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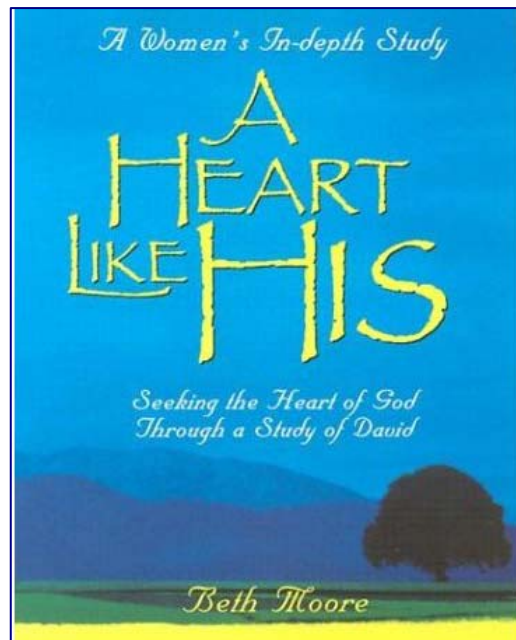
FAMILY MATTERS: TROUBLE AT HOME

[FAMILY RECONCILIATION: 2 SAMUEL 13-18]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

APRIL 6, 2008

LESSON #6 FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



FAMILY MATTERS: TROUBLE AT HOME

[FAMILY RECONCILIATION: 2 SAMUEL 13-18]

All of us can think times in our lives, probably not too far back, when anger just seemed to consume us. That car that cut us off on the way to work by changing lanes suddenly in front of us or that driver that stole the parking spot we were waiting on for twenty minutes in the rain. The list could go on and on. Anger is not something we seek after in our lives; however, it's something that frequently finds its way there—and it's so much harder when it happens in our very own families. But, that's exactly what we studied this week in Week #6 of our study from Beth Moore's *A Heart Like His*, when we read about a tragic series of events with David and his sons, Amnon and Absalom, and his daughter, Tamar. Our studies this week were from **2 Samuel 13-18**, but let me confess my own shortcoming this week as we start this lesson.

I was the mall last week, riding around and around the parking lot trying to find a parking place close to the entrance since it was drizzling rain. Finally, I saw someone getting ready to pull out of a space right outside the entrance. What luck! So, I pulled up near the space and am patiently holding back to allow the driver of the other car to back out of a parking space. There is another fellow coming towards me who also sees the soon-to-be vacant spot, so he stops on the other side of the car. Guess what he did? As soon as the other motorist back out, the other man quickly drives into the space I am just about to drive into. How dare he! Didn't he SEE that I was politely waiting for the other car to drive away so that I could drive into his space? I had EARNED my right to that place—he just snatched it! I glare furiously at him as I honk my horn and sweep past him. I can see by the smirk on his face that he is really quite pleased with himself. "I did that very well didn't I," he is probably saying to himself, "HE'LL just have to find himself another space - ha ha!" So what am I to do next? How can I get my revenge on this guy?

Do you remember seeing the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes* several years ago where a similar thing happened to Kathy Bates' character? Do you remember what she did? [RAMMED THE OTHER PERSON'S CAR BY BACKING UP AND HITTING IT FIVE OR SIX TIMES] Deep down I loved her response for some reason—and unfortunately, I had similar thoughts. But, why? What happens to us in these situations? **When someone wrongs you or wrongs someone close to you, what is your typical reaction?**

Do you recall what Paul said about this in his life—doing what he didn't really want to do? *"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ROMANS 7:15 (NASB)* Isn't that us too? Whew!

