

2 Samuel

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Second Book of Samuel using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Historical Books* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec-

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to 2 Samuel, paying particular attention to the *Content* and *Themes* of the book and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of 2 Samuel to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of 2 Samuel, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on 2 Samuel as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1–16.** How does David receive confirmation of Saul's death? What about the story of his demise is suspicious and ultimately incriminating? With what expectation does the messenger come to David, and what does he receive?
2. **1:14.** For what is the expression "the LORD's anointed" a title? What is David's attitude toward the office of the king? What is the Amalekite's attitude?
3. **1:18.** What is the Book of Jashar? What else is known about this ancient work?
4. **1:26.** Why does David call Jonathan his brother? What sort of kinship underlies this language? What does David mean by saying that his love for Jonathan is "passing the love of women"? What should we *not* take this statement to mean?

For application

1. **1:11–12.** What are some expressions of national mourning that might follow a great national disaster, such as a political assassination or a terrorist act? Why are such expressions important for the life of the nation as a whole? How might people in your own community join in mourning?
2. **1:19.** David's exclamation, "How are the mighty fallen!" has become proverbial. In what contexts do you usually hear it quoted? How do these contexts differ from the meaning David gives his words?
3. **1:26.** In your experience, what are some of the characteristics of real friendship? Why is friendship (as opposed to other forms of social companionship) so necessary to a person? What makes a true friendship spiritually beneficial, and how would you recognize when it is becoming spiritually harmful?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1.** What is the importance of Hebron at this time, and where is it located? How long does it serve as David's royal capital? Who settled there at the time of the conquest?
2. **2:4.** Since David has previously been anointed by Samuel, what is the purpose of this anointing? What is the "house of Judah"? Why does David praise the city of Jabesh-gilead, and what does he invite the people to do? Who apparently causes him to fail to win their support?
3. **2:8.** Who is Abner? Who is Ish-bosheth? What does the latter's name mean? Why is Abner's attempt to make Ish-bosheth the successor to Saul doomed from the start? Where is Mahanaim, and what brief role does it have for northern Israel? What does its name in Hebrew mean?
4. **2:13.** Who is Joab? What is the pool of Gibeon, and how large is it? What is it known as?

For application

1. **2:8–9.** When a strong man sets up a weaker person as his superior, who usually exercises the real power? When the devil grants the wishes of a suppliant for control or influence, who exercises the real power in the long run? How can his power be broken?
2. **2:12–17.** Read the note for v. 14. Why do you think this "entertainment" takes place to begin with? In some of our country's larger cities, what is behind the violence between gangs that happens there? What often happens to ordinary citizens when the violence explodes beyond a mere street fight?
3. **2:19–23.** Suppose you are involved in a heated controversy where you are trying to stop the quarrel, and your opponent insists on pursuing it. What does your goal become—getting out of the situation, reaching agreement, or winning the argument? Do you follow Jesus' admonition in Mt 5:38–42, or do you try to end things forcibly by humiliating your opponent?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:2–5.** How many sons by how many wives does David father during his time in Hebron? Why is this not surprising? Why is it not commendable? What are we to notice about how the author of 2 Samuel describes the situation?

2. **3:7.** What kind of move is Abner's taking one of Saul's concubines? What is Abner trying to do? What will Absalom, in his turn, later use sexual aggression to accomplish?
3. **3:12–16.** To whom does Abner shift allegiance? Why is this surprising? What must have dawned upon him about Ish-bosheth?
4. **3:27.** How does Joab regard himself in relation to Abner? How was retribution for murder customary among ancient tribal societies?

