

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 21: Kindness to Mephibosheth; David and Bathsheba

2 Samuel 9:1–11:27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson carries two very different scenes, and the teacher should let each do its work. First, in chapter 9, David's kindness to Mephibosheth is a beautiful picture of grace toward the undeserving. David seeks out the surviving son of his enemy's house, not to destroy but to bless, honoring the covenant he had made with Jonathan. Mephibosheth, lame in both feet and hiding in Lo-debar, is restored and seated at the king's table as one of the king's own sons. Draw out the gospel echoes gently. We too were brought from nowhere and seated at the King's table by a grace we did not earn, for the sake of a covenant we did not make (Ephesians 2:4–7). Let the class feel the warmth of this scene before the chapter turns.

Then, beginning in chapter 11, comes the account of David's great sin, and here the teacher must handle the material with restraint before a mixed adult audience. Name the sin honestly, David's adultery with Bathsheba, his attempt to cover it, and finally his arranging the death of her husband Uriah, one of his loyal soldiers. Do this without dwelling on sordid details. Show the chilling progression, how one sin led to another, idleness to lust, lust to adultery, adultery to deceit, deceit to murder. Do not excuse or approve the sin in any way. Let the somber closing line carry its full weight, but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord (11:27).

Save the confrontation and David's repentance for the next lesson; this lesson's work is to let the seriousness of sin land. Place the heaviest weight on the deceit and the gravity of sin, and on the sobering truth that even a man after God's own heart could fall this far. The lesson for us is humility and watchfulness, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12), and take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, for Christians can indeed depart from the living God if they harden their hearts (Hebrews 3:12–14). The grace of the king's table and the warning of the rooftop belong together in this lesson, mercy that humbles us and a fall that sober us.

Question 1

Student Question:

David showed kindness to Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake and because of a covenant; what does this reveal about the nature of grace and the ground on which God shows kindness to us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter opens with a question that reveals David's heart. Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? In the ancient world, a new

dynasty routinely eliminated the old one to remove all rival claims. David goes looking for the opposite reason. He wants to find a survivor of Saul's house, not to harm, but to bless.

Notice the ground of the kindness. It is for Jonathan's sake, rooted in the covenant David and Jonathan had made years before (1 Samuel 20:14–17). David is keeping faith with a promise. The kindness flows not from Mephibosheth's worthiness, which is never mentioned, but from a covenant love that reaches past the present moment.

This is precisely how grace works. God shows kindness to us not because of our merit but for the sake of another, for Christ's sake, in keeping with His covenant promise. Mephibosheth did nothing to earn what David offered; he received it freely as the heir of a covenant he had no part in making.

For the teacher, let the warmth of this set the tone. The God we serve is the seeking God, the God who looks for the lost and broken in order to bless them. David, here at his best, reflects the very heart of the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace is shown for the sake of a covenant, not because of the recipient's merit.
- David sought to bless rather than destroy his enemy's house.
- The kindness honored the covenant with Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14–17).
- God shows us kindness for Christ's sake, in keeping with His promise.

Discussion Prompts

- On what ground did David show kindness to Mephibosheth?
- How does kindness rooted in covenant differ from kindness based on merit?
- How does David's seeking heart reflect the heart of God toward us?

Question 2

Student Question:

Who in your life is hiding in a Lo-debar, expecting rejection, to whom you could extend the kind of unearned kindness David showed Mephibosheth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves David's example into our own relationships. Mephibosheth was hiding in Lo-debar, a name that means a place of no pasture, a place of barrenness and nothing. He expected the worst from the new king. Many people around us live in their own Lo-debar, braced for rejection, certain they are unwanted or beyond kindness.

David's grace teaches us to seek such people out. The kindness that mirrors God does not wait to be deserved and does not wait to be asked. It goes looking. It crosses old hostilities, as David crossed the long enmity with Saul's house, to offer blessing where blessing is least expected.

Help the class put faces to this. Who is the estranged relative, the difficult neighbor, the overlooked person, the one who assumes you would never reach out? Grace given to such a person can be a window through which they glimpse the kindness of God.

Press toward action. Unearned kindness is most like the gospel when it is specific and costly. Encourage one concrete step toward someone in their Lo-debar.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Many people live braced for rejection, in their own Lo-debar.
- Grace that mirrors God seeks people out rather than waiting to be asked.
- Such kindness crosses old hostilities to offer unexpected blessing.
- Unearned kindness is most gospel-like when specific and costly.

