successor to Solomon, and a grandson of David. In the account *of I Kings and II Chronicles*, he was initially king of the United Monarchy of Israel, but after the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled in 932/931 BC to form the independent Kingdom of Israel, under the rule of Jeroboam, Rehoboam remained as king of only the Kingdom of Judah, or southern kingdom. Bethlehem was the city David was from and where he was crowned as the king of Israel.

### *Season One: Bethlehem: Being Faithfull in Small Things*

David was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse and the lowest in rank and privilege in the family structure. In his early years, he became a shepherd. Keeping the sheep in that society was not a distinguished occupation. If the family could afford it, they delegated this dirty task to the servants. But in Jesse's family, the job fell to David. So, like other shepherds, he stood all day on the hard rocks, alone under the hot sun with the sheep as his only companions. He was very much alone in harsh terrain.

David, at this point, was too young to have done anything extraordinary. He hadn't slayed any bears, killed any giants, wrote any Psalms or preached any anointed sermons. His great exploits all lay in the future.

In fact, the only portrayal we find of him during this time is of him keeping the sheep (*1 Samuel 16:11*). We might think of him as a gas station attendant or a janitor because his life was filled with menial tasks nobody wanted to do, yet he did them with a spirit of devotion toward the Lord. That was David's first victory. He had a heart that sought God when seeking God seemed the least obvious thing to do. He had a *yes* in his spirit. So, the word of the Lord comes to Samuel the prophet:

***1 Samuel 16:1 Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I Have provided Myself a king among his sons.”***

For David, that day came without warning. He had no clue, as far as we know, that he was destined to sit on the throne. But one day, Samuel, the most famous prophet in all of Israel, came to Jesse’s home for dinner, surely one of the greatest occasions in that household’s history up to that point. Jesse invited each of his seven sons but did not invite David. He was left out in the pasture with the sheep.

Imagine being shunned by your own father on such a rare and sacred occasion. Even Jesse didn’t see what God saw in David’s heart. But Samuel called for the youngest boy and prophesied that amazing days were ahead for David. David was ushered into a new era of knowing what was ahead of him. There in Bethlehem, David received God’s call on his life. ***God’s primary earthly goal for David was not that he would be king, although he would. It was to make him a worshiping warrior king, being loved by God and being a lover of God.*** (Mike Bickel)

David received the prophecy from Samuel when he was about seventeen years old. But he didn’t become king of Israel until he was about thirty-seven! Twenty years of monumental ups and downs lay between him and the earthly prize of reaching Zion, his place of destiny.

You too may have received a first prophecy or insight into what you will accomplish for God. The automatic response is to say, “Let’s get to it, Lord! Bring it on.” You want to speed all the way to the finish line without stopping. But you must thoroughly absorb the lessons of Bethlehem. The small days are for a reason. In our own lives, the small days will make us faithful in small things, so we can be trusted later with big things.

The Lord said through Zechariah, *“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, Zechariah 4:10, NLT*). And Jesus said, *“And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?” (Luke 16:12)*.

David used the time to grow in intimacy with God. Though he had no recognition from his family, he knew he had great value from his relationship with God. David caught this truth at a young age. He felt successful because of his relationship with God. He was not so much interested in what others thought of Him as He was God.

We must be faithful in serving others before God gives us our own. We also must be faithful in the natural things before we are trusted with the spiritual. Jesus gave us a foundational kingdom principle that only when we are faithful over few things will He make us ruler over many things (*Matthew 25:21*). But the promise always starts with few things. That is what Bethlehem represents.

Bethlehem is the place where we learn to find our satisfaction not in the prophecy or promise but in God. You can tell when a person is finding his or her identity in the task or promise because they try to force the fulfillment of the promises on their life. They strive to advance, strive to gain favor with powerful people and they spread tension to people around them with competitive, impatient spirits. *The remedy for David and for us is to return to our roots and find our identity in God alone. Only in that revelation will we learn to live in peace, with the absence of striving.*

Each of us starts in Bethlehem, finding our identity in God and becoming faithful in small things. But the journey to our highest destiny starts with little responsibilities. It may mean being neglected, pushed aside, and ignored. But this significant season lays the foundation for success later. It’s an essential part of the

journey from which nobody is exempt, not even the Messiah. Both David and Jesus had their small beginnings in Bethlehem.