But, as we read and learned this week about David, this span of his life was tough sledding for he and his children. We know all too well, however, that sin never fails to bring painful repercussions and this week it came full circle as we saw the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy regarding David's sin. Open your Bible to **2 SAMUEL 12: 10-12 (NLT)** and follow along as I read. This happens right after Nathan confronts David about Bathsheba and his sin. *¹⁰From this time on, your **family will live by the sword** because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own. ¹¹"This is what the LORD says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. ¹²You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel."*

A family in trouble is a common experience, but it's never a pretty picture. Did you hear about the classified ad in a San Francisco newspaper that read, "2007 Mercedes SL550, fully loaded? First \$50 gets the car." A man read this and called to see if it was a misprint. To his surprise it was not. He rushed over there and gave the woman the \$50 and as she handed over the title to the car he asked why she was selling it for so cheap. She replied, "My husband

just called from Las Vegas where he is with his secretary. He lost all of his money and wanted me to sell the car and send half of what I got for it to him so he could come home!" I'm sending him his half today--\$25. Just as with this woman, it is so easy for us to seek revenge ourselves, but that's not what God wants from us. God tells us in **ROMANS 12:19**, *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

When trouble comes from within our family, it's a lot harder to bear than, say, those external struggles we talked about—like someone stealing my parking place or cutting me off in traffic. This week, David had nothing but family problems from within and he responded poorly. We can't ever forget that *"we reap what we sow, forgiveness notwithstanding!"* Listen to these words from Paul's letter to the Galatians in **GALATIANS 6:7-8 (NASB)**, *"⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption..."*

I can't help but remind you here that if there is anything we have been duped into believing in our generation of erroneous teachings and prosperity gospel on grace, it is the thinking that if we will simply confess our sins and claim God's forgiveness, then all the consequences of what we have done will be quickly swept away. WRONG! Grace means that God, in forgiving you, does not KILL you. Grace means that God, in forgiving you, gives you the strength to endure the consequences. Grace frees us so that we can obey our LORD. It does not mean sin's consequences are automatically removed. Think about this a second more. If I sin and in the process of sinning break my arm, when I find forgiveness from sin, I still have to deal with a broken bone. Isn't it amazing how we will accept that in the physical realm? No one here this morning would deny that. A broken arm is a broken arm, when I have been forgiven or whether I'm still living under the guilt of my sin.

But, let's get back to our lesson this week about David and his family troubles. Since we read lots of scripture this week, **2**

Samuel 13-18, there's not enough time to re-read it all this morning. I encourage you to spend time during the week reading the passages in our lesson so we can review and get some life principles out on the table on Sunday. Certainly the life of David, the man after God's own heart, is no advertisement for a trouble-free life. As we've made this journey together over the last five weeks through portions of David's life, we've discovered that it often consisted of one trial after another. He spent years in the wilderness, running for his life even though God had already anointed him as king. His family was the epitome of a dysfunctional family. David committed adultery and murder and he suffered the consequences of his sin.

Like David, we can't control much of the difficulty and suffering that comes into our lives, but we certainly can control how we respond to those afflictions. And depending on how we respond, we can either become bitter or better. It's our choice. The events in the life of David that we'll look at this morning cover quite a long period of time – probably about eleven years or so. Here is some background and then we'll look at a few passages that present three principles that David applied that helped him to become better rather than bitter.

In 2 Samuel 13, we read that David's son Amnon was infatuated with Tamar, the sister of his half-brother Absalom. So Amnon staged an elaborate plan that provided him with the opportunity to rape Tamar. Absalom was outraged when he found out and in turn devised a plot to murder Amnon. Even though he was David's favorite son, Absalom knew that David would not be happy with him and so he went across the Jordan River into exile.

Three years later, David invited Absalom to return home, but David, in his bitterness, did not allow Absalom to see him or even have any contact with him. Eventually Absalom gave up any hope of intimacy with his father and he began plotting to overthrow David's kingdom and take the throne himself. After four years of sowing seeds of dissention, Absalom executed his plan and took over Jerusalem and the royal palace and David once again had to

flee for his life. Yet again, David found himself back in the wilderness, the place where much of his character had been developed before. And in the wilderness, David returns to those roots and he is transformed from his bitterness.

