

David: Issues of the Heart
Part 4
A Crowned Heart
2 Samuel 5
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I am going to read to you from 2 Samuel Chapter 5 this morning. This is the passage on which I want to base what I want to talk about.

2 Samuel Chapter 5. We are looking at events in the life of David, you remember, the shepherd boy who became the king over Israel.

And now we come to the point where he is crowned as king.

Chapter 5:1 says,

“All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood.

““In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, “You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.””

“When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

“David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.

“In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.”

And the next few verses talk about David conquering and capturing the city of Jerusalem.

But down to Verse 17:

“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold.

“Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the LORD, ‘Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?’

“The LORD answered him, ‘Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you.’

“So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, ‘As water breaks out, the LORD has broken out against my enemies before me.’ So that place was called Baal Perazim.

“The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off.

“Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the LORD, and he answered, ‘Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees.

“As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the LORD has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.’

“So David did as the LORD commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.”

And we will see in just a moment why I have taken time to read those particular verses to you.

But as I just said, we are looking at the life of David, not just because we are interested in the story of somebody else’s life and interested in the sequence and events that took places, the mountains, the valleys that were part of David’s life, but we have a better reason, we have a bigger reason for looking at this than simply that.

In the New Testament Paul writes in 2 Timothy Chapter 3:16,

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

And if that is why all Scripture was written, that is our agenda when we look into the Scripture, whether it is anything from Genesis to the book of Revelation.

This is not just biography; this is designed to teach us – more than that, to rebuke us – more than that, to correct us, get us back on track - more than that, to train us in righteousness, and more than that, that we may be equipped for every good work.

And that’s why every part of Scripture is not only valid but important for us to spend time in. And as we look through this window into David’s life, many of us will find ourselves looking into a mirror that throws back an image that says, “This is me that we’re talking about.”

Now the story so far, as we have looked at it over several weeks, is that David was anointed as king by the prophet Samuel when he was just a teenaged boy.

He was the youngest of eight brothers, the least likely, in everybody's estimation, to be the man who would grow up to be the king.

But God told Samuel, "This is the man and it's for this reason: I am not looking where everybody else is looking. Everybody else," said God to Samuel "looks on the outward appearance. I don't look at that; I look in the heart."

God's eyes are x-ray eyes that cut through all the outward performance, all the management of what we want outwardly to appear to be, right into the heart of the real person.

And having looked into his heart, God said this: "I found David, son of Jesse, a man after My own heart. He will do whatever I want him to do."

"David's heart," says God "resonates with My heart. There is a connection between our hearts."

And the measure to which you and I are of use to God is the measure which our hearts resonate with His heart and His heart resonates with our hearts.

The outward external appearances can be deceptive – they oughtn't to be but they can be deceptive. We can manage them very well. But it's what is going on inside.

And after David was set apart as the king when he was just a teenaged boy, maybe 15 or so, in the next chapter he brought some food to his brothers who were out fighting against the Philistines in one of the quite common battles between Israel and the Philistines.

And when David got to the battlefield he discovered the whole army was paralyzed by a threat from one big man called Goliath. He put out a challenge and nobody would respond to the challenge. Nobody would go and fight him – no soldier, not the king, no officer.

So David said, "If nobody else will go, I will go because I know this man is challenging the armies of the living God. God will give him into my hands."

And David went, you remember, with five stones and a sling. And he slew Goliath and killed Goliath. And he becomes the hero of Israel.

Women, especially, were very impressed with this smart young man at this point because in 1 Samuel 18:6 it says,

"The women came out from all the towns of Israel...As they danced, they sang: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.'"

So David was the hero and all these groupie girls were running around him and singing to him.

And the next verse says,

"Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him."

I'll bet it did!

Rather than embracing David as the hero of Israel who had got Saul himself off the hook, he is angry and his anger, if you follow through the next chapter, turned to jealousy. His jealousy turned to fear. His fear turned to murder. And his murderous spirit turned to an intent, for fifteen years, to track David down and kill him.

