



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 3:1-21

Topic

David amasses six wives during his seven years as king over Judah in Hebron

Title

“The First Six Wives Club”

Introduction

It is all too easy to criticize the church. Our church and all churches have flaws because our church and all churches have one thing in common: **People attend them!**

It's like the anecdote I've heard a hundred times. A Christian was witnessing to someone and inviting them to church. The person protested by saying, “There are too many hypocrites in the church.” The Christian responded, “Then you should come. *One more won't make a difference!*”

Before you criticize the church you should carefully consider at least two things:

1. **You** are the church! The church is not an organization. It's an organism comprised of individual believers in fellowship with one another. We are all connected with one another. One of the illustrations used in the Bible to describe the church is that we are each members of one another the way our physical bodies are comprised of various members like hands

and feet and arms and legs. When you criticize the church, you are criticizing yourself and your own brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus looks upon the church as His betrothed bride. I don't know about you but I don't think it's a good idea to speak badly of someone's fiance! Especially if that Someone is the risen Savior, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who is daily working to present us faultless before His Father in Heaven.

I'm going to talk about Christians and churches succumbing to the methods of the world. I hope it serves as more of a reminder than a criticism.

Second Samuel chapter three presents two men, David and Abner, who are influenced by and who employ the methods of the world. We do not want to be like them - not at home and not in God's house.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Don't Succumb To The World's Methods As You Build Your Household, and #2 Don't Succumb To The World's Methods As You Build In God's Household.

#1 Don't Succumb To The World's Methods As You Build Your Household (3:1-5 & 13-16)

Ask anyone what David's big sin was and they will likely say it was his adultery with Bathsheeba. Truth be told, he'd been sinning long before she came along. David had multiple wives. David was so used to taking another wife that when he spotted Bathsheeba bathing on her rooftop he had no hesitation in taking another man's wife.

God had made it clear all the way back in the time of Moses that a king was not to take multiple wives.

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...

Nevertheless we read in these opening verses of six wives in the first few years of his reign as king over the southern kingdom of Judah.

2 Samuel 3:1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

2 Samuel 3:2 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

2 Samuel 3:3 his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur;

2 Samuel 3:4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

2 Samuel 3:5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

Six wives! As if that wasn't enough, look at verses thirteen through sixteen.

2 Samuel 3:13 And David said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face."

2 Samuel 3:14 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

2 Samuel 3:15 And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

2 Samuel 3:16 Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.

Abner, who commanded the armies of the rival king, Ishbosheth, wanted to defect to David. David's condition was that he get his first wife, Michal, back. She had been taken by her dad, King Saul, and given to another man while David was in exile.

David already had six wives. Even though he and Michal were never legally divorced, under Mosaic Law if you became the wife of another man you were not to return to a previous husband. We see, too, that her husband loved her.

It was all just wrong. "Neither shall the king multiply wives for himself..."

What do we think about polygamy? It's a good question since traditional marriage is, after all, under assault. In fact there are those who believe that the next wave against traditional marriage will involve the move to legalize polygamy. There is a hit cable-TV drama that expresses how 'normal' *Big Love* can be. *Sister Wives* is another show, a reality show. It documents

the life of polygmist family living which includes patriarch Kody Brown, his four wives and their 16 children. Brown and his wives have claimed they participated with the show to make the public more aware of polygamist families and to combat societal prejudices. In other words, the show is attempting to promote polygamy and desensitize us to it as sin by showing us how loving and sincere a multiple-marriage can be.

While it may not directly tempt you and I, polygamy is an example of how the world is seeking to influence us.

Is it sin? *Yessiree!* Consider just these three things:

1. When God saw that Adam was alone, He made for him a companion. It wasn't another man and it wasn't multiple companions. It was his wife, Eve. That union between one man and one woman for life remains God's standard for marriage.
2. We've already seen in the Law, from Deuteronomy, that kings were commanded to not have multiple wives.
3. The New Testament holds the leaders of the church to the same standard. One of the requirements is that you be the husband of **one** wife (1 Timothy 3).

Why did David do it? Among the reasons we might cite, for sure it was because that's what was going on in the world around him, the world of the pagans who did not know the God of Israel. Especially among kings the taking of multiple wives was expected. Often it was done to cement a political alliance. At least one of David's first six wives is said to be the daughter of a foreign ruler. David was doing what the kings in the world did.

It's interesting to me that the only commentary made in these first verses is that "David grew stronger and stronger." It almost sounds like his multiple marriages were helping him to solidify his rule as a king, helping him to establish his power and influence.

That's probably true. But it remains sin that David had multiple wives in spite of what seemed to be its success.

You can succumb to the methods of the world and be strengthened in your position and power in the world. But it doesn't make it right.

Success, worldly success, is never the measure of our walk with the Lord. Success often has little or nothing to do with outward obedience or inward godliness.

The fact is, the world promises you success if you adopt its methods, and it often delivers. But at what cost?

We'll see in subsequent studies that David's household was a disaster. That was one huge cost of his sin.

