

# Michal

HER NAME MEANS

*“Who Is Like God?”*

**HER CHARACTER:** A woman of strong emotions, she was unable to control the important circumstances of her life. Forcibly separated from two husbands, she lost her father and her brother, who were savaged by their enemies.

**HER SORROW:** That she was ensnared in the drawn-out battle between Saul and David.

**HER JOY:** Though short-lived, she enjoyed a passionate love for David.

**KEY SCRIPTURES:** 1 Samuel 18:20–29; 19:11–17; 2 Samuel 6:16–23

## *Monday*

HER STORY

### Scene One

Michal stretched herself across the window’s edge. Leaning out as far as she dared, she could see her husband running through the night shadows, his movements swift and lithe, like a young stag evading its predators. Even if her father, the king, pursued with an army, she was confident he would not catch her David.

She had loved the shepherd boy since the day he had calmed Saul’s troubled soul with his harp playing. After he defeated the hideous Goliath with only a sling and a stone, all Israel fell in love with him. But it was for her alone that David had slain two hundred Philistines—to prove his worth.

She turned from the window, grateful for the chance to have aided her husband's escape. Quickly she dressed one of the household idols, placing it in their bed and topping it with goat's hair to make it look like a sleeping David. She was ready for her father's men when they came pounding on her door.

"David is ill," she told them.

So they returned to King Saul, who immediately ordered them back, saying, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him."

Discovering the ruse, Saul confronted his daughter: "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?"

Michal lowered her eyes and replied, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'" She held her breath, certain her father would never swallow so bold a lie.

## Scene Two

Nine years or more have passed. Michal glanced out the window, arms folded tightly against her breast, observing the scene below. David, now the king, had entered Jerusalem, leaping and dancing as the ark of the covenant was carried into Jerusalem. He looked ridiculous to Michal, more like a romping goat than a great king.

David offered the sacrifices and blessed the people. Then he entered his own house to bless it. But Saul's daughter met him with scornful eyes: "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"

"It was before the LORD, who chose me," he replied, "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."

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Twice, Michal stood at a window observing David. In the first scene, Scripture paints her as David's wife, in the second as Saul's daughter. In fact, her attitude is so changed that we feel perplexed, watching her as she watches David. To understand what may have shaped Michal's heart in the intervening years, we need to find a corridor

connecting the two windows, a passageway that somehow led from love to scorn.

Michal may have expected her separation from David to be a short one, her idealism forging a happy ending to their fairy-tale love. Perhaps she believed David would find a way to protect her from her father's wrath. Was she shocked when real life intervened and her father punished her by marrying her to another man? Did her bitterness grow during David's long absence? Had she finally made peace with her new marriage only to be torn from her husband when David demanded her back after Saul's death? Did she question God's judgments, identifying more with the dead than the living after her father perished in a desperate battle with the Philistines?

Perhaps Michal's bitterness swelled to rage when she realized she had always been someone else's pawn, a mere woman manipulated by powerful men. Her own father used her, promising her to David in hopes she would prove a snare to him. And, finally, one of her brothers handed her back to David after Saul's death, further legitimizing David's claim to the throne. A princess, then a queen, she was still a slave.

Michal's story is tragic. Throughout the difficult circumstances of her life, we see little evidence of a faith to sustain her. Instead, she is tossed back and forth, her heart left to draw its own bitter conclusions. In the last scene with David, we see a woman blind with scorn, making the very mistake God cautioned the prophet Samuel against in his search for a king to succeed the wayward Saul: "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

The truth is, God is the only one who can see into the depths of anyone's heart, including Michal's. He knew everything that had happened, both good and bad. Still the story of Michal seems to indicate that she grew to be more like Saul than like David. As such, she reminds us that even victims have choices. No matter how much we've been sinned against, we still have the power to choose the attitude of our heart. If we cast ourselves on God's mercy, asking him to help us, he cannot refuse. Even in difficulty, he will dwell in us, shaping our own wayward hearts into the likeness of his own.

