

## SEEK HIS FACE<sup>1</sup>

(INTRODUCTION) (*Lights up on old, enfeebled King David slumped in his chair. On a small table beside him is his cup and a key. He looks up, sees the audience, and is startled.*) Oh! I did not know the king was in such a state he needed all these nurses! (*Upon brief reflection.*) No, no. It is GOOD you are here — to witness my counsel with my son, Solomon, the new king. Welcome.

(*Waits for some response/acknowledgment, and then, receiving none...*) You DO know who I am — or — who I WAS? I am David, son of Jesse<sup>2</sup> of Bethlehem. The Spirit of the LORD spoke through ME; his word was on MY tongue.<sup>3</sup> I was Israel's singer of songs<sup>4</sup> — a man after God's own heart.<sup>5</sup> Often — I sought His face.

(*Silence... then he brightens.*) If you wait, you will see my son, Solomon, the new king of Israel. (*Then remembers.*) Of course, — you KNOW that. My mind! It has departed before the rest of me. This counsel with Solomon — could be my last. (*The import hits him.*) But what do you tell your son when you HAVE one last chance? What will help him, give him success? I should tell him what I've learned — the key<sup>6</sup> to life.

And do I have stories to tell! I've had the highest highs from El Shaddai, Almighty God — and, yes, the lowest lows — well earned by my foolish failures. (*Looks up.*) You say "the king should not say such things"? I MUST say them — acknowledge when I have failed — and when I have had success. Maybe it will help my son. — Just what is the key? I know. And I will tell you. But first, a story of when I was most angry with God. In it you will FIND the key.

("UZZAH") Not long after I became king over all Israel, I wanted to restore the Ark of the Covenant to its rightful place of honor. So, I proposed to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the Lord our God, ... let us bring the Ark of ... God back...." The people all agreed.<sup>7</sup> We assembled and journeyed to Kiriath Jearim to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, a ten mile distance.<sup>8</sup> It was a joyous, sunny day!

We put the Ark on a new ox cart. Two Levites, good men who had kept the Ark there, walked back with it. Along the way, the oxen stumbled. To keep the Ark from falling, one of the Levites, Uzzah (*oot'-zah*), reached out and touched it. And this good man, this man of God, this man who sought to honor Jehovah (*yeh-ho'-vah*) — was, at that moment, struck DEAD!<sup>9</sup>

TERRIBLE!!! We were serving GOD! And now, this! (*Angry.*) WHY!?!<sup>10</sup>

In the next three months, I searched the Scriptures and LEARNED why. The Lord had decreed that only CERTAIN Levites, the Kohathites, were to transport the Ark. And THEY were to observe strict, clear Scriptures, by carrying it with poles, on their shoulders, and without touching or looking at it. — (*Looks at audience, as if they might question that.*) You can look it up.<sup>11</sup>

In my haste to serve Jehovah, I had transgressed His will. If I had just sought His face, by reading the Scriptures or inquiring of Him, innocent Uzzah would not have died. So, mark this — even when Jehovah SEEMS unjust, He's not. He's holy. He's sovereign. He's God. — We are not.

That key—seeking God's face — or failing to — accounts for my life — my victories and my defeats — my intimacies with God and my treacheries. When I sought His face, He chose me

and gave me victory. When I went my own way, I blundered, sinned, caused tragedy.

So, I should give Solomon the key—SEEK GOD'S FACE. And I should tell him my story so he will SEE it is the key—

(*"CHOSEN"*) My story starts long ago. I was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse — too old to be a boy, too young to be thought a man. As the least important—I kept Father's flocks. And with only sheep around, I can tell you—I needed something to do. So, during those long days and longer nights with the sheep, I worshiped my heavenly Father, composing and singing songs to Him — seeking His face. (He drops into present tense and his voice becomes young again...)