Discussion Prompts

- Who in your life is hiding in a Lo-debar, expecting rejection?
- What old hostility or distance might grace call you to cross?
- What is one concrete kindness you could extend this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Mephibosheth, lame and undeserving, was seated at the king's table to eat as one of the king's sons continually; how does this picture the privilege God grants to those He brings near?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The climax of the Mephibosheth story is the table. David restores all of Saul's land to him and declares, thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And the text underlines it: Mephibosheth did eat continually at the king's table, as one of the king's sons. A lame man, the heir of a fallen house, with no claim of his own, is seated among princes and treated as family.

Linger on the picture. His lameness is mentioned again at the very end of the chapter, as if to say his weakness never disqualified him from the table. He did not earn his seat; he was given it. And it was not a one-time meal but a continual place, a permanent belonging in the king's household.

This is one of the clearest Old Testament foreshadowings of the gospel. God in His rich mercy raises us up and seats us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7). We come

to His table not as those who have earned a place but as those brought near by grace, welcomed as sons and daughters, our weakness no barrier to His welcome.

For the teacher, let the class dwell at this table. The wonder of belonging, granted to the undeserving and the weak, is the wonder of our own salvation. Mephibosheth's feet were still lame, but he ate as a son.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Mephibosheth's permanent place at the table pictures gracious belonging.
- His weakness and lameness never disqualified him from the king's welcome.
- He was given, not granted by merit, a continual place as a son.
- This foreshadows being seated with Christ by grace (Ephesians 2:4–7).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the text keep mentioning Mephibosheth's lameness alongside his place at the table?
- How does this scene picture the believer's standing in Christ?
- What does it mean that his place was continual, not occasional?

Question 4

Student Question:

How does remembering that you have been seated at the King's table by grace, not merit, shape the way you treat others and view yourself?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the table scene toward our own hearts and relationships. If we have truly grasped that we sit at the King's table by grace and not by merit, it must change how we see ourselves and how we treat others. The one who knows he was seated by mercy cannot look down on anyone.

Consider how this humbles us. We are all Mephibosheth, lame in some way, brought from our own Lo-debar, given a place we never earned. Remembering this drains away the pride and the sense of superiority that poison our relationships. Grace received freely should flow out freely.

It also heals our view of self. The believer who feels unworthy, too weak or too damaged to belong, can look at Mephibosheth and take heart. Your weakness does not disqualify you from the King's welcome; His grace, not your worth, secures your seat.

Encourage the class to let this truth reshape one relationship and one self-perception. The memory of grace received is the engine of grace given and the cure for both pride and despair.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Knowing we were seated by grace forbids looking down on anyone.
- We are all Mephibosheth, brought from nowhere and given a place.
- Grace received freely should flow out to others freely.
- Our weakness does not disqualify us from the King's welcome.

Discussion Prompts

- How does remembering you were seated by grace change how you treat others?
- How does it answer the feeling that you are too weak or unworthy to belong?
- Whom might you treat differently this week in light of the grace shown to you?

Question 5

Student Question:

The account of David's sin begins by noting that he remained at home when kings go forth to battle; what does this teach about how idleness and being out of our proper place can open the door to temptation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the chapter turns, and we must read carefully and soberly. The account of David's great sin opens with a quiet but telling detail. It was the time when kings go forth to battle, but David tarried still at Jerusalem. The king who should have been with his army was idle on his rooftop. He was out of his proper place, and the door to temptation stood open.

The text seems to want us to see this. David was not where he should have been, doing what he should have been doing. Idleness and being out of place are not themselves the sin, but they create the conditions in which sin grows. From the rooftop David saw, and instead of turning away, he lingered, inquired, and sinned.

There is a sober warning here for all of us. Temptation often finds us when we are idle, unaccountable, and out of our place, when we have stepped away from the duties and disciplines that keep us walking with God. The wandering eye and the wandering heart find their opening when the guard is down.

For the teacher, draw the lesson without sensationalism. The point is not to dramatize the scene but to mark the path. Sin rarely begins with the great act; it begins much earlier, in the small drift away from where we ought to be.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- David was out of his proper place, idle when he should have been at war.
- Idleness and lack of accountability create conditions for temptation.

