

MIGHTY MEN

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LESSON 2

WHAT IS YOUR TOP PRIORITY?

THE SCOUT

Today could be the day I die, he told himself, although he had no intention of dying. It was, he thought, what a soldier should always think if he is to act with courage. All around him the air was thick with dust created by a horde of marching Philistine soldiers. The dust mixed with his sweat to create a sort of camouflage as he blended into the canyon walls, only his piercing blue eyes betraying him.

Tucked away in the corner of a crevasse in the Judean wilderness, Josheb¹ sat motionless as the Philistine Army passed less than 100 yards beneath him. He had been sent to scout out the enemy troops on behalf of King David. He knew he must report back both the strength of the enemy and the direction of their movements. By nightfall, he expected to complete his mission.

He had kept himself hidden well. He knew this countryside like the back of his hand. Not too many years previous, he had played among these rocks and crevasses, fighting the battle of David and Goliath over and over again. He, like all the other boys in Israel, idolized their young king. *What must it feel like to kill a giant?* Josheb had often wondered. And so, because he knew these hills like only a shepherd boy could, he had been chosen for this mission.

All day he avoided enemy patrols and raiding parties. From what he could tell, the Philistines had divided their forces into three groups. The largest group was just below him. After scouting the other two groups he concluded that they were small, diversionary parties of no more than 200 men. The group below him was no doubt the main force although he

¹ The Tachmonite. or, Josheb-bassebet, the Tachmonite, head of the three (1Chron. 11:11,12 27:2,32; 2 Sam. 23:8), he lifted up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

could not yet determine their numerical strength. He knew it was a large group, but he would have to wait and use the cover of the setting sun to get a final count.

This was his chance to prove himself. He knew that Captain Joab had not approved of David's sending him out as a scout. According to Joab, Josheb was too young and inexperienced for this sort of thing. Joab didn't much like shepherds, a sentiment he kept to himself seeing that he served a shepherd king. Josheb had overheard the conversation between the King David and Joab.

"He has only been in the army for 6 months, my Lord. The situation is critical. Our intelligence has been so sketchy that we really don't even know which general is leading this attack. We must send someone who is skilled in reconnaissance! I mean, what if it's one of *his* brothers who's leading the assault? I don't think you want to meet him unprepared."

"Joab, I am very aware of the situation. Your concern has been noted. Let me ask you a question, Joab. Did you grow up in the wilderness chasing sheep, fighting off mountain lions, and shivering in the cold?"

"No, my Lord, I live in Jerusalem."

"And how many scouts come from Jerusalem? A place of learning and worship is seldom the haunt of scouts, unless, of course, you happen to be from the ranks of the poor and must learn the ways of subtlety early. Are you from the ranks of the poor, Joab?"

"No, my Lord, you know I come from a wealthy family."

"And that is why you underestimate the skills of a shepherd. When you live in the wilderness, you learn things. You learn every nook and cranny where you can hide your sheep from the wolves. You know the location of every bear den, and you know the smell of a mountain lion. You learn to read the winds and the clouds like a book. A shepherd could hide his flock of sheep for months if he had to, and the most trained military scout would never find him. You would be amazed what you learn when your life depends on it. All of your senses become sharper. A shepherd, Joab, is a born scout. Send him. He will not fail."

"Yes, my Lord."

And so, the king himself had ordered that Josheb be sent to scout the enemy troops. It was rumored that one of "his" brothers was leading this attack. Perhaps this is why the

king was wearing Goliath's sword. Why the Philistines had come, no one knew. Perhaps Dagon, their god, was displeased and they sought blood to appease him. Perhaps the fishing season had not gone so well and they needed supplies for the winter. Perhaps Lahmi, the brother of Goliath, was hoping that David would choose to fight him with a sling. Either way, it did not matter. What mattered was that the Philistines were in Judah, and Josheb was charged with the most important task of scouting out their strength and their strategy. *I cannot fail*, Josheb reminded himself, *for if I do, I have failed the king, and my family . . . and my God.*

Josheb was a devout youth. He was young and, like David, had spent many years in the wilderness as a shepherd. Also, like David, he was the youngest in his family. Most importantly, during his days in the wilderness, he had developed the most important friendship of his life, his friendship with Adonai². Like David, Josheb knew Adonai as a friend. He knew the Psalms of David by heart and would sing them in worship of Adonai, although his voice, unlike David's, was anything but pleasant. The sheep, however, did not seem to mind.

As he crouched in a crevasse just out of sight of the Philistines, Josheb remembered the first time his father sent him out into the fields to watch the sheep. It was a clear, cold winter night.

He remembered how he sat under the stars, shaking with cold. He remembered the worry in his mother's eyes before he left. He remembered the twinkle in his father's eyes and the laughter of his brothers, who told him of the ghosts that waited for him in the dark. He remembered sitting alone, imagining that every shadow was a wolf, or a bear, or . . . a ghost.

