

Memory Verse

“Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility.” (Proverbs 18:12)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absalom allowed his hatred and conceit to control his actions. 2. Absalom’s pride and ignorance of God’s ways led to his death. 3. God is the true ruler, and nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God is sovereign. 2. God is all-powerful. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train ourselves to consider God in our daily lives. 2. Exchange worldly desires with godly by resolving conflicts with each other and actively seeking God.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Absalom’s Hatred: His Sin, Exile, and Return
- B. Absalom’s Rebellion: Treason Against David
- C. Absalom’s Conceit: His Death

Life Application: Exchanging Worldly Desires for Godly Desires

Memory Verse

Conclusion: In the end, no matter how much Absalom planned or plotted for the throne, everything went according to God’s will, and his own pride caused his death. To avoid walking the same path as Absalom, we need to learn to exchange our worldly desires for godly desires.

Introduction

- If you were to describe the characteristics and qualities of a king, what would they be? *(Allow students to brainstorm.)*
- What are the qualities of a king according to God's standards compared to mankind's standards? *(Allow students to brainstorm – if the previous discussion was written on the board, you can also circle or mark which characteristics are according to whose standards, God's or mankind's.)*

As the third son of King David, Absalom had everything that a person would want in this world. He was handsome, famous, and wealthy. The Bible tells us that “[from] the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him,” and that he had a heavy head of hair (2 Sam 14:25–26). However, for all of the privileges that he had, he neglected to remember God in his life.

A. Absalom's Hatred: His Sin, Exile, and Return

When we look at Absalom's characteristics objectively, we can see that he is actually a gifted individual; from a worldly perspective, he had many qualities that would be useful as a ruler. If he had used these qualities to help his father, he would have been an invaluable asset to David and the kingdom. However, Absalom made the choice to use his talents for his own gain. Let's take a closer look at his actions and how they affected the lives of those around him.

1. Repaid evil with evil

Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

(2 Sam 13:32–33)

In this chapter, Amnon raped Tamar and then threw her out of his place, leaving her devastated and ruined. In response, Absalom waited for an opportunity to kill Amnon. Let's read 2 Samuel 13:22–29. Although Amnon did a terrible deed, Absalom also sinned by repaying evil with evil. He allowed his hatred to dictate his actions, and he executed his own form of justice instead of leaving vengeance to God.

Paul wrote, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). Absalom was driven by his hatred, to the point that he chose to break the law and take matters into his own hands instead of leaving them to God.

2. Selfishly burned Joab's fields

Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

After killing Amnon, Absalom fled to his grandfather in Geshur and lived in exile for three years. It was only after Joab intervened that David allowed Absalom's return to Jerusalem. For two years, he lived in Jerusalem, yet David did not call Absalom or meet him for another two years. When Absalom tried to contact Joab, however, Joab ignored his summons. Let's read 2 Samuel 14:25–33.

Rather than wait for Joab, Absalom forced his hand with an act of willful destruction. However, when Joab confronted him, Absalom made no apology for his actions. It is clear that he did not think he had done anything wrong in either killing Amnon or burning Joab's fields.

B. Absalom's Rebellion: Treason Against David

After his reconciliation with King David, Absalom turned around and began to plot against his own father in an attempt to take the throne. Undermining David's rule would not have been easy, so how did he go about doing it? Let's read 2 Samuel 15:1–12.

1. Flaunted his wealth and position (v. 1)

Absalom was clearly concerned with his public image. Horses were only owned by the rich and having fifty men run before him was an announcement of his wealth. But these things were not simply a sign of his riches – they emphasized his power due to his status as son of the king.

2. Raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's reputation (vv. 2–6)

Absalom clearly had a plan in mind. He didn't only show off his power and status, he also spent time speaking to individuals and gaining their support. At the same time, he spread false stories that made it seem like he would be a better ruler than David.

3. Used God as an excuse for his own ends (vv. 7–12)

Absalom showed a strategic mind and a sense for detail. To make his trip to Hebron seem legitimate, he used God as an excuse, a purpose that David would not refuse. Hebron was also significant because it was the location David was anointed as king – Absalom was purposefully inserting himself into David's place.