### *Season Two: Gibeah: The Test of Being Promoted to Soon*

Gibeah is a place appearing in several books of the Bible. It is generally identified with a hill in Jerusalem, Gibeah may be a variation of the Hebrew word meaning “hill.” It is in the territory of the Tribe of Benjamin where King Saul lived.

*Therefore, Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, “Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.” So, David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. Then Saul sent word to Jesse saying, “Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.” (1 Samuel 16:19-22)*

After Samuel anointed David, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit troubled him. As a cure for his unpleasant mood, Saul’s servants recommended David to play music to comfort him. They referred to David as *“skillful in playing...prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him” (1 Samuel 16:18).*

So, David moved to the city of Gibeah, the capital of Saul’s government (*1 Samuel 15:34; 18:2*). David found favor in Saul’s eyes. David also found favor with the entire nation of Israel, which had been in full-scale military crisis because of Goliath the Philistine. David was quickly used by God to pull the nation out of a disaster. *In this second season of life, David had his first taste of earthly success, and it was significant.*

Today, his invitation to work at the king’s side as his personal armorbearer would be like the president of the United States asking a teenager to work as his

aide in the White House. So, the whole nation of Israel knew about David. God took him out of the hills of Bethlehem, significantly increased his salary, and gave him favor before man.

*What David didn't know then was that in all this early success, God was testing and growing his character, his love and his servanthood.* Would he continue to draw on his spiritual identity in God, or would he begin to find value and importance from his new position of honor? *This was the test of promotion God set before David in Gibeah. David learned quickly that blessing tests us differently than adversity.* Before blessing comes, we imagine we will be so faithful to handle men's approval with great humility. But when most people receive even a little bit of praise or money or success, they get completely thrown off.

*Fire tests the purity of silver and gold,  
but a person is tested by being praised. Proverbs 27:21, (NLT)*

It's amazing how quickly success affects the human heart. Somethings goes crazy in people, and they swoon with intoxicating pride. They find themselves unable to "tend sheep" anymore. They see all the people standing in line waiting to see them, and they conclude they can no longer bother with menial jobs. They say, "I don't have time for small stuff. I'm the anointed of God." They get distracted in the swirl of new activity while they fight to uphold their new image. History tells us that when most people get promoted even a little, they begin to see their identity in their ministry.

David was different. When he was promoted to Gibeah, he continued to live from his heart as he did in Bethlehem, faithful to his small responsibilities. Though he was beginning to taste the favor and esteem of men, he continued to be faithful in insignificant tasks. What was his secret? *He was not on a quest for success and importance because he already had it in being loved by God.* He had

learned the lesson of Bethlehem, and not even the success of Gibeah shook him from it.

*David declared, “O Lord, you brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.... Now in my prosperity I said, ‘I shall never be moved.’ Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong” (Psalm 30:3, 6-7).*

He was declaring that even in times of prosperity, he would not be moved. Often the Lord will give us a certain amount of success to equip us for the wilderness years that are ahead.

We will suddenly find ourselves in a position of prominence or leadership where people value our time and opinions. We will feel an amazing rush from all the attention. People will praise us in private and in public. We will receive the applause of men. But that’s never the end of the story. *Life alternates between times of promotion and times of struggle, times of favor and times of difficulty, times when our gifts are hidden and times when they are used in demonstration.*

Most people never imagine that the season of success will change, but it almost always does. No season continues unbroken in life. As we journey forward, the prosperity and favor of men will come and go, and in the end, they’re not worth much. But when we learn how to lean on God alone in times of success, we will know how to find Him in times of difficulty. The lesson of Gibeah is that *promotion comes not from the east, west, or south or from the north but from the Lord (Psalm 75:6-7).* God wants you to establish your identity fully in Him and learn to handle the favor of men in the same way you handled the obscurity. If you pass the test, you “graduate” to the next season, though you may wish you hadn’t!!

### *Adullam: The Cave of Difficulty*

*So, David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. Soon his brothers and all his other relatives joined him there. <sup>2</sup> Then others began coming—men who*

*were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the captain of about 400 men. (1 Samuel 22:1-2, NLT)*

The Cave of Adullam was originally a stronghold referred to in the Old Testament, near the town of Adullam, where future King David sought refuge from King Saul. The word "cave" is usually used but "fortress", which has a similar appearance in writing, is used as well.

