

# The Last Words

*May 12, 2024*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

2 Samuel 22:1-4; 23:1-7

### **Session Outline**

1. Remembering (2 Samuel 22:1-4)
2. Reflecting (2 Samuel 23:1-4)
3. Trusting (2 Samuel 23:5-7)

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### **Theological Theme**

David approached the end of his life with complete confidence in God based completely on the Lord's faithfulness and not his own performance or perfection. David's last public words summarized his reflections on all God had done in and through his life from his time as a shepherd boy to becoming the greatest king in Israel.

### **Call to Action**

If you were asked to write out your last words, what would they celebrate, what would they confess, for what would they cry? Consider giving God the last word in your life today.



## Leader Guide

# The Last Words

### Introduction

Think about the importance of last words from a leader. Whether a military authority sending off troops into battle or a coach sending his team onto the field against tough opponents, last words are often hold more weight and power for motivation because of their timing. This is especially true when these are not the last words for a given period but the last words of a person's life.

- ❓ What are some of the most famous last words you can think of?
- ❓ Why do you think last words carry more weight than usual? How have you been impacted by someone's last words?


### Session Summary

The last words people share at the end of their lives carry extra weight. King David was nearing the end of his reign and his life, and the words recorded in 2 Samuel 23 give an account of what was on his mind. As the greatest king in Israel's history, it is interesting to note the way that David took time to remember and reflect on the goodness and activity of God.

By no means did David live or lead a perfect life. He suffered consequences for his sin and rebellion, but he also demonstrated the faithfulness of God to keep his covenant and the importance of repenting with a sincere heart. Thankfully, God bases His interactions with His children on His own character and faithfulness, not on our goodness. David affirmed the wisdom of obeying God's Word and the reminder that God will oppose evil people and those who choose rebellion. So, we should choose wisely.


## 1. Remembering (2 Samuel 22:1-4)

Today's focus is on King David's last words in 2 Samuel 23. Just prior to that passage in chapter 22, David took time to remember all that God had done for Him and all God had been to him. David reflected on his life as he neared the end of his days and recalled the presence and power of the Lord at work on his behalf. This reflection time fueled what became David's last public words.

-  Why do you think it is a common practice to reflect on life as one nears the end of his or her life? What is the value in this?


David's words here are similar to those in Psalm 18, written years before, just after the Lord delivered David as a young man who was taking the throne and defeating his enemies. Most scholars agree that David revisited this Psalm at this point in his life and it was not published out of chronological order. Most likely, as he remembered his history with the Lord, David recalled these words that summarized his life with God.

David used various descriptors and titles for the Lord in just a few short verses. It is almost as if he couldn't stop naming all God had been to him and wanted to give as many specifics as possible. God's work in David's life was so significant, powerful, and incomprehensible that one title didn't do Him justice.

-  Which descriptor for the Lord stands out to you the most and why? How has He acted in this way for you?

God's deliverance was a major theme in David's life. He described God as rock, fortress, deliverer, and shield, among other things. God's continued faithfulness to David built a solid foundation of trust. The same is true for us. When we take time to remember all that God has done and is doing in our lives, our trust will grow. The question is not if God has been faithful and trustworthy but if we recognize that He is faithful and trustworthy.

All the ways David addressed the Lord were also personal. His use of personal pronouns makes the point that God's presence in his life was real and intimate. The Lord is present for His children and wants to be intimately involved in the details of our lives. We can know Him in the same way David did, and we can experience the truth that God is worthy of all our trust and praise.

-  Application: How can you reflect on God's faithfulness to you by using David's words in this passage as a model?


## 2. Reflecting (2 Samuel 23:1-4)

These were not David's last words from his deathbed but his final public declaration expressing his heart and longing at the end of his life. David reflected on his humble beginning as the son of Jesse and the fact that God elevated him to power and influence as His anointed. He also acknowledged the gift of God speaking through him.

-  How did confidence in God give David a clear picture of who he was as one belonging to God? How is this also true for us?


David had been used by the Lord to speak truth whether in written or spoken form. As a king who loved and served the Lord, David knew there had been moments of divine inspiration in his life. With the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, God speaks to us and through us. It is important to recognize these moments and be grateful for the opportunity to be used as part of God's plan.