From the events that we read, we can see that Absalom commanded enough authority to convince his people to kill Amnon. He also had the charisma to draw support from the Israelites, and he was knowledgeable enough about politics to figure out how exactly to rebel against King David. But while his actions against Amnon could be seen as disobedience against God's laws, subverting the Israelites against their own king was an act of rebellion against both David and the Lord. However, Absalom's acts did not stop there.

Absalom's Prideful and Foolish Decisions

Once he left for Hebron, Absalom's followers continued to increase in number. It came to the point that a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom" (2 Sam 15:13). With Absalom having successfully taken the throne, David was forced to flee from Jerusalem with his loyal followers, and Absalom was able to enter the city (15:14, 37). Let's continue reading 2 Samuel 16:15–23.

1. Permitted Hushai to remain as advisor (2 Sam 16:15–19)

When Hushai returned to Jerusalem, Absalom justly questioned his motives, knowing that he was loyal to David. Let's read Hushai's words to Absalom in 2 Samuel 16:15–19. If we closely examine what he said, he never actually specifies Absalom directly – in fact, his words are quite clearly referring to David, not Absalom.

- a. Long live the king: At present, David was still technically king over Israel
- b. Whom the Lord chooses: David was God's anointed, chosen to rule over Israel

Absalom saw only what he wanted in Hushai's words: an advisor who had chosen to leave his father in favor of him. If he were less prideful, perhaps he would have seen Hushai's words for what they truly were: a declaration of loyalty to David, not Absalom.

2. Slept with his father's concubines (2 Sam 16:20–22)

Ahithophel's advice might have seemed to be for political gain. But this act only served to express Absalom's utter disrespect for his own father, his ignorance of the ways of God, and his ignorance of God's command over the nation. In the end, it did nothing to stabilize his political position, and only severed the relationship between Absalom and his father beyond repair.

3. Followed Hushai's advice despite his lack of experience in battle (2 Sam 17:5–14)

Absalom was not a military leader as his father was. King David spent years in battle while evading capture from King Saul, and he defeated the Philistines to usher in an era of peace in Israel. Absalom did not have this same experience, but he still chose the advice that made him look better in his own eyes and elevated his public image. As a result, Hushai gained more time for David and his followers to escape with their lives.

Optional Teaching: Who was Ahithophel?

The Bible records that he was the father of Eliam, one of the mighty men of David. This made Ahithophel the grandfather of Bathsheba, the woman whom David took for himself. Later, when Bathsheba found herself pregnant from their affair, David commanded that Uriah be killed in battle to cover his sin. It is somewhat ironic that it was Ahithophel, the grandfather of the woman whom David coveted, who advised that Absalom take David's concubines for himself.

From his first three actions we studied, we can see that Absalom was an intelligent person, but from the last three, we can see that his pride and ego got in the way of his success. As crafty and as cunning as he may have been, following his desires and trying to run ahead of God's schedule led to his own death.

C. Absalom's Conceit: His Death

Let's read 2 Samuel 18:1–4. David had fought in numerous battles throughout his life, so he was an experienced military leader. He had every reason to think it right to lead his people into a fight. However, he humbly submitted to sound advice, realizing that his men were correct. In contrast, Absalom decided that it would be a good idea to gather up a large army and lead them into a fight, despite having very little experience in battle, especially compared to David and his mighty men.

We discussed earlier that Absalom's qualities could actually have been considered good qualities in a king – he was charismatic, communicative, and able to command loyalty in his followers. But when he drove King David out of Jerusalem and took the city for himself, he wasn't wise enough to evaluate the counsel that he received. He instead made prideful decisions that were contrary to his goal. What was

the result? Let's read 2 Samuel 18:6–15. We learned that when Absalom cut his hair each year, it was weighed at 200 shekels, which is almost six pounds (2 Sam 14:25–26)! From the Bible's description of Absalom, we can infer that he valued his good looks, and his hair was likely a point of pride for him. It was an outward reflection of his conceit.

Let's read Proverbs 18:12. From Absalom's actions, we can see that he was proud enough to think that he had the right to kill his brother and later take the position of king from his father. But like his head that got him caught in the branches of a tree, his prideful decisions resulted in a battle that his army lost. Despite years of planning, his treason only resulted in his execution at the hand of Joab. This was in part because of his failure to consider God's will. In his conceit, Absalom had forgotten that Israel belongs to God, not to the king.

