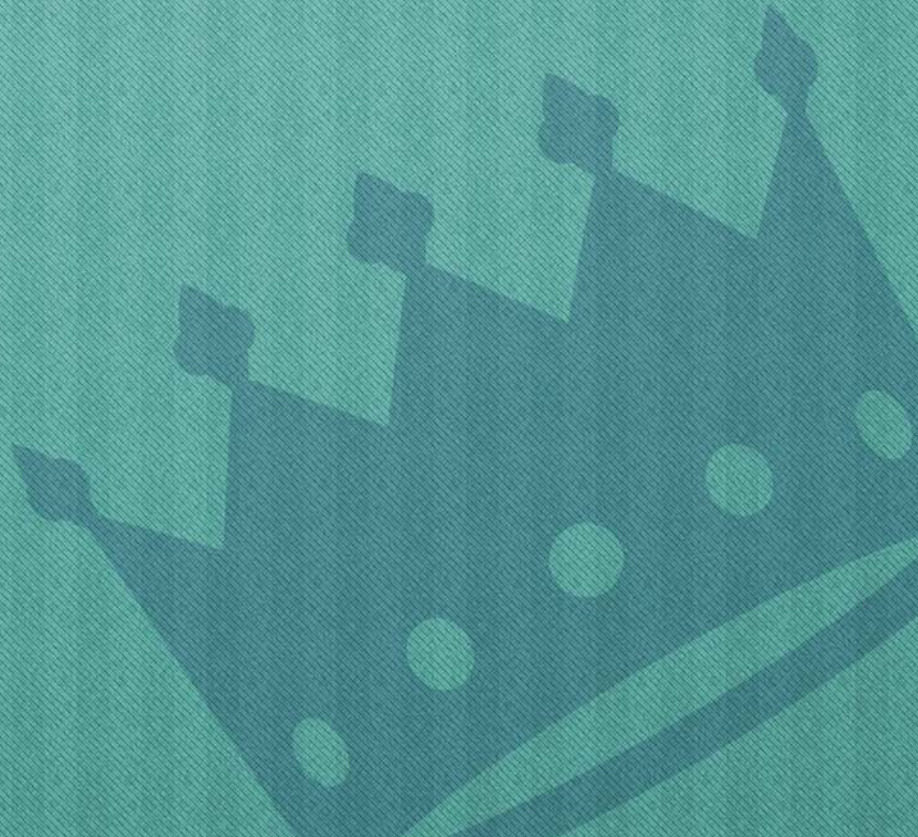


LEADING GOD'S WAY

...a study of the book of 1 Samuel



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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us for our study of the Book of 1 Samuel. This is the first of three “double books” in the Old Testament (1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles). 1 and 2 Samuel originally formed one book in the Hebrew Scriptures. Because of the compactness of the Hebrew language, both books could fit onto one scroll. When the Hebrew Bible was later translated into Greek, two scrolls were required, resulting in the two separate books we know today as 1 and 2 Samuel.¹

1 Samuel gives us the history of Israel during the transition from the rule of judges (as seen in the Book of Judges) to the era of the kings. This transition involves three phases. The first phase is focused on the leadership of the prophet Samuel (Chapters 1-7). In the second phase (Chapters 8-15), Samuel’s leadership overlaps with that of Israel’s first king, Saul. In the third phase (Chapters 16-31), the rule of Saul overlaps with the leadership of David, Saul’s replacement. The Book of 2 Samuel, which we will not cover in this study, is largely focused on the reign of David.

There are several key themes in the Book of 1 Samuel. One of these is the sovereignty of God. God raises up leaders and removes them (Psalm 75:6-7), but He alone is the supreme ruler. As Psalm 103:19 states: “The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”

Another theme in 1 Samuel is the importance of obeying God’s Word. Saul was rejected as king because of His failure to obey the Lord (1 Samuel 15:23). Though David was merely a sinful human being, God spoke of him as one “who kept my commandments and my statutes” (1 Kings 11:34).

