



A KING CROWNED: THE MOST INTERESTING MAN IN THE WORLD

SERIES: EPIC

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 1 Samuel 16 - 2 Samuel 5
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We are continuing in a series, the *EPIC*, that tells the story of the Bible from beginning to end. The reign of David as king of Israel represents the highest point in the *EPIC* story since the first human ruler, Adam, brought ruin to God's good creation. The family of Abraham was assigned to serve God's purposes among all people and in David's time that family had become a unified nation, occupying the land God gave them. After Saul died, David ruled without opposition and, at least for a time, lived up to the prediction that he would be a king with a heart for God.

David is introduced to the story when Samuel was sent by God to the house of Jesse to anoint a king who would eventually replace Saul. David had seven older brothers and was very little regarded, either by them or their father. Samuel first meets the eldest of Jesse's sons, the impressive looking Eliab (reminiscent of Saul in appearance), but is told by God that David will be king, declaring that "men look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

David occupies a large place in the biblical text, but because these *EPIC* messages move quickly we will have to be brief in considering all of the David material. More verses are given to his personal narrative than to any other person except Jesus. In addition we have a written record of his prayers—scores of Psalms attributed directly to David and many others inspired by him. In this message we will take up two tasks—a look at one of David's prayers (Psalm 8) and a look at the early, God-honoring years of his reign. The next message will cover final, failure-ridden years of David's life.

David understood, as no other of Israel's rulers did, that a king's first responsibility is to lead his people into God's presence, to teach them to pray. Surely his most enduring influence is found in the Psalms. David's words taught Jesus to pray, and for 3000 years they have given voice to both Jews and Christians who come to God with praise, longing, confusion, complaint, and adoration.

Psalm 8:3-9:

³When I consider your heavens,

**the work of your fingers,
 the moon and the stars,
 which you have set in place,
⁴what is man that you are mindful of him,
 the son of man that you care for him?**

(In this verse the word 'man' refers to both men and women, and the phrase 'son of man' designates an ordinary person. It is not a messianic title as it is at times in the gospels.)

**⁵You made him a little lower than the
 heavenly beings and crowned him
 with glory and honor.**

**⁶You made him ruler over the works of your
 hands;
 you put everything under his feet:**

**⁷all flocks and herds,
 and the beasts of the field,
⁸the birds of the air,
 and the fish of the sea,
 all that swim the paths of the seas.**

**⁹O Lord, our Lord,
 how Majestic is your name in all the earth**

David is filled with holy astonishment that 'the God of wonders' who set moon and stars in place would shower his love and attention on insignificant, ordinary humans. This prayer speaks of God's glory ("how majestic is your name") but also elevates people to an extraordinary place of honor. David prays as a king, but also raises all who pray with him to a place of royalty "You made [an ordinary person] ruler over the works of your hands."

This perspective is much needed in our day. Observations of failed humanity often lead to the conclusion that people are worth little and deserve less. Naturalistic explanations for our origins suggest that all living things are accidents of chance and chemistry and that death ends everything.

David knew the nature of mankind's brokenness and yet he also knew the plan of God—all human children, "crowned with glory and honor." David's prayer transforms all who pray along with him. We must not settle for self-hatred and persistent futility, nor allow injustice and chaos to spread among any society of 'glorious' human creatures. Justice is necessary and love is central if we are as significant as God declares us to be. It is an extraordinary thing to be human.

Believing what God has said we fight against despair and resist a world where beauty is equated with fashion; where the purveyor of snarky irony is more admired than the person who acts with courage; where joyful laughter is replaced by 'humor' that is crude or cutting or both; where competition establishes all human worth and world-weary despair is considered the essence of wisdom.

Leslie and I went to see the movie 'Lincoln' this week and I recommend it. In a scene near the end we hear the re-elected president deliver part of his second inaugural address, perhaps the greatest of all his speeches. Searching for language that could have meaning for a divided nation, Lincoln quoted a prayer of David, the 19th Psalm: "The judgments of the Lord are pure and righteous all together." David was a king after God's heart, profoundly evidenced by the fact that he taught his contemporaries and every generation since to seek God. The prayers of David, the king chosen by God, change us and fit us to be light bearers in a dark world. "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth."

But in addition to his words we also have David's life to consider – a life of powerful accomplishment for both good and ill as we shall see.

There is a funny television ad campaign that features "the most interesting man in the world." He is a citizen of the world who is cool, Omni-competent, interested in everything and superior to all of life's dilemmas. Some descriptions:

1. He was born in log cabin that he built with his own hands.
2. He is the life of parties that he's never attended.
3. He has won the lifetime achievement award—twice.
4. He lives vicariously through himself.
5. His enemies list him as their emergency contact person.
6. He once had an awkward moment just to see what it was like.