As he looked back over his life and reign as king, David identified some keys to effective and godly leadership. He had experienced the difference it makes when a leader exercises justice and knew that when justice was denied, problems arose. Think about your own experiences with leaders who have a personal agenda that overrides what is just, right, and good. Issues abound and conflict grow.

-  How is a heart for justice tied to being a godly leader? Why is it a failure to honor God if we neglect justice?

A person who leads in the fear of God acknowledges that the Lord is just and sees everything. God holds leaders accountable for their actions and choices. When people realize that they will answer for how they lead, it should affect their everyday decisions in a positive manner. Further, godly leaders pursue justice, not just considering the reality of answering to God but primarily because it reflects God's heart.


David's references to the morning light and sun on a cloudless day remind that a wise ruler is blessed when he rules with justice. Even though the reign of David had not been perfect, it had been blessed because he continually returned to God's wisdom and ways. This shepherd boy turned king knew this was not his own doing but resulted from God's goodness in his life.

-  Application: Where is God calling you to pursue justice in the world this week? How will you do this practically?


### 3. Trusting (2 Samuel 23:5-7)

Looking back at the end of his life, David didn't try to pretend his reign was without failure. There is power in accepting the reality of our brokenness and admitting to our own shortcomings. Our weakness magnifies the goodness of God, even and especially at the end of our lives.

David rejoiced that his everlasting covenant with the Lord was not based on his performance as a ruler. It was founded on God's gracious commitment to David. David could look back and be reassured that, although he had sinned and fallen short, God's plans for his life had prevailed with great purpose and influence.

-  Why is it important to admit your own failings alongside God's faithfulness when evaluating your life? Why should this lead to rejoicing?

Because the covenant was based in God's faithfulness and not his own performance, David confidently spoke about his salvation and security. Our attempted obedience is never enough to secure our salvation and David knew this from his own experiences with sin and its consequences. David's life held multiple examples of failure, repentance, and restoration with God. This is what it looks like to walk in faithfulness to God throughout our lives. Recognizing this reality prompts us, like David, to praise the Lord for His faithfulness in the face of our failure.

-  How does it impact you to remember that God's faithfulness to you is based on who He is and not what you've done?

God's faithfulness does not lessen the importance of our obedience. David rightly said worthless men will end in destruction. This represents those who reject the truth of God continually. This also speaks to those who do evil in the world to others. David knew he could trust the Lord to deal with those who practice evil as He sees fit. Our desire should be for all people to come to faith in Christ, but we can be confident that those who continually reject God and oppress His people will face God's justice in His time.

David's life could be summed up by the idea that God is in control. Trust in Him. Rest and allow God to deal with those who oppose you. Don't stress out over evildoers because God will deal with them, either through salvation or judgment. You can rest and delight in the Lord.

#### Last Words

The heading for this chapter, "These are the last words of David," is not intended chronologically; other words of David appear after this section and even in 1Kg 1:28–35 and 2:1–9. Perhaps the section contains David's last recorded public statement or testimony to God's work through his life.

David demonstrated the joy that comes from an intimate relationship with the Lord as he shared the ways God had been faithful and present in his life. His relationship with the Lord is the reason David was the greatest king in the history of Israel and one of the most prominent ancestors in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

- Application: Where do you need to trust God fully right now? How will you submit to Him in this area of life?

## Conclusion

King David lived a full life. As he neared the end of his days, he remembered and reflected on all he had experienced with God. As a leader, it can be powerful to pass on lessons learned to the next generation. Looking back, David stressed the different ways he had experienced the power and presence of the Lord along life's journey.

Although he had often failed and fallen short, he stood confidently on the faithfulness of the Lord and not his own performance or lack of perfection. David confessed his imperfections alongside the Lord's faithfulness. Great leaders accept their reality and use every situation to impact others for the kingdom. David is an example for us in this way, as he died in the same way he lived, as a man after God's own heart.

