

CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

FAITH FORMATION FOR CHILDREN | YOUTH | FAMILY | ADULT

**God does what!?!...The Surprising Work of God in the Lives of People
Week 4 - God Reforms**

KEY POINT

When David is about to move forward on his next project, God reminds David that God is the one truly in charge. David will always have a son on the throne of Judah, yet it is God's Son, and his kingdom, who will endure forever.

KEY VERSE

2 Samuel 7:12

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

OPENING PRAYER

Begin your time together with this, or another, prayer:

Faithful God, we give you thanks for always keeping your promises even when we do not hold up our end of the relationship. Open our ears and hearts to learn more of how deeply you care for all your children. Take residence among us so we may seek your wisdom and comfort all the days of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

READ

2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Additional text: Luke 1:30-33)

ABOUT THE STORY

We find King David in Jerusalem, which he conquered earlier in 2 Samuel and has since made both a religious and political capital for the kingdom of Israel. Many Israelites have moved from shepherding pastures to a more urban lifestyle. Now that David has settled the people and lives in a palace, he plans to create a house for God to reside. The Hebrew word bayit means "house," but has different connotations here, including "palace," "temple," "household" and "descendants." The meaning shifts with God's intent on who takes up residence there.

God sends the prophet Nathan to tell David God's message for him, as well as plans for the future. God discourages David from building a house (temple) for God and reminds him God was not contained throughout the exodus or through the Promised Land up to this point. Then God assures David that provisions will continue to be made for the Israelites so they will flourish and be protected from their enemies.

Perhaps most importantly, God promises David that he will have a house (dynasty or descendants) to continue God's kingdom through an heir who will be received as God's own child. This is the third of God's covenants (promises) so far. The first promise was to Noah that God would never flood the earth again; the second was to Abraham that he would have descendants numbering more than there are stars in the sky; and now the third is God promising David a dynasty.

This story would have been recited over the generations to show the history of the political and religious centrality of Jerusalem and context for King David's reign. It also would show God's intent for the temple to be built under Solomon's reign, not David's. Finally, in Nathan's words the people would have recognized the contrast between other groups of people needing to care for their idols and how Yahweh is a God who cares for the people.

This story reminds us that we can never out-give God, no matter how hard we try. King David reflected on how much God had given him, and he wanted to give back to God. David decided to build a permanent temple for God rather than the tabernacle (tent) that had been used since the days of Moses and Aaron. However, God declined this offer, and instead promised even more blessings to David and David's family. While it is a blessing to be able to offer our gifts to God, God will always give us more than we can ever give back.

SHARE

- David wanted to build a nice house for God to show his love and thanks. What is something you have done today to show someone else love or thanks? How has someone shown you love or thanks?
- Our story today would have been told over generations to teach the people of Israel their political and religious history. Take a few moments to share who has been the historian in your own family or community telling stories of your ancestors over the generations. Has this impacted your faith life or how you see yourself in the world?
- Where/how have you seen God's faithfulness to you in difficult times in life?

PRAY

Use the format of "popcorn prayer" for your closing. One person opens the prayer and each time there is a pause, someone else may add their petition. Once everyone who wants to has had a chance to pray, someone may close with, "We ask all these things in Jesus' name," and everyone else responds, "Amen."

BLESS

Share this verbal blessing with one another: "God is working in your life today. Amen."

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Take some time to look online or in a book from the library at the various spaces people call home. Photographer James Mollison has a particularly poignant collection called *Where Children Sleep* that shows children and their sleeping spaces in various places around the world. Pray for those who do not have secure shelter.
- Gather up some gently used clothing or household items that you no longer need and donate them to a housing shelter or organization that helps people experiencing homelessness get back on their feet.
- Be mindful of God's presence with you every step of your journey this week. Just as God was not contained in one confined place throughout the wilderness with the Israelites, so too God is present with you at all times and in all places.