- Sin begins earlier than the act, in the drift from where we ought to be.
- Linger rather than turning away let temptation take hold.

Discussion Prompts

- What detail at the start of the account hints at David's vulnerability?
- How do idleness and being out of place open the door to temptation?
- Where does sin actually begin, according to the flow of the story?

Question 6

Student Question:

Where in your own life are you most vulnerable to temptation when you are idle, unaccountable, or out of the place where you ought to be?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses David's vulnerability into our own self-knowledge. Each of us has particular conditions in which we are most exposed to temptation. For David it was idleness, privacy, and being unaccountable on a rooftop while others were at their posts. For us the circumstances differ, but the principle holds.

Wisdom means knowing our own weak points. When are you most vulnerable, when you are bored, alone, tired, away from accountability, off your normal routines? The enemy of our souls studies our patterns; we would be wise to study them too, not to despair but to guard.

God promises that with every temptation He provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), but we must be willing to take it, often by avoiding the conditions where we are weakest in the first place. The best battle against temptation is often fought before the moment of temptation arrives, by staying in our place and keeping accountable.

Encourage honest self-examination and one practical safeguard. What routine, relationship, or boundary would help you stay in your place when you are most prone to wander?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Each person has particular conditions of greatest vulnerability.
- Wisdom means knowing and guarding our own weak points.
- God provides a way of escape, but we must be willing to take it (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- Temptation is often best resisted before the moment arrives.

Discussion Prompts

- When and where are you most vulnerable to temptation?
- What practical safeguard could help you stay in your proper place?

- How can knowing your weak points become a means of guarding rather than despair?

Question 7

Student Question:

When Bathsheba sent word that she was with child, David tried to cover his sin rather than confess it; what does his scheming teach us about the way one sin tends to multiply into others?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When word comes that Bathsheba is with child, we reach a crossroads. David could have confessed. Instead he schemes to cover his sin. He recalls Uriah from the front, hoping the loyal soldier will go home to his wife so the child will appear to be Uriah's. But Uriah, more faithful than his king, refuses to enjoy comfort while the ark and the army are in the field. David's cover-up fails.

So one sin gives birth to the next. Adultery breeds deceit, and when deceit fails, deceit breeds something far worse. David sends Uriah back carrying his own death warrant, with orders that he be abandoned in the heat of battle to be killed. The man who would not confess one sin commits murder to hide it. This is the terrible logic of unconfessed sin.

James describes this very progression: lust, when it has conceived, brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death (James 1:15). Sin is never content to stay where it began. Refusing to bring it into the light, David is driven deeper and deeper into the dark, and a loyal man dies because of it.

For the teacher, mark the chain link by link without lurid detail. The lesson is the multiplying nature of sin and the catastrophic cost of covering rather than confessing. Each refusal to repent narrowed David's options and hardened his heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Refusing to confess, David schemed to cover his sin.
- One sin gave birth to the next, adultery to deceit to murder.
- Sin is never content to stay where it began (James 1:15).
- Covering sin rather than confessing it drives us deeper into darkness.

Discussion Prompts

- What were David's options when he learned of the pregnancy, and which did he choose?
- How did one sin lead step by step to another?
- What does this teach about the danger of covering rather than confessing sin?

Question 8

Student Question:

When you have sinned, are you more inclined to cover it and manage the consequences, or to confess it and bring it into the light, and why?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the multiplying nature of sin toward our own instincts. When we sin, two paths open before us, the path of covering and the path of confessing. David chose to cover, and it cost a man his life and very nearly his own soul. The instinct to hide is in all of us, and it is deadly.

Examine the impulse honestly. When we fail, the flesh rushes to manage the consequences, to spin the story, to keep the failure hidden. We tell ourselves we are protecting ourselves or others, but in truth we are choosing darkness over light. And what is hidden festers and grows.

Scripture points the other way. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Proverbs 28:13). If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). Confession feels like death to our pride, but it is the doorway to mercy and freedom. The light that exposes is the same light that heals.

