



 **LifeGroups**
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David's Son's Rebellion

A Godly Leader Doesn't Usurp Authority

- A godly leader doesn't usurp authority; it is given rightfully.
- 2 Samuel 15:1–12 and 14:25–27
- Absalom was David's third oldest son. Amnon, the oldest and heir to the throne, sexually assaulted his half-sister Tamar (Absalom's full sister), so Absalom killed him.
- David's second son is listed as Daniel, but he never played a role in any of these stories, so most scholars believe he died before any of these events happened.

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- This left Absalom as the oldest son of David and would-be heir to the throne (2 Samuel 13).
- However, when Absalom killed Amnon, he fled to Geshur for fear that David would retaliate against him. Absalom was in Geshur for three years. David longed to go out to him but never did until Joab used a wise woman to convince David to bring Absalom back.
- David did send for him to return to Jerusalem, but he set up a boundary. Absalom was to live in his own house and not come into David's presence (2 Samuel 14).

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- At this point, the story chooses to tell us that there was no man in Israel as handsome as Absalom.
- It gives us a detail that seems strange in our culture, that he would cut his hair once a year and weigh it.
- But in the ancient world, long hair was a great ornament, considered a sign of strength, virility, and prowess.
- His measuring it indicates that it was a source of public pride for Absalom.

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- The text tells us that in his whole body there was “no blemish.”
- This phrase is significant because it was used of sacrificial animals.
- They had to be perfect to be sacrificed (Leviticus 22:20).
- Therefore, it was also used of Jesus, referring not to His physical body but His sinlessness (1 Peter 1:19).
- But when this phrase is used of Absalom, it refers only to his physical appearance, not his character.

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- This stands in stark contrast to all the references to David's heart or inner person.
- Absalom looked perfect on the outside, but his inside was not right with God – the opposite of what God told Samuel to look for when choosing David.
- “Do not look on his outward appearance ... the Lord looks on the heart [inner person]” (1 Samuel 16:7).
- Right away, the story tells us that Absalom was not a man after God's own heart.

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- The story also tells us that Absalom had three sons, who are not named, and a daughter named Tamar (no doubt in honor of his sister), who was also described as a beautiful woman.
- This would have stuck out to any ancient reader because in typical ancient genealogies, sons are named and daughters are not.
- This is an intentional reminder of the story of Tamar as well as Absalom's strong feelings about it.

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- These details serve to set up the story of Absalom's rebellion.
- Absalom was invited back to Jerusalem but not allowed in David's presence. This parallels how God handled Cain's killing of his brother, Abel.
- Though God spared his life, Cain lived away from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 4:16).
- David's banning Absalom from his presence wasn't about not wanting to see him. It made a statement about his place in the royal family.

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- He could come back to Israel and be part of the community.
- But he would have no place in David's house.
- He had lost his claim to the throne.
- Even when they saw each other two years later, David kissed him in personal reconciliation but didn't restore him to his place in the palace or the royal line.

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- So, Absalom tried to take the throne away.
- First, he got a chariot, horses and 50 men to “run before him” (15:1). This was not an army; it was royal pomp – the first time a royal in Israel had done something like this for show.
- Second, Absalom would stand beside the city gate in the path of the people who came to Jerusalem to ask David to judge their disputes. Absalom listened to their story. He told them that they were surely right, and if he were judge (king), he would give them justice, intentionally turning their hearts to him and away from David.

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- Then Absalom even used faith as a smokescreen in his scheming. He told David he was going to Hebron (his birthplace) to fulfill a vow he had made to the Lord. This was strange because vows were sacrifices, which were offered at the tabernacle in Jerusalem (Leviticus 7:16).
- Hebron was where David had first been crowned king over just Judah and reigned for more than seven years before becoming king over all of Israel and making Jerusalem his capital (2 Samuel 5:1).
- David should have realized something wasn't right.

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- Absalom went to Hebron, gathered a following, including one of David's counselors and secretly spread the word through all of Israel that he would be declared king at Hebron. Absalom wasn't trying to be king over just Judah, he wanted the whole nation.
- As David's popularity had kept growing while Saul was king, Absalom's popularity with the people grew. But David hadn't tried to steal the throne from Saul. In fact, he refused to lift his hand against Saul, and even after Saul was dead, he waited and inquired of the Lord before he took any action to claim the throne.