For application

1. **3:6–11.** If you were in the position of Ish-bosheth, what kind of danger would Abner pose to you? What would you want to do about it—or, alternatively, what might you think Abner would do if you attempted anything? In your own career or social position, have you ever had relationships that resemble this one?
2. **3:13–15.** Do you think that David's desire to retrieve his wife Michal is for personal or political reasons? If either, what makes you think so? What might have been Michal's frame of mind in this situation?
3. **3:16.** How would you assess Paltiel's behavior in this verse? Why would he be so demonstrative in following Michal's retinue, then raise no objection on being told to go back?
4. **3:27–30.** Because Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel in a combat situation rather than in cold blood, is Joab's act of revenge as an "avenger of blood" justified according to Israelite law (see Gen 9:6, Num 35:10–28)? What does David think? What are some of the consequences of allowing family members to take blood vengeance in this way?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1–12.** What do Ish-bosheth's captains do? How does David consider this action? What does the tribal descent of these men show about Saul's tribe? Why is the way now clear for David to rule over all Israel?
2. **4:4.** Who is Mephibosheth? What does his name probably mean? What did a boyhood accident do to him, and for what does this brief introduction here prepare?
3. **4:9.** What does David often experience from God? With the Lord at his side, of what does David have no need? What do Rechab and Baanah wrongly assume?

For application

1. **4:1.** Since Ish-bosheth is afraid of Abner, whose allegiance is in doubt, why would his courage fail him when Abner is killed? Why would "all Israel" be dismayed as well? What often happens in a country when a power vacuum is created?
2. **4:4.** In our society, what do most people do when a caregiver causes permanent damage to the person being cared for? What difference would it make if the caregiver were a fellow Christian? What do you think of St. Paul's recommendation about lawsuits in 1 Cor 6:1–7?
3. **4:8.** What makes a deliberate act good or evil? Why may one not do evil so that good may come of it, especially if national interest is at stake? (Refer to CCC 1755–56, 1761.)

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1–5.** What summit has David reached by now? Of what is it the true beginning? How long will it last, and what will happen then?
2. **5:3.** What oath do the northern tribes swear? How do the obligations entailed by this covenant relate to the larger Deuteronomical covenant? Which anointing of David is this?
3. **5:6.** What were other names for Jerusalem? How does David go about making Jerusalem his capital? What strategic motivation prompts the selection of this site for the seat of Israel's government? When is Jerusalem conquered by David? Who are the Jebusites? To what do the taunting words of the Jebusites about the blind and the lame refer?
4. **5:7.** To what geographical location does the name Zion refer? What makes the site naturally defensible? What is the name Zion extended to include? According to the New Testament, of what is Zion a prophetic sign? What is the "city of David"?
5. **5:8.** What are the alternative meanings of the Hebrew word translated as "water shaft"? What is David urging his men to do in either the first or the second case?

For application

1. **5:1–3.** Would you describe the constitution of your country as a *covenant* (which establishes a family bond) or as a *contract* (which provides for the exchange of goods and services)? What allegiance do you as a citizen owe the country? What are the limits of that allegiance?
2. **5:7.** According to the note for this verse, the name “Zion” is sometimes extended to refer to the whole of Jerusalem. How do the psalms envision Zion (e.g., Ps 9:11; 14:7; 50:2; 84:5)? What images come to your mind when you read scriptural references to Zion?
3. **5:8.** Read the note for this verse. What is your attitude toward people who attend church but who are “different” (e.g., physically impaired, poor, tattooed, dressed oddly)? What does the Letter of James (2:1–13) have to say about making distinctions regarding such people?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1–23.** What does David do with the Ark of the Covenant? What does that thereby make his capital Jerusalem? What story does this episode resume?
2. **6:3–8.** How is transport of the ark irregular to the point of being irreverent? What sparks a lethal blast of divine wrath against Uzzah?
3. **6:17.** Where has David pitched the tent that will house the ark? At this time, where is the Mosaic sanctuary stationed, and what goes on there? What is the Davidic tent like, and what kind of liturgy do the Levites conduct there?
4. **6:19.** In what ways are the etymology and meaning of the Hebrew term “a portion of meat” uncertain? What does the parallel account in Chronicles indicate? Whose gestures do David’s actions recall?