The contrast between Saul and David highlights another key theme in 1 Samuel: leadership. The book gives us valuable insights into the kind of leadership God approves, and how He uses leaders who seek to hear and obey His guidance.

Another key theme in 1 Samuel is the importance of prayer. The book begins with the account of Hannah’s prayer for a child (1:10). Samuel was born when God answered his mother’s prayer. Samuel was a leader who prayed for the people he led. His commitment to pray for the people of Israel is seen in his own declaration: “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (12:23). Likewise, David was a man of prayer who often sought God’s guidance (30:8).

Like much of the Old Testament, the Book of 1 Samuel is a form of Scripture known as “narrative.” Biblical narratives tell us about things that have happened, and how God has been at work in history. Because biblical narratives differ from the straightforward teaching style of much of the New Testament, it may be helpful to keep in mind some principles for interpreting narratives. These ten principles come from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

¹ Rodger Crooks, *One Lord, One Plan, One People: A Journey through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 74.

Principles for Interpreting Narratives

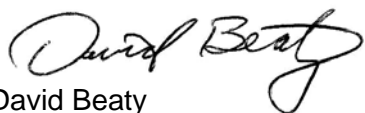
1. An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
2. An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.
4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
5. Most of the characters in Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too.
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in the Scripture.
7. *All* narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.
8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.
9. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).
10. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.²

Our study of 1 Samuel will be enriched by our study of selected psalms. Some of the psalms (including Psalms 34, 54, 56, and 59) were composed by King David in connection with events recorded in 1 Samuel. These psalms provide us with rich insights into David's communication with God during times of crisis.

As we begin this study of 1 Samuel, may we remember the words of Hannah's prayer recorded in 1 Samuel 2:2: "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."

May our great God and Savior give us a greater understanding of His holiness and His love as we study His Word!

In Christ,



David Beaty
Pastor, River Oaks Community Church

² Gordon F. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 83-84.

UNIT 1: THE NEED FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Background:

Eli and his sons were priests. In this highly honored office, they were responsible for determining God's will for the Israelites and offering sacrifices on behalf of the people. God's law made provision for priests with a portion of certain offerings, but Eli's sons severely abused their rights and dishonored God.

Reading: 1 Samuel 2:12-36; 3:11-18; 4:12-22

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What sins were being committed by Eli's sons (v. 2:12-25)?

2. Why were their sins particularly serious?

3. Should those in ministry positions be held to a higher standard than other people?

Why or why not? (See 1 Timothy 3:1-13; James 3:1.)

4. Why was Eli held responsible for the sins of his sons?

5. What was Eli's primary leadership failure?

6. What steps would you take to avoid that same failure in your life?

7. Read 1 Timothy 3:4-5. Why is an elder held responsible for properly leading his family?

8. How should leaders continue to responsibly guide their children as adults?

9. Does God's promise in 1 Samuel 2:35 point to Jesus?

Why or why not? (See Hebrews 2:17.)

Pray with any in your group who are parents. Pray with them for God's grace and wisdom in raising their children. Pray for God's Spirit to be at work in the lives of older children too.

UNIT 2: REPRESENTING PEOPLE BEFORE GOD

Background:

The “ark of the Lord’s covenant” was associated with God’s presence among His people (1 Samuel 4:3-7). The ark was captured in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11). It remained with the Philistines for a time (Chapter 5), before being returned to Israel (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 records a time of spiritual renewal in Israel under Samuel’s leadership.

Reading: 1 Samuel 7:1-17

Understanding and Applying God’s Word

1. What was Samuel’s challenge to the people of Israel (v. 3)?
2. Why was this step necessary in order to have God’s presence and power among them?
3. What role does repentance play in experiencing God’s presence and power in our lives today?
4. In verse 5, what did Samuel mean when he said, “I will intercede with the Lord for you”? (See also verses 8 and 9.)
5. How would you define “intercessory prayer”?

Why is it so important?