*One of those evenings, just after dark, I nod by the fire. "Grow-rr-rh" — a figure springs from the bushes. I jolt awake in terror! — then realize my younger nephew JOAB<sup>12</sup> has just gotten the best of me. I toss him a suitable insult. He tosses one back. Then he says, "I've been sent to fetch you to town."*

*"For what?"*

*"Samuel the prophet is there. He is with your father — says he seeks one of Jesse's sons. Your brothers have all passed before him. Now he wants to see you."<sup>13</sup>*

*My brothers were all older, taller, stronger, all better qualified for anything than puny me. Why ME? I set out for town, my head full of questions — no answers. Meanwhile, Samuel was telling my father that King Saul disobeyed God, so God rejected Saul and would, in time, take his throne.<sup>14</sup> Even my father thought Samuel made no sense at the time.*

*In Bethlehem, I enter the place of meeting. All eyes are on Samuel — and then ME. Samuel looks upon me a long moment, as if lost in thought. Then a peaceful smile spreads across his face.<sup>15</sup> Samuel takes a horn he brought, pours oil from it, anoints me, and blesses me in front of my family,<sup>16</sup> saying "[DAVID] is ... God's choice ... God's new king!"<sup>17</sup> — KING?!?! — WHAT?*

*(Back to the present, and old again.)* There, before I knew it — fresh from the fields — I had been anointed the next king of Israel! So it seems, "[t]he Lord does NOT look at the things man [does]. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord ... at the HEART."<sup>18</sup> Why ME, the youngest of eight brothers, the one consigned to the fields? Could it be because, while IN those fields, my heart had been tuned to seeking God's face?

All I know is that from that moment, my life was forever changed. From that moment I knew Jehovah's SPIRIT rested on me,<sup>19</sup> and I was to have adventure beyond my WILDEST dreams.

(*"TROUBLE"*) Strangely enough, the first thing that changed was I was called to the courts of King Saul to play for him. He was troubled, and my music brought him comfort.<sup>20</sup> I came and went between the king's courts and Father's fields.<sup>21</sup>

One day, Father sent me with provisions for my three eldest brothers who were in the field against the Philistines. I found my brothers with the army on one side of a valley — the Philistines on the other. As I talked with my brothers, a mountain of a man — over 9 feet tall! — stepped out from the enemy lines and began taunting our troops.<sup>22</sup>

*(We hear the giant's voice... derisive ...)* "Why do you come out and line up for BATTLE? — Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of SAUL? ... Choose a man....

If he is able to ... kill ME [—humph!!—], we will become your subjects. But if I ... kill HIM, you will ... serve US. [Again,] I DEFY the ranks of Israel!" Our forces feared and did nothing. They said he had been coming out for days on end — with no answer.<sup>23</sup>

A righteous anger rose up within me. Have you not felt it? I surprised myself by blurting, (*youthful and impetuous*) "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living GOD?!? WHAT OF THE MAN THAT KILLS HIM?"<sup>24</sup> — (*a beat, back to old, a sheepish look*) — I was young — and full of the Lord.

Well, King Saul heard of my hotheaded words and sent for me. I told him I had killed lion and bear while protecting Father's flocks. Since he had no other willing soul, the king reluctantly agreed to let me face the large one. Saul dressed me in his armor. Far too big and heavy. (*Back in time again to the youthful David. The memory is strong... this present tense segment picks up tempo until its end...*)

*I use what I know, my sling from the fields, smooth stones from the valley stream, and my shepherd's staff.*<sup>25</sup>

*The large Philistine laughs. "Am I a DOG, that you come at me with STICKS? ... Come here, [boy,] and I will give your flesh to the birds and ... animals."*<sup>26</sup>

*God's righteous anger flares in me. "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD ALMIGHTY, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand YOU over to ME, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. Today, the birds and beasts will feed on ... YOU and your Philistine BROTHERS. Then the whole world will know ... THERE IS A GOD IN ISRAEL!"*<sup>27</sup>

*He steps toward me. I run to meet him. One smooth stone in the sling, a few swings over my head, and the stone flies — straight to his forehead. It penetrates skin and skull. The large Philistine falls face down and I kill him with his own sword.*<sup>28</sup>

(*Old again...*) You know the rest. The Philistines fled and our army pursued, killing them all the way to Gath, the large one's home. The birds and beasts DID feast that night — on PHILISTINES!<sup>29</sup> "Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war.... He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield."<sup>30</sup> That day, the Lord proved Himself a mighty deliverer for those who seek His face.