And for fifteen years David was a fugitive, on the run from Saul.

And finally Saul is killed in a battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, along with three of his sons: Jonathan, who was David's best friend, Abinadab and Malki-Shua.

And when Saul was dead, the tribes of Israel came to David to make him king in the chapter that we have just read about.

However it wasn't all plain sailing because Saul had a fourth son called Ish-Bosheth, and Ish-Bosheth claimed the right to the throne himself. And the nation, for several years, went into civil war, those who followed Ish-Bosheth, mainly in the north; those who followed David, mainly in the south.

And it says in Chapter 3:1,

“The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”

And Ish-Bosheth was eventually murdered by two of his own leaders when he was asleep in his own bed.

Now the opposition is gone; David is finally on the throne.

And as we read in Chapter 5:4,

“David was thirty years old when he became king and he reigned forty years.

“In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.”

This is when the kingdom now becomes united, which remained united under David and Solomon, for about eighty years in all. And then it split again and divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.

Now there are three things I want to look at with you that I think may be helpful to us.

I want to talk first of all about how David's kingship is confirmed, and the word that Samuel had spoken to him fifteen years or so before is now brought to reality and his kingship is confirmed.

He has been waiting in the wings, as I said to you, for these last fifteen years. And now that Saul has died,

“When all the elders of Israel” (Verse 3) “had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.”

They talked about three things that qualified him. He was their own flesh and blood, their own kith and kin. Secondly, they said that he led Israel on military campaigns and proved himself as a military leader. And thirdly, “the Lord has set you apart for this,” they said, “and we recognize it.”

So all the pieces were in place for David to be crowned king.

Now a point I wanted to make about this is that this crowning has been a long time coming for David. It was nineteen chapters earlier that Samuel had anointed him as king over Israel, as God had told him to - nineteen chapters earlier, about fifteen years earlier.

And David in that time had had several opportunities to kill Saul and get himself on the throne. The only obstacle to what God had set him apart for being fulfilled was that Saul was still there.

Saul, a man whom the Holy Spirit of God had left, who was tormented by an evil spirit (we’re told that earlier). And David (we talked about this last time) twice had the opportunity to cut off Saul’s head.

But in both cases he didn’t do it. He cut off a piece of his raiment and then went across the valley and said, “Whose piece of clothing is this?” And Saul said, “It’s mine!”

“It could have been your head, Saul. I could have killed you, but I am not going to. God put you on the throne; God will take you off.”

Another time he came upon him sleeping with his bodyguard also sleeping around him; took his spear out of the ground, his water jug, went away with it and sent a message back, “I could have killed you with your own sword but I am not going to.”

Because David operated on the basis that “if God has called me for this role, God will bring it about, and He will bring it about in His time without any manipulation from me,” is the spirit of David.

You see, if God shows you something, don’t try to force it into being. If you sense in your heart God has called you to something or God is going to do something or He is going to give you something, don’t try to manipulate; just wait; keep a healthy distance from it, keep a healthy disinterest in it and wait for God in His timing to bring it about.

Several times in my life I have felt God has shown me something and you are never 100% sure until it does come to pass and you say, “Yes, that was God.” But you know, you are 90%, you are 80%, or you sense this is from God.

I remember on one occasion I had to wait for 7 years before what I sensed was right came to pass. On another occasion I had to wait for 11 years. On another occasion I have waited for 14 years.

And they were things, with hindsight, I can say that God clearly put into my mind. And they lived in the back of my mind. But we had to wait.

And that waiting period can be the most dangerous period in our lives because we want to speed things up and we become tempted to manipulate, to orchestrate, to make things happen to bring it about.

You know God takes His time in the Scriptures. In all the leading characters that God works with, He is never in a hurry.

Remember when He spoke to Abraham? Abraham was 75 years of age and God said, “Look at the stars in the sky.”

Abraham looked up. “I am going to give you as many descendants as the stars in the sky. Your wife will give birth to a son. From that son will come a family. From that family will come a nation.”

