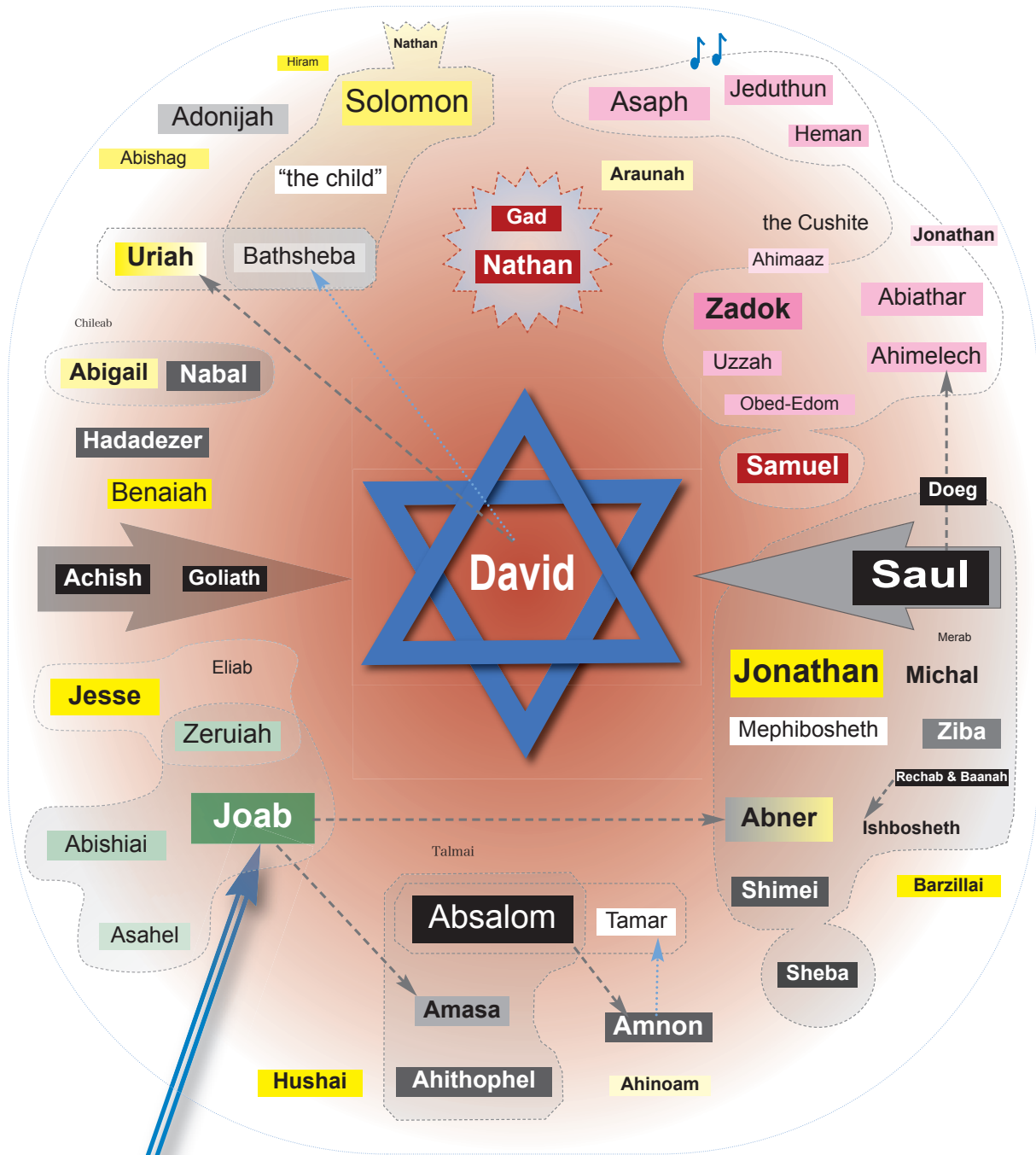


surrounded



people in the life of David

about Joab

1.) Joab was a son of David's older sister, Zeruah, and became his general. Before David became king in Second Samuel, however, Joab is only mentioned once (in 1 Sam. 26:6). Probably he followed David and fled from Saul; but there is little evidence for this. In Second Samuel, however, his name appears more often than any other name, except for David's.

2.) Joab was David's military commander in the fight against the forces of Saul's son, Ishbosheth, in Second Samuel ch. two. And he was still David's general in ch. 24, at the end of the book. However, things did not always go smoothly between the two, as seen in David's final instructions to Solomon about Joab in 1 Kings 2:5-6.

3.) David may have tried to replace Joab with Amasa in 2 Sam. 19:13; but Joab murdered Amasa instead in 20:8-13. This is one of two murders committed by Joab that David mentioned in his final instructions. The other was of Abner, Ishbosheth's general in 2 Sam. 3:23-30. Apparently Joab regarded both men as rivals. Abner had killed Joab's brother in battle; so Joab hated him for that reason, as well.

4.) Joab's courage is evident in the battle with the Syrians and Ammonites in 2 Sam. 10:9-14. Also, trust in God is seen in his words on that occasion (10:12), though as a whole his life was inconsistent. His fleeing to the tabernacle and refusal to leave it at the end in 1 Kings 2:28-33 also indicate something. He had some kind of faith, for sure, but was he really saved?