He remembered hearing the snap of a twig. Then came another, and at once he became very aware of a presence, a large presence moving stealthily through the undergrowth. Josheb grasped his staff. He had heard many stories of mountain lions and bears, but he had never encountered either face to face. He waited. He could hear his heart beating in his head; he could see his every breath as the cold air stung his lungs and formed smoke as it burst out of his mouth. He tried to hold his breath so as not to reveal his position.

"Josheb, is that you? My goodness, son, you are breathing as if you just hiked up a mountain! What's wrong? You aren't afraid, are you?"

² Adonai is the Hebrew word for "the Lord"

It was Papa. Josheb let out a loud sigh of relief.

"Yes, it's me. You can release your death grip on that staff."

"Papa, I didn't know you were coming. I was, uh, just making sure you weren't a bear."

"Good thing I wasn't, or I'd have spotted your breathing a mile away! Perhaps you thought I was one of those ghosts your brothers told you about." His father let out a laugh, and Josheb noted that the twinkle was not gone from his eye.

"I knew your mother was worried, so I promised her I would check on you. I also figured you would want this."

At that, Josheb's father tossed him a quilt.

"Thank you, Papa. It's so cold! I didn't think to bring an extra cloak."

Josheb and his father sat in the darkness for what seemed like forever, neither one speaking. The sky was littered with a million stars. They were so bright, and there were so many that they looked like a million shinning pebbles that someone had scattered across the sky.

"Josheb. You see those stars? You know who made them?"

"Yes, father, Adonai made them."

"He did. And you know what else, Josheb? Adonai, blessed be He, made you. When I look at those stars, I can't help but wonder how it is that Adonai is mindful of someone as small as I am. Yet, I know He knows me, and I know He knows you. More than that, I know that even the angels, as mighty as they are, are not made in Adonai's image. We alone are His image bearers. He made us a little lower than Himself.

"And that means He made us, my son, to rule over all of His creation. The sheep, the cows, the bear, the lion, the wolf—these are our subjects. A king, my son, does not fear his subjects; therefore, you need not fear. When the bear comes, or the lion, or whatever enemy it may be, remember that you, my son, are a king, a ruler, one of God's *mighty men*. Remember this, my son, and it will serve you well: it's not the might of the man that matters, but the might of his God. There is no God like our mighty God."

Josheb sat in stunned silence. He felt that he should say something, but nothing would come out. He was a king, a ruler, one of God's mighty men? Is that what his father had called him? Finally, to break the awkward silence, he mumbled, "Adonai, blessed be He, has made all things."

His father smiled, knowing that Josheb had much to learn, but confident that Adonai would teach him well.

Suddenly, Josheb's father began to sing robustly:

*"O Adonai, our Adonai, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth,
Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!
From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength,
Because of Thine adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
O Adonai, our Adonai, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!"*

When he finished, the echoes of his thunderous voice slowly faded to absolute silence. No noise. The sheep did not bay, the crickets did not chirp, and the trees stood perfectly still. Josheb imagined that Adonai himself had even hushed the angels to listen to his aged father's psalm of praise.

And with that, his father stood, and left . . .

It seemed like only yesterday in Josheb's memory . . . and yet, it felt like a lifetime ago, for at the moment, Josheb, a king, and one of God's mighty men, sat alone, camouflaged in dirt, overlooking a canyon through which the enemies of Adonai marched.

SESSION NOTES

- **Our _____ Depend on Our Hearing from the _____**
 - **An analogy: the importance of a _____ in warfare**
 - If _____ needed to hear from His Father, then so do we
 - We must hear the voice of the _____
 - **The strategy of the enemy: _____ and _____**
 - Our enemy distracts us with the _____ of _____
 - Our enemy keeps us from hearing the King by keeping us _____
 - T or F — “The unexamined life isn’t worth living.”
 - T or F — “There is more to life than increasing its speed.”
 - T or F — “Life is what happens to you while your busy making other plans.”
“Beware of the bareness of a busy life.” —Socrates
 - **If we are to hear from the King, we must learn to _____ and be _____**
- **We Hear from the King in His Word**
 - **We must spend time listening to Him in the _____**
 - The Bible reveals the _____ and _____ of God
 - God gave us the Bible so we could _____ Him
 - God _____ to us through His Word
 - God’s Word is unlike any other _____
 - The Bible is _____ (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - The Bible is like a _____ (Jer. 23:29)

- The Bible is like a double-edged _____ (Heb. 4:12)
- **Listening to Him in the Word must be our _____ daily**
 - A priority is an _____ we place _____ other activities
 - _____ Playing video games
 - _____ Doing homework
 - _____ Talking with friends online
 - _____ Practicing a sport or talent (guitar, piano, basketball, etc.)
 - _____ Going to church
 - Pick a consistent _____ and _____ to meet alone with God
 - Find an _____ time
 - Find a _____ place
 - _____ a _____—know what you’re going to do
 - Pray and ask the King to help you listen to Him as you read your Bible.
 - Read the assigned passage, listening for the King to speak to you.
 - Write down the verse that “speaks” to you and record what you hear the King saying to you in that verse. Keep these verses and thoughts together in a notebook.
 - Finish by writing down any special prayer requests that you have and then close in prayer.
 - Keep your notebook with you throughout the day and read over your verse two or three times during the day. Write down any new thoughts the King gives you about your verse or a way the verse was especially useful in your life.

