

General Church Education



Absalom's Defeat

2 Samuel 18:1-17; 19:1-8. 14-17

Lesson 30

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is King of Kings

For ages 10-11

Absalom's Defeat

2 Samuel 18:1-17; 19:1-8, 14-17

Teacher Background

After the people anointed David's son Absalom as king, David fled into the wilderness. Hushai, one of David's advisors, pretended to defect to Absalom but convincingly advised Absalom in a way that could help David. By accepting Hushai's advice, the Lord provided that Absalom would give David the time he needed to prepare for battle. After winning the battle David's forces dispersed into the woods. David had admonished his men to protect Absalom, but when Absalom's head became caught in a tree Joab killed him. David grieved when he heard of Absalom's death but Joab warned him that he would lose his troops if he did not congratulate them on their victory. This action and many others helped David to secure the support needed for his reinstatement as king over Judah and Israel.

This story demonstrates the Lord's leadership of David through Joab, the captain of his army. While it may appear that Absalom was not left in freedom to make good choices, it is important to note that he was being led by the Lord and not by evil spirits. In disobeying David, Joab showed that he was a clever leader who was taking care of David's welfare as king.

Focus Points

- Ahithophel and Hushai gave opposing advice, and Absalom chose Hushai's counsel.
- After David's forces beat Absalom, his head got caught in a tree and Joab killed him.
- David mourned for Absalom and Joab warned it would cost him the support of his people.

Readings from the Writings

By the commander of an army is meant its highest officer. If he looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and acts honestly, justly, and faithfully in the affairs of his command, he is doing the goods of use that are goods of charity. And because he is constantly meditating upon them, applying himself to them, and carrying them into effect, he becomes a charity. If he is the king he does not love war, but peace, and continues to love it during war. He only goes to war to protect his country and is not an aggressor but a defender. When war has been commenced, he is an aggressor, so long as aggression is defense. In battle he is brave and active; after battle, mild and merciful. Inwardly he does not exult in the slaughter of the enemy and the honor of victory, but the deliverance of his country and his people from hostile invasion and destruction. He acts prudently, faithfully looks after his army as the father of a family looks after his children and loves each one of them according as he does his work honestly and actively. Cunning is not cunning with him, but prudence. See *Charity* 164

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the Lord's Word by heart.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
Prosperity within your palaces.” (Psalm 122:6, 7)

Projects and Activities (see back for answers)

Choose one or two.

Fill in the Blank

Use the words in the box to complete the sentences.

Tree Tangle

As Absalom rode through the forest his head got caught in a tree. As his mule ran away from under him he was left hanging in a tree. Like Absalom, our reason (the mule) sometimes leaves us and we get caught up in selfish behaviors. This activity invites students to think of selfish feelings that can trap them and leave them stranded.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Reader's Theater Play: Ahithophel's Counsel

Act out the story of Ahithophel's skillful counsel. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-ahithophels-counsel-2samuel15.pdf>

Reader's Theater Play: Ahithophel's Counsel (Abridged)

Act out a shorter version of the story of Ahithophel's skillful counsel. Online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-ahithophels-counsel-abridged-2samuel15.pdf>

Discussion

David was overcome with grief when he heard Absalom died. But should he have been sad? Discuss why or why not. How did David's grief hurt the warriors who fought for Israel?

Absalom's Defeat

2 Samuel 18:1-17, 19:1-8, 14-17

Vocabulary

purposed—intended
convince—persuade or influence
counsel—advice

King David fled with his advisor Abishai and his son Absalom took over the city of Jerusalem. Hushai, another of David's advisors, went to Absalom in Jerusalem. Absalom was suspicious and asked, "Why did you not go with your friend?" He was right to be worried because David had sent him to spy on Absalom. However, Hushai cleverly convinced Absalom that he supported him now.

Ahitophel's advice

Absalom had to decide what to do now that he was in control of Jerusalem and David was on the run. Ahithophel, advised him:

"Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.