Now Abraham was 75 years of age, married to his wife who was 65 years of age, and they had no children. It says of Sarah, she was barren. But it says Abraham believed God. “Well God, it has not worked for the last 50 years but You said it; I will believe You.”

He went home and told his wife Sarah, and he probably expected a baby in 9 months. But it didn't work. Twelve months went by, two years, three years, five years, seven years, ten years went by; there is no baby.

Abraham is 85 now; she is 75. The Bible is not complimentary about either one of them. It says he was as good as dead and it says she was worn out. (I don't know why – she had no kids.) But anyway she was worn out.

And this was a dangerous moment for them because when they had a discussion, Sarah brought up the subject, “Did you tell me God told you we were going to have a baby?”

“Yes, He did.”

“Are you sure it was God who spoke to you?”

“Yes it was.”

“You sure you weren’t dreaming?”

“No, I wasn’t dreaming.”

“Are you sure you hadn’t been eating too much cheese or something?”

“No, I wasn’t eating any cheese. God spoke to me.”

“Well, where’s the baby, Abraham?”

“I don’t know, Sarah. Maybe He didn’t know how worn out you were.”

She probably said, “Listen, maybe He didn’t know how dead you were, Mr. Abraham.”

So they decided to help God out and they produced a son through the maid Hagar, not as a rebellion against God; as an attempt to bring about the will of God, quicker than it seemed to be that God was doing it.

And Hagar gave birth to a little baby boy. They called him Ishmael.

Fourteen years later, Abraham was 99; she was 89. And God said, “Abraham, do you remember I told you that you would have a son?”

“Yes.”

“Well, this time next year your wife will give birth to a son.”

“This time next year?”

“Yes.”

“Well, we’ve already got him. He’s thirteen now. He’s out there playing football.”

And it says that Sarah gave birth on the very day God had said.

So Abraham, being given this fantastic promise, when already he was too old, his wife was already too old, waited 25 years. Eventually after 25 years, the child who was promised was born, Isaac.

And I imagine Abraham thought, “Well now we have got this little boy; let’s get him to grow up and we’ll get this family on the road, we’ll get this nation on the road.” Probably anticipating Isaac would marry at twenty and have a baby every year for the next 25 years or something.

But as Isaac grew up he wasn’t very interested in women, didn’t get a girlfriend. And when he was forty, Abraham employed somebody to go and find a wife for Isaac. What do you call those today? Matchmakers, I guess.

And so the servant set off. “What do you want?” They got the specifications. Ok; went off and found a girl and brought her back and Isaac said, “Yes, she will do.”

So they got married and Abraham must have breathed a sigh of relief. “Phew, at last. At forty he is getting married. Now we are going to get these grandchildren, now we are going to get this nation.”

But it says about his wife, “She was barren.”

Of all the women in the Middle East, he picks a girl who doesn’t conceive. And she did conceive once after twenty years of marriage and she produced twins, Esau and Jacob.

And these were not identical twins in any shape, way or form - totally opposite.

And you know their story and their battlings and Jacob eventually goes down to Egypt. He has twelve sons. They go down to Egypt and they stay in Egypt for 400 years.

All the promise God made to them about the stars in the sky and the land on which he was then at the time seemed to have gone nowhere.

And after 400 years a young Hebrew man who has been brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, Moses, had a vision. God spoke to him, “You are going to lead My people out of Israel.” And so he thought, “That will start tomorrow.”

And he killed an Egyptian soldier in an attempt to get it going, and ran out to the desert; spent forty years out in the desert, nothing happening. He waited forty years after God spoke to him about bringing Israel out of Egypt.

Until after forty years when he was eighty years of age, God spoke to him in the burning bush.

I am just illustrating the fact God is never in a hurry – never in a hurry.

I mean Jesus was thirty before He preached His first sermon, before He performed His first miracle. I can imagine, you know, just from a human perspective, when He got to the age of twenty, probably saying, “Father, can I start now?”

“No, just wait until I set you apart.”

Twenty-one: “Come on, I’m ready.”