6. What was Samuel's understanding of the importance of his role in intercessory prayer? (See 12:23.)

7. Has God given you the responsibility to intercede in prayer for any particular person or group of people?

8. What other roles did Samuel fulfill as leader of the Israelites? (See 7:3, 9, 12, and 17.)

9. Should you be fulfilling any of these roles in your own spheres of influence (e.g. your home, place of work, church)?

How?

10. How does Jesus fulfill these roles as our great High Priest? (See Hebrews 4:14-16 and 7:23-28.)

UNIT 3: GOD'S WAY, GOD'S TIME

Background:

When the prophet Samuel grew old, the people of Israel asked for a king as his replacement (1 Samuel 8:6). Samuel warned the Israelites that their desire would have negative repercussions (1 Samuel 8: 9-20). Yet God told Samuel to "listen to them and give them a king" (1 Samuel 8:21). Saul, an outwardly impressive man, was chosen as the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:2). Samuel anointed Saul with oil as a sign of God's anointing upon him for his kingly rule (1 Samuel 10:1).

Reading: 1 Samuel 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What was Saul's initial reaction to being chosen as king (1 Samuel 9:21)?
2. How did God confirm His choice of Saul (1 Samuel, Chapter 11)?
3. What valuable lessons might Saul have learned from the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 12:22-25)?
4. Chapter 13 of 1 Samuel presents Israel preparing for battle with the Philistines. What specific instruction had Samuel given Saul regarding his leadership at this time (1 Samuel 10:8)?
5. Why did Saul disobey Samuel's instruction (1 Samuel 13:8-9)? [Note: Saul was chosen as a king, not a priest, and it was not his place to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.]

6. What did Saul's actions reveal about his character?

7. What was Samuel's response to Saul's impatience and presumption (1 Samuel 13:10-14)?

8. Why do you think the judgment Samuel pronounced was so severe?

9. Why do you think it was necessary to approach God with sacrificial offerings?

10. Why is it important to approach God on His terms?

11. How does Jesus enable us to approach God directly, without fear of condemnation? (See 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:22-27, and 1 Peter 3:18).

UNIT 4: HUMILITY AND LEADERSHIP

Background:

In Chapter 14, Saul and the Israelites are still engaged in war with the Philistines. In this chapter, Jonathan becomes a hero. He and his armor bearer launch a bold attack and defeat twenty Philistine warriors. This results in panic among the Philistines and they begin to retreat from the Israelites.

Reading: 1 Samuel 14

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. In what way did Jonathan demonstrate faith in God before attacking the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:6)?
2. How did he demonstrate submissiveness to God's will (1 Samuel 14:8-10)?
3. How did Saul demonstrate impatience and unsubmissiveness to God's direction before joining in the attack against the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:18-19)?
4. Why do you think Saul imposed an oath on his army (1 Samuel 14:24)?

Why was this foolish?

5. Was Saul eager to seek God's guidance in the continued assault against the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:36)?

6. Verse 37 records that God refused to answer Saul's request for guidance. How did Saul's judgment then go "from bad to worse"?

7. Why can pride, unsubmitiveness, and inflexibility be such harmful qualities in leaders?

8. Why is humility before God and others an essential quality for spiritual leaders?

9. Read Philippians 2:1-8. Explain why the crucifixion of Jesus reveals the greatest act of humility in history.

UNIT 5: COMPROMISE = REBELLION

Background:

In Chapter 15, Samuel gives Saul a command from the Lord to destroy the Amalekites. The Amalekites had been bitter enemies of the Israelites years before, attacking them during their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17:8). God's command to Saul was to completely destroy the Amalekites, leaving none alive and taking no plunder. [Note: God alone knows when people are corrupt beyond any possibility of repentance. His sovereignty in issuing such a decree of destruction is consistent with His perfect wisdom and His perfect love.]

Reading: 1 Samuel 15

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. Why did Saul not obey God's mandate?