For application

1. **6:6–7.** What does the account of Uzzah’s death indicate about respect we should have for holy things? Why is disrespect for them spiritually dangerous?
2. **6:9.** Read Sirach, chap. 1, on fear of the Lord. How is Sirach’s description different from the fear that David feels? How might it be similar? What is your own understanding of this virtue? How does it apply to your life?
3. **6:14.** Have you ever experienced feelings of joy and delight in the presence of the Lord, especially during a liturgical celebration? How did you express it? What expressions of joy and delight are appropriate in private prayer? in public (liturgical) prayer?
4. **6:16, 20–23.** Why do you think the love Michal formerly had for David has now turned to contempt? Do her stated reasons in v. 20 explain the shift? When the love between married couples turns sour like this, how can it be renewed? What attitudes in both spouses are necessary for that to happen?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1.** What is David’s “house”? How is rest from all his enemies achieved? Of what technique is the placing of the discourses of chap. 7 before the events of chap. 8 an example, and what does it mean? In this instance, what does the author’s rearrangement of the story show about David? Theologically, what does the attainment of “rest” signal?
2. **7:9.** To what does God’s promise of a great name refer? How was historical testimony to this from outside the Bible uncovered? How does the promise made to David link back to the promises made to Abraham?
3. **Word Study: House (7:11).** What does the Hebrew noun *bayit* mean, and how often is it used in the Hebrew Bible? Broadly speaking, to what can it refer? As a place, what is a house—especially if a king or a god lives there? Referring to a people, what is a house? What are some plays on the various meanings of this word in Nathan’s oracle?
4. **7:12.** Who is “your offspring” mentioned here? How did the early Christians read this prophecy? According to St. Augustine, what partial reflection of the future do we see in Solomon?
5. **Essay: The Davidic Covenant.** How does the Davidic covenant fit into the rest of the Old Testament covenants? How is Nathan’s oracle the foundation of the Davidic covenant? How is the divine plan summarized under the headings of Dynasty, Temple, Adoption, and Law for Mankind? Though worded as a divine promise, how are its terms guaranteed,

and who assumed responsibility for its fulfillment? How are the pledges made to David fulfilled definitively in the coming of Jesus Christ?

For application

1. **7:1.** “Rest” is a major theme throughout Scripture (see Heb 3:7—4:11). What kinds of “rest” does Scripture have in mind? How do you observe the Sabbath rest? How *should* you observe it (see CCC 2184–88)?
2. **7:11.** Given the understanding of “house” in the word study for this verse, what kind of house has the Lord made for you? What does Ps 127 suggest about your plans for your home and family?
3. **7:18–29.** David, in awe over the promises of God, expresses his gratitude by an extended prayer before the Ark of the Covenant. What part does gratitude play in your prayer life? How do you express it? Where do you go when you want to spend time in in-depth prayer?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–14.** How does David expand his kingdom by military conquest? What happens to survivors of the wars, with what result?
2. **8:15–18.** How does David take advantage of peacetime? Of what needs is his small administration given charge, and by whom?
3. **8:15.** How is the expression “justice and equity” defined in Genesis? With what are equivalent expressions in the ancient Near East connected?
4. **8:17.** Who has the responsibility for religious leadership? Who are Zadok and Ahimelech? Why is there reason to suspect that the names Abiathar and Ahimelech were switched around during the copying of the book?
5. **8:18.** Who are the Cherethites and Pelethites? How many of David’s sons are named in this book? Although the Hebrew calls David’s sons priests, how does the Greek LXX translate the Hebrew? What does the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles call them? To what might the priestly ministry of David’s sons perhaps be linked?