He is the most interesting man in the world.

David is the figure in human history who might best deserve the title: most interesting. And because it was faith in God that shaped David we should conclude that we, too, were made to live fascinating lives that overflow with

abundance (John 10:10).

I want to use seven words as lenses to consider David's story.

The first is the word *family*. David (the most interesting man in the world) likely had a rough childhood in a dysfunctional family. We don't meet him until he's about 12 years old at his anointing—an occasion to which he was not invited by his older brothers and father. His brothers ridiculed David at the time when Goliath hurled insults at the Saul's army. Psalm 27:4 reads "My father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up." And this phrase is surely the key—"the Lord will take me up". Not everybody gets a happy family. Perhaps most people don't. You're disappointed in your parents. You're hurt by your siblings. You wish you were born in a different time and place.

But family hardship deepened David's faith. He learned at early age to cling to God because he lived among people who were injured and ignored him.

The second word that can clarify our hero's life is *danger*. He was not reckless, but fearsome circumstances did not cause David to shrink back in fear. He did not wait until success was imminent before stepping into battle. As a shepherd boy he fought lions and bears. As a teen he fought the Philistine giant with a sling and some stones. Later he survived Saul's determination to kill him and led armies to war. David believed that he was called to honor God with his life and that a threatening foe was no reason to turn aside from his calling.

The third word for our consideration is *music*. Music can penetrate the heart and persuade us of truth at a deep level without the need for theologically precise language. David (the most interesting man in the world) was a gifted musician from his youth onwards. His playing and singing soothed Saul's mad rages and he was later spoken of as 'the sweet singer of Israel' (2 Sam. 23:1). The prayers of David (Psalms) are written as lyrics to be sung.

It is a tragedy that so many Christians are divided by their taste in music—that great old music is put away and creative new music is resisted. Too many churches settle for musical worship that is bland and repetitive rather than opt for musical energy (of any kind) that might stir hearts—and upset someone. We should be on the lookout for the 'young David's' in our congregations who can use their gifts in music to build up the people of God.

Fourthly, we consider *friendship*. David's familial brothers were a disappointment to him, but in Jonathan

God gave David brother-by-friendship that has inspired true fellowship in countless other men and women in all the generations since their time. Circumstances should have made them rivals—each had a claim to Israel’s throne. Yet we are told that ‘their hearts were knit together.’ They served each other and sacrificed personal benefits for the sake of their friendship. Jonathan took great risks to honor and protect David. After Jonathan died, David provided for his children even though his advisors viewed them as a rival line of kings. They were true friends to each other because they were first servants of God.

The fifth word is *community*. Though David had been anointed king, for most of twenty years he lived as a fugitive—threatened by Saul, living in caves and hiding amongst Israel’s enemies. And in those years he was joined by the riffraff of Israel, outcasts, renegades. David (the most interesting man in the world) believed in them and these rejects later became the core of his army. Because they needed to help one another trust and loyalty grew among them. Because they had few worldly resources they discovered God’s provision.

God frequently makes vital and attractive communities out of men and women with real needs and few man-made connections to one another.

Recall Paul’s description of the church in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

God makes strong and attractive communities out of folks with little human capital to offer, but who put him

first.

The sixth word is *restraint*. Men and women with authority often use it impulsively, giving free reign to their anger or their appetites. Some act as if ‘doing as I please’ is a mark of having power. In his early years David consistently chose to obey God rather than serve himself when he might have done so. Although Saul was intent on killing David, more than once David refused to kill Saul when he had the opportunity. Saul was Israel’s king and David refused to take his life. Later he allowed Abigail to persuade against killing her husband, a worthless man who had treated David with contempt. We do well to examine ourselves royal servants of God—do we govern our anger and passions, choosing what is wise instead of what feels good in the moment?

The last word is *failure*. David commands our attention in all the attractive ways that he is ‘most interesting.’ But he also made very dark choices. We’ll consider these more closely in the next message, but let me note here that David’s adultery and murderous betrayal are told in stark detail. As a result his evil has been used by God to sound a warning that has steered countless Bible readers away from the same path.

In addition, the record of David finding a way home to God after his sin, especially his prayers of repentance, have shown a beacon of hope to countless others. David’s horrendous sins do end with the victory of evil. Good has come from the wretched failure of the man who God chose to be king.

David looms large in the pages of the Bible. His prayers have taught every generation for 3,000 years, how to pray. He’s the king who leads his people into worship and helps them grow into something they could never be otherwise.

Romans 5:17:

Those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

That’s what we were made for, to reign in life. We were created for glory and redeemed to reign. Let us believe the truth and not settle for anything less.