2. What was Saul's response when confronted by Samuel (15:13)?

What was Saul's excuse?

3. What leadership weakness does Saul's excuse reveal?

4. Do you think Saul really believed he had obeyed God?

Why or why not?

5. What does verse 12 tell you about Saul's opinion of himself and his accomplishments?

6. What does verse 22 teach us about real devotion to the Lord?

7. Why did Samuel equate Saul's compromise with rebellion (verse 23)?

8. Why is the sin of rebellion so serious in God's eyes?

9. Since "to obey is better than sacrifice," God is clearly more interested in the attitudes of our hearts than in outward religious exercises. However, our best efforts at obeying God inevitably fall short. How then can we possibly please God? [Hint: Read Psalm 40:6-8 and Hebrews 10:5-10 before answering.]

10. If Jesus has provided for our acceptance with God by His perfect obedience, what is the motivation for our own obedience? (See John 14:23-24.)

11. How does God enable us to obey Him? [Read John 14:15-18 and John 14:25-26. Note how the promises of the Holy Spirit immediately follow the verses about obedience.]

UNIT 6: WHY LEADERS FALL

Background:

After Samuel pronounced God's rejection of Saul (13:14), the rejected king's behavior got even worse. His impatience and unsubmitiveness became outright rebellion against God (15:23). In Chapter 16, we are told that "the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him" (v. 14). Saul's rebellion had resulted in God's withdrawal of His Spirit. The Lord then allowed Saul to reap the consequences of his rebelliousness by allowing an evil spirit to afflict him. In God's mercy, Saul would find relief when David would play his harp for him (16:23). Later, Saul's insane jealousy would drive him to try to kill David (18:10-11).

Reading: 1 Samuel 18, 19, and 28

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What was at the root of Saul's hatred of David (18:6-9)?
2. Observe David's humility when offered the opportunity to marry Saul's daughter (18:18, 23). Note that David's humble assessment of himself came after he had killed Goliath (Chapter 17) and had experienced much military success (18:5). Why is a humble assessment of oneself important for those God uses in leadership?
3. Why are pride and jealousy so destructive in leadership?
4. Saul's lack of fitness as a leader is again seen in Chapter 28. In accord with God's law (Exodus 22:18), Saul had expelled all mediums and sorcerers from Israel. Yet when Saul was unable to get guidance from God, he sought guidance from a medium. What does this indicate about Saul's spiritual condition (specifically, his trust in God)?

Do you see any connection between Saul's behavior and Samuel's statement in 15:23?

Why or why not?

5. Saul's demise as a leader might be depicted in these steps:

Pride → insubordination → disobedience →
jealousy → manipulation → witchcraft → death

Can you find a verse in 1 Samuel that supports each of these steps?

- Pride: _____
- Insubordination: _____
- Disobedience: _____
- Jealousy: _____
- Manipulation: _____
- Witchcraft: _____
- Death: _____

6. Why is it so important that a leader knows how to submit to authority?

7. Why must a leader be able to recognize a bad decision, accept responsibility for it, apologize, and change course?

8. Why is it important for a leader to let others excel in leadership?

9. Share several ways that Jesus showed us the right way to lead.

10. Why is it so important for a Christian leader to be secure in his or her acceptance with God through Christ before becoming a leader in the church?

Bonus Question: Do you think Saul is in heaven? Why or why not?

UNIT 7: THE LEADER WHO TRUSTS GOD

Background:

By the time of the events of 1 Samuel 17, Saul had been rejected by God (15:26), but was still reigning as king. Samuel had anointed David as king and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (16:13). Yet David was still serving his father, Jesse, by tending sheep. He also took provisions from his father to his older brothers who were enlisted in Saul’s army. It was on one of these errands that David saw the Israelite army aligned for battle against the Philistines. David saw Goliath, the giant Philistine warrior, as he stepped forward to defy Israel. When no one from the Israelite army stepped forward to face the Philistine, the young shepherd-king volunteered (17:32).

