

**Date:** January 7-8, 2023

**Title:** *Hidden Hurts #1 - Broken Dreams*

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 7

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We're starting a new series that we've called *Hidden Hurts*. And *Hidden Hurts* is something that may or may not appeal to you, depending on where you are. So, let me just tell you how this idea came about. I was reading through my Bible a couple of years ago, and as I was reading the stories about David and his life, which are in first and second Samuel, I was struck by just how much either David or the people in his life had experiences that are remarkably common.

Sometimes when we read the Old Testament, we can get into the zone of thinking all this is ancient stuff that happened so long ago. What does it have to do with me? But the hurts that were present in David's life and in the people in his life were so common to what I hear about all the time and experience that I just started taking some notes on what the hurts were.

And as we approach the beginning of this year, it seemed like the right time to dive into some of these stories. And this would be a little different than what we often do here at Orchard Hill. We aren't going to work consecutively through a book and take chunk by chunk as much as we'll focus on these stories and people and talk about what we learn about God and ourselves from these stories.

And today we're going to begin in Second Samuel chapter seven, where David experienced a broken dream. David had dreamed of building a temple for God. And this is maybe not a dream any of us have had. But it was his dream. And he was told that it wasn't going to happen. And here's what I know. And that is most of us live at one time or another with some kind of a broken dream.

It can be a big thing, something around a loved one or our health, or it can be around a relationship, career, finances, or freedom. Or it can be things that seem relatively small. Sometimes a broken dream isn't necessarily this big thing, but it can be that you had a hope for the way a certain weekend or a holiday would go, and it didn't go exactly as you wanted, or you had a hope for the way that a conversation would go and it just went the wrong way.

I remember years ago when I was in college, and I was first getting serious about the concept of faith in my life. I was working a job during the summer that was very

physically demanding, and I was the low person on the totem pole, which meant it was also a little demeaning in terms of what I had to do.

It was a very unpleasant summer. It was just gutting through. And the one thing that seemed to be pleasant in the middle of that summer was a couple of guys and I were on a softball team, and we got to play softball once a week. Now, that, I realize is kind of ridiculous, but here's what happened.

I remember one day I was working, and the game was supposed to be this night and it started to rain. And I knew the game could get rained out and I was just really bummed. So, you know, I was new in my faith, and I was like God, could you make it not rain? I'd really love to play softball. Has anybody ever prayed a prayer like this? I don't think I'm probably the only person. And so, I prayed and the skies cleared. And I was thinking, this is awesome. God is so great. And I got to play my softball game.

Now, the next week, the same day of the week, the rain came in again. I said, God, it would be great if you could take the rain. Do you know what happened? It poured, and the game didn't happen. And here's what happened in my mind at that moment.

There was a little piece of me that had the come-on God moment. Did you ever have a come-on God moment where you say, come on, God, you can keep the rain away for a few hours so this could happen, so that I could play softball and have a moment of joy this summer? I mean, is that too much to ask?

And whenever you and I have a come-on God moment, whether it's a big thing in our life or something that seems relatively small, we're dealing with a little bit of a broken dream, and if unaddressed, can lead to bitterness, brokenness toward God, and even resentment toward God.

I saw something that one writer wrote. He called it Bigger Dreams. He said this. "I had bigger dreams, dreams of the places I'd go and the things I would do. Dreams of the difference I'd make in the choices or the chances that I'd take. I had bigger dreams, but my life has settled into the ordinary, despite my protest. To the contrary, I'm not old, but I'm getting older by the day, and I'm too terrified to leave.

But I'm also terrified to stay. I had bigger dreams, but now I'm filled with quiet desperation. Nobody knows and sees my constant frustration. My life has been diminished by the chosen responsibility. Who knew that my choices would lead to such austerity? I had bigger dreams." Sometimes broken dreams aren't even that

things went that wrong. It's just that when you look at your life, you thought that the way that I would live would be more fulfilling than it actually is.

So, David, in Second Samuel seven has this dream of building the temple, and this is part of what's known as the United Kingdom. In the Old Testament, you have King Saul, King David, and King Solomon - United Kingdom. Then the Kingdom divides. Judah and Israel become two different nations.

