

Restored
July 29, 2018
Allen Power

2 Samuel 19:1-8

Opening discussion: Think for a minute about leaders. The typical rule if you are a leader (especially a military leader) is to “*never let ‘em see you sweat!*” **Should leaders ever be publicly vulnerable with their people? How would that change your view of that leader? How vulnerable is too vulnerable?**

When we last left King David he was mourning the death of his son Absalom:

2 Samuel 18:33 (NLT) tells us, ³³ The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to the room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son.”

- Let’s do some review about the events leading up to Absalom’s death.
- **Can you describe David’s son Absalom? His personality? His appearance? What rebellious act had Absalom committed?**
- Reluctantly, David assembled an army to defend against Absalom and his army, and they fought in the forest of Ephraim.
- David’s men insisted he stay behind in the fortress for his security.
- Though Absalom’s army of Israel was a much larger force, David’s army routed them and 20,000 Israelites were killed.
- It is clear God supernaturally intervened because more men were killed “by the forest than the sword.”
- **What specific instruction did King David give his army about his treacherous son Absalom? In what bizarre way was Absalom killed?**
- This brings us to chapter 19.

- David's army marched back to the temporary fortress at Mahanaim expecting a celebration of their amazing victory and appreciation from their king.
- Instead, King David was an emotional wreck crying over the loss of a son who, hours before, was trying to kill David and capture the throne.
- Joab, David's highest ranking general (who had killed Absalom) hears rumblings about David's emotional display before he gets to the city.

2 Samuel 19:1–8 (NLT)

¹ Word soon reached Joab that the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom. ² As all the people heard of the king's deep grief for his son, the joy of that day's victory was turned into deep sadness. ³ They crept back into the town that day as though they were ashamed and had deserted in battle. ⁴ The king covered his face with his hands and kept on crying, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

⁵ Then Joab went to the king's room and said to him, "We saved your life today and the lives of your sons, your daughters, and your wives and concubines. Yet you act like this, making us feel ashamed of ourselves. ⁶ You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that your commanders and troops mean nothing to you. It seems that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died, you would be pleased. ⁷ Now go out there and congratulate your troops, for I swear by the Lord that if you don't go out, not a single one of them will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than ever before."

- Wow! Let's pause a moment and reflect on this confrontation.
- David is so self-absorbed and caught up in his own emotional melt down that he's making his army feel like they did something shameful in saving his life, his family, and his throne. Instead of saying thank you he was acting as if his loyal soldiers didn't exist, and that was a problem.
- Joab bluntly (and not very respectfully) tells David to "get a grip!" **Was Joab out of line? Why/why not? Wasn't it normal for David to grieve for his son? Do you think the loss of his son was the real reason David was so unglued? What might have been the larger reason?**

- We recall God’s words to David delivered by Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:10 (ESV) *...the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’*
- David was probably so unraveled because he knew this whole dysfunctional mess in his family had now affected the nation. He knew the root of the civil war was his own sin and disobedience.
- John MacArthur writes: *“In spite of all the harm that Absalom had caused, David was preoccupied with his personal loss in a melancholy way that seems to be consistent with his weakness as a father. It was an unwarranted zeal for such a worthless son, and a warning about the pitiful results of sin.”ⁱ*
- **Why was it such a big deal that David wasn’t out welcoming his troops? How did Joab say it could have been dangerous?**
- David’s response is in some ways remarkable:

⁸ So the king went out and took his seat at the town gate, and as the news spread throughout the town that he was there, everyone went to him.

Meanwhile, the Israelites who had supported Absalom fled to their homes.

- Scripture doesn’t tell us that David pushed back or hesitated.
- As far as we know, David may not have yet learned that Joab was the one who violated his “bring him back alive” order and killed Absalom.
- Maybe his reaction would have been different if he had known.
- Regardless, the text indicates he apparently snapped out of his self-absorption and did what a king and commander should have done – he showed appreciation to his troops.
- The lesson for leaders is pretty straightforward. Bible scholar and preacher Gene Getz stated the leadership principle this way:
“There are times when leaders must rise above emotional pain and identify with the needs of the larger community.”ⁱⁱ