Encourage the class toward the harder, better path. Where is something hidden that needs to be brought into the light, to God and perhaps to a trusted brother or sister? Naming it begins the breaking of its power.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- When we sin, the flesh rushes to cover rather than confess.
- Hidden sin festers and grows in the dark.
- Confession feels like death to pride but is the doorway to mercy (1 John 1:9).
- Bringing sin into the light begins the breaking of its power.

Discussion Prompts

- When you sin, are you more inclined to cover or to confess, and why?
- What makes confession feel so costly, and what does it actually open the door to?
- Is there something hidden that God is calling you to bring into the light?

Question 9**Student Question:**

The chapter closes with the words, but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord; what does the fall of a man after God's own heart, and God's grief over his sin, teach us about the deceitfulness and seriousness of sin and about the need to guard our own hearts?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter ends with one of the most sobering sentences in Scripture. After the adultery, the deceit, and the murder, after David takes Bathsheba to be his wife and the matter seems, on the surface, to be settled, the inspired writer adds a single devastating line: but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. The world may have seen a king tidying up an awkward situation. God saw sin, and God was grieved.

Sit with the weight of who this is. David is the man after God's own heart, the giant-slayer, the sweet psalmist of Israel, the king of the everlasting covenant. And he has fallen into adultery, deception, and murder. If David could fall this far, then no one is beyond the reach of sin's deceitfulness. The Scriptures sound the alarm: let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

This is a vital correction to a dangerous error. No height of past faithfulness makes a person immune to falling. The notion that a believer, once saved, can never be lost is flatly contradicted by warnings like this. The Hebrew writer pleads, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Hebrews 3:12–14). A child of God can indeed depart, and David stands here on the edge of that very cliff. Faithfulness is not a past achievement to coast on but a present walk to guard.

Mark also the deceitfulness of sin. It promised David a moment of pleasure and a manageable secret; it delivered guilt, deception, and a grave. Sin always lies about its cost. What looked controllable became uncontrollable. The thing that displeased the Lord would bring consequences that would haunt David's house for years to come.

For the teacher, let this be the heaviest weight of the lesson, but do not rush to resolution. The confrontation and the repentance belong to the next lesson. The work of this lesson is to let the seriousness of sin land fully on every heart, to humble us, to sober us, and to drive us to watchful, daily dependence on God's keeping grace. We close where the chapter closes, under the shadow of that solemn line, and we examine our own hearts.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God saw and was grieved by sin the world might have overlooked (11:27).
- Even a man after God's own heart could fall into grievous sin.
- No past faithfulness makes anyone immune from falling (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- A child of God can depart from the living God if the heart is hardened (Hebrews 3:12–14).
- Sin is deceitful, promising pleasure and delivering guilt and death.
- Watchful, daily dependence on God's grace is the only safeguard.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the closing line, but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, so significant?

- What does David's fall teach about the danger of presuming we could never fall?
- How does this warn against the idea that a believer can never be lost?

Question 10

Student Question:

Name one specific way this sobering chapter is moving the Lord to guard your heart and to keep you walking watchfully and humbly with Him.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the sobering weight of this chapter into a personal response. We have seen grace at the king's table and ruin on the king's rooftop, and both belong to us. The mercy humbles us; the fall sobers us. The question is what we will carry away into our own walk with God.

Encourage concrete reflection. For one student, this chapter may prompt a new watchfulness over an area of vulnerability. For another, it may call for honesty about something hidden that needs to be confessed. For another, it may renew gratitude for the grace that seats unworthy people at the King's table and a fresh resolve not to presume on it.

Aim the reflection toward Christ. Where David failed, Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). As we are formed into His likeness, we learn to flee temptation, to walk in the light, and to guard our hearts with humble dependence. The same Lord who was grieved by David's sin offers us, in Christ, the power to walk faithfully and the mercy to restore us when we stumble.

Close by inviting one namable step. Let no student leave merely shaken; let each leave resolved, naming one specific way they will walk more watchfully and humbly with the Lord this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace at the table and ruin on the rooftop both speak to us.
- The chapter calls for watchfulness, honesty, and renewed gratitude.
- Where David failed, Christ was tempted yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
- A namable step turns sober reflection into watchful obedience.

Discussion Prompts

- What has this chapter most awakened in you, watchfulness, honesty, or gratitude?
- How is Christ, who overcame temptation, forming you to walk more faithfully?
- What is one specific way you will guard your heart and walk humbly with God this week?