Let's look at three passages that demonstrate how David recovered the characteristics that helped to make him a man after God's own heart and how by doing so he was able to become better rather than bitter. When there are problems with the family, trials, tribulations, how can we let our sufferings make us better?

First, **RECOVER YOUR HUMILITY.**

Turn to **2 SAMUEL 16:5-14 (NLT)** and follow along: *⁵As King David came to Bahurim, a man came out of the village cursing them. It was Shimei son of Gera, from the same clan as Saul's family. ⁶ He threw stones at the king and the king's officers and all the mighty warriors who surrounded him. ⁷ "Get out of here, you murderer, you scoundrel!" he shouted at David. ⁸ "The Lord is paying you back for all the bloodshed in Saul's clan. You stole his throne, and now the Lord has given it to your son Absalom. At last you will taste some of your own medicine, for you are a murderer!" ⁹ "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" Abishai son of Zeruah demanded. "Let me go over and cut off his head!" ¹⁰ "No!" the king said. "Who asked your opinion, you sons of Zeruah! If the Lord has told him to curse me, who are you to stop him?" ¹¹ Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "My own son is trying to kill me. Doesn't this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to do it. ¹² And perhaps the Lord will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses today." ¹³ So David and his men continued down the road, and Shimei kept pace with them on a nearby hillside, cursing as he went and throwing stones at David and tossing dust into the air. ¹⁴ The king and all who were with him grew weary along the way, so they rested when they reached the Jordan River.*

As we've seen before, from time to time, David had a tendency to get wrapped up in himself and in his position as the king of Israel. We recall from our study over the past few weeks that David decided he would build a house for God. And certainly much of the sin in David's life occurred when he focused on himself and his power and influence.

But now in the wilderness, as Shimei yells curses at David, David recovers his sense of humility. Instead of killing the messenger like his officials wanted to do, David chooses to listen to the words of Shimei and through Shimei he hears the word of God. David is brought face to face with his own sinfulness and he is humbled. David realized that he wasn't any better than anyone else. Because he recovered his humility, David allowed his suffering to bring him into the presence of God where he could find mercy and grace.

Whenever I go through a difficult time in my life, I have a choice. I can sit there and stew in my anger toward another person who I feel has wronged me or caused my problems. I can let my anger against God control my life. I can sit there and wallow in self-pity. Or I can, like David, choose to humble myself and enter into God's grace and mercy. I can reflect on the fact that I am a sinner, saved only by the grace of God.

You may recall that Paul was able to apply the very same lessons in the midst of his suffering. We know that Paul was tormented by his thorn in the flesh, whatever that was. We also know that he was arrested, beaten and persecuted for his faith. But Paul faced all these trials with a deep sense of humility:

For I am the least of the apostles...1 Corinthians 15:9 (NIV)

...I am the least deserving Christian there is... Ephesians 3:8 (NLT)

...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. 1 Timothy 1:15 (NIV)

The truth is that I deserve every bit of suffering that comes into my life. No matter how good I am, I am a sinner. Time after time I have fallen short of God's glory. That kind of humility allows me to get in touch with who I really am. And when I do that, it puts me on the road to getting better rather than bitter.

Second, **RECOVER MY LIFE OF PRAYER.**

In these chapters we read about one of David's most trusted advisors, a man named Ahithophel. Look at **2 Samuel 16:23** for a moment: *²³Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice.*

Apparently David had come to rely upon Ahithophel whenever he needed advice and counsel. Ahithophel was not just David's trusted advisor; he also became a good friend. But when Absalom planned his betrayal of King David, Ahithophel could see the handwriting on the wall. An opportunist at heart, Ahithophel went over to the other side and became Absalom's advisor. We know from our previous looks at the life of David that when he got into trouble, David often prayed. But there is some evidence in the text that perhaps David had come to rely upon Ahithophel and his other advisors a little too much, perhaps even more that he had relied upon God. But when Ahithophel betrayed David and went over to Absalom's side, David returned to his roots and prayed: Look at **2 Samuel 15:31 (NIV)**, *Now David had been told, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." So David prayed, "O LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."*

In fact, it appears that many of David's prayers during this time in his life were written down and we have them today in the form of several Psalms:

- The inscription for Psalm 3 tells us it was written as David fled from Absalom.
- The Jews associate Psalm 55 with Ahithophel's betrayal of David, which seems reasonable given that the Psalm deals with the betrayal by the Psalmist's friends.