For application

1. **8:6.** Read the note for this verse. What victories in your life would you ascribe to the Lord’s assistance? What has failure taught you about your need for his help?
2. **8:13.** Why is one’s good name—or reputation—important, both to the person himself and to others? What care do we owe others for the preservation of their good name? Given the popularity of social media, how easy is it to malign the good name of anyone—and how hard is it to repair any damage? (Refer to CCC 2493–98 for a discussion of communications media in this regard.)
3. **8:18.** According to CCC 1546–47, what characterizes the priesthood of the lay faithful, and how is it expressed? At what is the ministerial priesthood of the ordained hierarchy directed?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1—20:26.** What do these chapters comprise, according to scholars? Of what are they the story? How does the story thematically mirror the preceding chapters? How do many consider the quality of these chapters? When did the author probably live?
2. **9:1.** What is David doing beyond simply honoring the memory of Jonathan, his fallen companion? How does David make good on this?
3. **9:7.** How are the circumstances of David’s effort to restore to Mephibosheth all of Saul’s property unclear?

For application

1. **9:1.** How is a promise made to others in God’s name related to the second commandment of the Decalogue (CCC 2147)? Even if not made in God’s name, why must promises be kept as long as the commitments are morally just (CCC 2410, 2101–2)?

2. **9:8.** In what position does accepting a gift from someone place the receiver? Why do some feel the urge to refuse gifts or to reciprocate in some way? What is the proper response to receiving gifts from God, for whom adequate repayment is not possible?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:2.** What does the Hebrew suggest that Israel has established with the kingdom of Ammon?
2. **10:4.** To what does shaving off the beards of David's emissaries amount? Of what is shaving a sign? What does cutting off their garments mean they are being treated like?
3. **10:9–14.** What does the Ammonite coalition do? If they had chosen to engage battle, what would have happened?

For application

1. **10:2.** When a country's leader dies, what do other friendly nations tend to do? How do their ambassadors expect to be treated by the host country?
2. **10:3.** Given David's defeat of the Philistines and Moabites described in chap. 8, on the one hand, as opposed to the likelihood of a treaty covenant between Israel and Ammon, on the other (see the note for v. 2), what cause for concern do the princes of the Ammonites have regarding David's emissaries? How does their suspicion compare with that of modern states?
3. **10:11–12.** When you find yourself beset on all sides with problems, what is your first recourse—to figure out a strategy on your own or to submit the situation to the Lord in prayer? When should you resort to prayer?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:1–27.** What happens in these verses? In the course of three days, how many commandments does he violate? How does he also abuse his royal authority? Predictably, what is the Lord's reaction?
2. **11:1.** What season is the spring of the year like? For what are farmers available within this window of opportunity? How does the expression "when kings go forth" appear to be a criticism of David? What relation to David is Joab? Where is Rabbah?
3. **11:3.** What is different about David's inquiry from previous occasions? How is Bathsheba designated several times in the text? Who is Uriah the Hittite? What does the meaning of his name suggest about him?
4. **11:11.** Where is the ark kept at this time? How is sexual abstinence in wartime used as a discipline? What is Uriah refusing to do?

For application

1. **11:2.** The note for this verse alludes to a discipline called "custody of the eyes", controlling what you choose to look at. Which virtues is it intended to protect? How often do you need to practice it, and on what occasion? How, for example, might you practice it while using an electronic device such as a computer or Internet-connected phone?
2. **11:6–13.** According to CCC 1778, when should one's conscience be operative? What often happens when a person decides to act despite what his conscience says? What spiritual damage occurs when he covers up a serious wrong that he has done?
3. **11:11.** Why does Uriah refuse to go to his house as the king has asked? What do you think of his reasons? How does his devotion to duty set an example for you?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:7–14.** How will the sword of violence turn back on the house of David? How will evil rear its head in David's own house? What will David learn from these hardships?
2. **12:14.** What is the child born of David's union with Bathsheba destined to bear? What distinction does Nathan's oracle illustrate? While the Lord remits David's guilt, what debt does he require him to pay?

3. **12:20.** What, presumably, is the house of the Lord that David goes into for worship? What is David's attitude at this time of grief?
4. **12:24.** Which of David's sons is Solomon? What Hebrew word does his name resemble, and where is that connection noted? What is significant from a theological perspective about the Lord's love for Solomon?

