
KILLING GOLIATH WAS THE EASY PART: DAVID'S MORAL DEVELOPMENT FROM SERVANT TO LEADER TO SERVANT-LEADER

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Abstract

The life of King David is an interesting study in moral development. King David is considered one of the greatest kings, if not the greatest king, of Israel. Yet, King David was not without his faults – the most notable being an adulterer and a murderer. The story of David portrays an excellent study in the moral development of a great leader and how in different stages of his life, he learned and grew as a leader. Starting as a young shepherd boy, he fought the giant Goliath and won – standing on his principles. As King, he wrongly calculated the consequences of his actions and committed adultery with Bathsheba, starting a series of second and third order effects of his actions. In his last days as King, he paved the way for his son Solomon to effectively lead the nation of Israel as a virtuous leader.

These three vignettes in King David's life provide insight into how David transitioned between using different bases for moral decision-making in his life. The first story of David and Goliath highlights the deontological approach to ethics. The second of David and Bathsheba highlights the teleological approach to ethics, with devastating consequences to his actions. Finally, in his naming of Solomon to the throne, David displays an integrative approach of a virtuous man – tempered by his earlier lessons in life.

King David: The Greatest King of All

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faults – the most notable being an adulterer and a murderer. The story of David portrays an excellent study in the moral development of a great leader and how in different stages of his life, he learned and grew as a leader. Starting as a young shepherd boy, he fought the giant Goliath and won. As King, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, starting a series of consequences for his actions and attempted cover up of the adultery. In his last days, King David paved the way for his son Solomon to effectively lead the nation of Israel.

These three events in King David's life provide insight into how David used different bases for ethics in his life. In the story of David and Goliath, David is a principled man, using the deontological approach to ethics. In the story of David and Bathsheba, David displays the worst of the teleological approach to ethics, with devastating consequences to his actions. Finally, in his naming of Solomon to the throne, David displays that he is a virtuous man – tempered by his earlier lessons in life.

David and Goliath: A Servant Answers the Call

The story of David and Goliath is well known – a shepherd boy answers the call to fight the giant Goliath when all the other great warriors are afraid. David is unafraid; he is unconcerned about the consequences, because he knows he is “in the right.” At this point in his life, David follows his will to do what is right. He steps forward on his own volition, based upon his call to duty. He does not consider the consequences of his actions – possible death – as important to responding to this call.

David's ethical basis at this point is quite similar to Kant's principles. Kant's view on moral reasoning is based on volition, the will to do what is right. He states three principles relating to duty and respect for law. These principles are:

1. *To have a moral worth an action must be done from duty.*
2. *An action performed from duty does not have moral worth in the purpose to be achieved but merely on the principle of volition by which the action is done.*
3. *Duty is the necessity of an action executed from respect from the law.*

Respect for law, freedom of choice in abiding in the law, and acting in the manner in which you would want all others to act are the principles that Kant espouses. The consequences of these actions are not to be considered nor are they important (Kant, 1959: p.16).

Ellin summarizes Kant's teachings and philosophy as "remember that you are a rational creature and try to respect the reason within you; think for yourself and do not follow the crowd; treat yourself and others with dignity and respect; remember that other people have goals and projects that are just as worthy as your own; take due care not to do what you are not willing for everyone else to do." (Ellin, 1995: p. 298)

Setting the Stage

The combined armies of the Philistines and the Israelites assembled for war; the battle line was set with the Philistines on one hill and the Israelites on another. Out of the Philistine line came the mighty warrior Goliath, who was over nine feet tall. Goliath wore the garments of a mighty warrior – a bronze helmet, a coat of armor made of bronze, and bronze greaves on his legs. He carried a bronze javelin with an iron rod. Goliath stepped forward and issued a challenge to end the battle quickly.

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us."

Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. (1 Samuel 17:8-11, NIV)

At this time, David was a young shepherd, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. David's three older brothers had gone to the war, and his father sent David off to see how his brothers were doing and to provide some provisions. The young shepherd, David, saw the army going out to its battle positions and heard the war cries of both armies. As David met his three brothers, he saw the giant Goliath.

