

GOOD
The
The **BAD**
&
The **UGLY**



*Family: a circle
of strength,
founded on faith,
joined by love,
kept by God,
together forever.*

A quick glance on Pinterest and social media yields a variety of quotes about family. But what happens when the foundation crumbles or in that circle of strength a segment is removed? How do such changes affect our family?

Woven throughout the Bible is the theme of family. We find a great case study in the life of David. His is a story replete with change. Many of those

changes involved and affected family. David's family story is a mix of good, bad, and ugly. It's a testimony of the wonderful truth that God can and does use imperfect individuals in the midst of family dysfunction and changing family dynamics.

Family is where our story begins.

David's story began with family. He knew a heritage of faith passed down from his great-grandparents Boaz and Ruth to their son Obed to his son Jesse. Through the royal family line of David, God established and promised an everlasting kingdom. We know very little

about David's entrance into his family. The Bible's first mention of him occurs on the day he was chosen as future king of Israel.

"One dangerous and sadly truthful piece about family is this: the people closest to you will try hardest to hold you in your place because they are comfortable with how they currently know you"

—Jason Pockrandt
in *The Confident
Father's Guidebook*



Changes in Family Dynamics

The day may have seemed ordinary to this shepherd boy out in the fields. Yet, imagine his surprise when family members summoned him from hillside to home, to a prophet awaiting this youngest son's arrival, and to the pronouncement that he would be Israel's next king. David's life was forever changed. Samuel's pronouncement changed not only a ruddy-faced young man, but also a family.

Parental Expectations and Sibling Rivalries

Changing roles affect family dynamics. How might Jesse have felt to hear Samuel's choice of a son he evidently hadn't even placed in the kingly running? How might this pronouncement have changed his view of David? What feelings might his brothers have experienced on that day?

We gain a glimpse of these sentiments in the famous story of David and Goliath. Jesse had eight sons; why did he send David? What was Eliab's reaction? What does David's response seem to suggest? Have you ever experienced a role change within your family? How did you react? What did you learn about yourself or your view of God's will or timing?

**Read 1 Samuel
17:12-30.
How does
Jesse's request
reveal family
dynamics?**

Intrusion or Blessing

The dynamics continue to shift as David goes to live in the palace. David, the young man, finds a treasured friendship in the king's son. This friendship alters the dynamics in Saul's family. Jonathan's loyalties lie with David, rather than with his father. Later, David officially becomes part of Saul's family through his marriage to Michal. *Read 1 Samuel 18:28.* How much did this change in family dynamics contribute to Saul's anger? Jonathan accepted David's role change, even though it meant he would never take the throne.

How well do you accept those who become part of your family? Your church family? Do you feel threatened or accepting of these persons' giftedness?

One for All and All for One

When a job opportunity moved my family from Chicago to Nashville, my children struggled. We had been involved in a church plant where our children took an active role in ministry. The move to Nashville left them confused about their ministry roles. God had called their dad to a new role, but what about them. I reassured them that God's will for their father's life also included God's will for their lives.

Second Samuel 5 records David's move from Hebron to Jerusalem. This relocation served to unify the nation of Israel. It was a good move for David. Verse 10 states that he grew "greater and greater." However, in this move, we find changing family dynamics. *Compare 2 Samuel 5:13-14 with 1 Chronicles 3:1-9.*

Have you ever experienced a family move? How did this decision affect your life or the lives of family members? How did it affect your view of God or His will for your life?



Changes Resulting from Sin

Whether our own sin or the sin of others, sin affects change within our families. The great king David in a time of weakness fell prey to lust. One look opened the gate to a downward path that included adultery, lies, cover-ups, self-justification, manipulation, and murder. We may be tempted to believe that something like this just wouldn't happen in our family, yet none of us is exempt.

How many among us struggle with the secret of a past abortion or

"You may feel that your family of origin wasn't dysfunctional. The truth is, however, that due to the fallen nature of all parents (and all children), all families are flawed, and therefore dysfunctional to a certain degree."