For application

1. **12:5–7.** How deserving of death are we when we choose to do what we know is evil? Some people question the possibility of committing a sin that is truly mortal; given David's example and his judgment on himself in v. 5, what do you say? What are the three conditions for a sin to be considered mortal (CCC 1857–59)?
2. **12:10–12.** All sin has consequences that even forgiveness of the sin does not remove. What consequences for David does Nathan outline in these verses? Some consequences affect other people, such as one's family. Are you aware of consequences for your family that have arisen from sins that you have committed? What are some of the consequences that have affected you or your relation with the Lord?
3. **12:16–18.** Even though David prays for the child he has with Bathsheba, for what other person might he be praying? Why might God sometimes refuse to "let us off easy" when he disciplines us? What do we learn from his "tough love"?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1.** Which son of David is Absalom, and what does he turn out to be? Who is Tamar? Which son of David is Amnon, and what is his rank? For what will his death open the way?
2. **13:13.** What is Tamar trying to do by saying that David would not withhold her from Amnon? What conjecture do others offer on the basis of ancient precedent?
3. **13:21.** Though David is outraged by the rape of Tamar, what does he fail to do? As a result, what will Absalom do?
4. **13:37.** Why does Absalom flee? Who is Talmai, and why is it no surprise that Absalom should seek asylum with him?

For application

1. **13:14.** The English word *rape* comes from a Latin verb meaning *to steal*. What theft is involved in sexual rape?
2. **13:15.** How unusual is a rapist's hatred for his victim? What causes such hatred, especially when the assault is motivated by lust?
3. **13:19.** For the victim, what are some of the psychological aftereffects of rape? What might be some of the spiritual aftereffects? How might a healing process be pursued?
4. **13:21.** What do you think explains David's failure to discipline his son, since he has shown himself merciless in punishing the crimes of others? How do parents' failures to discipline their children harm them?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:2.** Where is Tekoa, and whose hometown is it? How, in staging this ruse, does Joab appear to be acting in the interest of the kingdom?
2. **14:4–20.** What is the Tekoa woman's tale designed to elicit from David? In this case, what is it meant to secure? By indicating that the surviving son is his father's "heir", what does the tale assume about Absalom, David's third son? What happened to Chileab, David's second son? What are the parallels between this story and that of Cain and Abel?
3. **14:17.** How are the woman's words both words of flattery and words of irony?
4. **14:33.** What does David's kissing of Absalom suggest about their relationship? Although the gesture is good in itself, what problem arises because Absalom is not punished by David?

For application

1. **14:17.** What is the difference between sincere praise and flattery? According to CCC 2480, when is flattery sinful?
2. **14:18.** Read the note for this verse. What do you think causes David to suspect that his nephew Joab in particular is the person who coached the woman? What have we learned so far about Joab's character?

3. **14:26.** How does our culture evaluate a person's beauty? What does the condition of one's hair have to do with it? Why do we associate physical beauty with good moral character and physical ugliness with bad character? What do we know about Absalom's character so far?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:1—18:33.** In a carefully plotted conspiracy, what does David's third son and heir to the throne do? What high-ranking official does he win to his side? What does the ordeal force David and his supporters to do?
2. **15:7.** How does Absalom hide his plans for a coup? In the Bible, what are vows? Where is Hebron, and what is its connection with Absalom and David?
3. **15:12.** Who is Ahithophel, and what may be his connection with Ps 41 and 55? How might his loyalty to David have been shaken? Whose treachery does that of Ahithophel prefigure, and how? By implication, what does David's painful crossing of the Kidron to the Mount of Olives foreshadow?
4. **15:16.** What does David's decision to leave ten concubines behind indicate? Of what is he unaware?