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- But Absalom's heart was different. He was angry about his sister's abuse and David's lack of response. And he was prideful and believed he would make a better king.
- He opted to lead a rebellion using a false vow to God in his scheme. This is not the heart of someone who loves God and trusts His will.
- Absalom's behavior while David was king is a stark contrast to David's behavior when Saul was king. Absalom tried to take the throne by force. David had waited and trusted in God's will and His timing, even though he knew God had rejected Saul as king.

Godly Leave It To The Lord to Judge

- Godly people leave it to the Lord to judge their righteousness.
- 2 Samuel 15:13–16; 15:24–26; 16:7–13 and Psalm 3
- It may seem as if David were fleeing Jerusalem out of fear.
- He does say that Absalom's army was strong and would overtake them quickly (15:14).
- But the more we read, the more we see that David was fleeing to let God decide between him and Absalom.

Godly Leave It To The Lord to Judge

- David told the Levites to take the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem where it belonged, and if God wanted him to be king, He would bring David back to the ark (15:25–26).
- When Shimei cursed him and Abishai wanted to kill Shimei, David said maybe God had told him to curse him. If not, God would repay him with good for this evil done to him (16:7–13).
- David realized he had made many mistakes. He was not “without blemish” in character. He would let the Lord decide between him and Absalom.

Godly Leave It To The Lord to Judge

- In Psalm 3, David explicitly said he was trusting God to deliver him. God was his shield and his glory.
- The Lord answered him when he cried out and sustained him through every day.
- Though Absalom's army was strong, and David's many enemies assailed him on every side, David said, "I will not fear" (verse 6).
- David had every reason to fear, but he was fleeing out of trust (putting his fate into God's hands), not fear.

Godly People Still Love In Brokenness

- Godly people still love even when there has been brokenness.
- 2 Samuel 16:20–23; 17:1–14; 18:1–15; 18:33
- Absalom had conflicting advisors. But when David fled, he sent his advisor, Hushai, back to Absalom to pretend to join him while he spied for David.
- The story tells us that both David and Absalom listened to Ahithophel's advice as if it were the word of God (16:23). This doesn't mean he was a prophet speaking God's Word, just that they respected his counsel as much as if it were God's Word.

Godly People Still Love In Brokenness

- The first thing he told Absalom to do was to sleep with David's concubines, a common practice in the ancient world, to make a statement that he was usurping his father's place. But it was certainly not something God would command.
- But when Ahithophel advised Absalom to pursue David right away, when he was tired, God ordained for him to reject Ahithophel's advice and listen instead to Hushai, who intentionally gave him bad advice, which led to his losing the battle to David (17:1–14).
- David was right; the Lord decided between him and Absalom.

Godly People Still Love In Brokenness

- David knew he would have to fight Absalom's army, but he asked his men to deal gently with his son. Maybe he felt guilty for all that had happened or maybe it was just fatherly love, but he had mercy on his son.
- But Joab did not listen. He killed Absalom and buried him dishonorably – in a pit covered with rocks, fulfilling the law that a rebellious son be stoned (Deuteronomy 21:21).
- He was not buried in the family tomb. His burial place was even outside the promised land, east of the Jordan River.

Godly People Still Love In Brokenness

- There had been much devastation with Amnon, Tamar and Absalom, and then more brokenness with Absalom.
- David knew he hadn't handled everything right, but he did his best to trust God in this battle, praying that the Lord would choose between him and his son. But then when the Lord chose him, he felt despair and turmoil.
- Though David had repented, the consequences of his sins ran deep and long in his family. He wept over this lost son just as he had wept over Amnon and the infant son he had lost with Bathsheba. So much loss, so much pain.