And this is the Book of Kings now, where you get all of the kings with the weird names and the weird stories that happened. That's the divided kingdom. We're in the United Kingdom - King David. And King David, after the people had been wandering, now they come into the kingdom, says, I want to build the temple that the Bible has talked about, the scriptures have talked about.

And here's what we read in Second Samuel seven beginning in verse one, "After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, 'Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.'"

So, David is looking around. He's saying, I have a great palace. Cedar meant luxury. He was living in luxury. And he says the Ark of the Lord is still in a tent. I basically want to build a temple now for you, God. That's what he's saying.

"Nathan replied to the king, 'Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you.' But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: 'Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

Now again, that may not strike you as that significant because if you have a broken dream, you're saying he just wanted to build a temple? I want health. I want an extension of days with a loved one. I want to find love. We have been dealing with infertility. Those are our broken dreams. What is this?

But here's the first thing that I want you to see about this, and that is in David's life, what we see about God is that a broken dream does not equal divine disfavor in his life, and a fulfilled dream does not equal divine favor. Here's why this is important,

because so often what we will do is will say, well, if God allows me to have this experience, then God must be pleased with me and pleased with the way I'm living. And if God doesn't let me have this experience, it means God is somehow displeased with me.

Certainly, in the Bible, there are consequences to our choices. Certainly, in the Bible there is something to obedience, bringing blessing. But it's important to note that so often in the Bible, the dreams that we have are not tied to divine favor or disfavor. And the reason we know this is because we're told that David was a man after God's own heart. So, David pleased the Lord in that sense, even though there were incidents in His life which we'll look at that were displeasing to God.

But here this is not tied. In fact, if you want to understand the pathway that God took here, he says, I don't want you to, in essence, build the temple, because I want you to know that I dwell with you wherever you are. And I don't want your people to get the idea that I'm only in a temple.

And then in verse eight and following, we see something maybe even more striking about this. Here's what it says, "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.'" "The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you."

Now, do you hear this? Here's what happens. David says I'm going to build a house for God. I'm going to build a temple. And God says, you're not going to build me a house. I'm going to build you a house. Do you hear that? Here's why that's so counter. What we like to think is that if I have favor with God, I can do a little something that might earn me a little favor with God, and therefore I will get the things that I want.

We tend to approach God, even if we know theologically better than this, with a mindset that says I'll do everything right, then God will let me have the life that I actually want. And it's like God is saying, I want you to understand you don't get to do something and feel like I'm in your debt. I do for you. And this is the essence of Christianity, by the way.

You see, what religion basically says is that you perform, God gives you little gold stars, and then someday you get something good in the future. What biblical Christianity or the gospel says is you and I are sinful people and we need a savior. And God does for us, even though we don't do right by Him. And it's like God was saying to David, let your broken dream remind you that I do for you. Not that you do for me. Not that I somehow earn my way with God.

Often what we want to do is we want to say, well, you know, if I were to give myself a score on how much I obey the Bible, how kind I am, how generous I am, how much I put myself last, whatever categories you want to want to say, what most of us would do is we say, I'm a "b" on this, "c" on that, and "a" on this. Few of us would say f, f, f across the board.

But here's the thing. It doesn't matter how high your score is, perfection is God's standard. That's what the Scriptures teach over and over. And so, the only way that you or I can stand before God is not by saying, look at how well I've done, but look at what Jesus has done.

Eugene Peterson wrote about this in this passage specifically. Here's what he said. "David was about to cross over the line of being full of God, to being full of himself. If any of us develops an idolatry in which God and God's grace is less important to who we are than our own action and performance, our ability to represent God's kingdom is utterly destroyed."

If we start to think it's my action, my performance, not the grace of God, then we end up in a place where we are not actually really understanding what the message of Christianity is.

As we move further into this passage, what we begin to see is that God says, I'm going to establish this house, which I read in verse 11. He says this in verse 12, "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

Now, what happens in David's story is it moves from him to Solomon's. Solomon builds the temple, and then David is in the line of Christ. If you were around over Christmas, we dealt with one of the genealogies where David's name is prominent in the lineage of Jesus. And so, the way that God fulfills this is to say you're not going to build this because I don't want you to think that it's about you. But I'm going to establish something.