Goliath was no average warrior. One commentator estimates his height at nine feet and nine inches. His upper body was covered by a coat of mail weighing 126 pounds. His head was protected by a bronze helmet and his legs were covered by bronze armor. The iron head of his massive spear weighed more than 15 pounds.³ By contrast, David was, in Saul’s words, “only a boy” (17:33).

Reading: 1 Samuel 17

Understanding and Applying God’s Word

1. Why was David disturbed by the taunts of Goliath?
2. Why was David confident that he could face the Philistine giant?
3. Why did Saul consent to allow David to do that?
4. What is the significance of David’s reliance upon “the name of the Lord Almighty” (17:45)?

³ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel—Looking for a Leader*, Preaching the Word Commentary Series (Wheaton: Crossing Books, 2008), 305-307.

5. What qualities do you see in David's life that point to his becoming a better leader for God's people than Saul?

6. Choose the statement below that you think best states the spiritual truth seen in the account of David's battle with Goliath:
 - a. If a person has adequate faith in God, he or she will win every battle in life.

 - b. God often magnifies His name by empowering the weak who place their trust in Him.

Explain why you chose the answer you did.

Can you cite Scripture references that support your choice?

7. Read Hebrews 11:32-40. How does this passage help you understand God's extraordinary work through ordinary people?

What is the "better" thing God planned for us?

8. Is there a situation in your life to which you should apply some spiritual truth from 1 Samuel 17 or Hebrews 11?

UNIT 8: THE SUFFERING OF A LEADER

Background:

Chapter 19 of 1 Samuel records David fleeing for his life from King Saul. As we study this chapter, we will also study Psalm 59. This psalm is one of fourteen psalms that includes a historical note in its heading. These notes reveal the circumstances of David's life out of which the psalms were written. (Note: Some online versions do not include the headings with psalms. Be sure to get a version that contains these headings. They are part of the original Hebrew text and should be considered Scripture.) The heading of Psalm 59 includes these words: "When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him." We can clearly connect this psalm to 1 Samuel 19:11, which reads: "Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning." Having such a clear connection between a psalm and a narrative passage is a great help in interpreting and applying Scripture. 1 Samuel 19 can help us in our study of Psalm 59. Likewise, study of the 59th psalm will help us in our study of 1 Samuel 19.

Reading: 1 Samuel 19 and Psalm 59

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. When Jonathan persuaded his father, Saul, not to kill David, Saul took an oath to that effect (1 Samuel 19:6). Do you think the events recorded in verse 8 had anything to do with Saul's violation of his oath?

Why or why not?

2. In verse 9, we are told that "an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul." (See also 1 Samuel 16:14, 23, and 18:10.) Though difficult to understand, we can assume this means that God allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul. Why do you think God's judgment on Saul was so severe?
3. Look at Psalm 59. The heading of the psalm tells us David intended it to be set to music. Why would David have wanted these words to be put into song?

4. Where in Psalm 59 does David remind himself, and us, who God is?

5. What does David's prayer in verse 1 tell us about his trust in God?

6. What does David mean in verse 9 when he says to God, "I watch for you"?

7. What qualities does David ascribe to God in verses 16 and 17?

8. Why do you think he ends the psalm with this emphasis on singing praise to God?

9. What do you consider to be the characteristics of a good worship song?

UNIT 9: THE SERVANT LEADER: JONATHAN

Background:

The relationship of Jonathan and David has served throughout history as a model of committed friendship. Chapter 20 of 1 Samuel brings to light the significant sacrifice made by Jonathan in sustaining this friendship. Jonathan's actions show him to be an unselfish "servant-leader."

Reading: 1 Samuel 14 and 20

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What does 1 Samuel 14 teach you about Jonathan's skill as a warrior?

What does it teach you about his trust in God?

2. What does Chapter 14 reveal about Jonathan's reputation among the Israelite soldiers?

Do you think they would have followed Jonathan as their leader?

Why or why not?

