

## The David Series: Week 4 Devotions

In week 4 of the David Series we explored the theme of Betrayal in David's life. For this week the daily devotions will help us deal with betrayal in our lives.

### Day 1: Betrayal Revealed

#### Read:

"While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. 17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." 18 The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh. 19 The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? 20 Now, Your Majesty, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for giving him into your hands." 21 Saul replied, "The Lord bless you for your concern for me. 22 Go and get more information. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. 23 Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah." 24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David." (1 Samuel 23: 15 - 25)

#### Engage:

Today we heard about David's experience of betrayal. Having fought with all he had to protect the Ziphites, they were the very same people that went to Saul and betrayed David. They not only exposed David's location to Saul, but also agreed to get more information on David's hiding places. You read further along in 2 Samuel 15 and there you find that David is betrayed once again, but this time, by his own son – Absalom. Betrayal defined is an act of deliberate disloyalty. Imagine the pain that David experienced on both occasions of betrayal. Betrayal is terrible as it not only leaves us with trust issues towards the person who betrayed our trust but also towards others around us. We start to be paranoid and question the motives, even of well-meaning people. Worst of all, betrayal of those closest to us can affect the way we relate to Our Father in Heaven. We begin to question His love for us and sometimes even His existence. Let us remember that even as we experience the bitter taste of betrayal we shouldn't stop relating to and communicating with Our Father in Heaven. Let us also be prepared for instances of betrayal by virtue of being in close relationship with others. This is something that is bound to happen at some point, but what matters most is how we respond to these situations. Let us also remember that we too are capable of betrayal and that only God gives us the strength and wisdom not to betray others. Gossip is a common form of betrayal that we must all be aware of and be careful not to be part of as we do life with others. Proverbs 11:13 warns of a gossip betraying a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeping a secret. Unchecked we can all find ourselves gossiping without realising the impact it has on others. Be sure to be a trustworthy person who can be depended upon. This week, as we journey through betrayal, we will look at bitterness, imperfection, comfort, forgiveness, trust and God's faithfulness... as we journey together, let us really get into the Word and ask ourselves what it is that God wants us to get out of this aspect of David's life.

#### Respond:

1. Have you been betrayed recently by someone you thought you could trust? How did you respond?
2. Have you betrayed someone's trust of late? Have you asked for forgiveness and forgiven yourself?
3. More specifically, do you find yourself gossiping about people? What impact do you feel this has on them?

#### Let's Pray:

Lord, I pray that you show us examples of betrayal in our own lives and give us the strength, wisdom and courage to not violate the trust placed in us by others and to keep our commitments to them. Amen!

## Day 2: Bitterness Harboured

### Read:

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12: 14 - 15)

### Engage:

As I mentioned yesterday, it matters more what our response to betrayal is than the fact that we have been betrayed. Truth is, there is very little we can do about how others choose to treat us but we have control, with the power and help of Jesus, to determine how we respond or react. I remember someone once saying to me, in life, always aim to be a thermostat and not thermometer, and so it is with bitterness after betrayal. With a vague idea of the function of a thermostat in relation to a thermometer at the time, I had to take the time to understand what this statement meant. A thermostat is said to be a component which senses the temperature of a physical system and performs actions so that the system's temperature is maintained near a desired set point. A thermometer on the other hand is described as a device that measures temperature or a temperature gradient. A thermostat sets the 'tone' or atmosphere in other words, while a thermometer takes the temperature of the environment it finds itself in. Throughout the Bible a contrast is made between various characters who like David were betrayed but had one distinction – the ability or inability to overcome the temptation to harbour bitterness. Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines (Judges 16:16-21), Absalom betrayed David (2 Samuel 15:10-16), Jehu betrayed Joram (2 Kings 9:14-27) but worst of all Judas betrayed Jesus and so did Peter. The Bible makes such a clear distinction between Judas' response after betraying Jesus in comparison to Peter – the thermostat and thermometer effect. They say bitterness harboured is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die. The reason that simile is used is because bitterness does more harm to us than the person it's aimed at. Hence today's scripture speaks of a bitter root growing up to cause trouble and defile many. Let us keep a sharp eye out for weeds of bitter discontent in our hearts.

### Respond:

1. Are you currently harbouring any ill-feelings or bitterness towards someone who has betrayed you recently or in the past? How do these feelings affect you and your ability to relate to God and others?
2. Have you recently taken stock of where your heart is at and taken the time to sit in God's presence and asked him to help you deal with the pain, rejection, anger or bitterness in your heart? If not, take 5 minutes now to sit in His presence and invite Him in.

### Let's Pray:

Father in Heaven, today I pray that we be good stewards of our hearts that we may have the self-awareness to always conduct an introspection to understand where our hearts are at. I pray that bitterness will not take root in our lives and cause us to take the temperature of our atmosphere but rather that we be thermostats that define the atmosphere we want to be part of according to your will. In Jesus name we pray.