As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear. Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel." David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him." (1 Samuel 17:23-27, NIV)

David is just a young shepherd boy, but he sees the disgraceful thing that is happening. David understands that the rewards for killing Goliath are great, but his focus does not appear to be on the rewards, but on the principle of defeating the Philistine who is disgracing his people and his God. David's focus at this point appears to be his duty to defend the honor of the Israelites, while the Israelites are focused on the rewards that will be gained by the victor over Goliath. David's older brother, Eliab, is unconvinced of David's motives and asks:

"Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. (1 Samuel 17:28b-30, NIV)

David's questions and his statements are not lost on the men, however. King Saul hears of David's statements, and calls for him. David, the servant boy, is even bolder with the king and offers to step forward to fight Goliath.

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul

replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth." (1 Samuel 17:32-33, NIV)

David has a response for the king – he is unafraid of stepping forward because he has been successful in the past. His reliance on his principles has been proven even in his short life. Although Goliath may have been a fighting man for all of his life, David has also proven his worthiness. David is unafraid and willing to step forward.

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." (1 Samuel 17:34-37, NIV)

David Goes Into Battle

Saul has no choice; there are no other warriors who are unafraid to fight Goliath. Saul accepts David's offer and prepares David in the best way he knows how – by providing David his own tunic and outfitting him in the same manner as Goliath, complete with a body of armor and sword. This is all uncomfortable and new to David, who has to fight his own way. David is convinced that this is the way he should fight, and that he will be successful in the fight.

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. Meanwhile, the

Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. (1 Samuel 17:38-52, NIV)

David is victorious, and defeats Goliath in his own way. The Israelite army continues the fight and defeats the Philistines in detail. One man, standing on his principles and responding to the call of duty, leads the Israelite army to victory. David stood on his principles, without concern for the consequences of possible defeat. David completes the transition from a servant boy to the hero of the nation and great warrior.

David's Success

David's success in battle was great – and he continued to have great success as a warrior. In all that David did as a warrior, success found him – he was considered the greatest warrior in the land. When David returned from his great victory, Israel acknowledged his success with adoration, to the point of showing the contrast between David and King Saul.

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. (1 Samuel 18:6-9, NIV)

In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns. (1 Samuel 18:14-16, NIV)

David had great success on the battlefield, while Saul kept a close eye on David. Yet, in all that David did, he continued to have success. Saul attempted to kill David several times because of his jealousy, but was never successful. For the remainder of Saul's life, David continues to have great success. Saul eventually dies upon another battlefield fighting the Philistines by falling on his own sword. David becomes the king of Israel. David thus completes the transition from warrior to king.

David and Bathsheba: The Leader Takes Charge

Svara writes that the principle-based approach to ethics can “compel action without the distraction and pitfalls of considering the consequences,” but the approach can also “produce differing degrees of aloofness and inflexibility” (Svara, 1995: pp. 43-44). Stewart and Sprinthall note principled reasoning could produce “an extremely ‘thin self,’ much disembodied from feelings....” (Stewart and Sprinthall, 1994: p. 344).

David’s success had been from the most unlikely circumstances. He was a shepherd boy, the youngest son of eight. He defeated the greatest warrior of the Philistines with a sling, and had become the greatest warrior of the nation. When Saul tried to kill him, David was able to survive. David stood on his principles and his beliefs – and success always followed him. David did not have to worry about the consequences of his actions, because they “took care of themselves.” David was loved and praised as a great warrior and king. Unfortunately, this led to David having a feeling of invincibility and aloofness in his own personal life. David did not consider the consequences of his actions.

The story of David and Bathsheba is another well-known story in David’s life. David did not use the consequences-based approach to ethics, but he learned very quickly about the consequences of his actions. His aloofness and pride led him to actions having had great consequences on not only him but on others around him. David also learned that the consequences of his actions only get worse when they were not addressed quickly – the second and third order effects of his actions harmed not only David but those he loved the most.

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified

*herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home.
The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I
am pregnant." (2 Samuel 11:1-5, NIV)*

David knew that Bathsheba was the wife of one of his warriors who was off to war. David also no doubt knew that what he was doing was wrong – but he did not consider the consequences of his actions. David then found out that she was pregnant, and now he had to deal with the consequences of his action. His first response was to see if he could cover up the pregnancy by bringing the husband Uriah home. David's scheme was that Uriah would sleep with his wife and thereby explain the pregnancy. In such a way, David could cover up his adultery.

