

**David** — Youngest Son of Jesse

David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:13–14; Acts 13:22)! He’s believed to have been twelve to sixteen years of age when he was anointed as the king of Israel.

Saul’s initial pleasure in David vanished quickly as David rose in strength and fame. David slew the giant Goliath.

During David’s reign, after Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths, David sought out anyone who remained of the house of Saul to whom he could show *kindness* for Jonathan’s sake. When David killed two hundred Philistines, doubling the required payment, Saul realized he was outmatched; his fear of David increased.

While spending several years fleeing from murderous King Saul, David wrote a number songs, including Psalms 57, 59, and 142.

While on the run, David raised up a mighty army and, with power from God, defeated everyone in his path, always asking God first for permission and instructions before going into battle, a practice he’d continue as king.

David began to take a number of wives. Second Samuel highlights his weak spots. Over all, he was the second king of ancient Israel and the father of Solomon, who expanded the empire that David built.

**Abner** — King Saul’s Cousin

Abner wasn’t only the cousin of Israel’s first king, he was the commander of Saul’s army. Respected by King Saul, he was granted a place next to him when dining.

After Saul and three of his sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines, David took the throne of Judah. But, instead of swearing fealty to God’s anointed, Abner took Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth across the Jordan River and set him up as king. When Abner returned, he was forced to flee from the commander of David’s army, Joab, after a fierce battle at Gibeon.

Eventually incensed that his loyalty was being questioned by Ish-Bosheth, Abner defected to David’s side and vowed to bring all of Israel under David’s control. Joab became angry with Abner and killed him.

**Joab** — Son of Zeruiah, Nephew of King David

Joab was a son of Zeruiah, King David’s sister (1 Chronicles 2:13–17) and was therefore one of David’s nephews.

Joab was positioned as commander of David’s armies because of his victory over the Jebusites, resulting in the possession of the city of Jerusalem. It was through this victory that Jerusalem became “the city of David.”

As the commander of David’s armies, Joab fought and won many battles for the king, but his personal lack of self-control was problematic, causing much grief to the king and to Israel. His anger and perhaps the power of his position drove him to poor decisions at times.

It was also Joab who, in accordance with David’s command, placed Uriah the Hittite at the front of the battle to be killed, so that David could feel justified in marrying Uriah’s widow.

## Absalom — David’s Son

Absalom, according to the Hebrew Bible, was the third son of David, King of Israel, by his wife Maacah (the daughter of Talmai who was the King of Geshur).

Second Samuel 14:25 describes him as the most handsome man in the kingdom. He eventually rebelled against his father and was killed during the Battle of Ephraim’s Wood.

The first recorded event defining Absalom’s life involved his sister, Tamar, and half-brother Amnon. (To learn who they were, click their names in the list on the Introductory page’s summary: Week 32.)

Absalom began to stealthily undermine David’s rule. He set himself up as a judge in Jerusalem and gave out promises of what he would do if he were king. After four years of this, he asked to go to Hebron, where he had secretly arranged to have himself proclaimed king making his father David begin to fear for his own life.

During an impending confrontation, as Absalom was riding under some trees, his long hair became entangled in the branches and he was unhorsed. Joab found Absalom suspended in mid-air and killed him there. Thus, the rebellion was quelled and David returned to Jerusalem as king.

## Mephibosheth — Jonathan’s Son

There are two men by the name of Mephibosheth in the Bible, both in 2 Samuel. The less prominent one was a son of King Saul; he was delivered by David to the Gibeonites to be hanged in retaliation for Saul’s earlier slaughter of a band of Gibeonites (2 Samuel 21:1–9).

The other Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, who was the son of King Saul and a special friend of King David. When Mephibosheth was five years old, his father Jonathan was killed in battle. Denied the throne as king of Israel and crippled for life at age five, he spent his early years fleeing his grandfather King Saul’s enemies.

Fearing that the Philistines would attempt to take the life of the young boy, a nurse fled with him to Gibeah, the royal residence, but in her haste, she dropped him and both of his feet were crippled (2 Samuel 4:4). He was carried to the land of Gilead, where he found refuge.

Some years later, when King David had conquered all of Israel’s enemies, he remembered the family of his friend Jonathan (2 Samuel 9:1). Wishing to display his loving loyalty to Jonathan by ministering to his family, David brought Mephibosheth and his infant son Micah to Jerusalem, where they resided from that point on (2 Samuel 9).

Inheriting his grandfather’s height and good looks, along with his father Jonathan’s positive attitude, Mephibosheth used his wits to get out of life-threatening situations in Israel, Babylon, and Assyria.

Despite his handicap, a beautiful Kisharrah became his wife, King David became his friend, and the forests became his mission.

Later, when David invited the young boy to be part of his court, he entrusted the family property to Mephibosheth who was allowed to remain in the king’s house (2 Samuel 19:24–30).