For application

1. **15:2–7.** Notice Absalom's patience as he gradually devises his plot. What are David and his officials apparently not doing during this period? What happens in our spiritual lives when we are inattentive to subtle worldly or demonic influences over time?
2. **15:12.** Read the note for this verse. Scripture commands us to forgive those who let us down or even betray us (e.g., Mt 6:12–15). What does forgiveness involve? What does it accomplish, both in ourselves and in our relationships? What happens to us when we refuse to forgive?
3. **15:25–26.** Read the note for v. 25. On what does David base his serenity in the face of suffering? What is the difference between a stoical acceptance of suffering and serene trust in God?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:5.** Where is Bahurim? Who is Shimei? What does he display here, and how does he change later?
2. **16:18.** How is Hushai's declaration of loyalty to Absalom strategically ambiguous? What does Absalom assume, and what does the reader know?
3. **16:20–23.** Having taken control of Jerusalem and made a public claim to David's throne, how does Absalom advertise his seizure of power? Where does Absalom have sexual relations with his father's concubines, and why is the site significant?

For application

1. **16:4.** David accepts Ziba's accusation of Mephibosheth at face value. How are Christians supposed to speak about one another (see Eph 4:25)? When one hears an accusation of a neighbor, how should he deal with it?
2. **16:7.** What is the difference between venting anger with an expletive and actively cursing someone? Though not specifically mentioned in the *Catechism*, how might cursing be an offense against the fifth commandment (compare CCC 2302–3)?
3. **16:18.** By engaging in strategically ambiguous language, is Hushai being truthful or is he lying? Is the use of "discreet language" (CCC 2489) in effect lying? What is our obligation to tell the truth to one who may use it to endanger others?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:1–14.** What kind of counsel does Absalom receive concerning David? What does Ahithophel recommend, and what does Hushai advise? What is Hushai actually trying to do?
2. **17:8.** What is Hushai trying to accomplish by his shrewd political reminder to Absalom?

3. **17:15–22.** What are these verses describing? How does information pass from Hushai to David?
4. **17:23.** What does Ahithophel realize about the failure of his advice? How many premeditated suicides occur in the Old Testament, and how is Ahithophel's different from other instances?

For application

1. **17:1–14.** Have you ever received conflicting advice on an important matter from people you trusted? How did you arrive at a decision? How do you see the Lord's hand in what ultimately happened?
2. **17:23.** How, as the *Catechism* mentions (2091), does despair offend against the first commandment? How, as it explains elsewhere (2281), does suicide offend the love of neighbor? If you have ever considered suicide, what made you choose to live?
3. **17:25.** The note for this verse points out that the political situation David faces is a family feud at several levels. Why are disagreements within families often more serious than disagreements between neighbors? Do disagreements exist within your extended family, and, if so, have they disrupted relationships? How can personal holiness help eliminate the "root of bitterness" against which Heb 12:14–15 warns?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:6.** Where is the forest of Ephraim? Though it is an unusual site for a battle, what advantage does it offer David's guerilla fighters?
2. **18:14.** With which murders is Joab involved in the book? How is he like his brother Abishai? What is David's position?
3. **18:20.** What may be the reason Joab keeps Ahimaaz from carrying tidings of Absalom's death to David?
4. **18:33.** How does David mourn Absalom? In the midst of his paternal anguish, what may David be thinking?

For application

1. **18:9.** Absalom is snared by his most beautiful physical feature, his hair. Why do some people regard their physical beauty as a curse? How can they protect themselves from its dangers?
2. **18:14.** The note for this verse suggests that Joab murders Absalom for political ends. When do ends justify the means, and when do they not? What does the *Catechism* (1887–89) say about the "inversion of means and ends"?
3. **18:33.** What is the worst personal grief you have experienced? How did you express it? What, if anything, provided comfort during this time?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **19:1–8.** For what does Joab rebuke David? What might result from David's failure to express gratitude to his soldiers? What is it time for the bereaved father to do?
2. **19:13.** Who is Amasa? Even though Amasa sides with Absalom during the rebellion, how does David treat him, with what end no doubt in view? Besides that, what does Joab earn, and for what act?
3. **19:16.** Who is Shime-i? On this occasion, what does David swear to grant him; however, on his deathbed, what will David do?
4. **19:24.** What does the haggard appearance of Mephibosheth, grandson of Saul, show about him? Why did he not join David in his flight over the Jordan?