So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. (2 Samuel 11:1-27, NIV)

Uriah the Hittite was a good soldier – if his soldiers didn't get to go home and stay with their wives, Uriah would not either. Even after David kept him longer and got him drunk, Uriah was faithful to his soldiers in the field. David's scheme did not work, so he went to his second plan – to have Uriah killed in battle.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Also, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'" The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead." David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab." (2 Samuel 11:1-27, NIV)

David first committed adultery; the consequence of that action was the pregnancy of Bathsheba. As a result, David schemed to have Uriah come home and sleep with Bathsheba to cover up the pregnancy. When that didn't work, David then schemed to have Uriah killed in battle. Not only did Uriah die in battle, but also others died needlessly because of David's plan that required the soldiers to get close to the wall. David was now not only an adulterer but also a murderer.

David displayed callousness at the report Uriah and the others were dead with his comment “the sword devours one as well as another.” From David’s perspective, the plan had worked. David now had what he wanted – Bathsheba as his wife, and Uriah out of the way.

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD. (2 Samuel 11:26-27, NIV)

Far-reaching Consequences

Svara writes that the utilitarian approach to ethics provides flexibility in action but a fundamental problem is balancing the good between the few and the many. King David, in the story of Bathsheba, demonstrated great flexibility in his actions, while balancing the “good” for only himself versus the harm to many (Svara, 1995: pp. 37-38).

Hegel emphasizes the consequences of actions as a part of the actions themselves. He states the principle “Judge an act by its consequences, and make them the standard of what is right and good” which provides a basis for law (Hegel, 1996: p. 113). Hegel further elaborates on consequences as a justification for acts:

... by the theft of a bread a property is no doubt injured. Still, if the act was the means of prolonging life, it would be wrong to consider it as ordinary theft. If the man whose life is in danger were not allowed to preserve himself, he would be without rights; and since his life is refused him, his whole freedom is denied to him also... Hence only the need of the immediate present can justify a wrong act. Yet the act is justified, because the agent, abstaining from it, would commit the highest wrong, namely, the total negation of his realized freedom. (Hegel, 1996: p. 122)

Nietzsche stated that man has a will – and the stronger man uses his will for his own purposes. Lying, deceit, and violence are

acceptable if used to survive and conquer; survival in any way shows strength of will and spirit (Bok, 1998: pp. 7,17,29). Causing suffering of others is something that even gives pleasure. "To behold suffering gives pleasure, but to cause another to suffer affords an even greater pleasure" (Nietzsche, 1956: p. 198). To Nietzsche, the Romans and their spectacles of cruelty were something to be praised – the 'blood sport' was exhilarating (Bok, 1998: pp. 27-30). "There is no feast without cruelty, as man's entire history attests" (Nietzsche, 1956: p. 198).

Although it is a stretch to compare David's actions with the philosophy of Nietzsche, David displayed a lack of concern about the consequences of his actions – even when it caused the cruel and unnecessary deaths of his soldiers. He was guilty of lying, deceit, and violence for his own purposes and survival. He appeared to have no remorse for his actions that led to Uriah's death, but he was rather pleased his plan had worked so well. His pride led to callousness and even greater consequences. David is now confronted with his actions:

The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." (2 Samuel 12:1-6, NIV)

The wise counselor Nathan comes to David with this story for David's consideration. David is appalled at the actions of the man in the story, and immediately comes to the conclusion that the man

deserves to die for his actions. The man described in the story had “no pity” and had done a terrible thing. A stiff price must be paid for such actions, according to David. Now, David finds out the rest of the story:

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' (2 Samuel 12:7-10, NIV)

David is now confronted with his actions. The man in the story is clearly David – who had been given so much, but wanted even more. David now must be confronted with the consequences of his actions, which are severe. David finds out, however, that the price to be paid for his actions will be paid by others as Nathan continues to counsel David. Even though David is repentant, he is unable to stop the chain of events that will result from his actions.

"This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die." (2 Samuel 12:11-14, NIV)

David now had to deal with the consequences of his actions. Because of his pride and conceit, Uriah and others died in battle. Now, David would be disgraced publicly. The “sword” would never depart from David’s house, which meant the nation of Israel would never know peace while David was on the throne. The son that was to be born from his adulterous action would also die. David got all that he wanted with Bathsheba now as his wife – but he had to continue to deal with the consequences of his actions for the rest of his life. Now, David had to prepare for the death of his son.

