

## 7—The House of Saul and David: Mislabeled Scars

### 2 Samuel 2-9



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**“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker”**

**2 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV)**

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One of the saddest situations one can find themselves is in the midst of a family war. In 1800's rural West Virginia, the Hatfield and McCoy families were known for their long-standing grudges. Over the years, at least 13 family members died as a result of the shared hatred between these families. Some sources say this all started because of Randall McCoy's belief that a Hatfield stole one of his pigs!

These types of situations are some of the common themes in great works of literature. Many high schoolers have had to read Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. This story tells the tale of two young warring families, the Capulet's and Montague's, who fall in love. The musical West Side Story tells a similar tale of Tony and Maria falling in love even though they are from families in rival gangs, the Sharks and the Jets.

We see families at war in the Scriptures too.

The families of Isaac and Ishmael (later, the Arab nations) pass on the systemic dislike of one another which was once shared by Isaac and Ishmael's mothers (Genesis 21:8-11). The families of Jacob and Esau (later, the Edomites) pass on the family hatred which all started with these twin boys long ago.

In the book of 2 Samuel we see another family at war. After King Saul dies, and is officially dethroned, King David finally takes his place (1 Samuel 31-2 Samuel 1). Yet, there was still bad blood between the two families. Even though David had, generally, been a good man the entire family of Saul had been so poisoned against the family of David that the bitterness continued between them. There are some important lessons here. Years of bitterness, hatred, war, oppression, and hurt can leave behind deep wounds. Let's try to learn from these two families at war so we can understand and seek to avoid this cyclical pattern of pain in our own lives.

### Discussion Questions:

1. After Saul's death, where is David appointed as king (2 Samuel 2:3-4)? How does Abner, the commander of Saul's army, respond to this appointment (2 Samuel 2:8-10)? What, do these two families at war eventually do to try and assert their dominion in the region (2 Samuel 2:12-16)? What are the results (2 Samuel 2:30-31)? What, often, is the collateral damage when we are thirsty for prominence and recognition?

## *Sunday Evening Youth ZOOM Study (6-14-2020)*

2. Saul's hatred for David had been passed on to his family, his army, and his followers. Therefore, those loyal to Saul never show any loyalty to David when he is appointed as king. Instead, what is the result (2 Samuel 3:1,6)? When religious groups, political parties, or people are at war with one another for long periods what can be the generational effects? Can you think of any specific examples of this inherited hatred in our culture?

3. Several events occur during this transition of the kingdom from Saul to David.

- Abner, the commander of Saul's army, feels entitled to Saul's concubine and gets angry when criticized by Ishbosheth, Saul's son (2 Samuel 3:6-8).
- Abner switches sides and joins David's kingdom (3:9-22).
- Joab, the commander of David's army, is suspicious of Abner's motives and avenges his brother Asahel's death by killing Abner (3:23-27).
- Ishbosheth is assassinated by two of his own captains as a sign to David they will be loyal to him (2 Samuel 4:1-8).
- David has them executed for their capital crime (4:9-12).
- More tribes come to David to express their loyalty and he begins to reign in Jerusalem (5:1-10).

How would you describe this series of events during this time?

4. Though David and his nation are having great success, how does Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife, feel about his celebrations and dancing in front of the ark (2 Samuel 6:12-23)? Why do you think Michal might have felt this way about David's celebration and how does it seem to impact their marriage?

5. While we see many gestures of ill-will towards David, what does David do in 2 Samuel 9 as a gesture of kindness towards the house of Saul and why does he do it (9:1-7)? How does Mephibosheth react (9:8-13)? If we want to put an end to the vicious cycle of suspicion, war, and vengeance how does this example teach us (see also Romans 12:18-21)?

### **Key Lessons:**

- Where there is war and division there is often history. We must learn from history.
- Hate will only breed more hate. Only love can conquer hatred.
- David gave a gift to Mephibosheth he did not deserve or earn. Likewise, Jesus gives us a gift we do not deserve, earn, and cannot repay (Ephesians 2:4-7).

**Additional Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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