I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king." (2 Samuel 17:1, 2)

Ahitophel thought that if they attacked quickly, David could easily be defeated. His forces would be too tired to fight. He would kill David and bring David's supporters to Absalom.

Hushai's Advice

Absalom wanted to be sure he was doing the best thing so he asked Hushai what he thought. Hushai knew that if Absalom took Ahitophel's advice he would win. David needed time to get away and prepare for battle. Hushai needed to give advice that would help David, but would sound so convincing that Absalom would choose his plan.

Hushai Advises Absalom



Lesson 30 • Absalom's Defeat

Hushai reminded Absalom that David was a mighty warrior. He was sure to have found a good hiding place. It would be better to wait until Ahitophel had gathered a larger army for so Absalom would definitely win the battle.

Absalom chose Hushai's advice. The Word says that the Lord made sure he would do so.

“For the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahitophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom.” (2 Samuel 17:14)

Hushai Warns David to Escape

Hushai had spoken wisely. Now he had to let David know what had happened. He sent two priests to tell David what he had said to Absalom. He warned David not to stay in the wilderness, and by morning David and his followers had crossed the Jordan River.

David Prepares for Battle

David needed a safe place to prepare for Absalom's attack. He chose Mahanaim, a city where his soldiers could defend themselves. The citizens fed his tired and hungry followers and gave them supplies. David chose captains and divided his army into three divisions. Surprisingly, his warriors did not want him to go with them. They said that he was worth ten thousand of them and that should stay in the city.

Meanwhile, Absalom and his army followed David across the Jordan and camped in Gilead.



David stood by the gate as thousands of men marched out of the city. They heard him order that Absalom was not to be harmed! David and Absalom were very different. Absalom was willing to kill David and let his people live. David wanted to kill Absalom's men, but not their leader.

Joab Kills Absalom

David's army fought courageously and defeated Absalom's forces. As Absalom's men fled, the fighting spread out across the countryside. Twenty thousand men died in battle.

Then, as Absalom rode on a mule he met some of David's men in the forest. As he went under a tree, his head got caught in its branches. His mule went on, leaving him hanging there.

When Joab heard about it he was angry. He said,

“You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt.” (2 Samuel 18:11)

The man reminded Joab that David had forbidden anyone to harm his son. He said,

“Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king’s son.” (2 Samuel 18:12)

If Joab wanted Absalom he would have to kill him! Joab took ten armor bearers, found Absalom, and put three spears through his heart. His men also struck and killed him. They threw his body into a pit and covered it with stones. After plotting to take his father’s throne for years, Absalom was king for only a few days.

David Hears of Absalom’s Death

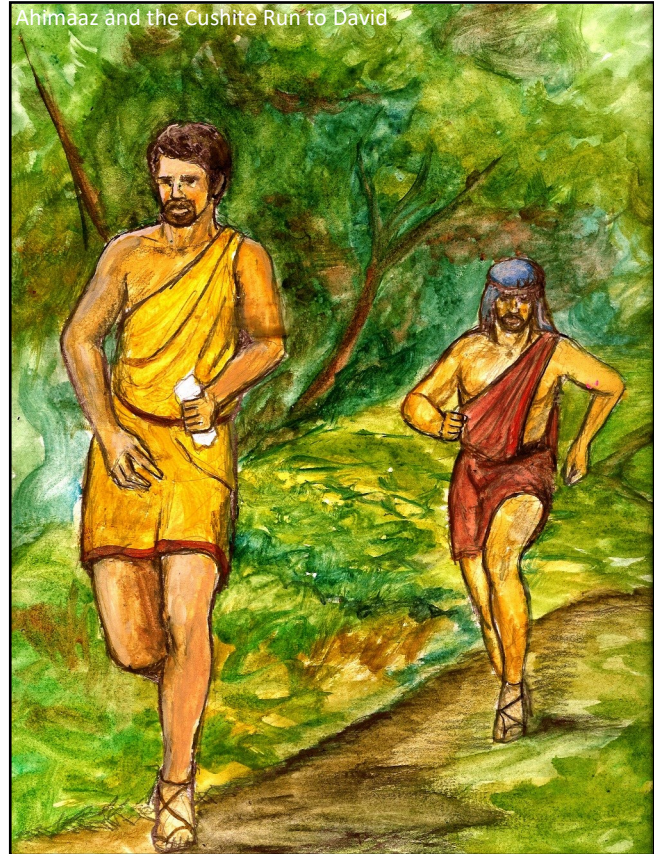
Joab did not tell David that Absalom had died. Ahimaaz, wanted to tell David about the victory, but Joab knew David would be angry about Absalom. He sent a Cushite man, but Ahimaaz ran overtook him and told the king about the victory. David asked if Absalom was safe, but Ahimaaz didn’t know. Then the Cushite ran up, bursting with what he thought was good news.