After the praises and promotion in Gibeah, David's career took a sharp turn. He lost all favor in Saul's court. His fame and popularity had created several jealous enemies. Saul rose up to kill him and enlisted three thousand men to chase, capture, and murder him. They were each given a salary, food, and transportation, all for the purpose of killing him. David probably confused and exasperated, at least initially, fled and made his headquarters in the dark damp wilderness cave of Adullam. There he gathered four hundred men together, and for about seven years they and their families wandered the wilderness.

This was the complete opposite of the lifestyle he had grown accustomed to in the king's court in Gibeah. Gibeah had tested him with praise and success. Now Adullam was testing him with hardship. God's promises appeared distant and faint. He said in his heart, *"Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul" (1 Samuel 27:1). He complained, cried, screamed, threw temper tantrums, and quit a couple of times. At times he even said, "God, just kill me. I'm not going to be a king anyway." Then he would repent of his wrong attitudes and say, "OK, I'm going to follow You with all my heart. You win again." God put David in Adullam for seven long years to firmly root his identity in God.*

The lessons of this season, though extremely difficult to learn, would prove to be his protection when he became king of Israel. In the same way, *God doesn't want us to get our identity even a little bit from our anointing or earthly success but from being loved by God and being a lover of God.*



Our ministry can fall apart. The people who admired us can leave. The blessing of the Spirit can lift off our labors for a season. We can lose our building, our home, and our financial base, *but if we love God and He loves us, we are still successful.*

This is the sure inheritance the Father has promised us. It's important that we remain so in tune with God's reality. We must remember when we suddenly are shoved into an Adullam season that God has a divine pattern for maturing us. Wilderness seasons can cause great confusion. It appears as though the plan of God for our life has changed. Yet in truth, *God has only changed our season, not our purpose or destiny.* Those are firm in Him. Our only job is to pass the test of the season we're in. When we know how to lean on Him in times of success we will know how to lean on him in times of difficulty.

So, the struggles you are visited with in Adullam turn out to be training for the way God wants to bless you in Zion. In your time of deepest struggle, you will see hints of what's to come in your life. But don't be too hasty. Another season lies between you and the place of your destiny.

### *Hebron: The Beginnings of the Prophetic Purpose*

*After this, David asked the Lord, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?" Yes," the Lord replied. Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?" "To Hebron," the Lord answered. 2 Samuel 2:1 (NLT)*

Upon hearing of Saul's death, his first response might have been, "At last, I can be king over all Israel!" But in this moment, David did something surprising. He responded, "Maybe God doesn't want me to be king of Israel in this season. *Let me ask the Lord first.*" *He sought God's heart. He demonstrated what people who are intimate with God do before making big decisions.* He asked the Lord if he should go up to live in any of the cities of Judah instead of going straight to Gibeah to replace Saul. He prayed one of the great prayers in his life,

“Shall I go up?” meaning, should he go up to Gibeah to replace Saul as king. The Lord answered him and told him to go up to Hebron instead.

Hebron has a long and rich Jewish history and is the site of the oldest Jewish community in the world. The Book of Genesis relates that Abraham purchased the field where the Tomb of the Patriarchs is located as a burial place for his wife Sarah. This was the first parcel of land owned by the Jewish people in their Promised Land. According to Jewish tradition, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well the Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah are all buried in the Tomb. King David was anointed King of Israel in Hebron, and he reigned in the city for seven years.

That answer disappointed David’s men. Going up to Hebron meant David was only taking about a twelfth of the kingdom Saul had governed.

The Lord told David to go to Hebron and only take a little bit of the kingdom. There were twelve tribes of Israel, and Hebron represented only one. God was testing and training David once again. He wanted David to find his identity in God, not in being king of Israel. *Therefore, God only released a partial fulfillment of the full destiny promised to him.*

God will do this to us, too. It’s an agonizing experience, but it builds incredible patience in us. David spent seven more years limited to the city of Hebron. Remember, at this point, he had waited to be king for thirteen or fourteen years. Still, he didn’t become angry with God for making him wait through another season of testing. He knew the Lord would give him all of Israel when it was time. *He was after the perfect will of God and would not settle for less.*

The only reason David could act this way was because his identity was in God. Being king of Israel was not the key to his sense of importance. And we too will accomplish much in the lesson of Hebron when we see we are already

successful before God and don't have to strive for success before men by going after position and honor.