## Day 3: Imperfect People

### Read:

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:15,19)

### Engage:

These are the words of the Apostle Paul in the Bible and if we are to be honest with ourselves, we can definitely relate to what he is saying here, at least I do. Paul was confounded by his inclination to do bad in spite of his desire to do good. This speaks to our imperfection as fallen human beings. Think of all the times you've said the phrase "I'm sorry" and you'll know how imperfect you are. The same goes for everyone out there, your best friend/s, your parents, your pastor, your youth leader...basically your anyone and your everyone! Sadly this means that sometimes we will face disappointment and betrayal from those we deem closest to us.

God on the other hand promises to NEVER fail us and to NEVER forsake us! He alone is perfect and deserves our utmost trust. This does not mean we shouldn't trust those closest to us but it simply means we should live with the

awareness of their capability to disappoint us. This also helps us in forgiving as we realise that even we aren't perfect ourselves. The Bible in Psalms 118:8-9 says, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes." David was betrayed numerous times as we learnt on Sunday and from his experiences, he wrote the Psalms and he said in Psalms 62:8, "Trust in him at all times...pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge." We are imperfect but He is perfect, we fail but He never fails...let us give our unreserved trust to Him.

Respond:

1. Do you believe you are imperfect? What do you believe makes you imperfect?
2. Do you truly believe that God will never betray you? Why is that the case?

Let's Pray:

Dear God, give us the humble perspective that we are imperfect and help us lean on your strength and understanding in keeping our commitments to our loved ones. Help us root out the unfair expectations we've placed on others and always remind us that you will never fail us, Amen.

## **Day 4: Dependable Comforter**

Read:

But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten. (Jeremiah 20:11)

Engage:

Betrayal by a close friend is devastating. It produces a feeling of worthlessness for having trusted an untrustworthy person. It foments anger and depression. It raises questions about our judgment. Because of the intimate friend's knowledge of our situation, such betrayal has great potential for further damage. We often respond to abandonment or betrayal in anger, by dwelling on the circumstances. We often seek to get even or make our betrayers suffer intensely for how they've wronged us. Through Jesus' example, we see a proper model of how to handle betrayal. We read in Hebrews that Jesus understands all that we encounter and are tempted with, yet did not sin in his own temptations. He pressed on to the task that he was called to by the Father. Though Jesus' internal struggle with Judas' betrayal is not recorded, we can assume that it was difficult for him emotionally. We know that he instructed Judas to do what he'd set his mind to. He didn't stop him or throw a fit. We also know that Jesus responded to Judas graciously. Jesus could never be accused of being a pushover, but he framed his response to Judas' betrayal with kindness and graciousness.

If we have been betrayed by someone close to us—and eventually we all will—our first response should be to cry out to Jesus who loves us, pursues us, and intimately understands the reality of that betrayal.

Respond:

1. What is the first thing you tend to do when you are confronted with betrayal?
2. Do you believe that Jesus is the ultimate comforter?
3. How have you experienced or not experienced Jesus' comfort?

Let's Pray:

Lord, teach us to trust in you completely as our dependable comforter at all times. Where we have not run to you and run to other things as our comforters, teach us rely more on you and your power to heal our broken hearts.

## **Day 5: Unearned Forgiveness**

Read:

Ephesians 4:32  
Colossians 3:13  
Matthew 6:14 -15  
Romans 12:19  
Romans 12:14

\*Forgive me please, I couldn't just pick one scripture today as I was spoilt for choice. There is so much in the Word of God about forgiveness.\*

#### Engage:

So the betrayal has been revealed for what it is, you've acknowledged that you may be harbouring some bitterness, you recognise that people are imperfect and you've also accepted that you are not alone. God is there to comfort you and help lift you up in the midst of your betrayal. Now comes the ultimate question...Should you be forgiving someone that has betrayed you and left you in pain and broken? Well, the answer to that is clear in the Word - bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you [Colossians 3:13]. It sounds quite straight forward, right?! But we all know that it really isn't, matters of the heart are never clear-cut. So how does one actually forgive someone who has not earned or worse off even asked for your forgiveness?

I love this picture I have included today as symbolism for forgiving and forgetting. I remember attending a youth conference in 2006 and as part of one of the sessions we were told by the facilitator to take a piece of paper, take some time to reflect and write down the names of the people that had hurt us. Putting down the first name was tough, really tough, but thereafter the names began to flow. Before I knew it, I had a whole page full of names of people I had been harbouring bitter feelings over that I needed to forgive. When I looked at that paper, over 90% of the people on that page had never apologised. I wrestled with God asking Him why they deserved my forgiveness, it was a struggle! I am reminded of Matthew 6:14 -15 as I tell this story now... "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Please do not misinterpret this scripture – it's not a tit for tat situation but it is a reminder that God forgives us so many times for the things we do, almost on a daily basis. Why can we not do the same for others? This scripture is reminding us of what we discussed on Tuesday, that we too are imperfect people and should not withhold for others, the forgiveness that God grants us so freely.

