

Adult Teaching Resources

November 22, 2015



A Time for Gratitude

You're All I Have — Ruth 1:1-2:23

An Odd Road to a Happy Ending — Ruth 3:1-4:21

Transformational Tears — 1 Samuel 1:1-28

Thanks for the Promises — 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Hope Waits

A Time for Anticipation — 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

www.baptiststoday.org

Subscribe to *Baptists Today* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.

www.nurturingfaith.net

Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Thanks for the Promises

2 Samuel 23:1-7

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Collect enough rocks so each class member can have one. Have index cards and pens for each class member.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

Where have you seen rocks that have impressed you? (a brook full of rocks, waterfall over rocks, the Grand Canyon, mountains, etc.)

What rock are you wearing today? (gold necklace, diamond ring, metal belt buckle, etc.)

Information

[Distribute rocks, index cards and pens.]

Now that everyone has a rock, I would like for you to study it for a minute. Then, on your index card, jot down three words that describe your rock.

[After a minute for silence and writing, ask class members to share their words as you write them on the board. Put check marks by words that have already been said.]

Do we see any common threads here?

[Have a class member read II Samuel 23:1-4.]

Rocks are lifeless and inanimate. They do not communicate with us, do not have emotion for us, and do not make commitments with us. Why do you think David compares God to a rock?

Biblical scholars have several suggestions. “Rock” may refer to Mt. Sinai where the Ten Commandments were delivered to Moses. So, rock = Law or rule of life. Rock may refer to an altar where animals are sacrificed. So, rock = a place of forgiveness and reconciliation. Rock may refer to a place where we find protection. So, rock = a shelter from danger.

Do you recall a story about David and some rocks he picked up along a stream? How might that memory have shaped David’s metaphor for God as a rock?

David uses another image from nature, this time not referring to God, but to the leader of

Information *continued*

God's people. The just ruler is like a sunrise after a rainy night. What do you think David had in mind with this metaphor?

David was a political leader — the second king of Israel — and he was reflecting on a political leader's role.

Many years later, the prophet Micah summed up the law. As you listen to this, consider what it would be like to have a national leader that took this as a mandate.

[Have a class member read Micah 6:8.]

What would it be like to have a leader who insisted on justice, who acted kindly, and who had a humble relationship with God?

Wouldn't that be refreshing, like a sunrise after a stormy night?

Many leaders do the opposite. They sacrifice justice for personal wealth and their wealthy benefactors. They consider kindness to be a form of naïve weakness. They use "God language" to secure more votes and to prove that God is on their side of the issues. But, there are others who do look out for the interests of those being treated unjustly, who speak well of others with whom they disagree, and who do not use their relationship with God for political points. This is still true in the Middle East (where David ruled). Is it true in our own nation? Is it true in all nations?

Our nation is entering another year's worth of political campaigning for national leaders. How could we use Micah's words as a yardstick to measure politician's promises (and records)? [What do they say about wealth and poverty? What do they say about violence — the opposite of kindness? How do they use or not use "God-talk"? etc.]

David uses language about nature to describe God and God's leaders.

David continues to use metaphors from nature to describe God's judgment on unjust, unkind, God-fearless leaders.

[Have a class member read II Samuel 23:5-7.]

These leaders are thorns. What do you think David was saying with that metaphor?

David offers a picture of judgment as a roaring, consuming fire. THE BIBLE LESSON writer notes, "Wicked leaders do not spontaneously combust. Nevertheless, the principle is that good leaders who practice justice bring order, beauty, and prosperity to their people, while evil or selfish leaders bring ruin to their countries and, ultimately, to themselves."

If this is true, how have you seen this play out?

Transformational Exercise

[Read this paragraph.]

“The evidence for David’s pervasive, saturated awareness of God is in his profusion of metaphors...David was immersed in God. Every visibility revealed for him an invisibility. David named God by metaphors. There is an organic interconnectedness in the comprehensive totality of creation, visible and invisible...by means of which everything seen and heard, tasted, touched and experienced, if only followed far enough, brings us into the presence of God. Even rocks. ...Is there anything lower on the scale of creation than a rock? Yet the extreme unlikeliness provoked in David an awareness of likeness.”

