

Showing Kindness

General Topic: God Requires Justice

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Author: Rev. Spencer L. Braddix

Lesson Text: 2 Samuel 9:1-7; 9-12

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 9

2 Samuel 9:1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

2 And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

4 And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

2 Samuel 9:9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

Lesson Objective(s):

By the end of this lesson, we will explore David's kindness toward Mephibosheth as an act of justice and equity, reflect on the value of keeping our word, and show radical kindness to someone in need.

Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as

www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

“Kill them with kindness.” “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” These alternative retaliatory phrases have been thrown around for centuries. They imply that the best way to impart justice upon your enemies is to treat them in a way they least expect. A way in fact that they least deserve. This frees the bestower of this type of justice from the hatred and vitriol it takes to have an unforgiving heart. It generates true feelings of guilt for the original transgressor, as they question why they commit wrongdoing to someone who would rather treat them well. In the end, as believers we all know that the justice of vengeance belongs only to the Lord. (Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:17-19) As we will learn in today’s lesson. Our job is to show compassion where contempt would normally reside.

As we study the life of David, although he was known as a man of war (2 Samuel 17:7-8), we learn that he was also a kindhearted king and one who ruled with justice (2 Samuel 8:15). This week’s lesson reveals the kindness of David shown to one of King Saul’s sons, Mephibosheth, which makes it easy for us to understand why Samuel said that David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). The only thing recorded in this chapter is the kindness David showed to Jonathan’s son because of the love he and Jonathan had for each other (1 Samuel 18:1-3, 1 Samuel 1:26).

Background

After returning the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and establishing himself as king over Israel, David set about subjugating his enemies. David conquered the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, and the Edomites, giving Israel control of land as far as the Euphrates (2 Samuel 8). David was at the height of his power. Still, he remembered his close friend, Jonathan. David and Jonathan had grown to be the closest of friends. Though Jonathan was Saul’s biological heir, he recognized that God’s hand was on David to be the next ruler. Jonathan even stopped his father Saul from taking David’s life (1 Samuel 19:1–7). Jonathan had been fully devoted to David, and David was fully devoted to Jonathan in return. This devotion continued even after Jonathan’s death.

David Reaches out to Saul’s Servant (2 Samuel 9:1–3)

In addition to being a fierce warrior and a capable administrator, David proved himself to be a kind and just king. He sought to honor the pledge he made to Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14–15), where he agreed to treat Jonathan’s family with faithful love. Once established in his reign, David inquired after the descendants of Saul to whom he could show the kindness of God because of his love for Jonathan.

David consults with Saul’s land steward who informs him that a son of Jonathan still lives. His name was Mephibosheth. Unfortunately, Mephibosheth was crippled and living in the obscure village of Lo-debar. The name Lo-debar is thought to mean “without pasture.” This was not choice land by any means. Mephibosheth was only five when his father Jonathan was killed.

David was in exile during that time and knew nothing of Mephibosheth. David’s inquiry about the descendants of Saul demonstrates a profound devotion to Jonathan and his memory. It also reveals something about David personally. He had achieved great success, and he still felt it important to show kindness.

David Rewards Saul's Son (2 Samuel 9:4–7)

Upon learning Mephibosheth whereabouts, David sends for him at once. Mephibosheth appears before David bowing low to show him utmost respect. Mephibosheth is afraid when he approaches David, and with good reason. It was customary for a new king to wipe out any remnants of rival dynasties.

David acts quickly to allay his fears, however (v. 7). David tells Mephibosheth not to be afraid because David intends to show him kindness to honor the memory of Jonathan. Saul's family estate had fallen to David either through Michal, his wife, or the rebellion of Ishbosheth. David intends to restore Saul's property to Mephibosheth and offers him a place at the king's table.

Mephibosheth responds with great humility. He had been afraid of finding his own destruction, but now Mephibosheth realizes that David had summoned him so he could honor him and restore his family's land. He became the stunned beneficiary of a pact David had made with his father years before.

David Restores Saul's Legacy (2 Samuel 9:8–12)

Restoring Saul's family estate was an act of extreme kindness. Saul's ancestral lands would become Mephibosheth's. David then goes even further, establishing a means for Mephibosheth to collect an income for years to come.

Ziba, the land steward, is appointed to manage the land for Mephibosheth. In exchange, he would receive half of the proceeds of the land. The rest would go to Mephibosheth. Ziba himself has fifteen sons and twenty servants. This is mentioned to show that Mephibosheth would be honored like one of the king's sons.

Finally, Mephibosheth also had a son. This son would carry on the name and preserve the memory of David's dear friend Jonathan.

Final Thoughts

The story of David and Mephibosheth is a story about kindness, restoration, and justice. However, at its core, it is a story about relationship. David had a very close friendship with Jonathan. David showed kindness and justice to Mephibosheth because he had promised King Saul that he would not cut off his descendants. But David was also kind and just to Mephibosheth because Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father and Saul's son had been kind to him. As a man after God's own heart, David sought to rule Israel by demonstrating the characteristics of divine justice that God required of all Israelites. To demonstrate justice and kindness, as believers we must be ready to go beyond simply loving those who love us; we must love those who don't love us as well and treat everyone the way we want to be treated, fairly and with kindness. When we demonstrate this type of kindness and justice to those around us, it helps bring them into a right relationship with us and points them toward a right relationship with God. The ultimate goal of the justice that God is requiring is not to reward ourselves, but it is for Him to get the glory in the end.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!