5.) First Chronicles 11:4-9 credits Joab with being the first to enter Jerusalem. (The parallel passage in 2 Sam. 3:23-30 doesn't mention him directly.) In light of his behavior elsewhere, the Chronicles account may be more about selfish ambition than being brave for God, though it's impossible to know for sure. David may even have been trying to replace him at that time.

6.) God used his prophet, Nathan, to lead David to repentance in Second Samuel ch. 11. In a similar way Joab use of a wise woman from Tekoa to tell an emotional story and get the king to bring Absalom back from exile in ch. 14. Though there are similarities in these accounts the "wise woman" was not the same as the Lord's prophet.

7.) Near the end, Joab rightly opposed David's census (2 Sam. 24:1-4, 1 Chr. 21:1-6). However, he also wrongly sided with Adonijah against Solomon (1 Kings 1:5-8). Why was he so inconsistent? Perhaps it was because he always acted in whatever way seemed best for him as head of the army. Counting his men would cause trouble, but so also would King Solomon. So Joab was selfishly consistent after all.

8.) The purpose of the worksheet on the right is not to decide if Joab was a true believer or not. (He probably was not, though it is impossible to know for sure.) Rather, the goal is to evaluate his life step by step so that we can profit from his faults and failures. What were his biggest sins and why did he commit them? How can we, by God's grace, avoid doing similar things?

Events in the life of Joab

Read each passage below and rank Joab's actions each time on a scale from -5 to +5, minus five indicating the worst things he did and plus five indicating the best things that he did. It may be best to do a few of these mini-studies at a time, rather than all of them in one sitting.

1.	2 Sam. 2:12-17	Joab agrees with Abner on a deadly contest.	
2.	2:26-28	Joab agrees with Abner to stop the fighting.	
3.	3:23-30	Joab murders Abner. <i>(1 Kings. 2:5-6)</i>	
4.	5:6-10	Joab leads the conquest of Jerusalem. <i>(1 Chr. 11:4-9)</i>	
5.	10:9-14	Joab and Abishai defeat the Syrians and Ammonites.	
6.	11:14-21	Joab helps David murder Uriah.	
7.	12:26-31	Joab honors David in the victory over Rabbah.	
8.	14:1-3, 19-24	Joab brings Absalom back from exile.	
9.	18:10-17	Joab kills Absalom.	
10.	19:13, 20:8-13	Joab murders Amasa. <i>(1 Kings. 2:5-6)</i>	
11.	20:16-22	Joab kills Sheba but spares a city.	
12.	24:1-4	Joab opposes counting the people of Israel. <i>(1 Chr. 21:1-6)</i>	
13.	1 Kings 1:5-8,	Joab sides with Adonijah against Solomon.	
14.	2:28-33	Joab flees to the tabernacle but is killed by Solomon	

conclusions & applications

How would you rank Joab's life as a whole? What were his greatest sins and failures?

How can we avoid being the same way?

Three Lessons from the Tragic Life of Joab

1.) to not trust powerful men

One of the main practical lesson in First Samuel is to beware of powerful enemies like King Saul. Conversely, one of the main practical applications of Second Samuel is to beware of powerful allies like Joab. Though he tried, David was unable to totally avoid Saul. Nor did God quickly remove the wicked king so that David could immediately take his place. Similarly, in Second Samuel, David was unable to replace Joab as his general, though he apparently tried to do so more than once. As a result, David had to deal with Joab for decades, like he fled and hid from Saul for many years, as well. Whatever our work or role in life on earth may be, trouble and danger will never be totally absent.

2.) to trust God's plans

David's final evaluation of Joab in his instructions to Solomon was totally negative (1 Kings 2:5-6), centered on the murders of Abner and Amasa, his general's two most obvious sins. Joab apparently didn't trust the Lord regarding his rivals for the position as head of the army; so he violently took matters into his own hands twice. (In First Samuel David refused to do so twice.) Though Abner and Amasa were his enemies in wartime, after the wars ended, as fellow Israelites, they were Joab's allies. So killing them was murder.

Should Joab have trusted his new ally, Abner, instead of accusing him of treachery (2 Sam. 3:24-25)? That would have helped; but totally trusting others is contrary to the first point above. It's good to be cautious. Joab's basic problem was not his lack of trust in men; it was his lack of trust in God's will and submission to it. The main reason he killed his two military rivals was probably because he was afraid of losing his position.

3.) to trust God, himself

One of the most difficult things to understand about Joab is how he could trust God to some extent, such as regarding foreign enemies in 2 Samuel 10:12, and yet not trust the Lord regarding potential domestic rivals. He bravely faced two enemy armies at the same time in 1 Sam. 10:9-14; yet he cowardly murdered two innocent men to protect his position at home. Why? The reason is probably because being head of the army was more important to Joab than anything else in life. Pleasing God was not his highest priority. Thus, though he fought against the armies of the idolatrous nations around him, Joab, himself, had an idol. His position was his god. How sad!

Likewise, today, there are sometimes "believers" who don't truly trust the Lord, since worldly success (or something else) is their real god. Again, how sad!