- At this point in your life, what "last words" might you pass on to another if you knew your time was limited? What is the value of reflecting on the end of our lives, even if we may have many years to live?
- How can our group support one another in reflecting often on the faithfulness of God in our lives?
- How can you seek a gospel conversation with someone this week by sharing about the life of David?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God for the example of David. Praise Him for His faithfulness to you and the confidence it gives you in living for Him each day. Ask for wisdom to learn from David's example and last words.*

## Memory Verse

*Is it not true my house is with God?  
For he has established a permanent covenant with me,  
ordered and secured in every detail.  
Will he not bring about  
my whole salvation and my every desire?  
—2 Samuel 23:5*

## Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel* by J.D. Greear and Heath Thomas
- *2 Samuel* by John Woodhouse
- *Be Restored* by Warren Wiersbe

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of 2 Samuel

## Purpose

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel describe Israel's transition from a loosely organized tribal league under God (a theocracy) to centralized leadership under a king who answered to God (a monarchy). Samuel's life and ministry greatly shaped this period of restructuring as he consistently pointed people back to God.

## Author

Early tradition suggests 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book. Some scholars believe Samuel was largely responsible for the material up to 1 Samuel 25, and that the prophets Nathan and Gad gave significant input to the rest (based on 1Ch 29:29). This proposal, however, must remain speculative because the books name no authors. First Samuel 27:6 suggests the book was not completed until perhaps a few generations after the division of the kingdom around 930 BC. This verse states that Achish gave the town of Ziklag to David. The writer goes on to say that, at the time he was writing, Ziklag still belonged to the kings of Judah. The reference to "kings of Judah" places the writing of 1 and 2 Samuel well after the kingdom divided.

## Setting

After Israel's conquest of the land during the days of Joshua, Israel entered a time of apostasy. The book of Judges describes recurrences of a cycle with predictable phases. First, the people sinned against the Lord and fell into idolatry. Second, the Lord raised up an adversary to afflict them and turn them back to him. Third, the people cried out to the Lord in repentance. Fourth, the Lord brought deliverance for them through a judge whom he raised up. The famous verse in the book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him" (Jdg 21:25), aptly describes the period. The book of 1 Samuel picks up the historical record toward the end of those stormy days.

## Special Features

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel highlight a significant transition time in Israel's history. As 1 Samuel begins, Israel is a loosely organized tribal league living under poor spiritual leadership. God's plan for his people nonetheless continued as he raised up Samuel to guide Israel's transition from a theocracy to a monarchy. Saul's kingship constitutes the remainder of 1 Samuel, while David's kingship is largely the focus of 2 Samuel.

## Extended Commentary

### 2 Samuel 22-23

Thanksgiving Hymn (22:1–51). The core of the appendix is David’s tribute to the Lord. This song was also included in the Book of Psalms (Ps. 18). The occasion for David’s thanksgiving was his deliverance from King Saul.

David recalled his cry for deliverance. He described the Lord’s intervention in words reminiscent of His appearance at Mount Sinai (see Exod. 19; Ps. 68:7–18; Hab. 3). The Lord, awesome in might, came to his personal rescue because David was upright and faithful. God was his Lamp, Rock, and Shield of Salvation, giving David complete victory over all his enemies. The song concludes with a doxology.<sup>1</sup>

Oracle (23:1–39). Although other words from David are recorded in the Old Testament books that follow (1 Kgs. 2:1–9; 1 Chr. 23:27), this oracle was David’s last formal reflection on the enduring state of his royal house under the covenant care of the Lord. The term “oracle” commonly introduces prophetic address (Num. 23:7; Isa. 14:28; Mal. 1:1). David declared by the Spirit that God had chosen him from all Israel and made an everlasting covenant with his lineage. Those who opposed him would be cast aside as thorns for the fire. This messianic description is fully realized in Jesus Christ, who as David’s son establishes the rule of God in the earth.

The catalog of mighty men and their exploits was another tribute to God’s enablement of David. Among David’s armies were two elite groups of champions who served as the king’s bodyguard and special fighting force (see 21:15–22; 1 Chr. 11:10–47). The first group consisted of the “Three” whose exploits against the Philistines were renown (see the cave of Adullam, 1 Sam. 22). Abishai and Benaiah were singled out, although they were not as great as the “Three,” because they held high honor in the annals of David’s wars. The second group, the “Thirty,” is also listed, giving a total count of thirty-seven heroes (including Joab, 23:24–39).<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Kenneth A. Mathews, “The Historical Books,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 131.