The world wants to influence our thinking about marriage and family. Traditional marriage is not the only fight going on. A growing number of politicians are calling for expanding mandatory childhood education to include preschool, requiring that families with children as young as 3 and 4 send them off to school.

There is also an effort to influence Christian parents in the area of how we discipline our children. The world has declared war on corporal punishment, on biblical spanking. Most of the countries in the world have made spanking illegal and, if you remember, there was an effort in the California legislature just a little while back to do the same here.

The world calls all corporal punishment 'hitting' and presents it as child abuse. Then it tells you that your child isn't sinning but rather that he or she has a *syndrome* of some sort. Your kid probably needs a psychologist and medication rather than discipline.

I understand child abuse. I've seen it. I'm a reporter of it. I know that some kids *can* have physical and organic problems. But I also know that the vast majority of the problem with kids is sin that requires careful, thoughtful, loving corporal punishment to correct.

Christians are starting to be influenced by the world's onslaught against spanking. A lot of Christian parents are trending against it or, if they say

they believe in it, practice it so infrequently as to have effectively abandoned it.

I'm not bringing this up for any reason other than to remind us that the world is always exerting its influence upon us and we can succumb to it in subtle but serious ways if we're not careful.

Instead, *let's influence the world!* Let's have great, solid, joyous families that are the envy of nonbelievers. Let's have **them** want to be like **us**.

I've already been the world, for the first twenty-four years of my life. It was lame. It was destructive. It was hopeless. Why let it dictate to me?

#2 Don't Succumb To The World's Methods As You Build In God's Household (3:6-21)

The church is not the new Israel. We have our own destiny. What we are looking at in these chapters is God's elect nation.

Nevertheless we can look at Israel for examples of timeless spiritual principles. These guys were building for God and so are we.

Abner is a great example of not just succumbing to the methods of the world but actively adopting them. When he saw David ascending in popularity and power, he decided to throw in with him. It's a story of high-level politicking to get what you want.

2 Samuel 3:6 Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul.

2 Samuel 3:7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

2 Samuel 3:8 Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman?"

2 Samuel 3:9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the Lord has sworn to him -

2 Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

2 Samuel 3:11 And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

A “concubine” was a female slave who functioned as a surrogate usually for having children. Kings had them, lots of them, as a show of strength.

Taking a king’s or a former king’s concubine was pure power-politics. You were telling the world that you were equal to the king. In this case Abner used it to provoke Ishbosheth into an argument so Abner would have grounds to defect to David.

2 Samuel 3:12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose is the land?" saying also, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel to you."

Wasn't that God's intention? For David to rule over all Israel? Yes, but did God really need Abner, a lying, disloyal opportunist, to bring it about? Was it through power-politics that God wanted to advance the nation?

David responded positively to Abner and we've read his one condition. Skip to verse seventeen.

2 Samuel 3:17 Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

2 Samuel 3:18 Now then, do it! For the Lord has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.' "

2 Samuel 3:19 And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.

It all sounded so spiritual. It's what the Lord had spoken concerning David. Except that Abner could care less about what the Lord had spoken until it looked like David would in fact defeat Ishbosheth and he, Abner, would lose everything.

2 Samuel 3:20 So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him.

2 Samuel 3:21 Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

It was a great photo-op. There was David dining with Abner who had brought twenty men to showcase his own power and influence. David would rule and Abner, the guy who single-handedly had opposed David by installing a puppet-king, would have some place of prominence in this new kingdom.

Politically it was an amazing fete. Spiritually *it stunk!* Abner used a spiritual end to justify his non-spiritual means. He was motivated by personal, selfish ambition. Abner cared only about Abner.

There are occasionally 'Abner's' in the church, men and women who are motivated by personal, selfish ambition. The church, comprised as it is of caring, compassionate Christians, is fertile territory for them.

More often it is some more subtle strategy or technique of the world's that we borrow and implement in order to achieve a spiritual end. The thing about the world's methods is that they work on a purely physical level.

One author has said that Christianity "advances by proclamation and persuasion and prayer and love and by being persecuted." The opposite of this would be feeling intimidated, being manipulated. Sadly that happens in churches. It's wrong and we need to guard against it.

We should be *motivated by grace*, not *manipulated by guilt*, to walk with the Lord and to serve Him.

Let me give you a biblical example. In a few chapters King David will attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to the Tabernacle where it belonged. *Excellent idea!* In order to transport the Ark David built a new oxcart carry it back. *Not an excellent idea!* At one point the cart faltered, the Ark became unsteady, and as one of its attendants reached out to steady it he was struck dead by God on the spot.

David was bummed. That is, until he went back and read God's Word, the portion detailing the proper transporting of the Ark. It was to be carried not on a new cart drawn by oxen but on the shoulders of the priests.

God has His own methodology for building the household of faith. It involves things like love, gentleness, kindness, selflessness, and sacrifice. In each situation we are to find the heart of God, then motivate His people by grace and never, ever manipulate by guilt.

The church is not to become driven by some worldly model. It is to remain led by the biblical model of the church in The Book of Acts.

Our success will be measured by the Lord when we stand before Him.

