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2 SAMUEL

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

How the Mighty Have Fallen — 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39

Scripture Scope: 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

2 Samuel — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

Week 1: How the Mighty Have Fallen (2 Samuel 1:1–3:39)

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- **The title:** In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel were one book, named for the prophet who anointed Israel's first two kings. 2 Samuel continues the story without a break.
- **The setting:** The reign of David, from Saul's death to the end of David's life, roughly 1010 to 970 BC. David reigned seven and a half years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem (5:4–5).
- **The main characters:** David, Joab, Abner, Michal, Nathan, Bathsheba, Uriah, Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Ahithophel, Hushai, Mephibosheth, and Shimei.
- **Its place in the Bible:** 2 Samuel fulfills Hannah's song about the LORD's anointed king (1 Samuel 2:10). Its seventh chapter, the LORD's covenant with David, is the foundation of Israel's hope for the Messiah, built on by the Psalms, the Prophets, and the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), and it leads directly into 1 Kings.
- **The structure (three parts):**
  - David's rise to full kingship and the LORD's covenant (chapters 1–10).
  - David's sin and its consequences in his family and kingdom (chapters 11–20).
  - An epilogue of six sections arranged in a mirror pattern (chapters 21–24).
- **Why it matters:** 2 Samuel shows the LORD keeping his promises to a king who is both a man after God's heart and a grievous sinner. It holds together covenant kindness, honest confession, real forgiveness, and lasting consequences, and it points beyond David to Jesus, the Son of David, whose kingdom has no end.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of 2 Samuel invites you to walk through the story of David's reign together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of 2 Samuel and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. 2 Samuel includes war, murder, and two scenes of sexual abuse of power. The study retells those scenes briefly and carefully in its own words rather than printing or reading them in full, so the group can understand what happened without dwelling on graphic detail.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through 2 Samuel:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week 2 Samuel Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**How the Mighty Have Fallen** (1:1–3:39)	David's Lament and Anointing in Hebron (1:1–2:7) / The Long War and Abner's Death (2:8–3:39)	The King who weeps over his enemies; the kingdom that comes God's way
2	**A House for David** (4:1–8:18)	King over All Israel, Jerusalem, and the Ark (4:1–6:23) / The LORD's Covenant with David (7:1–8:18)	The Davidic covenant fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David
3	**Kindness and Corruption** (9:1–12:31)	Kindness to Mephibosheth and War with Ammon (9:1–10:19) / David's Sin, Nathan's Rebuke, and Repentance (11:1–12:31)	A seat at the King's table; forgiveness through the true King
4	**The Sword in David's House** (13:1–14:33)	Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom's Revenge (13:1–39) / Absalom Brought Home (14:1–33)	God's justice for the wronged; the God who brings the banished home
5	**The King Flees** (15:1–17:29)	Absalom's Conspiracy and David's Flight (15:1–16:14) / Rival Counsel in Jerusalem (16:15–17:29)	The rejected King who goes out weeping; God overrules human plans
6	**O Absalom, My Son** (18:1–19:43)	The Battle and Absalom's Death (18:1–33) / The King Returns (19:1–43)	The Father's grief; mercy to enemies and the restored King
7	**Rebellion, Famine, and a Song** (20:1–22:51)	Sheba's Revolt, the Gibeonites, and the Giants (20:1–21:22) / David's Song of Deliverance (22:1–51)	The LORD our Rock; steadfast love to the anointed forever
8	**Last Words and an Altar** (23:1–24:25)	David's Last Words and Mighty Men (23:1–39) / The Census, the Plague, and the Altar (24:1–25)	The righteous Ruler; the costly sacrifice that stops judgment

How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

This **Leader Guide Edition** is built on a synchronized two-edition architecture so you never have to juggle two separate books during your small group or mini-church gathering:

1. 100% Word-for-Word Participant Text Included: Every section, Scripture reading prompt, verbatim ESV anchor verse callout, teaching narrative, table, and discussion or reflection prompt appears here **word-for-word identical** to what your group members see in their Participant Study Edition. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.

