

Choices That Matter

Studies from the Life of David (I)

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Foreword

Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

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Choices that Matter

Studies from the Life of David

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Before you begin . . .

David is among the Bible's most loved characters, ranking with Abraham, Moses, and Paul as a champion of faith in the living God.

David's experiences were varied. He was a shepherd on the hills of Judah, a servant in King Saul's palace, a very successful warrior and finally a king. He experienced poverty and wealth, hatred and love, persecution and honor, obscurity and prominence, the depths of sin and the heights of worship. But in every position and condition of life, David knew what it was to trust in the Lord. He poured out his heart to God in praises, thanksgiving, confessions and requests, and many of his prayers were preserved in the Psalms.

As we follow the life of David, we will see his great faith, victories and successes as well as his unfaithfulness, defeats and failures. As we are inspired by his writings, cautioned by his mistakes and instructed by his leadership and service, we will learn how to make the choices that matter as we face issues of life today.

Most importantly, our study will build our knowledge of God, who bids us to trust Him to lead our lives in the best possible way. May the pages of this study encourage you as you discover or rediscover that a loving and faithful heavenly Father does not abandon us when we fail, but rather stands by to use even our failures to bring about our blessing.

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PART I

SAMUEL, SAUL AND DAVID

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

The main text for our study of David's life will be the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. David comes on the scene in 1 Samuel 16, but in order to put his life in perspective, we need to start at the beginning of 1 Samuel.

Joshua had led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, a land which God had promised them through their forefather Abraham hundreds of years earlier (Genesis 12:6,7; 17:8). After Israel's conquest of Canaan, God appointed judges¹ to rule over the nation for the next 300 years. These were years of spiritual decline as the Israelites increasingly rejected God and His leadership. They quickly forgot God's miracles that had brought them into the land of Canaan, and they began to view the enemies around their nation as threats too great for God's providence and protection to handle. In spite of God's warning that a monarchy would bring calamity, they demanded to be governed by a king as were the neighboring nations. Their request was both a disregard of God's counsel and a clear rejection of His rule over them (1 Sam 8:7).

1 Samuel records how God raised up Samuel to be the last judge in Israel. Samuel was also a priest² and prophet³ who warned the people of the consequences of rejecting God's leadership and choosing to have a potentially selfish human to rule over them. The people of Israel insisted, however, and the disastrous 500 years of monarchy that followed finally resulted in 160 years of captivity in Babylon and Assyria.

The book of 1 Samuel, written by an anonymous author, is the fourth historical volume of the Old Testament. It serves as a transition book, narrating the biographies of the last judge, Samuel, and the first king, Saul. It also relates the early years of David, who is the main character of 2 Samuel. Beginning with Samuel's birth and ending with the death of Saul and establishment of David's reign, 1 Samuel covers about 95 years (approximately 1105-1010 B.C.).

Although the setting is in a barbaric land three thousand years ago, we will see that the people and problems were very similar to those of today.

HANNAH'S STORY

1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

The book of 1 Samuel begins with the story of Hannah, an Israelite woman who was barren. She pleaded with God for a son, promising to give him back to God for the Nazirite priesthood.⁴ God answered her prayer in the birth of Samuel. As she had vowed, Hannah took Samuel at age three to live at the sanctuary of the Lord at Shiloh. She visited her son regularly, but Eli, the priest at Shiloh, raised Samuel.

Unselfishly, Hannah rejoiced to see her son serve the Lord and Israel, and God rewarded her with three other sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:20,21). Through her experience, Hannah had grown to know and love the Lord more deeply, as evidenced by her prayer of praise (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20.

1. What irritation made it especially difficult for Hannah to accept her childlessness (1:2,6,7)?

2. a. What words described Hannah's emotional state (1:8-11)?

b. How did she deal with her frustration (1:10-11)?

c. What resulted (1:19-20)?

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28.

3. a. What amazing decisions did Hannah make after Samuel's birth?

b. What did Hannah's choices show about her character and relationship with the Lord?

4. What effect did her decisions have on Samuel (1:28b; also 2:11,18)?

5. What contact did Hannah have with Samuel as he grew (2:19)?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

6. Samuel would become the greatest priest, judge and prophet in Israel since Moses. What does Hannah's song suggest that she taught Samuel about God that prepared him to be the man of the hour for God's people?

Reference: Note 5, *God's chosen people*, p. 12.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Turning Sorrow to Joy

Behind almost every outstanding person is an outstanding parent. Hannah made some wise choices before and after becoming a parent that allowed her son to become a godly leader in Israel. Her choices not only turned her own sorrow into joy, but bridged the gap of need for her entire nation.

Sorrow is a part of life, but often presents the possibility for the greatest joys of life if handled wisely. Let's make some observations about how we can turn our sorrow into joy for ourselves and others.

1. What did Hannah believe about God in spite of her barren condition (1:10,11,15-18)?

2. J. Oswald Sanders tells the story of the Boston preacher, Phillip Brooks, who was found by a friend pacing up and down the room in great agitation. "What's the matter, Phillips?" the friend asked. "Matter enough," was the reply. "I am in a hurry and God is not." When our

timing and way is not God's, what does Hannah's story encourage us to believe?

Reference: Note, p. 54, question 7.

3. What choices can we make in the face of delay that allows God to turn sorrow into joy?

Philippians 4:6-7

Psalm 37:4-6

Psalm 27:14

4. Hannah also made an unusual decision in what she did with what God gave her in answer to her prayers. What choice in giving did Hannah make that eventually brought her joy and blessed all of Israel (1:11, 22,24-28, 2:20-21)?

