



"Too many have dispensed with generosity in order to practice charity."

—Albert Camus

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The Heart of a Leader (Part Three)

In Part Two, we considered a couple of "kingly" proverbs—[wisdom](#) from Solomon to help a monarch govern—that [King David](#) exemplified in his life. First, we saw how Saul did not act with mercy and truth ([Proverbs 20:28](#)) when he saw David's success and popularity, while David reacted to Saul's unjust persecution with [forbearance](#), remembering that Saul was Israel's anointed king. Second, we noted how David could not be bribed ([Proverbs 29:4](#)) in the instance of the false Amalekite trying to gain favor with him after Saul's death on Mount Gilboa.

Something similar happened when Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was beheaded by two of his own captains, who then brought his head to David, saying, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life." They even tried to work in the "[God](#) angle," saying, "the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants" ([II Samuel 4:8](#)).

David, though, recognized that the two captains had taken matters into their own hands, killed their own leader, and were trying to curry favor with him. But, as before, his sense of justice was so keen that he would not let such an outrage stand. His just response appears in [II Samuel 4:9-12](#):

But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity, when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who thought I would give him a reward for his news. How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?" So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged them by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.

If David had accepted the subtle bribes of these three men, he would have encouraged more of this sort of behavior, and justice would have been overthrown in the land. But by clearly establishing justice at the beginning of his reign, those under him could trust him, knowing that he operated by a higher standard. His people could see that he was not easily swayed by things that might otherwise appeal to his human nature.

The final scripture we will examine is [Proverbs 29:14](#): "The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever." As with the other proverbs, any number of examples could apply, but one that is especially moving is the account of Mephibosheth in II Samuel 9. Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathon, had been only five when his father and grandfather were killed. In the process of fleeing with his nurse, he fell and became crippled in both feet. Earlier, David had promised never to cease his [kindness](#) toward Jonathon's house ([I Samuel 20:14-15](#)). Because of his promise, once he was king over all Israel and all his enemies had been dealt with, he searched out any remaining descendants of Saul, and was told about Mephibosheth.

At the time, it was a common practice for kings to protect their heritage by killing, not only their enemies, but also all of their enemies' descendants. Obviously, David did not do this. He could have fulfilled his obligation by ensuring that Mephibosheth was taken care of in some minor way. But his

judgment on behalf of poor Mephibosheth shows the lovingkindness that was at his core, and we can catch a glimpse of the heart that was like God's ([I Samuel 13:14](#); [Acts 13:22](#)):

David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?" ([II Samuel 9:7-8](#))

Incredibly, King David decreed that this lame man would be a permanent fixture at the royal table, and he felt no embarrassment. In contrast, royalty and other political elites commonly make certain that the distinction of rank is preserved. Imagine how out of place many would consider having a person with an obvious physical defect at every White House dinner.

David, however, felt no shame because of the man's infirmity. His heart overflowed with compassion, kindness, and an affection unheard of today. Yet, King David is a mere shadow of the later "Son of David"—the One who is not ashamed to call us brethren ([Hebrews 2:11](#)), we who are crippled in our hearts rather than in our feet.

The Proverbs plainly contain foundational instructions to us as future rulers, but the same qualities the Proverbs praise are crucial even before we receive authority. King David exemplified many of them, and we can begin to do the same today. We can be true leaders in our marriages, in our families, in our congregations, and in the Body of Christ.

It does not require any additional authority to conduct our lives by wisdom or to search out a matter carefully before arriving at a conclusion. We do not need a golden crown to act with mercy, to submit fully to the truth, or to bestow kindness on others. No coronation is necessary to reject even subtle bribes, to act on behalf of the poor or needy, or to develop a finely-tuned sense of justice, an understanding of right and wrong regarding the treatment of others. These are the qualities that Solomon was inspired to highlight for kings, and these same qualities will belong to those upon whom [Jesus Christ](#), the [King of kings](#), will confer thrones to rule under King David.

- David C. Grabbe

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[The Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Kindness, the fifth fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, goes hand-in-hand with love. It is an active expression of love toward God and fellow man. As we come out of this calloused world, we must develop kindness through the power of God's Spirit.

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