

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: July 22, 2018

Lesson Title: "Deposed"

Lesson Passage: 2 Samuel 15:10-16,24-30

ABOUT THIS LESSON

After ordering the assassination of Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28-29a), Absalom fled to Geshur (v. 37), which was ruled by his maternal grandfather. After three years, he returned to Jerusalem, where he began to instigate a revolt against his father, King David. Leaving Jerusalem on a pretext, he proclaimed himself king of Hebron, gathered an army and marched into Jerusalem unopposed, as David and his loyal followers fled from the city. To his credit, David planned his strategic retreat so as not to bring destruction to the city.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the strategies used by Absalom to instigate a rebellion against his father. (2) Explain David's reasons for leaving Jerusalem quietly, rather than fighting Absalom's forces within the city.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Begin with this:* George Bernard Shaw once said: "The politician who once had to learn to flatter Kings has now to learn how to fascinate, amuse, coax, humbug, frighten, or otherwise strike the fancy of the electorate." *Relate this to the opening verses of 2 Samuel 15:* Once he had become established in Jerusalem, after returning from exile, Absalom did exactly what Shaw was talking about, winning the allegiance of the people through shrewd political maneuvering.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Although the lesson passage begins at 2 Samuel 15:10, the first nine verses of that chapter give us valuable insight into Absalom's strategy for usurping the throne of his father, David. *Share these insights:* (1) At this point, no rule of succession to the throne had been established in Israel. The deaths of Saul and Jonathan had ruled out the possibility of hereditary succession. So, in effect, the throne was fair game to anyone who could muster enough power to seize it. (2) One of the first steps of a man who intends to usurp power is to acquire a bodyguard. Absalom's personal troops, described in 15:1, were a formidable force. (3) Absalom's methods for gaining popularity (15:2-6) are still used by contemporary politicians. They (a) show an interest in people's private lives (v. 2), (b) pretend to be a protector of the average citizen, (c) insinuate that the prevailing government is unconcerned or incompetent (vv. 3-4), (d) and show their humility by refusing gestures of respect in the name of equality (v. 5). (4) By implementing these practices, Absalom "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (v. 6).

2. Read 2 Samuel 15:7, then note that many Hebrew manuscripts say "after forty years" (the KJV reading) in v. 7, but it is unlikely that it took Absalom forty years to prepare his rebellion. Most modern versions follow the reading in a number of ancient translations, "After four years." This means that it would have been four years after Absalom had returned to Jerusalem (*refer to 2 Sam. 14:23*).

3. Suggest that Absalom's religious excuse for going to Hebron (v. 7) was only a pretext, because Israel's one and only God, Yahweh, could be worshiped equally well in Jerusalem. His real reason for going to Hebron was that he had learned that many leaders in the tribe of Judah were discontent, first, because the capitol had been moved from Hebron to Jerusalem and, second, the northern tribes were playing a prominent part in the united kingdom. Absalom capitalized on this political unrest.

4. Finally, having set the stage, Absalom sent secret agents throughout the country, instructing them to proclaim him as king upon hearing the sound of the trumpets (2 Sam. 15:10). NOTE: He was reclaiming Hebron as his capital, but wanted to be considered king over all Israel.

5. *Comment on 2 Sam. 15:11-12:* (1) The 200 men who left Jerusalem with Absalom were not armed troops, and they didn't know what he was plotting. (2) The sacrifices offered by Absalom were probably related to his plot to seize the kingship, for such sacrifices were a standard part of coronation ceremonies. (2) Ahithophel the Gilonite (v. 12) was the grandfather of Bathsheba (compare 2 Sam. 11:3 with 23:34), and could have joined the revolt against David in order to avenge the disgrace to his family (*refer to 2 Sam. 15:31*).

6. *Read 2 Sam. 15:13-18:* (1) David apparently concluded that a strategic retreat would be in order, "lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us" (v. 14). And, to his great credit, he was determined to protect Jerusalem from a devastating battle within her walls ("lest he...smite the city with the edge of the sword"--v. 14). (2) The small detachment that David took with him out of the city (v. 18), consisted of David's 600 "mighty men" described in 1 Sam. 27:2, 30:9. Many of them had come from that original rag-tag army that David had put together during his days as a fugitive from Saul (1 Sam. 22:2). They were battle-hardened, disciplined, tough warriors who were loyal to David.

7. Note that David's covered head and bare feet in v. 30 were signs of mourning.

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

*Closing thoughts:* David had committed wrongs; but in this crisis he did the right things. (1) He submitted his destiny to God. (2) He did not let a foolish sense of pride dictate his response. (3) He showed concern for others even though he himself was in grave danger. (4) He "kept his head," making rational decisions under pressure. (5) He did not burden himself with the material trappings of kingship.