2. Interleaved `[LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY]` Blocks: Immediately following each section, you will find a dedicated leader block containing:

- **Pacing & Time Targets** calibrated for a 75–90 minute session. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. 2 Samuel weeks cover about 64–107 verses, so if time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives and the retellings rather than the discussion.
- **Hebrew Word Study & Ancient Near Eastern Research Quick-References** so you can explain terms naturally without lecturing, when they add something useful.
- **Question-by-Question Facilitation Probes** listed in question order, designed to move conversation past polite answers into honest reflection.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around** so you can gently redirect common rabbit trails back to the biblical text.

- **Additional Research Notes** appear when they add something useful.

3. Leader Flags: Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions, with guidance on handling them. 2 Samuel includes civil war and murders, David's abuse of power against Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah, the rape of Tamar by her half-brother, a son's rebellion and death, executions, and a plague. The flags give a consistent approach: retell the scene briefly in your own words, never read graphic verses aloud, never blame the victims, and make room for members who carry their own wounds.

4. Weeks 3 and 4: Chapters 11 and 13 involve sexual abuse of power. Before those sessions, consider telling the group privately what is coming, be ready with information about local pastoral care and counseling, and decide in advance who can sit with a member who needs to step out.

5. Reading aloud: Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Passages marked "in brief" are retold by the leader rather than read.

6. Facilitating well: Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

Section	Focus	Time Target
Section 1.1	Opening: How the Mighty Have Fallen (2 Samuel 1:1–3:39) (1.1 Q1)	**10 mins**
Section 1.2	Historical & Literary Context: From Gilboa to Hebron (1.2 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.3	Movement 1: David's Lament and Anointing in Hebron (2 Samuel 1:1–2:7) (1.3 Q1–Q5)	**22 mins**
Section 1.4	Movement 2: The Long War and Abner's Death (2 Samuel 2:8–3:39) (1.4 Q1–Q5)	**20 mins**
Section 1.5	Canonical Horizon: The King Who Weeps over His Enemies and the Kingdom That Comes God's Way (1.5 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.6	Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3)	**9 mins**
Total	**Full Week 1 Group Session**	**75–90 mins**

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · 2 SAMUEL 1:1–3:39

Week 1: How the Mighty Have Fallen

Scripture Scope: 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39 (ESV) • Focal Passages: 2 Samuel 1:1–16; 1:17–27; 2:1–7; 3:1, 6–21; 3:31–39 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: How the Mighty Have Fallen (2 Samuel 1:1–3:39)

Passage 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39

Opening

Saul is dead on Mount Gilboa, and Jonathan with him. When a messenger arrives at Ziklag carrying Saul's crown and expecting a reward, David does not celebrate. He tears his clothes, weeps, and sings one of the most moving laments in Scripture: how the mighty have fallen. Then, rather than seizing the throne, he asks the LORD where to go, and the men of Judah anoint him king at Hebron.

A long war follows between the house of Saul and the house of David. Abner, Saul's commander, finally comes over to David, only to be murdered by David's own commander. Once again David mourns. The road to the throne runs through grief, waiting, and a refusal to build the kingdom on bloodshed.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	2 Samuel 1:1–3:39 (the news of Saul's death, David's lament, David king in Hebron, the war with Saul's house, and Abner's death)
Focal Passages	2 Samuel 1:1–16; 1:17–27; 2:1–7; 3:1, 6–21; 3:31–39
Literary & Structural Anchor	David mourns Saul (ch. 1) and Abner (ch. 3), enemies whose deaths opened his way to the throne. His question to the Amalekite continues 1 Samuel's theme of the LORD's anointed. The refrain "how the mighty have fallen" frames his lament (1:19, 25, 27). David inquires of the LORD before moving (2:1). "House" recurs: the house of Saul and the house of David (3:1), preparing for the house the LORD will build for David (ch. 7). Joab and Abishai, the sons of Zeruiah, are fierce, loyal, and violent, and David's weakness in restraining them becomes a lifelong problem (3:39).
Big Idea	David receives the kingdom from the LORD's hand, mourns rather than celebrates the fall of his enemies, and refuses to build his throne on bloodshed.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Story:** Understand how David responded to Saul's death, became king over Judah, and handled the war with Saul's house and Abner's murder.

HEART **Grieve and Wait:** Learn to grieve even over those who hurt us and to wait for what God gives rather than grabbing it.

HANDS **Refuse the Shortcut:** Take one concrete step to seek the LORD before acting and to refuse a shortcut that would hurt others.