Jehovah's fame, and mine, spread. But my victory celebration proved short. Saul's smile of success soon contorted into a scowl. Three times he slung spears to kill me. I fled — and for years hid in wilderness caves.<sup>31</sup> But my good God delivered me through those long, desperate years. He delivered me from the hand of the large Philistine; AND from the hand of King Saul. "O my Strength, I sing praise to you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God."<sup>32</sup>

And so, I should say to my son ... because I sought Him, Jehovah preserved me and set me on Israel's throne just as He promised. He gave me victories over Israel's enemies — and peace. "This poor man called, and the Lord heard him."<sup>33</sup> — Seek His face.

(*"BATHSHEBA"*) But I did not always seek His face. Especially, THAT time after I was a few years on the throne. And THAT time shook me, shook those around me, — and shook all of Israel.

In the spring when kings go off to war, I sent my army out to battle under Joab, my nephew and now my general. But I did not go. I stayed in the palace — idle.<sup>34</sup> I had power. I

had wives and children. I had the esteem of my people. Most of all, I had the favor of the Lord of Hosts. But I was out of place — idle. (*The time shifts again, ... and the voice, to the vital, adult king...*)

*That evening, restless, I get up and stroll around my roof-top garden, inhaling the cool air of twilight, fresh with the fragrance of spring. A splash from below — and I glance over. THERE ... (and he is smitten again, even now) — two or three rooftops from the palace, a VERY beautiful woman is bathing. I turn away. NOT what I should look upon. I start inside. But — I pause. I think — young — attractive. Such BEAUTY! I look back. Those lines — that FORM! "Turn AWAY!" I whisper, even as I behold her. And stare — and leer — and LUST.*<sup>35</sup>

(*Old again... and colder...*) "Just where can a leer lead?" you might ask. I tell you, it can lead to terrible trouble. I inquired—of men, not of the Lord—and found that she was Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of my best young officers in the field. I sent for her. I talked with her. I took her.<sup>36</sup> (*The thought hangs in the air.*) Stolen water is sweet — this was, too — for the moment.<sup>37</sup> But it turned bitter. And that bitterness has plagued me — yes, even to this very day.

Later, a note from Bathsheba. She was with child. Now what to do? I sent for Uriah, hoping he would return home and lie with his wife, to cover my tracks. He returned, but — no matter what I tried — he honorably refused to lie with her while his brethren were in the field. HE was simply a man of HONOR. So, I sent him back to the front carrying a sealed note to Joab. I actually had this fine soldier carry his own death warrant. What a DESPICABLE act — ordering Joab to put Uriah in the front line of battle and, at an opportune time, to withdraw and let him be killed. My plan worked flawlessly. Uriah WAS killed. Then I married his widow.<sup>38</sup>

What TREACHERY!! — "Just where can a leer lead?" you ask. Adultery. Theft of another man's wife. Lying. Treachery! MURDER!!

But I kept it quiet — I thought. "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away...."<sup>39</sup> During this time, I did not seek God's face. After all, I was the king. None would dare challenge me.

But, in God's grace, one did. The Lord soon sent Nathan, His prophet, to confront me and bring me back. Nathan came and told of a rich man, with many flocks, who took a poor man's one little ewe lamb and ate her for dinner. I was enraged. THE MAN "DESERVES TO DIE!"<sup>40</sup>

Nathan quietly, fearfully responded, "YOU are the man. This is what the Lord ... says:  $\l$  anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from ... Saul. I gave [you so much.] And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ... You killed [Uriah] with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house.... Out of your own household I [will] bring calamity.... Before your very eyes ... one who is close to you ... will lie with your wives in broad daylight."<sup>41</sup>

"I have sinned against the Lord."<sup>42</sup> (*He is broken, as when it happened, and works to collect himself, drinking from his cup with shaking hand.*)

Nathan told me my sin was forgiven.<sup>43</sup> "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ... [God] forgave the guilt of my sin." But there would be consequences. Nathan said the son born to Bathsheba and me would die.<sup>44</sup> He did.<sup>45</sup> We mourned. Then we got up and lived.<sup>46</sup>

(*"FAMILY"*) Bathsheba later bore me Solomon—also known as Jedidiah, "loved by the Lord"<sup>47</sup>—to add to my many sons.<sup>48</sup>

I tried to forget Nathan's prophecy of calamity. But, the prophecy was of the Lord; so it would come, though I would deny its coming. In truth, I was very careful with my sons. Not wanting to risk pushing them away, I did not "interfere" with them. For example, I never asked Adonijah why he acted like he did.<sup>49</sup> Even before Bathsheba, I was too busy being KING to be FATHER — too busy to give my children my faith. And so, my absence as a father bore even more bitter fruit to add to the harvest from my sin.