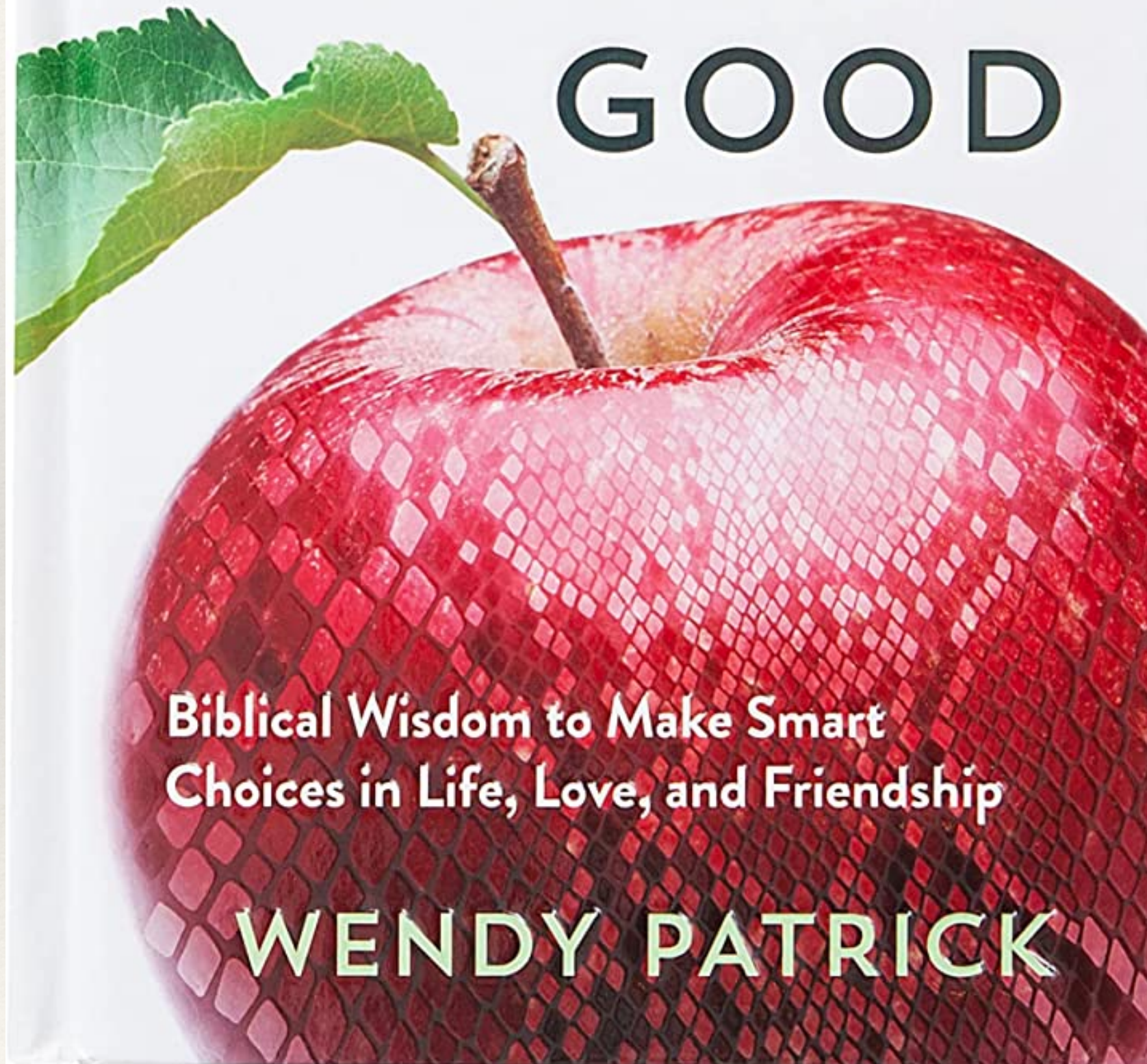
Godly People Still Love In Brokenness

- Though God had promised a Messiah from David's line, neither of his oldest sons were the one.
- But God would redeem David's sin by choosing another of his sons as king, the son of Bathsheba.
- God can redeem even the most broken of situations, even if the brokenness is caused by our own sin.

Dr. Patrick helps readers master the art of discernment and learn to detect red flags, spot green lights, and seize golden opportunities.

—JUDGE KEN STARR, Former Solicitor General of the United States

WHY BAD LOOKS GOOD



Biblical Wisdom to Make Smart
Choices in Life, Love, and Friendship

WENDY PATRICK

Why Bad Looks Good

- Deception of Public Perception (pp. 18-23) – 2 Corinthians 4:4
- When Bad Appears Beautiful (pp. 24-28) – John 7:24
- When Bad Sounds Good (pp. 35-39) – Psalm 55:21
- When Bad Feels Good (pp. 62-67) – Ecclesiastes 1:8
- When Frenemies Look Like Friends (pp.111-117) – Proverbs 12:26
- The Ruse of Reputation (pp. 130-135) – Ecclesiastes 7:1