

Group Study: The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:1-17)

Discussion Questions

1. Why does God reject David's offer to build a house but then instead promise to establish David's house forever?
2. How does the Davidic covenant relate to the earlier covenants with Abraham and Moses?
3. How does David's life reflect both faithfulness and failure within the covenant?
4. What does this covenant teach us about God's steadfast love despite human failure?
5. How does Jesus fulfill the Davidic covenant? How does understanding the Davidic covenant shape our view of Jesus as King?

Good Faith Bible Study

Kathy and Nathan Maxwell

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"The Davidic Covenant"

2 Samuel 7:1-17

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If you've already read the lesson for this week, I hope that the repetition at the end is obvious. Throughout David's story—and really throughout the entire biblical story—at least one thing remains the same: the steadfast love of God. It's a familiar phrase to us from hymns and choruses, of course. But in this podcast, let's take a closer look at one of the most beautiful and surprising words in Scripture: *hesed*. It's the word that's often translated "steadfast love."

So, what is *hesed*?

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Let's start with the word itself.

The word *hesed* is spelled with a rough, throaty “ch” sound in Hebrew (חֶסֶד), and it's one of those words that just kind of refuses to be tamed by translation. It's not just “love” or even “steadfast love.” And it doesn't just mean “mercy” or even “faithfulness.” It's all of those things and more. It's a covenantal kind of love that's deeply loyal and compassionate and unrelenting.

Some people say that *hesed* is love with teeth. It's love that keeps showing up, even when it's not easy. Even when it's not deserved.

Here's the thing: *hesed* isn't just a divine attribute. It's at the heart of every covenant that God makes—from Abraham to Moses to David. And eventually, to all of us.

Let's pause for a minute and talk again about covenant. It's the central theme for this issue and for this particular lesson, too. As we've discussed before, the idea of covenant wasn't unique to Israel. In the ancient Near East, kings often made treaty covenants with their subjects. The king would promise protection, provision, maybe even land, and in return, the vassals owed the king loyalty and service.

But here's what's radical: In the Davidic covenant, God—the king of kings—acts like the servant. God doesn't require tribute from David. Instead, God does promise land, but also loyalty, a lasting dynasty and unconditional love.

That is unheard of in the ancient world when we're talking about covenants.

And it's all grounded in one thing: *hesed*.

So, when we read 2 Samuel 7, we're not just reading royal marketing material. We're watching God flip the script. God replaces contract with covenant, and control with commitment. God replaces distance with intimacy.

You see, this isn't a transactional God. This is a God who says: “Even when you mess up, even when your dynasty crumbles, my love will not be taken from you.”

That is *hesed*.

Now let's go back to the story.

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David is sitting comfortably in his palace. He's finally experiencing some peace. He looks around and thinks, "Wait a minute. I have a house. But God's dwelling is still in a tent."

Now this seems like a good impulse, right? To honor God, to show reverence. And Nathan the prophet initially agrees. But then comes the surprise: God says no.

"Are you the one to build me a house?"

It's like God is asking, "David, I'm not asking for grandeur. I have always dwelled among the people—in a tent, in the wilderness. Don't try to box me in. I am still on the move."

But God doesn't stop there. Instead of accepting David's offer to build a house, God makes a counter-offer: "How about I make you a house. A lineage. A kingdom. And I will not take my *hesed* from your descendants."

If that isn't grace, I don't know what is.

Now, let's talk for a minute about how your Bible study group might explore this idea of *hesed*—not just as a word, but as a way of seeing God.

Here are a few questions you might consider, to prompt your own thinking or your group's discussion.

The first question: What images come to mind when you hear the word "steadfast love?" Spend a minute with that image. Examine those images. And now compare those images. Is this also the image that you think of when you typically picture God?

This question really engages your theological imagination because sometimes images can communicate truth that is obscured by words. Many people carry a subconscious image of God that is critical or distant. *hesed* gently reshapes that image.

Here's a second question: Why do you think that God includes correction or discipline in the promise, but not rejection?

hesed is a term that manages to hold both justice and mercy together. So what does this tell us about God? What does it tell us about us, as the people of God?

And here's a third question: Have you ever experienced someone's commitment to you even when you didn't feel worthy of it?

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Now, this is a personal question, and it invites vulnerability. If some people don't feel comfortable sharing, they might write a description of this experience or maybe share with just a partner instead of the whole group. If you have some people that are artistic, they might draw an image from that experience.

And speaking of images, sometimes visuals are really helpful when emphasizing a point. So here's a simple group activity that you could try. I guess we could call it "the *hesed* web" or something like that.

You'll need a ball of yarn or string. Maybe you've done something similar before. Read 2 Samuel 7:15, "I will not take my steadfast love from him..." Maybe your whole group can say that phrase together.

And then start the activity by saying: "This string represents the *hesed* of God—woven through our lives, no matter what."

The first person holds the end of the string, shares a brief story or a reflection about a time when God's love showed up for you, and then pass the ball across the circle. Not one person to the next—across the circle. Each person does the same thing, holding a piece of yarn or string as they go. By the end, the group will have created a visual web—a symbol of the connection and covenant and care that is formed when we experience the *hesed* of God.

This activity might lead you to ask, "What does this web teach us about God's love? What happens when we see *hesed* not just as a promise to David, but to us?"

As we wrap up the podcast, let's return to the idea that God is not a "transactional God."

We often hear from people who are wounded by a transactional faith. People who have been told, either explicitly or implicitly, that God's love is fragile—that it depends on behavior and belief and belonging.

The story of David and this word, *hesed*, says otherwise. *hesed* tells us that:

God doesn't abandon us when we fall.

God's love is not performance-based.

God makes covenants knowing that we'll fail, and God stays faithful anyway.

hesed as not just God's promise to David, but God's promise to all of God's people. *hesed* is not just a word to study. It's a love that we receive—a love that keeps showing up, no matter what.