- Psalms 22, 41, 63, 109 and others all seem to be influenced by those who betrayed David.

When difficulties come into our lives, it will either drive us away from God or draw us closer to Him. And perhaps our response is best demonstrated by what happens in our prayer life. When we're struggling in our life, we can either look for relief everywhere else, or we can turn to God in prayer. Isaac Bashevis Singer, a Nobel Prize winning Jewish author, hit the nail on the head when he once said, *"I pray only when I am in trouble; but I am in trouble all the time so I pray all the time."*

Humility lets me get in touch with who I am and that begins the road to recovery. **Prayer** lets me get in touch with who God is. And that is a crucial second step to becoming better and not bitter in the midst of my suffering.

Third, **RECOVER MY COMPASSION**. Now that David has gotten in touch with who he is before God and who God is, he is in a position to complete the process of getting better by recovering his compassion. Through humility and prayer, David seems to finally recognize that Absalom's rebellion, at least in part, is due to David's rejection of Absalom over a decade earlier.

David's rejection is now transformed into compassion and love for his son. Once again David is in the midst of battle. Unfortunately this time, the enemy is not some foreign country – it is his own son. Although David is ready to go into battle with his troops, his commanders convince David to stay behind and give them support from the city. But before the troops left to go into battle, David demonstrated his love and compassion by giving this specific command to his commanders:

The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, *"Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.*

2 Samuel 18:5 (NIV) During the battle, Absalom's hair got caught in a tree while he was riding his mule. The mule kept going,

leaving Absalom hanging from the tree by his hair. One of the men reports this to Joab, one of David's three generals. Joab and ten of his armor bearers, ignoring the command of David, kill Absalom while he is still hanging from the tree. The word of Absalom's death finally gets back to David and once again David demonstrates his compassion.

Look at **2 Samuel 18: 33 (NIV)**: *The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - O Absalom, my son, my son!"*

When we face suffering in our lives, there is a tendency to focus only on ourselves. But by beginning with humility and progressing on to prayer, we find that our focus shifts from us to God and to other people. It enables us to look at those who have hurt us with compassion and love, rather than bitterness.

Sigmund Freud died at the age of 83, a bitter and disillusioned man. Tragically, Freud, one of the most influential thinkers of our time, had little compassion for the common person. Freud wrote in 1918, "I have found little that is good about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or to none at all". Because he failed to exercise compassion Freud died friendless and alone.

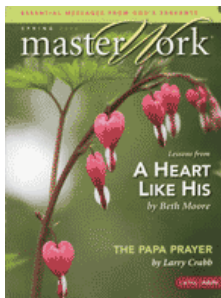
Over 3,000 years after David's life, Jesus taught his disciples the importance of exercising love and compassion when we suffer. Jesus said these words in his Sermon on the Mount from **MATTHEW 5:44**: *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*

If I want to become better and not bitter in the midst of my trials, I must begin by taking an honest look at my own life so that I am humbled by recognizing that I am nothing more than a sinner saved by God's grace. Then I have to get my focus off of myself

and on to God by spending time with Him in prayer. And those two steps will then allow me to treat others with compassion and love.

Because we live in a world that is full of sin, we will experience pain, trials, afflictions and suffering. Following Jesus Christ is no guarantee that we'll somehow be spared from pain and suffering, in spite of what we might hear from some pulpits and in some books written by authors who call themselves Christians. Let's not forget the words from Paul in **Philippians 4:13**, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Let's pray!



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