“No.”

Twenty-five: “Come on, I’m making tables and chairs all day. Can’t I do something a bit more than that? I mean I saw a lame man hobbling up the road – couldn’t I just heal Him? Father, let me.”

“You wait,” until He was thirty.

And when He was thirty, He was set apart when the dove descended and the voice of the Father in heaven, “This is My Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

He had to wait all that time. And actually the biggest surprise of all was to His brothers. They did not believe Him when He began to preach. You would think they had lived in His house; they must have known, but they didn’t. He never told them. He never said to them, you know, “Do you like the stars in the sky? Beautiful, aren’t they? I made those.”

Saul of Tarsus converted on the Damascus road. And the day he was converted Ananias came to speak to him and he said God said to him that “you will preach before Gentiles and kings and you will suffer greatly for My name.”

And Paul said later about that, “I was not disobedient to that vision from heaven,” but nothing happened for about 14 years. He went and lived in an Arabian desert for a few years, went back to Tarsus, got a job as a tent maker because his training, which had been as a Pharisee was no longer of any use to him. In Tarsus he got a job as a tentmaker.

And then God brought him down to Antioch and he got sent out across the world.

God takes His time. You see we live in a day when we want everything to be instant because so much is instant.

We can sit and watch on our television screens something live on the other side of the world. We can get onto a plane and be overnight in almost any other country of the world.

We have fast food. We talk in sound bites. We can tweet with 140 characters and communicate something in such brevity.

But God isn’t like that. God takes His time.

And David has been for 15 years waiting for what God had promised him to come to pass, but he didn’t do anything to make it happen.

Great verse in Isaiah 5:19 there is a series of woes in that chapter and God says,

“Woe to those who say, ‘Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it.’”

Woe to those who say, “Let God hurry.”

Why?

“So that we may see it.”

No, you may not see it. It may develop after you are gone. But give God time.

And so in Chapter 5:12:

“David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel.”

And he knew it because there was a coming together of the outer circumstances with his inner conviction.

Now the inner conviction usually comes first and then the outer circumstances came into being to confirm it was right.

And he waited all those years for that. And the waiting time is a testing time. And the testing time is a deepening time. And the deepening time is a necessary time.

David wrote in Psalm 40,

“I waited patiently for the LORD.”

I ask you this morning, are you waiting? Are you waiting for something you sense God has spoken to you about?

Well let me give you a word of profound advice: keep waiting, and in His time He will bring it about.

I had somebody say many years ago something that was helpful to me: *“God’s delays are not God’s denials.”*

God’s delays are not God’s denials.

So the first thing, David’s kingship is confirmed and all these circumstances come together.

Secondly, his kingship is consolidated. You see his kingship was confirmed in a day in a ceremony, in an event. His kingship was then consolidated over many years.

For seven years he was in Hebron and then he captured the fortress of Zion, which we know as Jerusalem. Ever since Israel conquered Canaan under Joshua they had been unable to occupy Jerusalem.

Jerusalem had been a thorn in their side. They couldn’t capture it. It was strategically located 800 metres above sea level, between the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Zion with the Kidron Valley and stream running down between them.

And the Jebusites who had been the occupants of Jerusalem before even Joshua arrived in Canaan, had successfully defended the city for 400 years.

Joshua 15 [vs. 63]; it says,

“Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there.”

Judges 1:21:

“The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there.”

And this had been a repeated story for these 400 years.

Now David had been on the throne for seven years in Hebron and he decides he needs to occupy Jerusalem to be the king over the whole nation of Judah and Israel together.

When they tried to take the city, the Jebusites taunted them and they said (we missed out this in Chapter 5:6),

“Even the blind and the lame can ward you off.”

“We don’t need an army to ward you off; we can flick you off as you try to climb your way up here.”

And then David had an idea. There was a water supply drainage that ran out of the city – drainage and sewerage.

And he sent his soldiers up through the drainage system, up through the sewerage system and they came up at the, I guess, the grids, the manholes in the city. And one night they came out and were in the city. And when the Jebusites woke up, there were the men of David ready to conquer them, which they did.