—Dave Carder in *Secrets of Your Family Tree*

haunting memories of a failed relationship? Who cannot name a minister, church leader, or Christian businessperson who has fallen prey to some of the same sins? Sin wreaks havoc in a family, with children as the collateral.

Blatant Sins

Read 2 Samuel 12: 7-12. David's sin with Bathsheba changed plans within the royal family. Nathan's pronouncement that the sword would never depart from David's household rang true. Absalom killed Amnon. David's

commander Joab killed Absalom. Solomon killed Adonijah. Often a besetting sin in a parent's life appears magnified in the lives of children. Sexual sin played out in the lives of David's children through the rape of Tamar and the glaring rooftop exposé of David's concubines.

What impact did David's actions have on his sons? Did they see it as a double standard?

Underlying Circumstance	Relationship to David's Sin
Rape of Tamar 2 Samuel 13:1-20	
Death of Amnon 2 Samuel 13:30-33	
Rebellion and death of Absalom 2 Samuel 15:1-12; 18	

David's Responses	How did the sin come full circle in its impact on David?
	2 Samuel 13:21
	2 Samuel 13:30-33; 37-39
	2 Samuel 19:1-8

Secret Sins

Sometimes sin is not as blatant; however, the effects on our family can be equally devastating. Just as David *won* the hearts of the people, so Absalom *stole* the hearts of the people. David's prayer in Psalm 51 speaks of the value of a broken and contrite spirit.

Was pride an ongoing struggle for David? Consider David's sin in numbering the people. Even Joab could see the veiled motive in this effort and advised David not to go through with this. Yet, David persisted in this venture. As a result, 70,000 people lost their lives.

What outward effects can inward sin (pride, fear, silent resentment) have on families? How do you see a sin in your own life played out in your family of origin or in the lives of your children?



Changes beyond Our Control

How do we deal with situations where our hands are tied? What effects do changes beyond our control hold for our families? David faced several of these incidents.

Bad Judgment

Read 1 Samuel 21:1-9; 22:22. Although we may question David's level of truthfulness, his intentions were not evil when he came to Nob and asked the priests for provisions. Even taking the sword of Goliath did not seem an unreasonable thing. By battle standards, it would have been his to claim. However, an observer named Doeg related David's whereabouts to Saul. The resulting slaughter of innocent followers of God must have seemed almost surreal to David. His statement in 1 Samuel 22:22 suggests David's sorrowful regret and burden of responsibility.

How do you handle guilt when changes are beyond your control? Hindsight bias leads us to believe that if we had only done this, we could have prevented the situation or the outcome would have

been different. However, this thinking promotes self-doubt and in essence places us in the role of God.

Misinterpreted Acts of Kindness

When David heard the news of a nearby king's death, he thought it only respectable to send condolences. Yet, his acts of kindness were misinterpreted as acts of war. This resulted in the humiliation of his men. Interestingly, the Book of 1 Samuel places this incident immediately before David's sin with Bathsheba.

How do you react when others misinterpret your intentions? How might your reaction affect your family? How could this affect your overall mood, your level of motivation, or your desire to show kindness in the future?

Emotional Ties

What do we do when a partner leaves or when a child is taken from us? When emotional ties are severed? Michal loved David the

hero. Yet, while the hero was away, Michal was given to another man (1 Samuel 25:44).

Michal reentered David's story, but the emotional ties were severed once again over spiritual issues. Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23. What might have precipitated Michal's aversion that day as David danced before the Lord?

Has spiritual growth in your life ever produced family conflict? How did you feel?

How did you resolve this? Changes beyond our control challenge us to cling to a never-changing God.

Triggers and Wounds

The story of Nabal in 1 Samuel 25 offers another example of a change beyond David's control. David's men had acted in kindness, only to have that kindness ridiculed. David's proclamation to destroy the entire household over refused provisions sounds akin to Saul's actions in Nob. Thankfully, Abigail's quick actions provided a reality check for a raging monarch.