One reason God gave David only one-twelfth of the kingdom in Hebron was because He wanted David's core of fighting men. He wanted a core of submitted, committed leaders free of ambition. God has no use for freelancers or mavericks, no matter how highly skilled. They became loyal and unified. They found the secret that working together produces far greater results than going it alone. They became a mighty army that God used to make Israel great among the nations.

*Hebron speaks to us of finding God in times of partial fulfillment of His promises.* This can be a painful season in our lives. The blessing seems to come so slow.

*You may pass the test of isolation and obscurity in Bethlehem, the test of early promotion in Gibeah, and the test of adversity in Adullam. But many of God's servants stumble in this place represented by Hebron. Things look so ready that they think they have passed the ultimate test. They grab hold of the situation without inquiring of God. (Mike Bickel)*

God demands a righteous response. If He is truly the primary chief of our hearts, then we will not need to be king. He could tell us to go back to Bethlehem, and we would gladly do it. Our occupation and image before people should never motivate us. *Our greatest private agenda must remain to be loved by God and to be a lover of God. That's the lesson for us from David's season in Hebron.*

### *Zion: The Promises Fulfilled*

*Zion is a hill in eastern Jerusalem, Israel: Originally the stronghold of Jerusalem, Zion was conquered by David and in ancient times was the site of the Jewish Temple. It was the site where David returned the Arc of the Covenant and worshiped 24/7.*

After seven years of reigning in Hebron, David was thirty-seven years old. It had been twenty years since the original prophecy that he would be king over all Israel. David has arrived. *The season of Zion speaks to us of the full release of what God promised.* He would soon capture Jerusalem, referred to as Zion, and set up his capitol there. There are several lessons from Zion. The first; there is no substitute for the confidence we feel upon arriving at our destiny God's way and in God's time.

David could rest. Because being King was God's idea not David's. He didn't have to keep his position with strife and manipulation. Zion is a prophetic picture of Jesus being made King of all the earth. We are the promised bride, finding our fulfillment in Him.

Bethlehem - Faithfulness in small beginnings

Gibeah - The test of early promotion

Adullam - The cave of difficulty

Hebron - The beginning of the prophetic promise

Zion - Fulfillment

*We see from David's life that Personal prophecy is progressive ~* meaning that it unfolds over a period of time and does not necessarily come to pass in the timing that we think it should. Don't become frustrated, discouraged and impatient waiting on the fulfillment of God's prophetic word. Think of the progressive nature of prophecy this way: *our lives are like a book, with different chapters and pages within each chapter, and prophecy reveals what is on the different pages.* One

prophecy is not designed to reveal the entire book of our lives, or even an entire chapter.

*Remember that prophets are chosen by God and it's a calling that comes with a price ~ David* was the prophesied king, anointed by Samuel in the midst of his brothers (*1 Sam. 16:13*). He was almost immediately taken from his home and assigned to become King Saul's armor-bearer. In the next breath, he was facing the battle of all battles with the giant Goliath.

When David defeated Goliath against all-natural odds, Saul became jealous and tried to kill him. David ended up fleeing into the wilderness and ran into all sorts of dangers along the way as Saul's army pursued him. His wives were captured. His men turned against him. David's psalms reveal the emotions of a man facing warfare to see his prophetic destiny become a reality.

*So, again, (and over and over) when you receive a true prophetic word from God it brings spiritual warfare ~* You probably won't be chased through the wilderness by a jealous king, but you may be chased out of your church by a jealous leader. You may not be sold into slavery, but you may be betrayed by those closest to you. You may not be falsely accused of rape, but you may be falsely accused of something you didn't do. You may not be thrown into prison, but you may be thrown out of your comfort zone.

*The key is enduring the Spiritual Battle ~* how? God's grace, of course, but you also need to take Paul's advice to Timothy: Paul said, *“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18).*

It means I continue to declare the prophetic word over my life. If you are in a season of waiting and warring, hold on. Remember, it was about 20 years between David's prophetic anointing and David's kingship. Chances are it won't take that long for you to see the first fruits of the powerful prophetic words spoken over your life. But even if it does, don't give in to the enemy's strategies. Remember that this is the Lord's battle. Declare the prophetic word over your life and keep fighting the good fight of faith.

*Prophetic words can give us something to hold on to, but they are not our daily bread. It's never a good idea to chase prophecy.*