And so in Chapter 5:7 it says,

“David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.”

Verse 9:

“David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the supporting terraces inward.

“And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.”

Notice he renamed it the City of David.

And one of the most fascinating archeological sites in Israel today, in my view, is the excavations that are taking place on the site of the City of David. They have dug down to his palace and you can see the rooms that were part of his original palace.

And he became more and more powerful.

The reason?

Because the LORD God Almighty, it says, was with him.

David's story, David's conquest was inexplicable apart from one reason: God is in this – God is in this.

And that's when you wait God's time and He brings you into whatever it is He has for you, you know you are safe, you know you are secure, you know that things will happen. Why? Because this has been God's business.

But the third thing I want to talk about – David's kingship was confirmed and then it was consolidated; the third thing is that David's kingship was challenged, because the moment he was crowned there was conflict.

Verse 17 says,

“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him.”

Now there is a principle here. Whenever God does something in life, Satan will counteract it. He always has and He always will.

When God created the beautiful Garden of Eden, placed Adam and Eve together there in their innocence in these beautiful surroundings, no longer is the setting described to us in Scripture when Satan comes in, poison comes in. And he seeks to corrupt, which he does, and destroy, which he does.

When Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit in the Jordan River and the Father said, “This is My Son; with Him I am well pleased,” and this marked the beginning of His ministry, the next item on the agenda was that Jesus went into the wilderness and for forty days was tempted by the devil. Poison comes in and Satan becomes active.

Be on your guard when God does something new in your life because you can be sure it will arouse the interest of Satan for sure, and he will seek to poison and destroy. And the most vulnerable are those who think they stand - take heed lest you fall, we are warned about.

So David was anointed as king and the Philistines then, who had long been an established enemy of Israel, went in full force to search for him – full force.

The Philistines had been enemies of Israel for four centuries. They came into Canaan just about the same time as the Israelites occupied it. And they tried to dislodge the Israelites. And for four hundred years – we are now four centuries into that time in Canaan – they have sought to destroy Israel, they have sought to take over their land.

They had been involved in many skirmishes during Saul's reign. Apart from when David slew Goliath, they had had a great time conquering territory and stealing things and taking people away.

And now David is on the throne; they come to attack him.

And how does David respond?

Well in Verse 18 it says,

“Now the Philistines came and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the LORD, ‘Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?’”

What does David do? He gets on his knees and he asks God, “What shall I do in this situation?”

Now David had a great military commander in a man called Joab. He didn't first inquire of Joab. “Joab, you're the military commander, leader; what do you think we should do about the Philistines?”

And Joab with all his wisdom, all his skill, all his proven ability, might have given him some good advice, but that isn't where he went at first.

David himself was a great fighter. He had experienced victory over the Philistines himself, but he didn't look first to his own skills or to say, “What did I do last time?” or “Let me go and get some stones and a sling – that's what I did last time.”

He inquired of the Lord.

And Verse 19 says,

“The LORD answered him, ‘Go, for I will hand the Philistines over to you.’”

“So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them.”

Very simple – “what do I do?”

“Go.”

He went and defeated them.

But then in Verse 22 it says,

“Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim.”

Same place, same enemy.

“So David inquired of the LORD.”

Once again he got on his knees and he asked God, “God, what do we do now? Here are the Philistines coming back again. We defeated them last time and they are coming back again. What do I do?”

First time he went God had said, “Go” and he went.

Second time, Verse 23, God said, “Do not go straight up,” and then gave him a tactic: circle around behind them etc. etc. and when you hear the sound of marching on the tops of the balsam trees, the mulberry trees, that’s your time to go and attack them.

The point I wanted to make with you is that on both occasions the Philistines came and threatened Israel. David did not lean back on his past experience of fighting the Philistines; he inquired of the Lord.

The Lord said, “Go,” so he went. Second time, the Lord said, “Do not go straight up there; go around.” Gave him a different tactic.

