

STOP! BEWARE OF BAD DECISIONS

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

CONSEQUENCES

DECISION

GLORY OF GOD

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

2 Samuel 15:1-37, 16:15, 18:33, Proverbs 8:10-11

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help children understand that if they makes decisions that do not please God, it will bring them terrible consequences

MEMORY VERSE

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV*)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The two oldest sons of David and possible successors to the throne of Israel, Amnon and Absalom, turned into irreconcilable enemies when Amnon dishonored his half-sister, Tamar, sister of Absalom. Absalom takes his revenge on his older brother (Amnon) by killing him. In both instances, the dishonoring of Tamar and the murder of Amnon, King David looked like a weak father lacking moral authority to correct his children.

After three years of voluntary exile, Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but his intentions were not good. He knew that he was next in line for the throne of Israel; he made the decision to win the favor of the people, take control of the army and not wait until his father died to become the new king.

Absalom was ambitious and calculating; besides being very vain, because he knew he was good looking. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that he is a man who feared God. On the contrary, the Bible says he was very proud, self-confident and ruthless; killing people to get what he wanted was not beneath him.

With the support of Ahitophel, one of King David’s chief advisors, Absalom proclaimed himself king of Israel in Hebron, the place where Samuel had anointed his father, David, at the command of God. With this act, Absalom was not only acting against his father, who had not chosen him to be king, he proclaimed himself to be king, basically just taking control without any authority.

Because of Absalom's rebellion, David had to flee from Jerusalem so his own son would not murder him. God allowed Hushai, another one of King David's counselors, to give plans to Absalom and then had those same plans given to David so that David would be saved. In the end, the two armies fought each other and David, acting like a father and not a general, asks his army to be gentle on Absalom and asked that they not kill him.

The experience of David's army helped them overtake Absalom; however over 20,000 men died in battle.

While Absalom was fleeing, his hair was caught on an oak branch and Joab, one of David's generals, killed him. Absalom's choices had tragic consequences for himself and for Israel.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Start the lesson by asking the children what important decisions they make during the week, and what would have happened if they had chosen differently. Say, "Did you make a decision that seemed fantastic and then it had a bad consequence?" (Let a few children tell their stories.)

Organize your children into three teams and give them Student Activity Sheet #267-A entitled "What Are the Consequences of . . . ?" Have each team choose a picture. Then have the teams think about the consequences that they might experience if they chose one decision over the other. After they have had time to talk about it in their groups, have each group share what they came up with.

TEACH THE LESSON

Say: "Today we're going to study the life of a young man who made some very wrong decisions that brought about fatal consequences. First, let's read the story and then we'll study it."

"If only I were king," thought Absalom, son of King David. Absalom was very proud of his good looks.

He wanted to take his father's place as king. He got up in the morning, stood on the side of the road, next to the palace door, and asked everyone who came to appear before the king "What town are you from?" And they would respond, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." Absalom would then respond, "'Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you.' And Absalom would add, 'If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that they received justice.' "

One day, Absalom asked David's permission to go to Hebron to worship the Lord and David let him go. But in reality, Absalom did not want to go worship, he wanted to build a palace there, because then he would be king of Israel in place of his father.

As soon as he left, secret messengers were sent throughout the tribes of Israel to say, " As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'"

Absalom asked Ahithophel, one of David's counselors, to help him take the throne from his father. One day, a messenger came to David and told him, "The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom ." So David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword." But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. David had been told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, so he prayed, "Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."

Hushai was one of David's loyal counselors. David told Hushai to return to Jerusalem and pretend that he was with Absalom. At first, Absalom was suspicious of him but Hushai said, "Your Majesty, I'll be your servant; I was your father's servant in the past, but now I'll be your servant."

Absalom wanted to make sure that his father could not regain his kingdom, so he asked for advice from Ahithophel. Ahithophel told him, "I would choose 12,000 men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. I would attack him while he is weary and weak ."

Absalom also asked Hushai what he should do. Hushai knew that Ahithophel's advice would bring bad results for David, and that David and his men needed time to rest and plan their next move. Hushai told Absalom that he should wait until he could get together more men for his army.

So Absalom and all of Israel. Said, "The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel."

When Absalom's army finally set out to fight David, David and his men were rested and ready for battle. "King David commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, 'Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.' David's army marched out of the city to fight Israel; the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim."

"Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large

oak, Absalom's hair was caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going."

"When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, 'I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.' "

Then Joab, David's commander, took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. When David heard of his son's death, he wept and said, "*O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom !*" David returned to his throne in Jerusalem very saddened.

(The *italicized* words are from 2 Samuel 15:2-4, 10, 13-14, 31, 34; 17:1-2, 14, 18:5-6, 9-10, 33.)

CONNECT THE LESSON

Lesson review

Use Student Activity Sheet #267-B and #267-C to review the lesson. Activity: How so I make good decisions?

This activity will help your children understand some biblical principles that will help them in making decisions that honor God. Read Proverbs 8:10-11 and have your children fill in the blanks on Student Activity Sheet #267-D and think more about what they have learned.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Have the children repeat the memory verse for the unit aloud (1 Corinthians 10:31). Afterwards, ask each child to write one word of the verse on the board until it is complete. Explain how the verse relates to us in today's world. If Absalom had known this verse and had been obedient to God, maybe he would have ended up being king of Israel, and he would have had God's approval.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Ask the group to share their prayer needs. Ask several to pray for these needs. Also be sure to pray that God would help all of the children make wise decisions and that they would honor him.

Encourage

Encourage the children to try to make good decisions this week and to come next time with a list of their experiences to share with the group.

Invite

Thank your children for their attendance and announce something about the next lesson to spur interest in them.