After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David, but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate." David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." (2 Samuel 12:15-19, NIV)

The baby was now dead – the consequences of David’s actions were dealt to the innocent. David, the servant who had become king, now saw that he was not immune to pride and envy, nor was he immune to the consequences of his actions. Even though he had prayed fervently for the child, the answer was unchanged. In the past, David had shown that he was willing to make a stand on his principles, but this had led to an aloofness and self-centeredness. David now learned he had to consider the consequences of his actions on others.

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept,

but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. (2 Samuel 12:20-24a, NIV)

David accepted the consequences, and learned from them. He comforted Bathsheba, and they had another son, Solomon. The consequences of David's actions were not over – David would be prohibited from building the great temple, which would be left to his son Solomon. The “sword” would never leave Israel during David's reign. David, however, was learning from his experiences and growing as a leader. He thus began the transition from a leader to a servant-leader. He now understood his duty as a leader was not to be served but to serve others and to care for others. To do so required not only strong principles but also consideration of the consequences of his actions. By learning from his experiences in the past, David became a virtuous leader.

Passing the Legacy: David as the Servant-leader

David learned from his experience and gained wisdom. The man of virtues is temperate, brave, and wise – but wisdom is the only real virtue. David learned from his experiences – including his encounter with Goliath and the consequences of his actions with Bathsheba -- that unless you have wisdom, you do not have the ability to apply proper living, how to be courageous, or when to apply justice. No other virtue except wisdom does “you or anyone else any good unless you know how to use it properly” (Ellin, 1995: p. 203). Wisdom for David, of course, was more than just knowledge. “The object of knowledge pure and simple is the knowable – if that is the right word – without any qualification,” but wisdom is gained by applying that knowledge (Plato, 1941: p. 135).

In the latter days of his life, David was a virtuous man. A virtuous man, in Aristotle's view, will fare better in life – perhaps not have greater wealth, but a virtuous man will conduct his life well (Rachels, 1999: p. 185). Aristotle emphasized that virtues are gained

through knowledge and application of the virtues – by exercising and actually doing virtuous acts (Aristotle, 1976: pp. 88-91).

Through the act of exercising and applying certain characteristics of virtue, a process of *catharsis* takes place – by imitation and practice, there is “a schooling of the emotions and a deepening of one’s understanding of human nature” (Bok, 1998: p. 43). For example, to foster the virtue of courage one must place themselves in alarming and dangerous situations so that one can become brave – and, in turn, “when we have become brave ... we shall be most able to face an alarming situation” (Aristotle, 1976: p. 95). We must learn virtues from others and put virtues into practice. Aristotle described a large number of moral virtues including courage, magnificence, proper ambition, temperance, justifiable pride, veracity, modesty, good temper, sincerity, frankness, and justice (Ellin, 1995: pp. 197-199).

David’s experiences helped him to gain these characteristics, particularly justice and proper ambition. Aristotle noted that justice is complete virtue, or the sovereign virtue because it pertains to the relationship with others (Aristotle, 1976: p.173). As David neared the end of his life, he focused on helping others achieve success, particularly his son Solomon. David begins by summoning all the leaders of Israel:

David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors. (1 Chronicles 28:1, NIV)

David recalls for all the leaders that he is not the one who will be able to build the temple. He had hoped to be able to build the temple, but he still had to live with the consequences of his earlier actions. Yet, even though he was not able to build the temple, his purpose was clear – he would pave the way for his son to complete the task. David was willing to do the preparation for his son to succeed.

King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'"

(The LORD) said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time.'

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work." (1 Chronicles 28:2-3, 6-7, 9-10, NIV)

David prepares Solomon for his work by first making a public declaration and acknowledgement that Solomon will finish the work. By supporting Solomon publicly, David sets into motion the support Solomon will need for the work to be done. This public declaration not only passes David's legacy to Solomon, but also charged Solomon to be faithful and strong in his work. David not only provided public support for his son, but also provided Solomon with detailed plans for the temple.

Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. He gave him instructions for the divisions of the priests and

Levites, and for all the work of serving in the temple of the LORD, as well as for all the articles to be used in its service. He designated the weight of gold for all the gold articles to be used in various kinds of service, and the weight of silver for all the silver articles to be used in various kinds of service... (1 Chronicles 28:1-21, NIV)

David assured Solomon that all the people of Israel would support him in his task. The detailed plans were ready; the people were now ready to support Solomon in constructing the temple. David then turned to the people to give them the charge to support Solomon and provided all the resources that Solomon would need.

Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God. With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God--gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble--all of these in large quantities. Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" (1 Chronicles 29:1-5, NIV)

The people of Israel responded with full support of Solomon and the building of the temple. David had proven to be a great leader – all of the other leaders of Israel followed his lead and answered his charge willingly.

Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. They gave toward the work on the temple

of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly. (1 Chronicles 29:6-9, NIV)

David's character was also displayed on that day. David now realized that he should not take credit for what was happening, but rather to pass the credit on. David had now learned the virtue of modesty in contrast to his former pride. David had now tempered his former ambition. David's actions and motivation were truly sincere. David learned from his experiences in the past that he could do greater things by paving the way for his son and ultimately his nation.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. (1 Chronicles 29:11b-17, NIV)

The Legacy Complete

The people responded by accepting Solomon as their new king. David's legacy continued and was even greater because of his

support of his son. Solomon was able to complete the temple and became the “wisest” king of all the kings of Israel. Because of his father’s support and affirmation, King Solomon started on the path of success.

“...They acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time, anointing him before the LORD to be ruler and Zadok to be priest. So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David. He prospered and all Israel obeyed him. All the officers and mighty men, as well as all of King David's sons, pledged their submission to King Solomon. The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before. (1 Chronicles 29:22b-25, NIV)

The final words concerning David’s life do not address the great successes nor do they discuss the great failures of David’s life. The final words are simple – that David enjoyed a long life and enjoyed wealth and honor. At the end of his life, his legacy was that he had conducted his life well.

David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. He ruled over Israel forty years--seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king. (1 Chronicles 29:26-28, NIV)

Conclusion

The life of King David was obviously more complicated and complex than the three vignettes discussed in this paper. Nonetheless, these three events in David’s life demonstrate how he used different philosophical bases in his ethical decision-making. David was a highly principled, confident young man as a shepherd boy who defeated Goliath – yet this confidence and dependence on principles led to aloofness and feelings of invincibility. With Bathsheba, he was self-serving and sought out expedient methods to cover up his own problems, leading to dire consequences. As an older man, he assimilated the lessons from the past and became a virtuous man. His virtues approach was tempered, however, with the strength of his principles and understanding the dire consequences of

his actions. Arguably, at the end of his life he used all three philosophical bases for decision-making – the principles approach, the utilitarian or consequences approach, and the virtues approach. His transition was complete from a servant to a leader to a servant-leader.

David, most of all, gained wisdom through his experiences. This wisdom was not merely knowledge, but knowledge that David applied in his dealings with others as the servant-king – the King charged with taking care of the people of Israel. King David wrote Psalm 51 after Nathan came to him concerning his adultery with Bathsheba. David writes the following, indicating he had learned the hard lessons and taken them to heart:

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts, you teach me wisdom in the inmost place... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:6,10)

As a “virtuous man” at the end of his life, David did not look upon his principles exclusively as a motivation for his actions, but drew upon those principles to give him a strong foundation for his actions. He tempered his principles with a utilitarian approach – considering the effects of his actions upon others. Finally, he had learned and assimilated the lessons from the past – and had become a “good man” with positive attributes. His approach at the end of his life was an integrative approach combining the three philosophical bases for ethics – principles, consequences, and virtues.

As a servant-leader, David shifted from an inward focus to an outward focus – his actions as the leader of Israel during the latter portion of his life were to serve the people of the nation he loved. As such, David led by serving others and preparing them for greater things than even he had achieved. David’s concept of service to his people was based upon the virtue of caring more for the people he served than he did for himself. This virtuous approach was based upon love of his people and a burning desire to see others succeed.

For today’s leaders – practitioners and public administrators -- King David displayed a spirit of benevolence

for his people. Benevolence, for public administrators and practitioners, is described as “a broad and unashamed love of the people ... a commitment both to serve a greater collective good and to fairly minister to the individual needs of citizens ... without benevolence, our field has a meaning and purpose beyond just doing a good job; the work we do becomes noble – a kind of civic virtue” (Frederickson, 1997: p. 234). The concept of servant-leadership for public administrators today is based upon this broad, unashamed love of the citizens we serve.

Notes

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