3. It would have been understandable if Jonathan had aspired to follow his father, Saul, as king of Israel. Why did Jonathan not seek this for himself?

4. See 1 Samuel 20:13-15. What do these verses indicate about Jonathan's understanding of God's plan?

What do they indicate about his humility?

5. See 1 Samuel 20:30-34. Why do you think Jonathan was not controlled by the jealousy seen in his father?
6. Read Jesus' words found in Matthew 23:11-12. Why was Jonathan a great leader?
7. Read Philippians 2:1-11. Why are verses 3 and 4 especially important for those in leadership?

Why are those verses so hard to obey?

Why was the self-humbling of Christ, described in Philippians 2:6-8, the most remarkable example of humility in all of history?

How should the example of Christ affect us?

UNIT 10: LEADERSHIP GROWTH THROUGH HARDSHIP

Background:

In David's desperation to escape Saul, he fled to the Philistine city of Gath. Gath was the city of Goliath, the Philistine giant whom David had killed. Moreover, the sword David carried on his flight was the unique sword he had taken from Goliath (1 Samuel 21:9). Why would David flee to Gath? Perhaps he reasoned that Saul would never think to look for him there!

David soon realized the risk he had taken by going to Gath. The servants of Achish, King of Gath, warned the king about David (1 Samuel 21:11). In his fear, David pretended to be insane, hoping that Achish would dismiss him as a harmless madman. He left Gath and took refuge in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1).

The significance of these events in David's life is seen in the fact that two of his psalms are connected to these circumstances. David was moved by the Holy Spirit to write both Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 in response to the events of 1 Samuel 21. Both psalms reveal David's fear, but also his trust in God. They also teach us how we can draw closer to God and grow stronger in faith during the hardest times of our lives.

Reading: 1 Samuel 21:10-15, Psalm 34, and Psalm 56

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. Why is David's praise of God in Psalm 34 especially significant?
2. What does Psalm 34 teach us about trusting God during a crisis?
3. What does the psalm reveal about God's concern for His suffering children?
4. Can righteous people expect to have fewer troubles in life?

Why or why not?

5. Why would the Holy Spirit inspire David to write the unusual words found in Psalm 34:20? (See John 19:31-37 before answering.)

6. See Psalm 56. How has David learned to deal with his fear?

7. In the face of very real threats, why does David say, "What can mortal man do to me" (verse 4; also verse 11)?

8. What is the greatest lesson you have ever learned through hardship?

Has this made you a better spiritual leader?

How?

Bonus Questions:

In Psalm 34:12-13, David teaches us not to lie. Yet in 1 Samuel 21, we see that David lied to Ahimelech the priest and deceived Achish, king of Gath. Do you think David regretted any of this?

Would the events of 1 Samuel 22:18-22 (the killing of Ahimelech and his family of priests) have affected David's thinking about his deception of Ahimelech?

UNIT 11: THE LEADER WHO SEEKS GOD FIRST

Background:

1 Samuel 23 records Saul's continued pursuit of David. But the chapter begins with David being told that the Philistines were looting the city of Keilah. (This was apparently an Israelite city.) David asked God whether he should attack the Philistines to save the city. Verse 2 reads, "The Lord answered him, 'Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.'" This is significant for a couple of reasons. For one, David was fleeing for his own life. The fact that he would lead an army on a mission for God's purposes shows his devotion to the Lord. (By contrast, Saul had been called to deliver Israel from the Philistines [1 Samuel 9:16], but he was consumed with pursuing David!) But even greater significance is seen in the fact that the Lord spoke to David. This is the first time the Bible records God giving direct guidance to David, but it will not be the last. By contrast, Saul has been unable to get guidance from the Lord (1 Samuel 14:37).

It appears that Psalm 54 is connected with the events of this chapter. (See 1 Samuel 23:19-20 and the heading of Psalm 54. However, the psalm could also be connected with the occasion of 1 Samuel 26:1). The psalm provides us with David's prayer and proclamation of trust in God while his life is continually threatened by Saul and his army.