Listening to the king speak to you through His word must become your top priority.

THIS MONTH'S ASSIGNMENT

Read the section entitled "How to Make the Most of Your Devotions." Then spend time each day reading through the devotional passages provided at the end of this book. Record the things that you learn, noting verses that have an impact on your relationship with the Lord. Be prepared to discuss some of your observations next month.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DEVOTIONS

WHAT ARE DEVOTIONS?

Having devotions simply means spending time with God in the Word and prayer. When you "have your devotions," you spend time alone with God praying, reading the Bible, and thinking about what God is saying to you through the Word.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE DEVOTIONS?

The goal of life is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut. 6:5). Having your devotions is one of the best ways to help you get to know God, and as you get to know Him, you will begin to love Him. Having your devotions helps you fulfill the purpose for which God created you!

WHEN SHOULD I HAVE MY DEVOTIONS?

Many people choose to have their devotions in the morning to start the day off thinking about God. Giving your devotions first priority in your day also protects you from getting so busy during the day that you forget to spend time with God. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. People have their devotions at many different times of the day: morning, afternoon, and night. The important thing is to have a set time when you will have your devotions. Think about your schedule and plan a time to have your devotions when you are alert and unhurried. Also, pick a place where you will not be interrupted so you can focus on being with God.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE MY DEVOTIONS?

For the purpose of this study, we have provided five days of devotions per week. Certainly we need to seek God every day, but on some days you may spend extra time in corporate worship at your church or in Bible study with others. As with any priority, you will want to spend time with God as often as possible. Don't be surprised if you find yourself wanting to spend time in prayer and reading the Word multiple times in a single day.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE?

How long your devotions take will vary. It could take as long as an hour, or it could take only a few minutes. How long or how short your devotions are should not be your focus. However, it does take time to build a relationship with God. Don't approach your devotions as something you do so you can check it off your to do list. If anyone deserves our quality time, it is God!

HOW DO I HAVE DEVOTIONS?

There are many ways to have your devotions, but in this study you will be following two different formats. The first format is entitled "Read with Your Heart." An explanation of how to fill out the form can be found at the beginning of the devotional section at the end of this book. The second format is simply working through a book of the Bible and is self-explanatory.

If you find yourself having trouble understanding how to do your devotions, ask your parents, your small group leader, or your pastor for help. Once you have completed this study, these same people can give you suggestions of additional resources to help in your devotions.

READ WITH YOUR HEART

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Read any or all of the passages below underlining or highlighting any verses that speak to your heart or challenge you.**

Each day contains five readings: (1) a morning Psalm, (2) an evening Psalm, (3) an Old Testament reading, (4) a reading from one of the four Gospels, and (5) a New Testament reading. There is not always a connection between the readings, but many times a connection can be found. The readings are structured so that you can read all of the suggested passages, or just one.

- **Record what you learn about God from your reading (what He is like, how He acts, etc.) and how that should impact your life.**

As you read the passages, focus on two things. First, focus on what you learn about God in the passages—what He is like and how He acts. Second, think about how those truths about God should impact the way you live your life. Write down what you find. If you read the passages and can't find any truths about God, just leave this space blank.

- **Record any other thoughts you had while reading—things that challenged, encouraged, or convicted you.**

Sometimes in your reading you will come across things that really challenge, encourage, or convict your heart. Write those things down. If nothing stands out, then leave this area blank.

- **Review the verses you highlighted or underlined and write down one verse that was especially meaningful or challenging.**

As you read the passage, you are asked to underline or highlight any verses that speak to your heart or challenge you. Look back over those verses and pick the one verse that really stands out to you today as a verse you want to 'carry with you' as you go throughout the day. If no verses speak to you, then just leave the space blank.

- **Meditate on this verse today and write down your thoughts about what God is saying to you through this verse.**

Throughout the day, meditate on the verse you picked for today. Meditation is one of the keys to God transforming you. Meditation is simply thinking about the verse—thinking through each word or phrase and asking questions of the verse so you can understand it better and find very real ways that the verse applies to your life. Write down additional thoughts about the verse and how it applies to your life.

WEEK 1

READ WITH YOUR HEART

Date: _____

Read any or all of the passages below, underlining or highlighting any verses that speak to your heart or challenge you.

Morning Psalm: 15

Evening Psalm: 9

OT: Job 12:1–6, 13–25

NT: Acts 11:19–30

Gospel: John 8:21–32

Record what you learn about God from your reading (what He is like, how He acts, etc.) and how that should impact your life.

Record below any other thoughts you had while reading—things that challenged, encouraged, or convicted you.

Review the verses you highlighted or underlined and write down one verse that was especially meaningful or challenging.