For application

1. **19:5–7.** What is the sternest rebuke you have ever received? How deserved was it? What did you do in response? What was your attitude to the person who delivered it, both at the time and after the situation had passed?
2. **19:18–20.** What is the difference between an apology that expresses sorrow for an offense (as in "I'm sorry") and one that asks for forgiveness (as in "Please forgive me")? Which calls for a response from the person offended? How adequate do you think Shime-i's apology is for what he did (16:5–8)?
3. **19:26–30.** The *Catechism* (2477) describes the sins of rash judgment, detraction, and calumny. Of these three, which ones apply to or affect Mephibosheth, David, and Ziba? How equitable is the decision David makes in v. 29? Why do you think he would be so favorable to Ziba?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1.** What fuels the short-lived second rebellion against David? How is the depth of this tribal animosity revealed? What does the war cry “no portion in David” anticipate?
2. **20:5.** What suspicions must Amasa’s delay raise? What does one suspect Amasa is having difficulty doing, and why?
3. **20:23–26.** What is different about this list of court officials who serve David in the latter years of his reign as compared with the roster in 8:15–18?

For application

1. **20:3.** Read the note for this verse. How are victims of rape often treated in our culture? How do you think they *should* be treated? Since Absalom abused these women to stake his claim to the throne, how justified is David in his treatment of them?
2. **20:9–10.** Since Amasa is Joab’s cousin and Joab has no reason to kill him to avenge blood, what is his motive for this murder? Why do you think David does not call Joab to account immediately (refer to 1 Kings 2:5–6) but reinstates him instead?
3. **20:22.** How many definitions can you think of for the word *wisdom*? What seems to be the meaning here? As mentioned in other parts of Scripture (e.g., Prov 1:2; Ps 111:10; Is 11:2), what does it mean?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:1—24:25.** Of what do these chapters, as an appendix to the books of Samuel, consist, and according to what literary device? What does each of the accounts concern? What function does this final section serve?
2. **21:1.** What was the bloodguilt that Saul incurred before his death? What covenant did his attempt at genocide violate? What did his disregard for this oath bring upon the land?
3. **Word Study: Make Expiation (21:3).** What basic and theological meanings does the Hebrew verb *kaphar* have? In which book does its basic meaning appear? Where is its theological meaning made more prominent, and how? In Old Testament theology, to what is atonement equivalent? What two elements does it involve? How are both ideas present in 2 Sam 21:1–14?
4. **21:6.** Since Saul did not have seven living sons, whom does David hand over to the Gibeonites? What does “hang them up” mean? How is it accomplished? Where is the Mosaic Tabernacle at the time?
5. **21:19.** What is the most likely reason for the statement that Elhanan slew Goliath, which clashes with 1 Sam 17:1–51, which says that David killed him? According to the parallel passage in 1 Chron 20:5, whom did Elhanan slay?

For application

1. **21:3.** According to the word study for this verse (“Make Expiation”), *expiation* in the Old Testament has a theological meaning of making atonement. What do you think the New Testament understanding of expiation is, especially in terms of Jesus’ death on the Cross? What is our part in making expiation for our sins (beyond the types of penances usually given in the confessional)?
2. **21:8–9.** According to the *Catechism* (2266–67), what should be the purpose of legitimate public authority in inflicting punishment on a criminal? What is current Church teaching on the use of the death penalty? What expiatory value does it have?
3. **21:11–14.** Given the dignity of the human person, what kind of burial do criminals executed by the State deserve? How should the State proceed if human remains cannot be identified and no one claims them?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:1–51.** What is the theme of David’s prayer of praise? How does David experience Yahweh’s strength and salvation? Chronologically, where is the song best situated? Compositionally, how are the Books of Samuel framed?
2. **22:8–16.** How does Yahweh often face his enemies? What are these extraordinary manifestations called?