God's Sovereignty

Let's read 2 Samuel 15:24–26. Although David's life had changed a lot over his years, his heart was still centered upon God. Let's turn to Psalm 3. Although God had anointed David as king over Israel, he was now being chased from his throne. Yet despite this, David still called the Lord "a shield" and the one who sustains him (Ps 3:3–5).

In comparison, we learned today that Absalom repeatedly failed to consider God. There is no mention of God in any of Absalom's actions, except for the time he used a vow to God as an excuse to leave Jerusalem and make his way to Hebron. Absalom even considered God Himself as a tool for his personal use. However, although Absalom did not consider God, we can see that God was very much still in charge of his life. Even his evil deed of sleeping with David's concubines was a fulfillment of God's will (2 Sam 12:11–12) and an answer to David's prayer (15:31).

Let's read 2 Samuel 17:14. "So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel.' For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom." Absalom had a clever plan and was patient enough to execute it in his rebellion. But his desire to overthrow his father's rule meant nothing in the face of God's control over all history and life on this earth. Nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will. As David wrote, "Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people" (Ps 3:8).

Check for Understanding

- 1. What was the reason Absalom burned Joab's fields? What does this reveal about his character?** Because Joab did not answer when Absalom summoned him. This shows that Absalom was not only willfully destructive in seeking his own gain, but that he also did not think he had done anything wrong.
- 2. What three actions did Absalom take in his revolt against the throne?** He flaunted his wealth and position; he raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's reputation; and he used God as an excuse for his own ends so that David would permit him to go to Hebron.
- 3. What three actions did Absalom take when he drove his father out of Jerusalem?** He permitted Hushai to remain as advisor; he slept with his father's concubines; and he followed Hushai's advice despite his lack of experience in battle.
- 4. What do these six actions tell us about Absalom's character?** From the first three actions, we can see that Absalom was an intelligent person, but from the last three, we can see that his pride and ego got in the way of his success.

5. **Why is it ironic that Absalom died as a result of his head getting caught in a tree?** His head full of hair was an outward reflection of his conceit. Like his head that got him caught in the branches of a tree, his prideful decisions resulted in a battle that his army lost. Despite years of planning, his treason only resulted in his execution at the hand of Joab.

Life Application

Exchanging Worldly Desires for Godly Desires

Absalom's life in the Bible revolved around his conflicts against others – he came into conflict with Amnon, then Joab, and finally his father David. When we take a closer look at Absalom's actions, we can narrow down the reasons behind them to two things: his anger and his conceit. He allowed his desires to drive his actions. First, his desire for vengeance drove him to murder his own brother, and his arrogance broke the familial and political relationship between himself and his father beyond repair. He had no consideration for God's will, and instead prioritized his own desires.

It is easy for us to look back on Absalom's life and point out his selfish decisions. But it is much more difficult to look at our own lives and see if we have also been driven by our own desires. How do we train ourselves to consider God in our daily lives, instead of disregarding His will as Absalom did? How do we avoid making selfish decisions that are driven by our desires? The most basic line of defense against following our personal desires is increasing our love for each other, and especially for God. When we do so, we will naturally grow in our desire for God rather than for things of this world, then we can successfully avoid getting caught in the same conflicts that Absalom did.

Of course, growing in our love for others is never easy, especially compared to the sacrificial love that Jesus Christ showed towards us. But we can begin by resolving any conflicts that we have, both with our brethren, and with God.

1. Resolve Conflicts with One Another

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." (1 Jn 4:20–21)

Anger often blinds us. When we get riled up or angry at someone or something, we immediately lash out, or internalize our hatred and slowly grow in resentment. Our speech and actions become fueled by bitterness, and our anger begins to interfere with our spiritual growth. To avoid making the same mistakes as Absalom, we need to let go of such negative feelings. By doing so, we are less prone to sinning against God, and our judgment is no longer clouded by anger or hate. We need to resolve conflicts with one another before approaching God (Mt 5:23–24). Let's take a moment to consider the following:

- Have you ever felt angry or irritated at someone, or gotten into a big argument that lasted for several days?
- How do you handle these feelings? Do you try to move on, or do you spend hours or days thinking of things to say or do towards the person in question?
- If someone says or does something hurtful towards you, what steps can you take to resolve the situation? Based on circumstances that you've experienced, discuss with the class different actions that you can take that are in line with God's will. Take a look at

the following verses. For each, write down what the Bible suggests you can do when faced with conflict.