And he did, and again the Philistines were defeated.

Now David had fought the Philistines in the same valley, the Valley of Rephaim. He had seen victory so the easy thing to do would be to repeat what he had already done to gain the victory the first time.

But David was wiser than that. He went back to God. He inquired of the Lord and His strength and His strategies and His tactics were not of human origin, but of divine origin.

It is so easy in our experience to have had a time when God has done something that we simply then try to repeat what God had done. We don’t need to pray about this anymore; we know what happens because God did it last time.

You know maybe the first time that you really sought God’s plan for your life, maybe as a young person, and God led you, but you don’t ask Him anymore. You have learned how to make your own decisions now.

I don’t mean every decision we make we necessarily pray about that because once we are on a track let’s follow it through and do what seems logical. But when you come to a fork in the road, you say, “Well I think I know what to do here.”

Maybe the first time you ever bought a house you prayed about this, “God, show me which house should we buy,” you know, and you have thought about it, you prayed about it and you bought your house but now if you buy another house you just look at the logistics of it and that’s the basis of your decision.

Maybe you went into business, maybe you changed the situation in life and you asked God to guide you and He did as, in the words of Solomon, you trusted the Lord with all your heart. You did not lean on your own understanding, and He did direct your paths.

But now we have become established and now we no longer inquire of God, we don’t seek Him in the same way, we don’t even trust Him in the same way. Rather, we do lean on our own understanding.

And we have basically developed a business plan for our lives. “This is how I am going to make my life work.” We have got a proven strategy and we no longer go back to God and inquire of God.

We can do it as a church as well. We can stop looking to God but just oil the machinery and repeat what we already know and do what we already do.

We must be very, very careful of wanting to do what has always been done because we are secure with the way it has always been done.

There are churches all around the place, churches in this city, that have seen God in marvelous ways, working within them, but the life has gone out of them because they have simply repeated the pattern that God blessed years ago and they are no longer inquiring of God, “What is it You want to do today in this day, in this situation, in these changed circumstances? What do You want to do now?”

No, no, they have got a long enough history to know exactly what to do because it worked twenty, thirty years ago.

Back in the early 50’s there were Youth for Christ events in Toronto and they were actually held in the Peoples Church, which was then down on Bloor Street. And many folks came to Christ through those exciting Saturday night events that went on, you know, through the winter months.

And an old man came to me one day here, an older man should I say, and he said to me, “You know, I was converted in those Saturday night Youth for Christ meetings that we had back in the 1950’s. I want to give” – and he gave me a number of money, a figure – it was quite a high figure – “I want to give this money to restart Youth for Christ in the Peoples Church.”

And I said, “Well, your motivation is wonderful because you were converted that way, but what happened in the 1950’s is not going to happen today in the same way. God did it then. We have to be saying, ‘Lord, what is Your tactic? What is Your strategy? What is Your way of reaching into people’s hearts today?’”

And as I say there are churches dying all over the place because they have stopped asking God, “What do You want us to do?” and then listening to Him and then obeying Him.

And David’s habitual lifestyle was to inquire of the Lord. You know, back in 1 Samuel 23:1 before he was even on the throne, David inquired of the Lord, it says. Chapter 23, David inquired of the Lord. Chapter 30, David inquired of the Lord.

When he became king, Chapter 2:1 of 2 Samuel, David inquired of the Lord. Chapter 5, David inquired of the Lord. David inquired of the Lord.

This is a bit repetitious isn’t it? Well, sure it is because David got on his knees and inquired of God. That’s what happened.

And the interesting thing is that God gave Him a different answer the second time. He would never have known that different answer if he tried to live on the basis of the first answer.

He might have just gone up as he had the first time and get slaughtered. God had a different tactic for him.

You know it is a big mistake to try and lock God into predictable patterns or to feel we have got a handle on what God does.

Nobody ever starts a dead church. People start live churches. People start Gospel-preaching churches. But there are dead churches and dying churches all over the place – why? Because we have lost that freshness with God.