It all began, or so it seems now, when Amnon, my firstborn, became infatuated with his beautiful half-sister Tamar, aptly named for the stately palm tree. Amnon played a ruse — and raped her. When I heard, I was furious. But I did nothing. Tamar became a desolate woman, living under the protection of her brother, Absalom<sup>50</sup> (*ahb'-shalom*), my third-born son.<sup>51</sup> Absalom despised Amnon and, when opportunity arose two years later, had him killed.<sup>52</sup> For the following three years, Absalom lived in exile. I longed for his return. But, again, I did nothing.<sup>53</sup>

Later, through the action of another, Absalom returned from exile. But I left him unforgiven and estranged<sup>54</sup> ... and the space between us hardened into stone. Finally, Absalom, "a father's peace," laid claim to my throne.<sup>55</sup> He was accepted by the people, and I was the one forced into exile.<sup>56</sup> With me out of the palace, my son pitched a tent on its roof, took my concubines, and LAY with them. EVERYONE knew!<sup>57</sup> The news came to me, and Nathan's prophecy returned with its vengeance, "Out of your own household ... calamity...."<sup>58</sup>

Ultimately, armed men joined me, defeated Absalom's army, and sent me word of "our great victory." But I awaited word of my son's fate. It came. My son was no more<sup>59</sup> — lost to me — and God — FOREVER! His blood — his eternal damnation TOO — is STILL on my hands.

(Reliving it.) *"O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!"*<sup>60</sup>

Yes, I was restored to the throne. But my failure to consistently seek the Lord's face had cost too much: my firstborn, Amnon — my third, Absalom — my desolated daughter, Tamar — my fractured family — my challenged throne.

And even now, today, my fourth-born son, Adonijah, has challenged for the throne. And he has taken most of the rest of my family. The only members of my family not celebrating with Adonijah at his feast were Bathsheba, Solomon, and me.<sup>61</sup>

("LEGACY") But God has decreed, Solomon will be king.<sup>62</sup> Even now, Nathan the Prophet is anointing him.<sup>63</sup> Solomon will soon return here to me. And I must give him the key.

I will tell him, "I am about to [die]. So be strong, show yourself a man.... Walk in [God's] ways, and keep ... his ... Law..., so ... you may prosper in all you do ..., [and] the Lord may keep his promise [that if my] descendants [seek Him] with all their heart ... [I] will [always] have a man on the throne of Israel."<sup>64</sup> [M]y son ..., acknowledge [my God as yours], and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind.... If you seek Him, He will be found by you....<sup>65</sup> He will direct, deliver, comfort, and protect you; He will bless you and your family and give you a lasting legacy if you just SEEK - HIS - FACE! Try Him on this offer. And the blessings!?!<sup>66</sup> — the blessings .... (*A far away look.*)

(CLOSING) (*We glimpse a little time he has with God.*) Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.<sup>67</sup>

(Looks around. Lost. "Who is that out there?" Thoroughly used up. Will he actually be able to tell his son any of this? And if so, will his son listen? Anxiously...) Do you know who I am ... or ... who I was? I am David, son of Jesse of Bethlehem. The Spirit of the Lord spoke through ME; his word was on MY tongue.<sup>68</sup> I was Israel's singer of songs<sup>69</sup> — a man after God's own heart.<sup>70</sup> Often — I sought His face. (*Lights to black. End.*)

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#### ENDNOTES

1. ©2004–05, Josh Morriss, III, 806 Lakeridge Pl, Texarkana, TX 75503, [www.joshmorriss.org](http://www.joshmorriss.org), except Scripture excerpts from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

2. 2 Samuel 23:1.