Opening Frame: The Way to the Throne Is Open

1 Samuel ended with Saul and his sons dead on Mount Gilboa and the men of Jabesh-gilead honoring their bodies (1 Samuel 31). David, the LORD's anointed, has waited years for the throne, hunted, hiding, and refusing to take it by force. Now the way is open. A messenger arrives expecting a reward for news of Saul's death, but David tears his clothes and weeps, and then sings a lament for the king who tried to kill him. He asks the LORD where to go before he moves, and still the house of Saul does not give up without a long and bloody war. The question for this week: now that the way is open, how will David take the throne? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Think of a time when waiting turned out better than grabbing something right away. What happened?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Welcome the group to 2 Samuel and give the three-part structure in one sentence. Mention gently that this week includes several violent deaths, which will be retold briefly. Keep the icebreaker light.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: What made waiting hard? What would grabbing have cost? How did it change your view of waiting?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not spend the opening on the whole book's plot. Do not preview chapters 11 and 13 in detail; mention only that later weeks include hard chapters.
- **Additional Research Notes:** 1 Samuel 31:3–5 records Saul's death; 2 Samuel 1:6–10 is the Amalekite's version. Many critical scholars treat Samuel as part of a history completed during the exile; evangelical scholars generally hold that it draws on early sources from David's and Solomon's time.
- **Hebrew Word Study:** Bayit (בַּיִת), "house," in 3:1 and 6. "House" means a building, a household, or a dynasty. In this opening it names the week's big idea: the house of Saul weakens and the house of David strengthens, and in chapter 7 the LORD will promise to build David a house forever.

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: From Gilboa to Hebron (2 Samuel 1:1–3:39)

Passage 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39

Entering the World of Hebron and the House of Saul

1. Historical Background

About 1010 BC. Saul and three sons have died on Mount Gilboa. David is at Ziklag in the Negev. Abner, Saul's commander, makes Saul's surviving son Ish-bosheth king over Israel, while Judah anoints David at Hebron. A civil war follows.

2. Cultural Setting

Tearing clothes and putting dust on the head were signs of mourning. Royal insignia such as a crown and armlet symbolized authority. Hebron, an ancient city tied to Abraham (Genesis 13:18; 23:2), was a natural first capital for a king of Judah. Taking a dead king's concubine could be a claim to his throne.

3. Literary Structure of 2 Samuel 1:1–3:39

- **The Amalekite's report** (1:1–10)
- **Mourning and judgment** (1:11–16)
- **The Song of the Bow** (1:17–27)
- **David inquires of the LORD** (2:1–4a)
- **Thanks to Jabesh-gilead** (2:4b–7)
- **Ish-bosheth made king** (2:8–11)
- **The contest at Gibeon** (2:12–17)
- **Asahel's death** (2:18–32)
- **A long war** (3:1–5)
- **Abner's defection** (3:6–21)
- **Joab murders Abner** (3:22–30)
- **David's mourning** (3:31–39)

4. Key Themes

Mourning rather than rejoicing; the LORD's anointed; waiting on the LORD; two houses; the violence of the sons of Zeruiah.

5. Theological Considerations

David receives the kingdom as a gift from the LORD rather than seizing it. Those who expect a reward for killing his rivals find no welcome.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

The Amalekite's account conflicts with 1 Samuel 31:3–5, and most interpreters conclude that he lied to win David's favor. The name "Ish-bosheth" ("man of shame") may be a scribal substitute for "Ishbaal" (1 Chronicles 8:33), replacing the name of the god Baal.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

> **1.2 Q1:** David waited years for the throne after he was anointed. Why do you think God's timing for David was so slow?

1.2 Q2: Several people in these chapters try to help David by killing his rivals. Why is that kind of "help" so dangerous for a new king?