What was it that ticked off David about Nabal? He'd had previous encounters with foolish and evil men. Could it have been Nabal's taunt, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters." Was there something in that statement that triggered

"It doesn't matter what story we're telling, we're telling the story of family."

— Erica

Lorraine Scheidt

a memory of his shepherding days? Samuel's death was fresh on David's mind. Did Nabal's words spawn memories of the prophet's request for his inclusion? Or did they open a *father* wound?

What triggers you? What wounds surface when you are belittled or find yourself at the mercy of someone else? Do childhood or family memories influence your responses in times of transition or crisis?



Changes Necessitated by Life Seasons

"Families are the compass that guides us. They are the inspiration to reach great heights and our comfort when we occasionally falter."

Crossing the Brook and Leaving the Palace

When Absalom challenged his father for the kingdom, David realized he could not fight as he had in his younger days. The sting of his own son being an enemy added to his pain. David wept as he left Jerusalem that day, not knowing whether he would ever again see home, friends, or familiar surroundings.

Have you ever had to relocate or make accommodations because of a physical limitation (yours or a family member's)? If so, how did this change affect your family?

Disappointments and Regrets

My father-in-law's wanderlust kept him studying maps and planning for trips throughout his adult years. When driving became challenging, trains and tour buses carried him to his destinations. His lifelong dream was to ride a donkey to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. That dream was never fulfilled.

David had a dream—a righteous goal—to build a temple for God. Yet, plans for that dream changed as Nathan the prophet received a midstream halt from the Lord. The temple would be built, but not by David. Did David look back at his warring victories with a twinge of regret, knowing this was a reason mentioned for God's refusal? Often, age lends perspective on priorities. Things we once deemed important may lessen in value with each life season. Acceptance of God's design concerning other family members' roles comes as we realize our limitations.

"Indeed, the choices we make today as parents will affect our families for years to come."

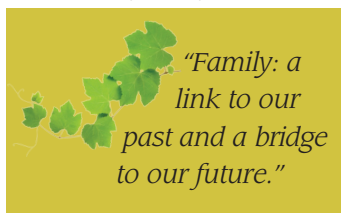
—Pastor and author,
Mark Musser

We find David's amazing response in 2 Samuel 7:18-29. What attitudes characterize his response? How do you respond when something for which you aspire is given to another?

Relinquishing Authority

David was blind. He was weak, and although he was still the reigning and rightful king until death, he stepped down and let his son rule during the final season of his life. Giving up rights in families is a struggle. It's also a struggle in the family of God. After all, we've been a good provider, nurturer, leader, servant, pianist, teacher, (you fill in the blank). However, God may have a Solomon in the wings, a young person blessed with wisdom, ready to accomplish something far beyond our abilities.

Once again, David responded righteously. He provided means and materials. He encouraged and aided his son in the transition. Is there a younger person whom God has appointed for a task?



Are you encouraging and aiding this person in pursuit of God's purposes? Retirement-age people today are among the richest ever. Will the current snowbird generation offer its accumulated resources to youth in

order to further God's kingdom?

Changes God Desires

"Family: a link to our past and a bridge to our future."

Family plans may change, but God's plan for families remains constant. Family is part of God's design for each of us. Whether that family is seemingly functional or overtly dysfunctional, God desires our worship, surrender, and trust concerning the family in which He has placed us.

What changes do you feel are needed in your family? Which of these areas (worship, surrender, or trust) do you find most challenging? What changes are you willing to make?

About the Writer: Sarah Fletcher, former editor for WNAC and her husband, Keith, live in Johnston City, Illinois, where he pastors Johnston City Free Will Baptist church. Sarah is a licensed professional counselor employed as an adult therapist in a community mental health agency. Sarah enjoys cooking for a crowd, and serves as kitchen coordinator of JC Kids' Lunch Bunch.