Reading: 1 Samuel 23 and Psalm 54

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. Why was David's call to "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah" a particular challenge for him as a leader (1 Samuel 23:3)?
2. What did David do in the face of this challenge?
3. Verse 6 of 1 Samuel 23 tells us that Abiathar (son of Ahimelech the priest) came to Keilah with the ephod. The sacred ephod was used for determining God's will in specific situations (see Exodus 28:6-14). With this "official" means of guidance now available, David showed his regard for the office of the priest by utilizing the priest and ephod. Having just defeated the mighty Philistines, why would David seek guidance about a threat from Saul?

4. After fleeing Keilah, David stayed in the Desert of Ziph. Apparently, he was growing discouraged (1 Samuel 23:14-15), and his friend Jonathan came to see him. How might Jonathan have helped David “find strength in God” (verse 16)?

How could you help a friend in this way?

5. The Ziphites knew David was hiding in their area, and they sought to betray him to Saul. See Psalm 54. What is the significance of David’s reliance upon God’s name and God’s might in verse 1?
6. Is verse 4 of Psalm 54 a good summary of what David seemed to be learning about life and leadership in God’s kingdom?

Why or why not?

Why is it that God seems to delight in those who trust in Him?

7. How do you decide which decisions in life you should pray about?

Does the Lord want you to change your approach to decision-making in any way?

UNIT 12: THE LEADER WHO WAITS ON GOD'S TIME

Background:

Chapters 24 and 26 of 1 Samuel present similar events in Saul's ongoing pursuit of David. In Chapter 24, we are told that Saul and three thousand chosen soldiers were seeking David in the Desert of En Gedi. Saul entered a cave, unaware that David and his four hundred men were hiding there. David's men saw this as a golden opportunity for David to kill Saul and take the throne as rightful king. But David refused to harm "the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6).

In Chapter 26, we see Saul and his men in the Desert of Ziph with David and his men secretly encamped nearby. David and Abishai entered Saul's camp at night and removed the spear and water jug at Saul's head. These items served as proof that David could have killed Saul but chose instead to spare his life. Chapters 24 and 26 each provide a remarkable example of a leader who refused to take matters into his own hands, choosing instead to wait for God to act in His own way and time.

Reading: 1 Samuel 24 and 26

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. How might David have justified a decision to kill Saul when he entered the cave (1 Samuel 24:3-4)?
2. Why did David refuse to take Saul's life?
3. Do you think David's decision was popular with his men?

Why or why not?

4. Why did David consider Saul "the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6,10) when David himself had been anointed to take Saul's place (1 Samuel 16:13)?

5. Why are we so often in a hurry when it is evident that God is not?

6. What should be our attitude when waiting on God to bring about His plan for our lives?

7. When David passed up a second opportunity to take Saul's life (1 Samuel 26:8-11), what reasons did he give for his restraint?

8. Read 1 Peter 2:21-23. How did Jesus respond when He was insulted?

9. Do you find it difficult to leave matters of justice in God's hands?

10. How can you more fully trust God in situations that seem unfair?

UNIT 13: ABIGAIL—WISE LEADERSHIP

Background:

In 1 Samuel 25, we find David and his roving band of warriors in the Desert of Maon. There was a wealthy man named Nabal who lived there. David and his men could easily have stolen all of the sheep they wanted from Nabal. Instead, they treated Nabal's herders and sheep shearers well, and even protected them (v. 16). So when David made a request for provisions from Nabal, it was natural to expect Nabal to respond favorably.

But Nabal was not a wise man. The Hebrew meaning of his name is "fool," and our passage describes him as "surly and mean" (v. 3). Nabal scorned David's request and insulted David and his men. When David's messengers returned with Nabal's response, David's reaction was swift and decisive: "Put on your swords!" (v. 13) David and his men would have shed much blood if it had not been for the intervention of a very wise woman: Abigail, Nabal's wife. Her bold actions prevented the bloodshed and kept David from unwise actions.

