

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY THIRTEEN

David and the Ark

2 Samuel 6

When God gives specific instructions for doing His will, He wants it done exactly that way, doesn't He? When we begin to care about the things God cares about, we're on our way to real freedom and real happiness.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A key idea threads through this series on David: *he was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)*. David's life gives glimpses into what it means to be a person after God's heart . . . and what it doesn't mean.

When you think about David, you likely think of a few iconic images. The shepherd boy standing over the fallen giant Goliath. The sensitive man singing songs for his king, his people, his God. The seasoned warrior slaying "his ten thousands" (18:7). The revered king sitting upon the throne.

Yet bearing the soldier's sword, the musician's harp, or the ruler's scepter doesn't necessarily make someone godly. So what was it about David's heart that separated him from everyone else?

Simply put, *David loved and trusted God*. And this spiritual posture guided his steps.

Despite David's deep desire to follow God, he occasionally misstepped and fell off the path of righteousness. In 2 Samuel 6, the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* study, David's example instructs how people after God's heart should respond when they find themselves straying from Him because of their careless neglect of His commands.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

David's love for God gushes from his psalms like water from a geyser. Express your own love for God using the words of *Psalms 9:1–2* before you study His Word today:

*I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.
I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Before the time of David's reign, the hearts of the Israelites stood far from God. The hard-hearted people had their perfect leader in Saul, who had next to no love for God. When Saul was king, he had great interest in achieving military success—so much so that he completely ignored Israel's spiritual health.

Prior to Saul's reign, the enemy Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant (*1 Samuel 4:1–11*), but they later returned it to Israel because God had cursed them for taking the ark (*5:1–7:1*). According to *7:1*, where did the ark stay after the Philistines returned it? (Make sure you find this spot on your Bible *atlas*!)

The ark was *essential* to Israel's spiritual life because the presence of God dwelled with it. Yet, Saul did not once seek out God's presence during his reign. When David took Saul's place, he refused to make the same mistake. Jump ahead now to 2 Samuel 6 to see how David corrected Saul's error.



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Observation: Celebrating the Presence of God

Every passage of Scripture contains truths that can lead to life change. However, a hasty reading often results in misunderstanding the text of the passage and its meaning.¹ Slowly read *2 Samuel 6* a few times using different Bible translations. As you read, place yourself in David's sandals and consider the motivation for his actions throughout the account.

In *2 Samuel 6*, David had just been crowned king in Jerusalem. He then immediately traveled to Baalah of Judah. (This is another name for Kiriath-jearim, mentioned in *1 Samuel 7:1*.) According to *2 Samuel 6:2*, why did he go there?

According to *6:3*, how did David try to transport the ark of the covenant from Abinadab's house back to Jerusalem?



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As David's men navigated the ark through the rocky terrain, the ark became unsteady and started to tip over. What happened to Uzzah when he tried to stop the ark from falling in [2 Samuel 6:6–7](#)?

How did David respond in [6:9–10](#) to what happened to Uzzah? What caused him to change his mind in [6:12](#)?

We've got David standing here mad at the Lord when, in fact, the Lord was angry at David. Well, I thought you said he was a man after God's heart? I did. Does that mean David was perfect? It does not. Having a heart for God doesn't mean you're perfect; it means you're sensitive. And when you see you're wrong, you face it. You own up to it. You come to terms with it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to [6:5, 12–15](#), how did David and the rest of the people of Israel respond to the ark's presence in Jerusalem?



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Why in the world did David get so excited? Because he was free. When you obey, you're free. When you disobey, you're in bondage. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How did Michal, David's wife and daughter of Saul, feel about David's behavior (2 Samuel 6:16, 20)?

Like father, like daughter! While David couldn't contain his heart's love for God, his wife filled her own heart with bitterness and contempt. But David didn't care! He said, "He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes!" (6:21–22). What a clear picture of true love for God!



Interpretation: Great Intentions, Tragic Results

First, read about the *ark of the covenant* using your Bible study tools. What was the ark? Why was it so essential to Israel's spiritual life? Record any other key findings in the space below.



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Read [Exodus 25:10–22](#). How does this passage clarify God’s choice to kill Uzzah in [2 Samuel 6:6–7](#)? Note that Uzzah was trying to do a good thing for God! Develop a timeless theological truth about following God’s commands.

What does the contrast between David’s response and Michal’s response to the presence of the ark in Jerusalem reveal about their hearts? What can followers of Jesus today learn from their example?

Who cares about little golden poles that go through little ringlets and go on shoulders rather than waists? God does. If He didn’t care, He wouldn’t have said it. If the Lord cared enough to write it and cared enough to preserve it, He cares enough about the details to have you pull it off His way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Filling in the Gaps

At this point, you may *still* feel confused about some of the finer details of the 2 Samuel 6. This is where correlation is helpful. Pastor Chuck Swindoll says, “By comparing one Scripture with other Scriptures, precept upon precept and line upon line, the whole truth begins to emerge.”²



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Thankfully, 1 Chronicles 15 contains a parallel account of these events that helps clarify David's motivation. According to [15:11–15](#), what mistake did David make the *first* time he tried to bring the ark to Jerusalem? What did he do differently the *second* time?

What does this passage reveal about David's heart for God and His law?

In *principle*, David was following God by trying to reinstate the ark into Israel's spiritual life. In *precept*, however, he ignored God's commands for handling the ark, and he paid the price for his disobedience. Thankfully, God gives His people second chances. David learned from his error, repented, and brought the ark to Jerusalem in a manner pleasing to God.



Application: Freedom in Christ

This scene from David's life offers two points of application:

1. *The better you know where you stand with the Lord, the freer you can be.* When David repented from his sin and realized he had right standing with God, his heart overflowed with joy and he freely worshiped God without feeling shame.
2. *The freer you are before the Lord, the more confident you will become.* In contrast, Michal did not have a heart for God, so she lacked the kind of freedom David had. She couldn't navigate her life with the kind of confidence that comes only from God.



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Which of these two points prove most relevant in your life right now? How so?

Do you ever find yourself wanting to follow God in principle but not in precept? If so, in what ways? Is there a specific way right now the Holy Spirit is nudging you to address an issue or need?

The apostle Paul said, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (*Galatians 5:1* NIV). Because of God’s love, grace, and forgiveness, anyone can experience the kind of freedom David had and can lead a life that overflows with joy and confidence in Jesus Christ.



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A FINAL PRAYER

To conclude your study today, reflect on this prayer by Pastor Chuck:

Father, I pray for those whose lives are marked by emptiness, sadness, and all the things that go with the consequences of sin. I pray You will lead them to a knowledge of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and give them no peace until Christ has invaded their lives. And for those who live their lives still bound up, though in Christ, may they come to know a grace and freedom that accompanies obedience. And may that grace and freedom mark our lives as Your followers. In the name of Christ, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 140.