About five years ago I was speaking from Matthew’s Gospel here and I pointed this out in Matthew 8 and 9. So most of you will have forgotten; some of you weren’t here, but three of you might remember.

Matthew 8 and 9 there are ten distinct miracles that Jesus performs in those two chapters. And there is great variety in the way that Jesus performed those miracles.

The first one is of a leper who comes to Jesus and He reaches out His hand and touches him and says, “Be clean.” Jesus touched him.

And then a centurion came in and said to Jesus, “My servant is back at home. He is sick. Will You come and visit him?”

And Jesus said, “No, no. You go home and your servant will be fine.” He just spoke the word, that’s all.

And when the centurion got home the servant was well. No physical contact between them – not even see each other.

And then there is a paralytic who came to Jesus and Jesus didn't touch him; He spoke to him and said, "Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk." And the man jumped up and began to walk. There is authority in the voice of Jesus.

And then one of the other instances there was a woman who came through the crowd and she came behind Jesus and touched His cloak. She had a hemorrhage for 12 years. She touched His cloak and immediately she was healed.

He didn't touch her. He didn't speak to her. He wasn't even looking in her direction. She touched Him and was healed.

Now we see the variety there in the way Jesus performed those miracles and we are fine about that because it is in the Bible so we don't even think twice about it.

But if life then was like it is now, it probably would have led to some problems because I can imagine some of these people getting together after they had been healed by Jesus and one saying to the other, "You know I was healed by Jesus when He was here."

The second one says, "Oh you were? I was as well. That's fantastic! You know, when He touched me it was as though the power of God came down His arm and through His fingers and into my body. Did you feel that when He touched you?"

And the second man says, "What do you mean when He touched you?"

"Well, you know, when you...you were healed by Jesus?"

"Yes."

"Well, you know, when He touched you."

"He didn't touch me. That isn't how Jesus heals people."

"What did He do to you?"

"Well He just spoke the word. He said, 'Get up and walk' and there was such authority in His voice, I jumped up and I began to walk. Why did He have to touch you?"

"Well, I don't know, but He does touch people. That's what He does. I think yours was just psychosomatic you know."

And so they probably formed two different denominations. The "Touchy Church" on the one hand, in the town, and the "Church of the Word" on the other side of the town.

And they meet together and sing their favorite hymns every Sunday. You know, "He touched me, etc., To get a touch from the Lord is so real"; those are their favorite songs.

And down the road in the “Church of the Word” they sing, “Speak Lord in the stillness” and keep it still.

And so they carry on with their two different churches, the two different abomina...uh, denominations.

And then they both hear that somebody has moved into the town who was also healed by Jesus and so the leaders of both churches go to meet him to invite him to their church. And they arrive at the same time.

And the first one says, “We hear you have been healed by Jesus.”

“That’s right. I was blind and He healed me.”

“That’s fantastic! We would love you to come to our church and we would love you to tell us about how Jesus touched you, you know, and you could see.

And he says, “Um, about how He touched me?”

“Yeah, you know, when He healed you.”

“Well, He didn’t touch me.”

And so the man from the Church of the Word steps in and says, “Excuse me, we have a true church in this town as well. We would love for you to come and just share how when Jesus spoke, the word was so authoritative and right into your heart and healed your eyes. Would you come and share your testimony with us?”

“What do you mean when you said He spoke up to me?”

“Well, you know, when He spoke with authority.”

“He didn’t speak to me – not like that.”

The first one says, “He didn’t touch you?”

“No.”

“He didn’t speak to you?”

“No.”

“What did He do?”

“Well He did what He always does.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, the way He always heals people.”

“What did He do?”

“He just spat in my eye. Didn’t He spit in yours?”

It’s quite an amazing story actually; it’s in Mark Chapter 8 (we’re not deviating because I am going to finish in a minute) but in Mark Chapter 8:22,

“They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man...

Listen to this:

“...and they begged Jesus to touch him.”