“There is good news, my lord the king! For the Lord has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you.” (2 Samuel 18:31)

But David wanted to know if Absalom was safe. As David’s victorious army returned, David grieved for his son. The victory had turned into a day of mourning. Joab criticized David for not showing appreciation for the soldiers who had risked their lives. He accused David of wishing his army had been killed and that Absalom had lived! Joab warned that if he did not greet his warriors, they would be gone by the next morning! David listened to Joab’s advice, and Israel and Judah welcomed David back as their king.

Good Counsel

Absalom and David asked for and received advice from others. Good counsel can come to us in many ways. The best advice comes from the Lord in His Word, but other people and other books can also help us make good decisions. Sometimes words of wisdom may come from people who we hardly know.



Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
Prosperity within your palaces.” (Psalm 122:6, 7)

Projects and Activities (answers at back)

Choose one or two.

Fill in the Blank

Use the words in the box to complete the sentences.

Tree Tangle

Make a Tree Tangle to illustrate how our selfish loves can get us caught up evil.

Fill in the Blank

Use the words in the box to fill in the blanks for questions 1-8. Answer questions 9 and 10 on your own.

ten thousand	tree
Cushite	greet the soldiers
grieved	go to battle in person
victory	Ahimaaz
pursue immediately	wilderness

1. King David fled into the _____ when Absalom took over Jerusalem.
2. Ahitophel's advice was to choose twelve thousand men and _____.
3. Hushai advised Absalom to _____.
4. David's men said that he was worth _____ of them.
5. The Lord gave David's army _____ over the army of Absalom.
6. As Absalom rode on his mule he got caught in a _____.
7. Joab sent a _____ to tell David the news even though _____ wanted to go.
8. David was greatly _____ by the death of his son but Joab made him _____.
9. Why do you think Joab didn't want Ahimaaz to deliver the news?
10. Would you have done the same thing as Joab even though it meant disobeying the king?

Tree Tangle

As Absalom rode through the forest his head got caught in a tree. As his mule ran away from under him he was left hanging in a tree. Like Absalom, our reason (the mule) sometimes leaves us and we get caught up in selfish behaviors.

This activity invites you to think of selfish feelings that can trap you and leave you stranded.

Supplies needed

1 paper plate or a stiff piece of paper
scissors
yarn or string
marker or pencil

Directions

1. Copy the Tree Tangle Template on to stiff paper.
2. Cut around the points of the circle. You should end up with a star. Cut a small hole in the center on the white dot.
3. Using a marker or pencil write five negative feelings that could leave you hanging between what you know to be right and how you feel in the rectangles on the tree trunk. For example, jealousy, anger, frustration, hatred, irritation, greed, selfishness.
4. Thread the string through the center to each point around the edge of the circle (see picture, below).
5. Now weave the string in and out of these strings to create a web.
6. How is this web like the web of thoughts and feelings you experience when you have bad feelings and cannot think straight?

Tree Tangle Template



Answers

Lesson 30

Fill in the Blank

1. wilderness, 2. pursue immediately, 3. go to battle in person, 4. ten thousand, 5. victory, 6. tree, 7. Cushite; Ahimaaz, 8. grieved; greet the soldiers.