1.2 Q3: The word "house" keeps appearing: the house of Saul and the house of David. What do you think the narrator is preparing us for?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Describe the settings in words: Ziklag lies in the dry south; Hebron lies in Judah's hill country south of Jerusalem; Mahanaim, Ish-bosheth's base, lies east of the Jordan.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: How long had David waited since 1 Samuel 16? What did waiting teach him? Where are you waiting on God now?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: Who expected a reward? What would David's kingdom have become? Where can "help" do harm?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: What does "house" mean? Whose house grows? What might God build?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn 1.2 Q2 into a discussion of modern politics. Do not get lost in the names of the war's commanders.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Jewish tradition (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 15a) says Gad and Nathan completed what Samuel began (compare 1 Chronicles 29:29). Phrases such as "to this day" (4:3; 6:8) show some editorial distance from the events.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Funeral laments for kings and heroes are known across the ancient Near East, such as the Sumerian laments. Contests between small groups of champions to decide a dispute are known from ancient Near Eastern art and texts. In the ancient Near East, taking a dead king's concubine could be a claim to his throne (compare 16:21–22; 1 Kings 2:22).
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Meshiach YHWH (מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה), "the LORD's anointed," in 1:14 and 16. The phrase was central in 1 Samuel 24 and 26. In this context section it shows that David still honors Saul as the LORD's anointed after his death.
  - Bayit (בַּיִת), "house," in 2:4, 7, 10, and 11 and 3:1, 6, 8, 10, 19, and 29. In this context section it shows the book's key word taking shape in the rivalry between two royal houses.

Section 1.3

Movement 1: David's Lament and Anointing in Hebron (2 Samuel 1:1–2:7)

Passage 2 Samuel 1:1–2:7

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **2 Samuel 1**. Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: 2 Samuel 1:1–12** (focal passage) — An Amalekite arrives at Ziklag with Saul's crown and armlet and claims to have killed the wounded king; David and his men tear their clothes, mourn, weep, and fast.
- **Leader summary of 2 Samuel 1:13–16** — David asks the Amalekite how he was not afraid to destroy the LORD's anointed. Because the man claimed to have killed Saul, David has him put to death.
- **Reader 2: 2 Samuel 1:17–27** (focal passage) — David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, the Song of the Bow: how the mighty have fallen.
- **Reader 3: 2 Samuel 2:1–7** (focal passage) — David inquires of the LORD, goes up to Hebron, is anointed king over Judah, and blesses the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **2 Samuel 1:19:**
>
> “Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!
>
> How the mighty have fallen!
>
> **2 Samuel 1:25–26:**
>
> “How the mighty have fallen
>
> in the midst of the battle!
>
> “Jonathan lies slain on your high places.
>
> I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
>
> very pleasant have you been to me;
>
> your love to me was extraordinary,
>
> surpassing the love of women.
>
> **2 Samuel 2:1:** After this David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.”

Teaching Narrative: A Lament and an Anointing

1. A Messenger Expecting a Reward (2 Samuel 1:1–10)

The Amalekite's story does not match 1 Samuel 31. He brings Saul's crown to David, the rival, expecting thanks.

2. Mourning, Not Celebrating (2 Samuel 1:11–12)

David and his men tear their clothes and weep and fast until evening for Saul, Jonathan, and the people of the LORD.

3. The LORD's Anointed (2 Samuel 1:13–16)

David will not reward anyone for violence against the LORD's anointed. His throne will not be built that way.

4. The Song of the Bow (2 Samuel 1:17–27)

David honors Saul's courage without hiding Israel's loss, and he grieves Jonathan's covenant love. The refrain frames it all: how the mighty have fallen.

5. Shall I Go Up? (2 Samuel 2:1–4a)

David's first act after Saul's death is to ask the LORD. Only then does he go to Hebron, where Judah anoints him.

6. Kindness to Saul's Friends (2 Samuel 2:4b–7)

David blesses the men of Jabesh-gilead for their loyalty to Saul and promises them kindness.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: The Amalekite expected a reward for bringing news of Saul's death. Why did David respond with grief instead?

1.3 Q2: David asked the Amalekite how he was "not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed" (1:14). What does David's question show about how he saw Saul, even after years of being hunted?

1.3 Q3: David sang, "How the mighty have fallen!" (1:19). What can we learn from David about grieving someone who hurt us?

1.3 Q4: David said of Jonathan, "your love to me was extraordinary" (1:26). What made Jonathan's friendship so remarkable?