Now, his friends were from the Touchy Church. They didn’t ask Jesus to heal him. They begged Jesus to touch him, “Jesus, touch him, just, come on, just, just touch.”

You see they have locked Him into a pattern and when you lock Jesus into a pattern you can be sure He will break it.

“So He took the man... led him outside the city. When He had spit on his eyes, He put His hands on him and said, ‘Do you see anything?’”

Isn’t that amazing? I imagine them bringing this, “Just touch him” and He just takes him out and the people crowd around. What’s going to happen? They are looking at Jesus, looking at the blind man standing in front of Him.

Suddenly in the silence they hear...spat right in his eye.

So he forms another church called the Church of the Holy Spittle, and they meet every week, “Spittle of the Living God, fall afresh on me.”

You see, when you don’t do firsthand dealings with God, that’s all you have got left - the way it worked last time, the way it worked in other people’s lives.

When Kellen prayed earlier, he asked God to deliver us from just seeing what He has done in other people’s lives, just enjoying their stories, but to have our own story, our own experience of God.

And David did not live on the past, he did not live on what God had done before; he inquired of the Lord. And that takes time; that takes discipline.

You know there was a craze some years ago where people used to wear “*What Would Jesus Do?*” bracelets and things like that. Did you hear that? *What Would Jesus Do?*

It’s gone now because these crazes do go.

How would we hope to know what Jesus would do? The disciples never knew.

I saw a guy once wearing a t-shirt “*What Would Jesus Do?*” And I said to him, “Do you spit in people’s eyes and blind people’s eyes?”

He said, “What are you talking about?”

“Well, that’s what Jesus did.”

“No, I hadn’t thought about that.”

“Well, next time you see a blind man, spit in his eyes and see what happens.”

It’s not trying to imitate Jesus, “What did Jesus do?” That’s not the Christian life.

I saw another guy on an airplane once with a t-shirt that said, “*What would Scooby-doo?*”

I thought that was a good one. It’s about as helpful actually, theologically, as “What would Jesus do?”

We don’t live on some kind of automatic pilot. We have to deal freshly with God. What did Jesus say is always an important question. Love your neighbor as yourself. But how? Well then you have got to trust Him because it’s not what did Jesus do? It’s what is Jesus doing?

Because I am in a fresh daily dependence upon Him.

And when we are not seeking the mind of God, not inquiring, not, as David, inquiring of the Lord, we will only seek repetition of what we already know, what we have already experienced or we have already heard from other people.

The strategy of yesterday is never enough to be the strategy of today.

And if we are going to take these stories of men like David and women in Scripture whose lives were so evidently set apart as being directed by the Spirit of God, they are not just stories to hear about and wish we lived in those days; they are truths that we have to take into our hearts.

God calls you; give Him time to confirm it. That was the first lesson. Don’t rush it. Don’t push it. Wait.

And then it is consolidated over a period of time. What God begins, that’s not the end of the story; it grows, develops.

You are brought into conflict. Always when God does something, Satan will counteract and there will be conflict that will come, sometimes from the most unexpected of sources. But in that conflict you inquire of the Lord, “What do You want me to do?”

And one day He will say, “Go,” next day He will say, “Do not go.” We trust Him. We walk by faith, not by sight. We acknowledge Him in all our ways and He does direct our paths. That’s His commitment to us, and He fulfills it. He will direct our paths.

Let’s pray together.

Father, only You this morning know the state of all of our hearts. You know the battles that some of us are facing, whether in work, whether in our homes, whether in our marriages, whether in our own selves, internally.

But we pray that You will show us that we can inquire of the Lord and get on our knees and say, “God, what is it?” and then trust You when we don’t hear a clear answer. Trust You; when we get a clear answer, obey it.

And thank You, You are totally committed to us and to bringing about in us all that You want to make possible, all You died to accomplish. And I pray that You will teach us to walk humbly with You.

For those who are in a waiting period, You seem to have shown them something but it is not coming to pass – give them the patience I pray to wait. And as David said, “I waited patiently for the Lord and He heard my cry.”