- Leaders are human like anyone, but they are also held to a higher standard because of their responsibility to the people they serve.
- In the worst part of World War II leading up to D-Day, General Eisenhower wrote in his diary: *“No matter how bad things got, no matter how anxious the staff became, the commander had to “preserve optimism in himself and in his command. Without confidence, enthusiasm and optimism in the command, victory is scarcely obtainable...optimism and pessimism are infectious and they spread...” “With this clear realization, I firmly determined that my mannerisms and speech in public would always reflect the cheerful certainty of victory—that any pessimism and discouragement I might ever feel would be reserved for my pillow.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- As rude as Joab was, King David needed to be shaken out of his unreasonable melancholy so he could affirm those who had done so much for him and his kingdom. It wasn’t just about courtesy, the future of the nation depended on it.
- It’s obvious how this lesson applies to anyone in a position of leadership. How does it apply to any follower of Christ? Let’s look at that.
- Question: **How was David able to snap out of his grief so quickly to step up to his responsibilities? How did his faith in God factor in?**
- Any expert on grieving would encourage us not to hold our emotions in but to let them out. **Are there times when a “full venting” of our feelings might be harmful to ourselves and others? When might a complete airing of our anger or sorrow be inappropriate or even selfish?**
- If a leader has a responsibility to *“rise above emotional pain and identify with the needs of the larger community,”* let’s look at how followers of Christ should grieve the loss of a loved one or friend.
- The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (ESV) ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

- First, let's see what Paul DIDN'T SAY. Paul didn't say believers should be stoics who put on a façade or a stiff upper lip. We need to experience our grief and God is waiting to comfort us. The Apostle Peter told us to *"Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you."* (1 Peter 5:7, NIV)
- What Paul DID say is that believers don't have to grieve the way people do *"who have no hope."*
- If we're grieving the loss of another believer, we have the hope that we will see them again because Jesus has conquered death.
- Tim Challies writes: *"...there's a distinctly Christian way to express grief. We must not grieve like unbelievers do. What is this Christian form of grieving? Christians experience grief but without despair, sorrow but without defeat, sadness but without hopelessness." [How can that be?] "Jesus truly died and truly returned to life and his resurrection is a promise, a proof, and a down payment that we, too, will return to life. What happened to him will happen to us. If it wasn't for Jesus we'd have no hope! But Jesus rose so we have the greatest hope!"^{iv}*
- Even if, tragically, we're grieving the loss of someone who was NOT a believer, a follower of Christ will receive supernatural comfort through the Holy Spirit because we have the only real source of comfort: Christ Jesus.
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3 tells us, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
 - Psalm 34:18 (ESV) says, The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
- We don't have time to do a full unpacking of how a Christian grieves. But my own life experience tells me even in the most tragic of circumstances, a believer grieves differently. Even in the midst of questions of why God would allow a terrible tragedy, the fact is time and again I've seen Christians grieve differently than those who have no hope.
- The way a Christian grieves can literally be a testimony to God's grace.

- Illustration: This week’s sudden, tragic loss of author, speaker, wife, and mother, Wynter Pitts. [14-year-old Alena’s tribute to her mom.]^v

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Quoting Gene Getz again, *“There are times when leaders must rise above emotional pain and identify with the needs of the larger community.”*^{vi}
- The story of David’s need to rise above his grief and live up to his royal responsibilities has obvious implications for leaders.
- Beyond the leadership lesson, it also points to how followers of Christ are to grieve. The way a Christian grieves is a testimony of God’s sustaining grace to a watching world.
- As Paul said, we don’t grieve like those who have “no hope.”
- To be clear, scripture never implies that a Christian should put on a happy face and stuff down our grief. Quite the contrary, we just looked at only a couple of the many verses in scripture that invite and instruct us to turn to Jesus for comfort in our grief.
- Still, Christians can grieve differently because we have the only real source of comfort and strength in sorrow: Jesus Christ.
- He himself promised: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” John 11:25–26 (ESV)
- Then he asks, *“Do you believe that?”* If we do, we will experience sorrow, yes, but never hopelessness.

ⁱ MacArthur, John. The MacArthur Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 13188-

13190). Thomas Nelson, Kindle Edition. <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0324/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.bhpublshinggroup.com/QR/571Bible/0324/how-bad-things-got-no-matter-how-anxious>

^{iv} <https://www.challies.com/articles/how-christians-grieve/>

^v <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2018/july/honoring-wynter-pitts-the-touching-tributes-of-her-daughter-alena-and-cousin-priscilla-shirer>

^{vi} <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0324/>