1.3 Q5: After Saul's death, David "inquired of the LORD" before he went anywhere (2:1). Why is that first step so significant for a new king, and for us?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retelling, 7 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 5 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have readers take 1:1–12, 1:17–27, and 2:1–7; retell 1:13–16 yourself. Consider having one strong reader take the whole lament, read slowly.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: What did the Amalekite bring? What did he expect? How do we respond when a rival falls?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: What had Saul done to David? What did David still honor? What does that say about God's choice?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What does David praise in Saul? What does he leave out? Whom might you need to grieve honestly?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What did Jonathan give up (1 Samuel 18:1–4)? How did he show loyalty? Who has loved you that way?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What could David have done instead? What did asking show? What decision could you bring to the LORD first?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: The Amalekite's execution (1:13–16)**
  - Paraphrase only. Members may question David's harshness. Explain that the Amalekite claimed to have killed the LORD's anointed and expected a reward; David's judgment showed that the throne would not be built on such violence. Avoid applying this as a model for capital punishment debates in the group.
- **LEADER FLAG 2: David and Jonathan (1:26)**
  - Members may have heard this verse interpreted as evidence of a romantic relationship. Explain that the language reflects covenant friendship and loyal love in its ancient context. Address questions respectfully and without ridicule, and avoid turning the session into a debate on sexuality.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not treat the Amalekite's story as accurate; it conflicts with 1 Samuel 31:3–5. Do not rush the lament; let the group feel its grief.
- **Additional Research Notes:** The Song of the Bow is preserved from the "Book of Jashar" (1:18; compare Joshua 10:13). 1 Samuel 23:2, 4 and 30:8 show David's habit of inquiring of the LORD. 1 Samuel 31:11–13 records the loyalty of Jabesh-gilead.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Tearing clothes and putting dust on the head (1:2, 11) were standard signs of mourning in the ancient Near East. Royal insignia were symbols of authority, and the Amalekite brought them hoping for reward.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Meshiach YHWH (מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה), "the LORD's anointed," in 1:14 and 16. In this movement it shows that David will not reward violence against God's chosen king.
  - Gibborim (גִּבֹּרִים), "the mighty," in 1:19, 21, 22, 25, and 27. Gibbor means a warrior or hero. In this movement it shows the refrain mourning heroes brought low, honoring Saul and Jonathan without hiding Israel's loss.
  - 'Ahavah (אַהֲבָה), "love," in 1:26. In covenant contexts "love" describes loyal commitment (1 Samuel 18:1–3). In this movement it shows David praising Jonathan's covenant friendship, loyalty, and self-sacrifice.
  - Sha'al beYHWH (שָׁאַל בַּיהוָה), "inquired of the LORD," in 2:1. In this movement it shows the new king beginning his reign under God's direction.

Section 1.4

Movement 2: The Long War and Abner's Death (2 Samuel 2:8–3:39)

Passage 2 Samuel 2:8–3:39

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: 2 Samuel 2:8–11** (focal passage) — Abner makes Saul's son Ish-bosheth king over Israel, while David reigns over Judah in Hebron.
- **Leader summary of 2 Samuel 2:12–32** — At the pool of Gibeon, a contest between twelve men from each side ends with all of them dead, and a fierce battle follows. Joab's young brother Asahel chases Abner, who warns him twice and then kills him. Abner and Joab agree to stop the fighting.
- **Reader 2: 2 Samuel 3:1–21** (focal passage) — The war is long, and David's house grows stronger; Abner quarrels with Ish-bosheth and offers to bring all Israel to David; Michal is returned to David; Abner meets David and leaves in peace.
- **Leader summary of 2 Samuel 3:22–30** — Joab returns, rebukes David, and lures Abner back to Hebron, where he kills him to avenge Asahel.
- **Reader 3: 2 Samuel 3:31–39** (focal passage) — David declares his innocence, mourns Abner publicly, and fasts; the people see that David had no part in it; David confesses his weakness before the sons of Zeruiah.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **2 Samuel 3:1:** There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.
>
> **2 Samuel 3:36:** And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people.
>
> **2 Samuel 3:39:** And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. The LORD repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!”

Teaching Narrative: A House Divided and a General Mourned

1. Two Kings (2 Samuel 2:8–11)

Abner props up Saul's son as king. David reigns in Hebron and waits.

2. The Cost of Civil War (2 Samuel 2:12–32)

A "contest" turns into a slaughter, and a young man's eager pursuit ends in his death. Brothers fight brothers.

3. Stronger and Weaker (2 Samuel 3:1–5)

The war drags on, but David's house grows stronger and Saul's weaker. God's purpose moves forward slowly.

