

How King David Destroyed His Marriage—and How You Can Heal Yours

There is a passage in 2 Samuel that I see differently than probably any explanation you've heard before. I am curious what you think and hope my understanding helps you in your marriage.

It is the story of David and Michal. Michal was David's first wife—Saul's daughter. She was *given* to him for the foreskins of 100 Philistines. Pretty gross, right? Saul's hope, by setting such an unusual and difficult bride-price, was that David would be killed in the effort. (1 Sam. 18:25)

Michal was in love with David—and why not? He was the hero of Israel. He was rugged and handsome and the fiercest fighter—back when fighting was cool. Today, “cool” is more like pajama-boy from the Obamacare ad. But David was more of a *Duck Dynasty* kind of Jew.

Not long after their marriage, David had to flee for his life. Saul was trying to kill him. After more than a decade, Saul dies and David is made king. When he comes back, he finds that his wife had been given to another—Paltiel, son of Laish. He tells General Avner to bring him his wife, and Paltiel (who is more of a spiced-latte type of guy) follows her, weeping.

The Ark and the Ephod

Sometime later, the Ark of the Covenant is brought to Jerusalem. This is a jubilant day! All Israel is rejoicing.

Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets (2 Sam.

6:14-15).

Meanwhile, his wife, Michal, was none too impressed.

As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart (2 Sam. 6:16).

When she sees King David, she mocks him:

David returned to bless his household, but Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet him. She said, "How the king of Israel has dignified himself today, exposing himself this day in the sight of his servant's slave girls like one of the rabble might shamelessly expose himself" (1 Sam. 6:20).

Naked? Really?

Let me just clear up one thing. David was not naked. The NIV, my preferred version, uses the words "half-naked." I don't believe the King of Israel was exposing himself to the nation. The Bible says he was wearing a linen ephod. This is what a priest would wear. My best guess is that he was wearing this ephod and little else. NOT half-naked, but not, in Michal's eyes, dignified for a king. And she would know; she grew up in royalty.

She was also probably judging David for acting as if he were a priest. He is making sacrifices (v. 13). David is not a Levite. He is from the tribe of Judah. Where does he get off dressing like a priest and making sacrifices? What Michal could not understand is that, prophetically, David, the father of Yeshua, is a priest, "in the order of Melchizedek." (Ps. 110:4)

David Responds

But here is where it gets interesting. Look at David's defensive response to his wife.

"It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel—I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor." (2 Sam. 6:21-22)

While these words have been celebrated, I don't think they were from the Spirit. He criticizes her father and even speaks boastfully over his best friend Jonathan, essentially saying, "The Lord chose me over your brothers!" It was a verbal bodyslam!

As a "zealous" type, I can really relate to David's response. It hurts to be accused of evil when you are doing the right thing—especially from your wife. But why is Michal responding this way? Why is she so jealous?

Mercy for Michal

Look at what this poor girl has been through. Let's go point by point.

1. She was raised by a psychopath, Saul.
2. Saul gave her to David in hopes that, "she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." (1 Sam. 18:21).
3. Her husband has to abandon her, to run for his life.
4. She is given to another man while she is still married to David. And seeing that this man ran after her weeping, when she was given back to David, tells me she grew into a decent person.
5. She is taken from her second husband forcefully and given back to David. Maybe she grew out of her puppy

love for David and grew to love her second husband? Maybe she resented being taken away? Maybe she had to leave children behind? It seems it was a traumatic experience for her.

6. When David returns from exile, he has got a bunch of new wives and then takes even more wives in Jerusalem (2 Kings 5:13).

My point is that she had been through the emotional mill. She had suffered trauma. She was abused. She was a broken woman and in need of therapy. But David, the zealot, could only see in the natural—she was criticizing him. He couldn't see how much she simply was crying out for love and stability.

Hear Beyond the Words

What a lesson for us leaders! We can be anointed and powerful in the pulpit, and then completely in the flesh when it comes to loving our wives. If I have learned anything from 30 years of marriage—it's to *ignore the words, and figure what's going on inside*. Michal was being passive-aggressive: a type of behavior characterized by an avoidance of *direct confrontation*.

I have a secret for the wives. When you respond with passive aggressiveness instead of being direct, and you assume that your husband will figure it out, you are going to be disappointed most of the time. *We're just not that sharp.*

Michal was using criticism to try and communicate what she was really feeling. "I'm hurt! I'm broken. I don't know who I am. I don't feel that you love me. I can't rejoice like you. I'm mad at you! My father and my brothers are dead! I need someone to hold me!"

I am actually tearing up while writing. This poor girl was crying out for love. And, instead, David rebuked her by saying that he would go even further in his zeal for the Lord.

But imagine if he walked over to her. Put his arms around her and said: "Sweetheart, I can't imagine what you are feeling. I know you are hurting and broken, but I want you to know, even your criticism will not keep me from loving you. You are not just the Queen of Israel. You are my queen. I will never leave you again..."

I don't know, but something tells me that if he had been the man he was supposed to be, and loved her like she needed to be loved, she would have repented of her judgment and she would have been mother to the next king of Israel, not Bathsheba.

They both acted childishly. If she could have simply been honest and shared what she was really feeling, and if he could have been there to love her, instead of reacting to the verbal attack, the story would have ended differently. {eo}

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