God was doing something bigger than David understood in the moment and was working things for his best in a way that probably didn't make a lot of sense to David right in that moment. Now, the reason that this is important is because whenever you or I have a dream that isn't being fulfilled, one of the most natural things to do is to pray.

You don't have to be a person who has a lot of church, even a lot of background toward faith. But what happens is when you face a crisis, there's a natural moment to say, God, would you do something? And if you read in your New Testament, what you often see is that the way that God interacts with prayer is in response to faith.

In Matthew nine verse 22, somebody was healed and Jesus' own words at that point were it's your faith that's healed you. And so, what some of us do is we come to our broken dream and we say, well, what I need to do is believe more, and then God will give me what I want. In fact, there are whole churches that teach this, but I would like to suggest that what faith really looks like is finding a balance between two extremes.

On one end, you have this expectation that God will work. But taken too far to this end, it becomes a presumption that says I demand that God works in the way that I think he should work, and if he doesn't, then I'm going to be disappointed, upset, irritated, and annoyed that God hasn't worked. On the other end, what you have is what I would say is an understanding of God's sovereignty in a situation saying God may be up to something bigger like he was in David's life, but on this side, this can become resignation.

Or you just simply say, well, if God's going to do what God's going to do, what difference does it make what I believe, how I pray, or what happens in my life? And here's what happens if you get over to this side too far, you end up with a belief in a God who should always come through for you to make your dreams happen. And if your dreams don't happen, you have a theological problem which becomes a faith problem, because all of a sudden, your God didn't do what you thought he should do.

And on the other side, the same thing happens when you get over to this side. You can't hold that consistently. And the problem when you start to get resigned is all of a sudden you don't have an interaction with God. You just simply say, well, God's going to do what God's going to do. What difference does it make?

And I would like to just say what faith is, biblical faith is, is it's coming somewhere in this middle portion. You may be off to one side or the other a bit, but it's coming to this mid-portion and saying, I can affirm that God is at work in a situation even if it doesn't happen to my liking because I believe that God is good and God is working in this situation and now, I can handle my broken dream.

And here's maybe a way to think about this. When I was a kid, my mom's parents lived in Rockford, Illinois. A little city, I guess it used to be the second biggest city in Illinois, and now I think it's the third. Naperville has passed it. But Rockford, Illinois is where my grandparents lived. And I remember going over there as a kid and my parents would drop me off and my grandparents would watch me.

And my grandparents lived on the top of this hill on a street called C Street. And so, you could walk down the hill on either side. And I remember one day I was there, and I was playing in the front yard when my grandfather came out and he said, hey, would you like to go for a walk? And my response was, well, where are you going? And he said, well, would you like to go for a walk? And I said, well, where are you going? He said, do you want to go for a walk or not? I said no, I got things to do. I'm playing.

So, he takes off down the hill. And what I didn't tell you is down the hill and around the corner was a Baskin-Robbins. And often in the afternoon we would walk down and get ice cream and then we would walk back with ice cream. Well, he reemerges, you know, 15-20 minutes later with an ice cream cone. And as my little mind would have it, I was like, Grandpa, you held out on me. Why didn't you tell me you were going for ice cream?

And here's what he said. I'll never forget it. This is one of those moments. He said, if you had wanted to go for a walk with me, it wouldn't have mattered where I was going. Sometimes what we do with God is say, God, if you'll give me my dream, then I'll walk with you. But if you believe in the goodness of God, that kind of faith says, God, I'll go with you wherever you're going because I know that you are good and you're for me, even if it doesn't make sense to me right now.

And if we don't have that kind of faith, what will happen is either we'll get presumptuous and we'll start saying, you better take me for ice cream. There better be ice cream down at the bottom of that hill or we'll get resigned and say, oh, there's nothing good in this life. There's nothing that I can count on. But the biblical faith says God is good, God is at work, and I can trust God even if it doesn't make sense to me.

Here's how Martin Luther put it once. He said, "Faith is a free surrender and a joyous wager on the unseen, unknown, untested goodness of God." Let me may say that

again. Martin Luther put it this way, "Faith is a free surrender and a joyous wager on the unseen, unknown, untested goodness of God." So, when you and I have a broken dream, our choice is to either say God isn't good or life isn't good, or it's to say God might be doing something even better than I understand because his story isn't about me doing for him, it's about him doing for me. And sometimes that'll show up in ways I don't understand.