Reading: 1 Samuel 25

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What was Nabal's view of his possessions (v. 11)?

Why was his viewpoint consistent with his name?

2. Was David unwise in his declaration in verses 21 and 22?

Why or why not?

3. See verses 23 and 24. Abigail took a big risk in what she did. What good leadership qualities do you see in her?

4. Note Abigail's beautiful words in verses 28-31. How could she have known to say these things?

5. Note how God is credited with restraining David from wrongdoing in verses 26, 34, and 39. Also note that He used Abigail to do that (v. 33).

Why are we in need of God's restraining work in our lives?

How can we better cooperate with His restraining work? (See Matthew 6:13.)

6. Why did David realize it would have been wrong for him to kill Nabal (v. 39)?

7. Why did God sometimes allow, and even direct, Saul and David to attack and kill people?

Is this a contradiction with His commandment in Exodus 20:13?

Why or why not?

Bonus Questions:

Is there ever justification for war today?

Why or why not?

Is a Christian ever justified in taking someone else's life?

Try to find Scripture to guide you in your answers.

UNIT 14: WHEN LEADERS FACE DISCOURAGEMENT

Background:

1 Samuel 27 records that David allied himself, along with his soldiers, to Achish, king of Gath. The Philistine king trusted David and gave him the city of Ziklag, where David and his men lived for a year and four months (vv. 6-7).

When Achish and the Philistines prepared to engage Israel in battle (see Chapter 29), David and his men followed Achish. The Philistine commanders were angry with Achish for allowing David to join them, fearing he would turn against them in the heat of battle. Achish sent David and his men back to Ziklag.

On returning to Ziklag, David and his men were met with tragedy. The Amalekites had raided Ziklag, burned the city, and taken all of the women and children as captives. Bitter and discouraged, David's own men placed the blame on their leader and spoke of stoning David. This must surely have been one of the lowest low points of David's life.

Reading: 1 Samuel 30

Understanding and Applying God's Word

1. What do you think David did to find strength in God (v. 6) at this time of crisis?

What would you do if faced with such a hopeless situation?

2. Note that David sought direction from the Lord in the crisis (vv. 7-8). Why did David still trust God to guide him despite all of the loss he had experienced?

3. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken (vv. 18-19). Why was David able to be generous with the men who were too weary to help in the rescue mission (vv.21-25)? (i.e. What belief gave rise to his graciousness?)

What leadership qualities are seen in David in this decision?

4. Consider what has transpired in David's life from the time of his anointing to be king (1 Samuel 16) to now. Why do you think God allowed so much adversity in David's life before he reigned as king in Israel?

5. How can discouragement be used to shape a Christian for more effective leadership in God's kingdom?

6. Read Jesus' words in John 14:23-27. How does the Holy Spirit encourage us in times of discouragement?

Can you share an instance when the Holy Spirit strengthened you with His encouragement during a hard time?

7. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What should be happening when we spend time in fellowship with other Christians?

How can you take a more active role in the call to "encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25)?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS FROM 1 SAMUEL STUDY

1. Based on your study of 1 Samuel, what would you say is the most important quality for a Christian leader?

Why?

How is that quality seen in Jesus?

2. Share the most important leadership lesson you have learned from 1 Samuel.

How can this lesson be applied in your life?

3. Why must a person be submitted to spiritual authority in order to be effective in Christian leadership? (Read Luke 7:1-10 before answering.)

4. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Why are the qualifications for the office of elder and deacon so high?

Why is it important to properly manage your own family before exercising leadership in the church?

5. Why must a person be willing to be “stretched” to be a leader of God’s people?

How might God want to stretch you?

6. Take time to pray for each person in your group about leadership growth and any leadership opportunities that God may have in store.

Bonus Question for 1 Samuel study:

Was it really the prophet Samuel who appeared in Chapter 28?

Why or why not?

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