- Rom 12:17, 19 – *Avoid evil acts and do not act out of vengeance. Instead do what is right in the eyes of men.*
- Eph 4:31–32 – *Learn to let go of negative feelings, and instead act with kindness towards others.*
- Mt 18:15–17 – *Use dialogue to settle the matter with the brethren who sinned against you, or if the matter cannot be resolved, ask another to help mediate.*
- Col 3:13 – *Forgive others, as Christ forgave us.*
- Eph 4:26 – *Try to resolve any conflicts before too much time passes.*
- Prov 17:14 – *Stop or pause a dialogue when you realize that it is becoming an argument.*
- Jas 1:19 – *Think before you speak.*

2. Resolve Conflicts with God

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:8)

To draw near to God and resolve our conflicts with Him, we must first humble ourselves and repent of anything that we have done against His will. This means we need to spend time examining our daily lives and learning what is right or wrong in God’s eyes. We often learn about the importance of repenting, but we may still feel like God is very distant, or that our prayers are ineffective. How do we grow in our understanding of God if it feels like He isn’t close to us?

- *“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jer 29:12–13)*

As backwards as it may seem, if we feel distant from God, the first thing we need to do is ask God for help! He has promised that when we seek Him out, He will draw near to us. But we need to grasp on to this promise ourselves and be proactive in seeking Him out. Like taking vitamins or medication, seeking God means establishing a daily habit or ritual to improve our spiritual health.

If you don’t already have a set time, write down a time of day you can set aside so that you can spend at least a few minutes with God. If you already have a set time that you spend with God, write down how you can use this time to “seek” God more effectively.

- *“For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Heb 5:13–14)*

It is easy for us to fall into a “routine” in our spirituality. Many brethren fall into the trap of believing that they do not need to do anything beyond attending services each Sabbath. But the Bible often calls us to greater action – we need avoid settling into a “lukewarm” faith, and instead push ourselves closer and closer to God. We need to seek “solid food.” When we do so, we become more discerning of what is right and wrong, and it becomes easier for us to pick out the things in our lives that are against God’s will.

Take a moment to discuss with your class: what do you think “solid food” means to you

personally? How can you seek this out in your life?

To avoid being driven by our worldly desires as Absalom was, we need to increase our awareness of both God and man. By caring for one another and actively seeking out God, we will slowly learn to replace our worldly desires with godly ones. When we do so, we will naturally learn to make wiser decisions that are in alignment with God's will, and He will bless us with His protection and salvation (Ps 3:3, 8).

Memory Verse

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility." (Proverbs 18:12)

Meaning

See the teachings in *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C*.

Conclusion

We learned today that Absalom had many qualities that would have been an asset as a ruler. He had a clever plan to take the throne, and he was patient enough to execute it in his rebellion. But in his hatred and conceit, he forgot God's presence and power. In the end, no matter how much Absalom planned or plotted for the throne, everything went according to God's will, and his own pride caused his death – both the physical "pride" in his hair, and his internal pride in making foolish and conceited decisions. To avoid walking the same path as Absalom, we should not let ourselves be controlled by our desires or by our conceit. Instead, we need to learn to exchange our worldly desires for godly desires. In this way, we can live in humility and be at peace both with men and with God.

Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. In what way did Absalom's haughty heart lead to his destruction?
In the end, it was the hair on his head – an outward reflection of his inward pride – that led to his death.
2. What was the reason Absalom burned Joab's fields? What does this reveal about his character?
Because Joab did not answer when Absalom summoned him. This shows that Absalom was not only willfully destructive in seeking his own gain, but that he also did not think he had done anything wrong.
3. What three actions did Absalom take in his revolt against the throne?
He flaunted his wealth and position; he raised his reputation by sowing doubt in David's; and he used God as an excuse for his own ends so that David would permit him to go to Hebron.
4. Although he was clever and patient with his rebellion, why did Absalom fail?
His desire to overthrow his father's rule meant nothing in the face of God's control over all history and life on this earth. Nothing can thwart God from carrying out His will.
5. What is the most basic line of defense against following our personal desires? How can we do this?
The most basic line of defense is increasing our love for each other, and especially for God. We can do this by resolving conflicts with one another and resolving conflicts with God.
6. Have you ever gotten into a serious conflict with someone? How did you resolve it? Would you approach the situation differently today?
Personal answers.