3. **22:11.** What is a cherub? In biblical poetry, with what are powerful winds linked?
4. **22:44.** What kind of power does Israel become under David? Who is really responsible for the subjugation of these vassal states? According to Deuteronomy, what is one blessing bestowed for obedience to the covenant?

For application

1. **22:4.** When you experience trouble and “call upon the Lord” for help, what is your prayer typically like? How often do you worry even as you pray? How would praise of God, “who is worthy to be praised”, change the tenor of your petition?
2. **22:20.** How do you think God looks upon you—for example, do you think his view of you is positive or negative, benevolent or judgmental? How do you believe he regards your failures? What would make him delight in you?
3. **22:26–28.** What does it mean that God shows himself “perverse” to the crooked? Does loyalty to God earn his favor? What does *humility* mean, and why does God respond so favorably to it?
4. **22:35, 40.** How are Christians to be prepared for war? In what kinds of battles are they engaged? According to Eph 6:10–17, what weapons should we be prepared to use, and against what enemy?

Chapter 23

For understanding

1. **23:1.** What does it mean to say that these are the last words of David? What are other possible translations for “sweet psalmist of Israel”?
2. **23:2.** How does the Lord speak through David? Who later acknowledges David’s status as a prophet?
3. **23:8–39.** With what do these verses deal? What are they known as in Hebrew, and what makes them into an elite corps of men? What two distinct ranks are discernible? Who comprise these ranks?
4. **23:16.** What is the water from Bethlehem, retrieved at the risk of human life, treated like? What does David therefore do with it, in symbolic adherence with what law?

For application

1. **23:2.** How has the Spirit of the Lord spoken to you through others? In what ways might the Spirit of the Lord speak through you? In what ways might your life be an encouraging testimony to others?
2. **23:5.** What do you think of the “prosperity gospel” advocated by some preachers? When you are faithful to the Lord and his covenant, what kind of prosperity do you expect? What happens to your fidelity if material or personal suffering happens instead?
3. **23:13–17.** Read the note for these verses. What is the most striking example of loyalty you can recall in a friend? How does Sir 6:1–16 understand the loyalty involved in friendship?

Chapter 24

For understanding

1. **24:1.** Whom does the parallel account in 1 Chron 21:1 identify as the instigator of David’s wrongdoing? Since the two statements are not incompatible, what does the author of 2 Samuel stress? Within what context must even the spiritual forces of darkness operate?
2. **24:10.** Since the narrator never explains why the census is sinful, what might it imply that David is doing? If so, of what is he guilty?
3. **24:12–25.** How does David halt the plague? In what four ways does the incident display subtle parallels with Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac?

For application

1. **24:1–3.** The note for v. 1 discusses the spiritual instigator behind this census. What do you think David’s own motivation may have been? Which organizations do you know that count their membership? What probably distinguishes their motives from those of David?
2. **24:10–14.** David is confronted with a choice of three immediate consequences of his sin. Which would you have chosen? What do you think of David’s answer? When confronted with the consequences of your sin, how do you choose to respond to the Lord?

3. **24:16–18.** The note for v. 16 suggests that the Lord can turn the evil of sin into great spiritual benefits—in this case, the location of the Temple (see Rom 8:28). How has the Lord turned evil into good in your life or the lives of people you know? How might some of the setbacks of the Church in recent history (e.g., the modern decline in church attendance) be turned to good for those who love the Lord?
4. **24:24.** David's reply to Araunah the Jebusite amounts to a principle of the spiritual life—namely, do not offer God what costs you nothing. What, by definition, is a sacrifice? What did Dietrich Bonhoeffer mean by the expression “cheap grace”? Why should a sacrifice to the Lord your God cost you something?