4. Abner Changes Sides (2 Samuel 3:6–21)

A quarrel over Saul's concubine drives Abner to David. David's demand for Michal strengthens his claim to Saul's house, but the scene of her weeping husband is painful.

5. Murder at the Gate (2 Samuel 3:22–30)

Joab avenges his brother by murdering Abner in Hebron, a city of refuge, in peacetime.

6. A King Who Mourns (2 Samuel 3:31–37)

David publicly condemns the murder, walks behind the bier, and fasts. The people see his heart and are pleased.

7. Gentle and Weak (2 Samuel 3:38–39)

David admits that he is gentle, though anointed king, and the sons of Zeruiah are too fierce for him. He leaves justice to the LORD, but his weakness will cost him.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: The contest at Gibeon began almost as a game and ended in slaughter. How can conflicts between people who should be on the same side escalate so quickly?

1.4 Q2: "David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker" (3:1). How does it help to know that God's purposes can move forward slowly, even during a long struggle?

1.4 Q3: Michal was taken from her weeping husband to strengthen David's claim to the throne. What do you notice about how people are treated in this scene?

1.4 Q4: After Abner's murder, "everything that the king did pleased all the people" (3:36). What did David's public grief show the people about his kingdom?

1.4 Q5: David said, "I was gentle today, though anointed king" (3:39), and admitted he could not restrain Joab. What happens when a leader will not confront violence or wrongdoing among his own people?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 4 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have readers take 2:8–11, 3:1–21, and 3:31–39; retell 2:12–32 and 3:22–30 yourself, soberly and briefly. If time is short, summarize 3:6–21 in two sentences.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: Who started it? Who stopped it (2:26–28)? Where have you seen conflict escalate like this?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: How long did it take? What kept David going? What long struggle do you need to entrust to God?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: Who decided? Who wept? What does the text want us to notice?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: What did the people see? What did David refuse to do? How do leaders show their hearts in public?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q5**: What did David leave undone? What will it cost later (1 Kings 2:5–6)? Where might you need to confront rather than avoid?
- **LEADER FLAG 3: Violence in the civil war (2:12–32; 3:27)**
  - Paraphrase the deaths at Gibeon, Asahel's death, and Joab's murder of Abner without graphic detail. Note that the narrative presents Joab's act as murder and that David publicly condemns it (3:28–39). Members who have lost family members to violence may be affected.
- **LEADER FLAG 4: Michal taken from Paltiel (3:13–16)**
  - The scene of Michal taken from her weeping husband is painful. Avoid presenting it as romantic or as David simply reclaiming his wife. Acknowledge that women in the ancient world were often treated as political pawns, and that the text records Paltiel's grief. Be sensitive to members who have experienced divorce or family separations.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not excuse Joab because he was avenging his brother; the text calls it murder. Do not make David's weakness simply a virtue of gentleness; it has real consequences.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Numbers 35:19–25 limits the avenger of blood, and Joshua 20:7 names Hebron as a city of refuge. 1 Kings 2:5–6 records David's last instructions about Joab. 1 Samuel 18:27 and 25:44 explain David's marriage to Michal and her remarriage to Paltiel.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Israel's law allowed an avenger of blood only for murder and only outside the cities of refuge; Asahel died in battle, and Hebron was a city of refuge, which makes Joab's act a murder. Demanding Michal back reaffirmed David's legal tie to Saul's house and strengthened his claim to the throne.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Bayit (בַּיִת), "house," in 3:1, 6, 8, 10, 19, and 29. In this movement it shows the house of David growing stronger while the house of Saul weakens.
  - Rakh (רַךְ), "gentle," "weak," in 3:39. The word means soft, tender, or weak. In this movement it shows both David's mercy and his weakness in controlling Joab and Abishai, a weakness that will haunt his reign.

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The King Who Weeps over His Enemies and the Kingdom That Comes God's Way

Passage 2 Samuel 2:1

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

David's grief over his enemies and his patient seeking of the LORD point forward to the King who wept over his enemies and received his kingdom God's way, through the cross. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. The King Who Weeps (Luke 19:41–44; 23:34)

David wept for Saul, who had hunted him. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, the city that would reject him, and prayed for those who crucified him.

2. No Pleasure in Death (Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 5:44)

The LORD takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and Jesus calls his followers to love their enemies.

