

STUDY GUIDE

DAVID

AFTER GOD'S HEART



SUMMIT DRIVE CHURCH



DAVID: AFTER GOD'S HEART

DAVE FIELDS

2 Samuel 6 – Death and the Dance

I. Background

1. The David-Story gives us a picture of what it means to “deal with God” as God.

“In the Bethlehem hills and meadows, tending his father’s sheep, David was immersed in the largeness and immediacy of God...His praying and singing, his mediation and adoration had shaped an imagination in him that set each sheep and lamb, bear and lion into something large and vast and robust: God.”

– Eugene Peterson

2. The Ark of the Covenant

Jerusalem is not just to be the place where

David reigns from, but where God is worshipped. So David’s plan is to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the city. This is an important task – a holy task.

This gold-covered box was a physical reminder of God’s very presence with his people. Of course, a box cannot contain God, but God had chosen to let this be a symbol of His presence; like a “hot-spot” of His presence on earth – where heaven and earth overlap.

The Ark has been sitting in the village of Kiriath-Jearim, in the house of the old priest Abinadab. He has two sons, Uzzah and Ahio, and they are given the task of supervising the delivery of the Ark to Jerusalem.

II. “God in a Box” – Uzzah’s Death

“When they came to the threshing floor of Naxon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord’s **anger** burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God. Then David was **angry** because the Lord’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

– 2 Samuel 6:6-8

1. **David is angry with God.** He’s walked with God. Dealt with God all these years. And this makes him mad. This seems, from his view, inconsistent with the God he knows: the One about whom he sings in his Psalm: “The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love”

- Psalm 103:8

2. **David doesn’t know is what the narrator tells us.** “The Lord’s anger burned against Uzzah “... because of his irreverent act...” Reverence is a posture that ‘reveres’; that rightly acknowledges the awesome, holy and mysteriously wild nature of God. Irreverence is the opposite of that. It’s flippancy. And flippancy of action, this comes from a flippancy of heart. It comes from somewhere that we can’t see – but God can. “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

3. **There is likely more – much more – going on inside Uzzah - things God can see that, David, and we, cannot.**

“Over the centuries, as the Christian imagination has reflected on Uzzah’s death, one insight has appeared over and over; it’s fatal to take charge of God. Uzzah is the person who has God in a box and officially assumes responsibility for keeping him safe from the mud and dust of the world....

In this imaginative context we can guess that Uzzah’s reflexive act – reaching out to steady the Ark as the oxen stumble – this wasn’t the mistake of a moment; it was a piece of his lifelong obsession with managing the Ark.”

– Eugene Peterson



Take Home:

So where does that leave us? Where do we go as we hear this warning? **We go to Jesus.** Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father,” a tender term, and also “Hallowed be your Name,” meaning, “May you be honored and revered.” Here is a beautiful balance between intimacy and awe.

III. Alive To God – David’s Dance

“Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets....

It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel—

—I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes.”

- 2 Samuel 6:15; 22

Take Home: “Worship in Spirit and Truth”

“True worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (John 4:23).

So David dances: why? Because he’s a lover of God. He’s open and ready to relate in the Spirit and in truth. The part David had missed in the first attempt was the “truth” part. But he, in this scene, has learned that part too. He combines a heart full of praise with a desire, now, for obedience too.

This isn’t just “be passionate”. It’s “deal with God **as God is**.” David is now open to that. Are you?

Take Home: “Even More Undignified”

Michal would have been very comfortable walking next to Uzzah beside the ox-cart – dignified, looking the part of a queen, but utterly distant from God.

“David is more concerned to honor the Lord than to foster his own reputation...”

- Joyce Baldwin

Are there ways that you are trying to ‘limit’ or put a lid on the implications of your faith in your workplace in order to ‘maintain’ a particular reputation, and image, you are putting forward?

“David danced. In God, David had access to life that exceeded his capacity to measure or control. He was on the edge of mystery, or glory. And so he danced. When we’re going about our work responsibly and steadily, we walk....But when we’re beside ourselves with



love, charged with excess of meaning, shaken out of our preoccupation with ourselves, we dance. David danced.”

- Eugene Peterson

Life Group and Reflection Questions:

1. As you consider the story of David moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, what features of this story most stand out to you? In what ways did taking an “imaginative approach” with this text help flesh out some of the ‘reasons’ why we see the anger of God ‘break out’ against Uzzah?
2. Eugene Peterson has suggested that the death of Uzzah was not the result of a momentary decision but was a long time in the making already; that he was already long “dead” to God before this incident with the oxcart. We noted how Jesus spoke to the Pharisees with a similar kind of language, calling them “whitewashed tombs”. With this in mind, what warnings do you hear in this text?
3. Pastor Dave asked the question: “Where do we go when we hear this?” The answer he gave was, “We run to Jesus, who ran toward us.” What does Paul say about the process of coming “alive to God” in Ephesians 2:1-5? How does that encourage you?



4. Being “alive to God” is one of the key features of David’s life. Paul writes about this idea of being ‘alive to God’ using the language of “spiritual fervor.” In **Romans 12:11** we read: “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”

What has helped you in this sense in the past?
What might you need to adopt, or re-engage, in order to avoid a slide into complacency?

5. Notice, too, Paul combines “spiritual fervor” with “serving the Lord.” How do you think those two features ‘belong to’ each other? Are there ways that you need to re-engage your spiritual fervor by re-engaging in serving?

Prayer:

Take some time to give thanks to God for his graciousness. Ask that God’s greatness would move you to awe, and that the promise that his Spirit is now in us lead you to deep intimacy with the One who lives in you!