

## WHEN TO RSVP, "NO THANKS"

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"Just say, "NO" campaigns do their best to dissuade young people from illicit drugs, sex before marriage, alcohol, and invitations from would-be kidnappers. This time of year, with the many parties and Christmas activities getting into full swing, is probably a good time to remind ourselves that not every invitation from *friends* to do something is necessarily a good idea.

Centuries ago, a guy named Absalom -- the most charming, handsome and understanding man of his day -- threw a party in a place called Hebron. 200 people eager to respond to Absalom's invitation, attended the affair, not realizing that it was a rebellion party.

They got sucked into a conspiracy against rightful authority. How did that happen? And how can we avoid the same sort of trap?

### *Absalom -- Mister Friendly, Familiar Friend*

Third son of David, born in Hebron

Handsome, highly praised

Murders half brother for raping his sister

- ▶ secretly plots revenge for 2 years
- ▶ uses his followers to commit the murder
- ▶ flees justice but is recalled by King David after 3 years

Starts a fire to manipulate important people to pay attention to him

*The Conspiracy -- Bond, tie, compact against authority (physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual)*

14:33      Absalom uses David's love to take inappropriate liberties.

- (1) People can easily take advantage of mercy and forgiveness.
- (2) Conspirators have little sense of repentance.

15:1      Absalom provides himself with a chariot and heralds.

- (1) Conspirators who want to take authority upon themselves love visibility.
- (2) They like to start their own ministry and talk about their accomplishments.

15:2-4      Absalom intercepts people with grievances and offers his judgment as better than the King's.

- (1) Not everyone who asks you about your problems is really interested in your welfare.
- (2) Conspirators use other people's issues and matters as stepping stones to increase their own authority.
- (3) Not everyone who agrees with your complaints has good judgment.

15:5      Absalom encourages people to idolize him.

- (1) People who have been helped and counseled are inclined toward dangerous homage.
- (2) Beware of leaders who relish the attention and service offered by their followers.

15:6      In this way, Absalom steals away (deceive, thief) hearts.

*The Coup (after 4 years)*

15:7-8      Absalom uses religious pretenses to usurp authority.

15:9      Absalom goes to Hebron, where David was crowned.

- (1) True authority comes from obedience, not imitation.
- (2) It is easy to get "carried away" in the midst of good friends and long-term relationships (Hebron).