[Eugene H. Peterson. *Leap Over A Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians*. HarperSanFrancisco. 1997. p. 206f.]

Take another look at your rock. In the next few minutes of silence, use the other side of your card to write a sentence or two of a metaphor about God. “God is my rock, because God ...” You are not limited to this rock, however. Use any image from nature. David used a sunset and a roaring fire in this passage. What in creation reminds you of God? “God is my _____, because God...”

After a time of silence, I’ll ask those who would to share your metaphor with us.

[After reflection, writing, and sharing, close in a prayer something like this: *God of creation, So much of your creation can draw us back to thoughts of you. Even lowly rocks. Help us to have the awareness of you that David had. We pray for our nation’s leaders. We pray they will have the spirit that Micah preaches about. We pray for leaders who love justice, practice kindness, and who walk humbly with you. Amen.*]

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Stories that didn't fit — At the end of 2 Samuel is a collection of traditions attached to David that didn't fit well into the narrative but were considered too important to leave out. The primary narrative ends with chapter 20, and doesn't pick up again until 1 Kings 1.

Chapter 21 of 2 Samuel describes events from early in David's reign in which David appears in a rather negative light, such as when he surrendered seven of Saul's sons to the Gibeonites for execution (21:1-14), and a series of battles with the Philistines in which someone named Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, not David, killed “Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam” (compare 1 Samuel 17, especially v. 7). Putting these stories in chronological order would have cast a shadow over David's rise to power, in which the narrator stressed only positive aspects of David's character and decision making.

Chapter 22 purports to be a psalm of David celebrating God's choice of David and the divine aid that enabled him to be victorious in war. It is virtually identical to Psalm 18.

Chapter 23 contains today's text, known as “the last words of David” (23:1-7), along with a list of heroic exploits carried out by David's most valiant warriors (23:8-39). The last warrior named is Uriah the Hittite, whose betrayal and death David had engineered in 2 Samuel 11.

Chapter 24 is the story of a census, paralleled with significant differences in 1 Chronicles 21, in which David's numbering of the people led to divine punishment and David's purchase of Araunah's threshing floor to build an altar — a spot that later became the site of the temple.

Last words? — The last words of David as recorded in the Deuteronomistic History are found in 1 Kings 2:1-9, and they contain both blessing and bitterness. In that text, David first blesses Solomon as his successor, then orders him to use his wisdom to contrive an excuse to execute Joab and Shimei. David bore grudges against both of them, but political expediency did not allow him to kill them during his own reign.

It is likely that the author/editors of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua—2 Kings, with the exception of Ruth) wanted David to be remembered more favorably, and so they either preserved or began a tradition identifying this more affirmative poem as “The Last Words of David.”

The Chronicler's history of David is deletes all references to wrongdoing and presents David as the ideal king. In 1 Chronicles, David's last recorded words are in a public speech in which he announced plans for the temple and endorsed Solomon as his successor (1

Digging Deeper *continued*

Chronicles 29).

A surprising parallel — The introduction to the “oracle” attributed to David in today’s text is surprisingly similar to an ancient oracle attribute to the pagan prophet Balaam, who was moved by God to bless Israel.

Both Num. 24:3 and 24:15 begin

*The oracle of Balaam, the son of Beor,
The oracle of a man whose eye is clear.*

2 Sam. 23:1 includes:

*The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
The oracle of the man whom God exalted.*

Some scholars note this similarity as evidence of the oracle’s antiquity, suggesting that it was a longstanding tradition rather than a late composition.

The prophet David? — In Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, he made reference to David as the ancestor of Jesus the Messiah, saying: “Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on the throne” (Acts 2:30). Peter’s claim that David had predicted Jesus’ resurrection is an example of a very loose quotation and exegesis of Ps. 16:10 that would not pass muster in a seminary classroom, but it was a common practice during the first century.