And when you come to verse 18 and following, what you see is David's response now. Verses 18, "Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" And if you read through the following verses, he keeps referring to God as Sovereign Lord.

And we teach here from the NIV. It's the New International Version. If you read the ESV, the English Standard Version, instead of Sovereign Lord, it says Lord God here. And the difference is this. The Hebrew words that underlie our texts are Adonai - Yahweh. Yahweh is the name for the covenant God of Israel, and the Covenant keeping God-Adonai means Lord. And so, the NIV has translated it here, Sovereign Lord. The one who's in control. It's a good translation. The ESV chose to stick with a little more literal kind of rendition, which is typically the difference between the two versions.

But here's why I point that out. What happened for David is he came to a point of saying, God, I acknowledge that you are in control and that whatever it is, is good. And so, I can take my dream and say, God, you're engaged in doing something that I don't fully understand, but I trust your goodness. It was his way of saying, I'm going to make a joyful wager on your unseen, untested, unknown goodness. And David, if you read through the text of First and Second Samuel, invested in trying to help the temple get built, even when he didn't get to be a part of it.

One of the ways that you and I can navigate broken dreams is by saying, God, I'm going to invest in something bigger, even if I don't fully understand why you're doing that. So, here's an example of this. I don't remember this in real-time. Some of you might. I had to read about it and hear about it later. But when Richard Nixon was president, one of the people who worked in his White House as a main adviser was Charles Colson.

And Colson was also responsible in part for the Watergate break and ended up facing charges going to prison for years for that. And he writes about this in his autobiography, *Born Again*, about his journey through this and how it was because of going to prison that God got a hold of his heart and he came to trust Jesus Christ as



his savior. I heard him talk some years ago before he passed, and he talked about the journey from the White House.

I'm paraphrasing, but he basically said this was the pinnacle. This is what I dreamed about. This is what I had always wanted. And to have it taken away and to end up in prison felt devastating. And yet it was precisely in that devastation that God brought me to faith in him. And if you know his story, what happened was he began a ministry called Prison Fellowship.

And today, all over the world there are people working in prisons talking about Jesus Christ, giving hope to prisoners because Charles Colson went to prison. Angel Tree, I believe, is born out of that. The gifts go to the children of prisoners at Christmas time, this was because he said, I'm going to take my broken dream and turn it around.

Now I recognize very few of us will ever work in the White House or maybe even dream about that. Few of us will go to prison. Few of us will start an international ministry. But the point here is that what happens when you have a broken dream is you have a choice. And the choice is either to say, I'm going to invest my tears into something greater and believe in the goodness of God, or I'm going to do what our culture tells us to do, which is either to indulge our tears or to deny them.

And by indulging, what I mean is we just become a victim. You know, the victim thing that happens sometimes where it's a constant. I'm a victim. Here's what happened in my life that went wrong. Here's who treated me wrong. Here's what God didn't do. And when we're victims, all we can do is see the world through that lens.

Sometimes instead of that, our culture will say, just deny your fears. Deny that you have any hurt. Act like it didn't matter. Biblically, the idea is to say this hurts, I'm heartbroken, but I'm not going to simply say that my life doesn't have meaning. I'm going to invest my tears. You know, I don't know what your dream is today, but I would guess in any gathering this size, there are many of us who identify with a broken dream.

My hope, my prayer, is that you'll be able to separate your dream from God's pleasure or displeasure in your life. You'll be able to say God is good even if I don't see it, and I'm willing to invest my tears in something bigger. I think if you and I do that, we'll find some relief from the hardship of saying, this is what I really want, this is what I long for. It doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. It doesn't mean that you don't still want it. But it means your faith is to say God is good regardless of how He chooses to work in my situation.

Let's pray together. God, I don't know the broken dreams that are represented at Orchard Hill today, but I know there are broken dreams. And God, I pray that you would meet with each of us. I know that you care about each situation and that our tears are something that doesn't go unnoticed by you. We're told in Psalms how you collect our tears in a bottle, that every one of our tears, every one of our heartbreaks is something you know intimately. And God, I pray that you would help us when we have those heartbreaks, those moments, to believe in your goodness and not rely on religion or our goodness to move us forward. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great day.