3. No Shortcut to the Throne (Matthew 4:8–10; 28:18; Philippians 2:8–11)

David did not seize the throne; he waited until the LORD gave it. Jesus refused the devil's offer of the kingdoms of the world and received all authority after the cross.

4. Not by the Sword (Matthew 26:52; John 18:36)

Jesus' kingdom does not advance by the sword.

5. A Kingdom That Grows (Matthew 13:31–32)

The house of David growing stronger points to the kingdom of God, which grows like a mustard seed.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **2 Samuel 2:1:** After this David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.”

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: When Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he "saw the city" and "wept over it" (Luke 19:41). How does David's grief for Saul help us understand Jesus' grief for those who reject him?

1.5 Q2: On the cross Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). What would it look like to pray that way for someone who has wronged you?

1.5 Q3: The devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world by a shortcut, but Jesus received "all authority in heaven and on earth" after the cross (Matthew 28:18). Why does it matter that Jesus' kingdom came God's way?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Teaching connections, 6 minutes; discussion, 6 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up Luke 19:41–44, Luke 23:34, Matthew 4:8–10, Matthew 28:18, and John 18:36 ahead of time.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: Whom did David weep for? Whom did Jesus weep for? What does that show about God's heart?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q2**: Whom did Jesus forgive? What did it cost him? Whom might God be calling you to pray for?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: What did the shortcut offer? What did the cross accomplish? Where are you tempted by a shortcut?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not suggest that forgiving someone means trusting them again immediately or staying in harm's way. Do not make David a flawless picture of Christ; his weakness with Joab is real.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Ezekiel 18:23 also says the LORD takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Philippians 2:8–11 traces Christ's exaltation through his obedience to death.

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	David mourned Saul and Jonathan, inquired of the LORD before going to Hebron, and mourned Abner after Joab murdered him, while the house of David grew stronger.
HEART	God's kingdom comes his way, not by violence or shortcuts, and his King grieves even over enemies.
HANDS	Faith seeks the LORD before acting, grieves honestly, and refuses to grab what God has not yet given.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Is there a decision ahead of you that you need to bring to the LORD before you act? What would asking him first look like this week?

1.6 Q2: Is there someone who has hurt you whom you need to grieve over or pray for, rather than resent?

1.6 Q3: Where are you tempted to take a shortcut to something you believe God has promised?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, David mourned Saul and Jonathan, was anointed king over Judah at Hebron, and mourned Abner, refusing to build his throne on bloodshed.

Transition: The house of David is growing stronger. Next week the whole nation comes to him, and the LORD makes him a promise that will shape the rest of the Bible.

Week 2 Overview — A House for David (2 Samuel 4:1–8:18): Movement 1, King over All Israel, Jerusalem, and the Ark (4:1–6:23), covers Ish-bosheth's death, David's anointing over all Israel, the capture of Jerusalem, and the ark's journey to the city. Movement 2, The LORD's Covenant with David (7:1–8:18), covers the LORD's promise of an everlasting house and David's victories. The Canonical Horizon traces the Davidic covenant fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David.

Focal Readings to Preview

- 2 Samuel 5:1–12
- 2 Samuel 6:12–23
- 2 Samuel 7:1–17
- 2 Samuel 7:18–29

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD our God, thank you that you give your kingdom in your own time and in your own way. Forgive our impatience, and forgive us for the times we have quietly rejoiced when others fell. Give us hearts that grieve as David grieved, even over those who have wronged us. We pray for those who have lost loved ones to violence; comfort them and bring them justice. Teach us to seek you before we act, and to wait for your answer. Thank you for Jesus, who wept over his enemies, prayed for those who crucified him, and received his kingdom through the cross. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Use silent reflection for 1.6 Q2. Do not ask members to name the person aloud.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q1**: What decision? What would asking look like? When will you pray about it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q2**: What makes it hard? What would praying for them look like? Who can support you?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q3**: What shortcut? What would it cost? What would waiting look like?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not pressure anyone to forgive or reconcile on a timetable. Keep the concrete step specific and achievable.
- **Additional Research Notes:** In Week 2 Ish-bosheth's murderers also expect a reward (4:8–12), and David responds as he did to the Amalekite (4:10). The "house" theme reaches its peak in 7:11–16.