

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for August 29: Face crises with courage

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Trouble is no respecter of persons; no one is exempt from pain and suffering. The fact that crises will come never has been in question. How crises are handled is the issue. David encountered trying times during his life and in his tenure as king of Israel. Yet he faced them with courage and used them as an opportunity to draw closer to God.

Continue to trust God (2 Samuel 15:13-14, 24-26)

The prophet Nathan had passed God's judgment on David. As a result of his own moral failure, David saw his son, Absalom, lead an all-out revolt against him. For a period of years, Absalom deceptively had lured the men of Israel away from David. Eventually, those who pledged their allegiance to Absalom presented a real threat to David and his kingdom (vv. 1-12). Either David underestimated the strength of Absalom's army or he was uninformed regarding the insurrection because he seems surprised when he hears Absalom is marching on Jerusalem (vv. 13-14).

David fled the city for his own protection and for the benefit of the people of Jerusalem. As was the custom, the Ark of the Covenant traveled with the king. After crossing the Kidron Valley, David instructed the Levites to return the ark to Jerusalem. As long as he maintained possession of the ark, David had the physical manifestation of the presence of God and the symbol of divine favor. By returning the ark, David displayed the nature of his faith. His trust was in God, not in the symbols of God's favor (v. 25).

David's actions afford two critical lessons regarding the nature of displaying trust in God while facing a crisis. Many would say David failed to show faith when he fled from Jerusalem rather than standing to fight. It would have taken great courage to stay and fight. It took equal courage to flee for the protection of the citizenry of Jerusalem.

The first lesson learned from David's experience is a reminder that personal faith needs to be tempered with the corporate welfare of others. By returning the ark to Jerusalem, David taught the second critical lesson. Faith must not be placed in objects, even when they are holy objects. Only when faith is placed in God is it properly allocated.

Don't isolate yourself from others (2 Samuel 15:30-37)

As David fled Jerusalem and began to seek God's face regarding how he was to handle Absalom's rebellion, he engaged in a number of experiences with friends and trusted advisors. God used them to give strength to David.

Ittai, a Gittite, chose to stay and remain loyal to David rather than return to his homeland (v. 20). Zadok, Abiathar and Jonathan continued to be obedient to the king and his orders (vv. 27-29). But, it was Hushai who showed the greatest allegiance to David. A longtime family servant, Hushai not only made himself a loyal subject (v. 34), but he also agreed to be a bit of a spy and go to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel, a follower and advisor to Absalom.

In the midst of very trying times, David sought out the counsel and support of trusted friends. Few people are able to handle the severity of life alone. Everyone needs the support of another person.

The genius behind the family of faith is the foundation of encouragement. Believers are called upon to stand in the gaps and to be supportive of one another. Being part of a fellowship of believers provides the surest means

for successfully handling life's crises.

A word of encouragement to the family of faith might be in order here. There seems to be a tendency in the modern church to "shoot the wounded." It is easy to become judgmental and to see difficulty in another person's life as proof of sinfulness. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to judge sin. It is the role of the church to be redemptive.

Fulfill your responsibilities (2 Samuel 19:7-8)

Absalom's rebellion eventually was crushed and David's throne was protected. However, Absalom was killed by David's army. Even when a son rebels against his father and seeks to destroy him, a father's heart always breaks for a lost son. David was no different. What had begun as an insurrection crisis ends in grief. Following Absalom's death, David entered a time of depression.

Just as God had sent Nathan to confront his sinfulness, God sent Joab to help David from his depression. Joab's counsel seems to lack compassion. 2 Samuel 19:5-7 is the record of Joab forcefully telling David it is time to move on. Because he was God's man, David responds to Joab's words and returns to "the gateway (v. 8), the symbol his life was returning to some degree of normalcy.

Every crisis has a trying time. Often crises will present such heartache and hurt, the recovery period requires grief. Even in the most devastating experiences of life, there must be a time when life begins again; a time to move beyond the difficulty to once again experience the joy of life. Often God sends servants to encourage his people beyond their grief. Sometimes their counsel can be gentle and caring. There are other times when love must be tough. Either way, it often is the ministry of others that provides the help necessary for returning life to a normal state.

Conclusion

David eventually returned to experience much of the life God had intended for him. Even the man after God's own heart experienced heartache. In a sense, it was the difficult times that helped to mold and shape David into the person he eventually became. Crises can be used to bring about a positive result, because God takes tragedy and turns it into triumph.