

David: Highs and Lows

David and Mephibosheth
2 Samuel 9

Introduction:

This week we'll be looking at a little-known story from the life of David that features a dramatic act of kindness. Among David's highs and lows, this moment ranks as a 'high.' You'll find this story in 2 Samuel 9.

After Saul and his son Jonathan – David's dear friend – were killed in battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 31), David emerged as the unrivaled king of Israel. 2 Samuel 7 tells us that David had reached a place in his life where he was settled in his palace and at rest from his enemies. He no longer had to hide in caves; he was no longer pursued by assassins.

At this point that David asks the question we read in 2 Samuel 9:3. "Is there anyone left of the house of Saul that I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" The same question is asked in v. 1 and in v. 3, but there is a slight difference in the wording. In v. 3 David says, "that I may show the kindness *of God*."

Three times David uses the Hebrew word "*hesed*." Our Bibles translate the word as kindness – but David is not simply trying to be nice.

We do not have a good English equivalent for this Hebrew word; the best we can do is the word love, but we need to add other words to it. We speak of God's steadfast love, God's covenant love. This is the kind of love we promise in marriage vows.

Eugene Peterson says that this kind of love, God's *hesed*, "is love without regard to shifting circumstances, hormones, emotional states, and personal convenience."

The kindness of God is not simply good manners. The kindness of God is not about being nice. The kindness of God is not something that anyone can do if they'll make the effort or if they are taught properly.

So what is the "Kindness of God?" And what would it mean for us to show it?

Scripture Reading:

2 Samuel 9

For Discussion / Reflection:

1. In 2013 Rasmussen Reports conducted a national survey of 1000 American adults asking this question: Do you think people are becoming more kind, or are people becoming less kind, more rude? The survey found that 77% of those surveyed said that we were becoming ruder and less civilized. 13% were not sure. Only 10% of those surveyed responded that we were becoming more kind.

What do you think? Have things gotten better in the past 12 years?

2. Does the word “kindness” characterize someone you know? Why does this word bring that person to your mind?
3. Why is it unusual or unexpected that David would show kindness to Mephibosheth?
4. Read 2 Sam. 9:7. What does this verse tell us about the nature of David’s kindness?
5. Notice the last phrase of verse 3 and the last phrase of verse 13. Kindness does not define people in terms of their brokenness. Have you experienced this form of kindness from someone else? Is there a way you can show it?

Prayer:

Merciful and kind God, we are thankful that you do not define us in terms of the broken parts of our lives. We are thankful that in Jesus our sins are forgiven, and we are invited into your house to enjoy the abundance of your table. Fill us with your Spirit, that we might show the kindness of God to this broken world, we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.