So I set the paper on fire and watched it burn away to nothing. The writing was the forgiving aspect and then the burning was the forgetting, letting it go and leaving it behind aspect. I can't explain to you the weight that I felt had been lifted off my shoulders after that experience. And so it stands to reason, like we discussed on Monday, that bitterness – if harboured, takes root in your heart and grows into a tree that is watered by constantly replaying the betrayal. That doesn't have to be case with us because it takes so much from us. Instead, our comfort should be that we have the power to use the axe of forgiveness to cut down that tree and completely uproot it from our hearts with the practice of forgetting / letting it go.

Like David, find your strength in the Lord to help you forgive when you feel like you can't do it on your own. Remember as well, that you'll probably need to forgive countless times in your life just as you have had Christ do for you. So don't lose heart but instead, continue to "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

#### Respond:

1. Maybe you'd like to also spend some time, like I did all those years ago, to really reflect on the people that you need to forgive. I wouldn't recommend setting your paper on fire but a good option would be to tear it up and throw it away instead.
2. Take some time to journal about how that experience made you feel.
3. Challenge yourself to memorise one of the three scriptures I shared with you today.

#### Let's Pray:

Dear Lord, I thank You for the power of forgiveness, and I choose to forgive everyone who has hurt me. Help me set [name anyone who has offended you] free and release them to You [Romans 12:19]. Help me bless those who have hurt me [Romans 12:14]. Help me walk in righteousness, peace, and joy, demonstrating Your life here on earth. I choose to be kind and compassionate, forgiving others, just as You forgave me [Ephesians 4:32]. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Day 6: Trust Restored

### Read:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)

### Engage:

I'm sure you have all heard this saying before... "Once the trust is broken it can be restored but the relationship is never really the same again." I chose to use this picture today because I feel like it really drives that point across. This bowl fell and broke to a couple of pieces at some point, but then someone picked up the pieces and mended it together again. The bowl still works, but it will never really look the way it did before it was broken. Betrayal has the same effect on relationships as well. This reality check for me is a firm reminder of the importance of keeping our commitments to others like we prayed on Monday as the consequences of not doing so are real and far-reaching. One thing we know though is that we can always trust in Our Father in Heaven.

Trust is foundational to experiencing the incredible life God offers us in relationship with him. Trust is a commodity of the heart that is only truly given when someone or something proves itself trustworthy. I can only trust you to the measure that I believe you are trustworthy. I can only trust my vehicle to the extent that I believe it will get me somewhere safely.

Scripture makes powerful declarations about those who choose to place their trust in God over the world or themselves. Psalm 22:4-5 says, "In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame." Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." And Jeremiah 17:7 says simply, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord." We serve a God who is perfectly trustworthy. We serve a God who "so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. God has already given us everything. He has done enough to earn our trust. But no matter how trustworthy God is, we still must make the decision to trust him. And no more important decision could be made.

To place our trust in God is to found our lives on the unshakable, powerful, loving, and resourceful character of our heavenly Father. He alone has the ability to provide for us, heal us, love us, empower us, and save us. He alone is one to trust. When we place our hope in him, we anchor our lives, emotions, finances, relationships, and future in a God who wholly cares for us, loves us, and promises to provide for us.

God promises you in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." You do not have to go through life on your own. You do not have to carve out your own way. You do not have to work to be loved, liked, or provided for. When you place your trust in God, give him your heart, and follow him, you will discover a wealth of abundant life unseen by those living for the world. The Creator of all, the Author and Perfecter of your faith, is beckoning you to place your trust in him alone. He is beckoning you to stop looking to the world and yourself for that which only he can truly and consistently provide. Place your trust in him alone today and experience a peace and joy that comes from casting off the weight you were never made to carry.

### Respond:

1. Meditate on the trustworthiness of your heavenly Father. Allow Scripture to stir up your faith to place your trust in God alone.
2. Who or what are you placing your trust in? Who do you see as your provider, source of happiness, or foundation for your future?
3. Place your trust in God alone. Cast the cares of your life on his shoulders and receive his sustaining peace. Rest in his wonderful presence in faith that he will truly take care of you.

### Let's Pray:

Dear God,

What an incredible God you are! When I look at the beauty of your creation, I'm in awe of your mighty and majestic ways. When I see the work of your hand, I'm overwhelmed by your love for me. Lord, I believe that you saved my soul; help me trust that you have made me whole. Lord, I believe that you hear my prayers; help me trust that your answer is best. Lord, I trust that you created the mountains; help me trust that you can move them. Please forgive my failures and

Increase my ability to give you everything. Thank you, Jesus.