## WORSHIP

*W*hen David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, after it had been in Philistine hands for a number of years and after a fateful earlier attempt to move it, he did so with a deep sense of awe. The ark was moved only six steps before he stopped and sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Then, as the priests brought the ark into Jerusalem, David “danced before the LORD with all his might” (2 Samuel 6:14), and the people with him shouted and blew on trumpets.

There was nothing subdued or restrained about David’s worship of the Lord. The psalms of praise he wrote also reveal his deep love for God, a love so all-encompassing it could not be contained, but burst forth in exuberant worship.

Sacrifices and offerings were an important part of worship in Old Testament times. Since sin separated the worshiper from God, sacrifice was needed to reestablish the relationship and make true worship possible. The response of praise to God took several forms: prayer, as when Solomon dedicated the temple (1 Kings 8); praise in singing as individuals (2 Samuel 23:1) and in choirs (Nehemiah 12); praise with musical instruments (Psalm 150); and praise with dancing (Exodus 15:20–21; 2 Samuel 6:14–16; Psalm 149:3).

But God makes it clear that he won’t be satisfied with only the forms of worship. Sacrifices and music and dancing have no meaning apart from a heart and life truly dedicated to the Lord. God’s words to the prophet Micah (Micah 6:6–8) clearly state this truth:

With what shall I come before the LORD  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has shown all you people what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

Michal's contempt for her husband, David, revealed her own lack of true dedication. She was content to be a critical spectator rather than a true worshiper of God. Whenever anyone puts appearances or tradition or form above a true desire to worship our God and Savior, we'd best step carefully ... and read the words of God to Micah the prophet, which are as true for us today as they were for the Israelites of the prophet's day.

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HER LEGACY IN SCRIPTURE

**Read 1 Samuel 18:20–27; 19:11–17.**

1. How would you describe Michal in these passages?

**Read 1 Samuel 25:43–44 and 2 Samuel 3:14–16.**

2. After Michal helped David escape, she didn't see him for more than nine years. How do you think these events in the intervening years affected her? How would they have affected you?

**Read 2 Samuel 6:12–23.**

3. Why do you think Michal responded to this scene of worship as she did? Why do you suppose she was in her room watching from the window instead of in the crowd participating?
4. What is your biggest barrier to true worship? What could bring that barrier down so that you are a participant rather than a spectator?
5. What was David trying to tell Michal in 2 Samuel 6:21–22?
6. Think about your own experience of suffering—perhaps even victimization. How have you responded? Has suffering tended to make you tough and bitter? Shattered and helpless? Strong and full of faith? Why?

*M*ichal's contempt for true worship can be contrasted with David's love of worship. He worshiped God with abandon, with a true heart. His devotion was so deep, so real, it had to be expressed in the most extravagant praise and in dancing "with all his might." That's the sort of worship God is looking for from his people, and he responds with a promise to bless.

### Promises in Scripture

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.  
Bring an offering and come before him;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*

—1 CHRONICLES 16:29

*Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, and seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

—NEHEMIAH 9:5–6

*Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;  
for he is our God.*

—PSALM 95:6–7

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

—PSALM 100:4

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HER LEGACY OF PRAYER

*Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. "I will give her to him," he thought, "so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him."*

—1 SAMUEL 18:20–21

*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 SAMUEL 6:16

REFLECT ON: 1 Samuel 19:11–17; 2 Samuel 6:16–23.

PRAISE GOD: Because he is the same—yesterday, today, and forever.

OFFER THANKS: That God gives us the freedom to choose how we will respond to him.

CONFESS: Allowing skepticism or cynicism to infiltrate your faith.

ASK GOD: To increase your awe of him.

### Lift Your Heart

*D*avid was so exuberant that he danced in public as a way of worshipping God. You may not be quite ready to take your joy to the streets, but you can loosen up a bit by raising your hands in prayer, visiting a church whose worship style is a little outside your comfort zone, or just dancing and singing along with a praise and worship tape when no one else is home. Go ahead. Enjoy yourself in God's presence! If he's not worth getting excited about, who is?

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*Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name" (Psalm 66:1–4).*