### **Michal — King Saul's Younger Daughter**

Michal was, according to the first Book of Samuel, a princess of the United Kingdom of Israel; the younger daughter of King Saul, she was the first wife of David, who later became king, first of Judah, then of Israel.

She's important in biblical history because she fell in love with David, even though her older sister, Merab, had been promised to David to be his wife as a prize for killing Saul's enemies. Because his younger daughter, Michal, loved David, Saul considered her a way to ensnare the future king, of whom he was insanely jealous.

After Michal was given to David as a wife, her father's jealousy of his rival escalated and he tried to kill David. Michal helped her new husband escape when King Saul's men came to kill him.

When Saul was dead and David was preparing to step into his rightful position as king, he ordered that Michal be brought back to him. This act seems to have destroyed whatever love Michal had once felt for David, because the next time we see her, she is caustically critical of David when he dances before the Lord (2 Samuel 6:16, 20).

### **Nathan — A Court Prophet**

Nathan was a prophet, living during the reign of King David in Israel. God spoke to David through Nathan on several occasions. He was a member of David's royal court and one of his closest advisors.

The first mention of Nathan established his relationship with David as a trusted advisor. His second mention comes after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and brought about her husband's death to hide her pregnancy (2 Samuel 12:1).

Nathan went to David and wisely told the king a fable about a rich man and a poor man. David confessed to Nathan that he'd sinned against the Lord; Nathan comforted him, saying that the Lord had forgiven his sin and that David's life wouldn't be taken.

The Lord sent Nathan to David again, this time to say that the Lord loved his new son Solomon. Prophet Nathan was known for his faithfulness, friendship, and tough love through the years.

### **Amnon — King David's Firstborn Son**

Amnon was the oldest son of King David and his third wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel. He was born in Hebron during his father's reign in Judah, and was the heir apparent to the throne of Israel until he was assassinated by his half-brother, Absalom, to avenge the rape of their sister Tamar.

Amnon showed despicable character, an alarming lack of self-control, and great selfishness. He fell in love — or in lust — with his half-sister Tamar. His obsession with the desire to sleep with her became so consuming that he grew physically sick (2 Samuel 13:2). Tamar refused Amnon's advances, calling his actions a “wicked thing.” Yet he raped her.

Immediately after the rape, Amnon was filled with hatred toward Tamar; in fact, “He hated her more than he had loved her” (13:15). Sadly, David, although furious at his son's crime, didn't punish Amnon (13:21). He was killed by his brother Absalom, in revenge for the rape of his sister Tamar.

The name Amnon means "faithful" in Hebrew.

**Tamar** — King David's Daughter, Sister of Absalom

Tamar was the daughter of Maacah, a princess from a neighboring kingdom; she was of royal descent on her mother's side. She had a brother, Absalom, and a half-brother, Amnon. Amnon had an obsessive desire for his half-sister Tamar; one day he pretended to be sick and called for her to come to him in his bedroom to help him; while alone with her, he raped her.

Unfortunately, though David was angry with Amnon for raping Tamar, he didn't punish or require him to marry Tamar. As a result, Absalom took it upon himself to murder Amnon in revenge (2 Samuel 13:1–22).

Tamar lived out her days in a royal harem.

**Bathsheba** — Schemer or Victim?

The story of David and Bathsheba is one of the most dramatic accounts in the Old Testament. Bathsheba was a beautiful, clever, unscrupulous woman who was seen by King David while she bathed, and desired by him. She subsequently became pregnant by him, even though she was married to the soldier Uriah. Despite her marital status, David summoned Bathsheba to the palace, and they slept together.

Bathsheba later discovered she was pregnant (2 Samuel 11:5). When she informed David, the king reacted by attempting to hide his sin. When it became apparent that David and Bathsheba's adultery couldn't be covered up, David enacted a sinister plan to command his military leader, Joab, to place Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, on the front lines of battle and then to purposefully fall back from him, leaving him exposed to enemy attack that killed him.

After her time of mourning, Bathsheba married David and gave birth to an unnamed son who died in infancy. She gave birth to three more sons before the birth of Solomon.

**Solomon** — The Third and Last King of the United Kingdom of Israel

Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba (the former wife of Uriah the Hittite whom David had killed to hide his adultery with Bathsheba while her husband was on the battle front).

Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs), the book of Ecclesiastes, and much of the book of Proverbs.

The highlights of Solomon's life? When he ascended to the throne, he sought after God who God gave him opportunity to ask for whatever he wanted. Solomon humbly acknowledged his inability to rule well so he unselfishly asked God for the wisdom he'd need to rule God's people justly.

Solomon wrote many proverbs and songs (1 Kings 4:32) and completed many building projects (7:1–16; 9:15–23). He also built a fleet of ships and acquired tons of gold from Ophir with his partner, Hiram, king of Tyre (9:26–28; 10:11, 22). Perhaps Solomon's most important building project was completing the Jewish temple per the instructions and provisions of his father, David (6; 1 Chronicles 22).

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines, many of them foreigners who led him into public idolatry in his old age, greatly angering God.