3. 2 Samuel 23:2.

4. 2 Samuel 23:1b.

5. 1 Samuel 13:14.

6. For more information on the key, consider how this might relate to the key to the house of David mentioned in Isaiah 22:22 or the key of David that Jesus Christ has in Revelation 3:7. God promised that David's throne would last, and that is fulfilled in Christ, who holds the key.

7. 1 Chronicles 13:2–4.

8. 1 Chronicles 13:5–6.

9. 1 Chronicles 13:7–10.

10. 1 Chronicles 13:11.

11. See Regulations: Exodus 25:13–15; Numbers 4:1–20; Numbers 7:3–9; "Recent History": 1 Samuel 5:1–7:1, especially 1 Samuel 6:10–11 [The loathed Philistines(!) used a cart.], 1 Samuel 6:19 [people of Beth Shemesh looked into the Ark and 70 died]; Obed Edom: 1 Chronicles 26:14.

12. While we do not know who actually was sent to get David from the fields to meet Samuel, it is reasonable to expect that Joab lived in the community and could have been the messenger. He is used here to help make David a little more real by highlighting this long-standing relationship from his youth before mentioning Joab as the adult general later in the story. The idea of Joab as the messenger was taken from the (mostly fictional) novel *David the King*, by Gladys Schmitt, NY, NY: Dial Press, 1946.

13. 1 Samuel 16:1–11.

14. 1 Samuel 16:1.

15. 1 Samuel 16:12.

16. 1 Samuel 16:13.

17. 1 Samuel 16:1b, 12b.

18. 1 Samuel 16:7b.

19. 1 Samuel 16:13b.

20. 1 Samuel 16:14–23.

21. 1 Samuel 17:15.

22. 1 Samuel 17:17–24.

23. 1 Samuel 17:8–11, 16.

24. 1 Samuel 17:26.

25. 1 Samuel 17:31–40.

26. 1 Samuel 17:43–44.

27. 1 Samuel 17:45–47.

28. 1 Samuel 17:48–50.

29. 1 Samuel 17:51–52.

30. Psalm 144:1–2.
31. 1 Samuel 18–30.
32. Psalm 59:17.
33. Psalm 34:6a.
34. 2 Samuel 11:1; 1 Chronicles 20:1a.
35. 2 Samuel 11:2.
36. 2 Samuel 11:3–4.
37. Proverbs 9:17–18.
38. 2 Samuel 11:5–17.
39. Psalm 32:3.
40. 2 Samuel 12:1–6.
41. 2 Samuel 12:7–12.
42. 2 Samuel 12:13a.
43. 2 Samuel 12:13b.
44. 2 Samuel 12:14.
45. 2 Samuel 12:15–18.
46. 2 Samuel 12:20–23.
47. 2 Samuel 12:24–25.
48. 2 Samuel 5:13–16; 1 Chronicles 3:4b–9; 1 Chronicles 14:3–7.
49. 1 Kings 1:6.
50. "Absalom" (Strong's #53) is a compound Hebrew word made up of "ab" (Strong's #1), meaning "father" ("abba": "daddy"), and "salom" (Strong's #7965), meaning "peace" or "safety." So, poignantly, this one, who ended up grieving David so deeply, was called, literally, "father's peace."
51. 2 Samuel 13:1–21.
52. 2 Samuel 13:22–29.
53. 2 Samuel 13:30–39.
54. 2 Samuel 14:1–24.
55. 2 Samuel 15:1–6.
56. 2 Samuel 15:7–14.
57. 2 Samuel 16:20–22.
58. 2 Samuel 12:7–12.
59. 2 Samuel 18:1–32.
60. 2 Samuel 18:33.
61. 1 Kings 1:1–27.
62. *See* 1 Chronicles 22:8–10; 28:5–7.
63. 1 Kings 1:28–40.
64. 1 Kings 2:1–4.
65. 1 Chronicles 28:9.
66. *Cf* Hebrews 11:6; Proverbs 3:5–6; Malachi 3:10.
67. Psalm 23:4–6.
68. 2 Samuel 23:2.
69. 2 Samuel 23:1b.
70. 1 Samuel 13:14.