Psalm 16, while attributed to David, is clearly a personal prayer for protection and deliverance. In v. 10, the psalmist prays “For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.”

Peter changed the text from first person to third (“I” to “he”) and shifted its meaning from a personal prayer to a prediction about the coming Messiah: “Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption’” (Acts 2:31).

A later insertion? — Many scholars regard v. 2 as a later addition designed to bolster David’s prophetic image, in part because the term translated as “word” is not the expected *dabar*, but *millato*, a word that is characteristic of late Hebrew.

Another argument for v. 2 being a later insertion is that v. 3 already includes an introduction to the oracle: “The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me . . .” It seems unlikely that the original writer would introduce the oracle multiple times.

God as a rock — The use of “rock” as a metaphor for God’s protection (v. 3) is common in the psalms. Psalm 18, for example, uses it three times: “my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge” (v. 2), “And who is the Rock except our God?” (v. 31), and “The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!” (v. 46).

Digging Deeper *continued*

A contemporary song written by Michael O'shields and made popular by Petra employs the image in its chorus, frequently repeating: "The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock and may the God of my salvation be exalted."

Poetry in motion — Hebrew poetry is characterized by a rhythm of sense, rather than sound. Rather than having lines that end with the same sound, Hebrew poetry usually consists of couplets or triplets of lines that repeat, reverse, or expand upon the same thought.

Prophetic oracles were typically couched in poetry, and the passage attributed to David in 2 Sam. 23:3b-4 is no exception. It consists of two parallel lines that set up the condition of a just king, followed by two extended couplets elaborating on a metaphorical description of what such a king's rule is like.

Obedience and blessing — The books of Samuel, part of the Deuteronomistic History, include one illustration after another of how Israel or its leaders prosper when they are obedient, but suffer when they turn away from God. Even David is not immune to trouble: the Deuteronomistic author shows that God prospered David and gave him success as long as he was obedient and sought God's way (1 Samuel 16—2 Samuel 10). Once David "fell off the wagon" through his affair with Bathsheba and his resultant betrayal of Uriah, however, his rule was tarnished and his kingdom was troubled.

The book of 1 Chronicles also recounts David's rise and reign, but deletes all references to his shortcomings and presents him as the ideal king, without spot or blemish. It's surprising, then, that the present text appears in 2 Samuel rather than 1 Chronicles. Perhaps it is an earlier attempt to rebuild David's reputation, similar to the Chronicler's later and more thoroughgoing revision of his legacy.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Should modern governments be theocracies?

Israel, ideally, was a theocracy in which God was the nation's true king while the man on the throne was to act as God's representative. There was no separation of church and state in Israel, as we know today: the Israelites' very identity and existence was centered on their special relationship with God. This made it appropriate for Israel to have a state in which divine and human laws were one and the same, so long as the rulers rightly interpreted God's teaching and showed justice to all, including aliens in the land. Should such a government exist today? While some extremely conservative citizens hold to the myth that America was founded as a Christian nation and is God's "new Israel," the truth is that America has been pluralistic from the beginning. While we may draw on biblical principles as examples of just laws, and our culture is no doubt strongly influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, most of us know that it would not be right or fair to draw up laws based entirely on one leader or one party's particular interpretation of what God expects.

Even the modern state of Israel is a secular country. Despite efforts by the minority ultra-Orthodox to impose their own interpretations of scripture as the law of the land, the founders of Israel recognized that a government should not force sectarian laws on a pluralistic society. The closest thing we have to a "theocracy" today is the rule imposed by organizations such as the so-called "Islamic State" or Taliban strongholds, in which a rigid interpretation of *sharia* law is forced on all residents regardless of their faith. That alone should be example enough to warn us against the dangers of combining politics, power, and religion.

That does not mean that modern presidents, legislators, and court officials cannot learn from this text and lead the country in a way that respects human rights and treats all people fairly. They may do so in part due to a personal respect for God and for biblical teaching, or out of an innate sense of what is right and good. The important thing is that those who lead should lead rightly: those who have power should use their power for the common good.