5. What does God promise when we dedicate or give to Him what He has given us?

Luke 6:38

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Malachi 3:10

Note: This verse specifically refers to the *tithe* or *tenth* that the Israelites were instructed to give to the Levites, the tribe of Israel who owned no land, but were in charge of worship and sacrifices throughout the land (Leviticus 27:30). However, the broader principle of God's abundant blessing when we give toward His purposes--whether in time, talent or treasure--is clearly stated in this verse.

6. a. What attitudes and actions commend Hannah as a parent and as a person?

b. What ultimate joy came from the difficult parental choices she made with Samuel?

SUMMARY

7. Is there an area of your life that is not fulfilled at this time?

What does Hannah's story encourage you to do regardless of how hopeless the situation may seem?

8. When God answers prayer, what handling of the blessing can bring the most joy?

9. Whether in parenting, marriage or friendship, what attitudes toward those you love can bring the most satisfaction?

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *Judges*. Israel had conquered the land of Canaan in a patchwork manner, and God graciously raised up leaders, called *judges*, to govern the people and bring deliverance from their foes in the land. These leaders led Israel for about 300 years, from the time of the elders who outlived Joshua until the time of the monarchy (about 1350-1050 B.C.). The book of Judges describes the deliverance God brought about for Israel through these leaders and Israel's response (summarized in Judges 2:16-19). The six major judges were Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon,

Jephthah and Samson. Six minor judges were Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon. Samuel was the judge, prophet and priest who guided Israel through the transition from theocracy (God's rule) to the establishment of a monarchy, the rule of a human king which the people preferred and demanded.

2 Priest. A priest is one who presents the needs of the people to God. In the Old Testament, the sons of Aaron were set apart as priests to offer sacrifices for sins. Christ fulfills the Old Testament priesthood as He offered Himself as the holy lamb of sacrifice for the sins of all people for all time. Through faith in Him, we no longer require a priest, but can go directly to God with our needs. (See Leviticus 17:11,14; John 1:29, Hebrews 9:22. Also Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16.)

3 Prophet. Prophets were called directly by God and brought God's messages to the people. They always prefaced their words with "This is what the Lord says." They pronounced God's judgment on sin and, as *seers*, predicted the near or distant future. The tests for the authenticity of a prophet were (1) his prophecy always came true (2) his teaching corresponded with God's revelation, and (3) he lived a godly life. Jesus Christ became the final and perfect Prophet, the actual "*Word of God made flesh*" (John 1:1,14).

4 Nazirite priesthood. This was a special vow of separation and consecration to the Lord that was marked by disciplines in diet, appearance and associations (Numbers 6:1-21). The long hair of the Nazirite was a physical mark of their vow of devotion to God. The Nazirite vow usually lasted for a set period of time. Samuel's Nazirite priesthood would last a lifetime.

5 God's chosen people also referred to as *Jews, Hebrews, Israel*. These titles all refer to descendants of Abraham. He was a man of faith whom God set apart to become the father of a nation, Israel, whose God-given charge was to make the one true God known to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). From this nation would come the Savior-Messiah who would redeem the world from sin (Isaiah 53, Romans 6:23).

LESSON 2

SAMUEL & ELI'S SON

1 Samuel 2:11-4:1a

Convinced by his unusual birth that God had a special purpose for Samuel, Hannah and Elkanah left their son at Shiloh to be raised by Eli the priest. The sanctuary at Shiloh was the most important in Israel as it was the place where Israelites brought sacrifices¹ to make atonement for their sins. Eli and his two sons, Phinehas and Hophni, were the priests by family inheritance.

As the narrative continues, the author draws a clear contrast between the humble, devout and simple family of Samuel and the prestigious, but out-of-control family of the chief priest Eli. While Samuel grew as an obedient servant in the house of the Lord, Eli's two sons disobeyed their father and mocked God.

The greed and sexual perversion that brought Eli's sons into disrepute were clear. Hophni and Phinehas arrogantly ordered the sacrificial worship in a sacrilegious way by demanding the best portions of the sacrificial meat for their own consumption even before it was used in sacrifice for sin. They also slept with the women who served in the temple. Eli joined them in the feasting, rebuked them strongly for their immorality, but did not demand their obedience to the Lord on either issue. Consequently, God determined to end their days in leadership. Because these men were in positions of national religious and political leadership, their downfall would mean national crisis for Israel.

In the midst of the heresy, however, God was carefully preparing Samuel to take leadership in Israel. As he grew up in Shiloh, Samuel was well-liked by everyone who came there (2:26). The young man of peasant origin was an obedient and available servant to Eli and those around him.

b. Phinehas and Hophni as sons versus Samuel as a son?

Read 1 Samuel 2:27-36.

3. a. Who did God confront regarding the sin of Eli's sons?

b. What was Eli's main mistake (2:29)?

Note: *not be an old man in your family line* (2:31). The vile heresy of Eli's sons had seeded evil in Israel that would lead to the death of Eli's sons (4:11), the massacre of Eli's descendants by Saul at Nob (22:18-19) and the removal of Abiathar from office (1 Kings 2:26-27), all of which spelled the end of Eli's descendants in the priesthood. *distress in my dwelling* (2:32). Philistines would capture the ark (4:1-10), Shiloh would be destroyed (Jeremiah 7:14) and the temple would be moved to Nob (21:1-6), all of which meant spiritual upheaval for Israel.

4. 1 Samuel 2:30b holds the key verse in 1 & 2 Samuel. How would you put it in your own words? (You might find a dictionary helpful.)

Read 1 Samuel 3.

5. How did the Lord call Samuel as a prophet (3:1-10)?

Note: *did not yet know the Lord* (3:7). Samuel had not yet had a direct revelation from God. *NIV Study Bible*, p. 379.

6. a. What sad news came in the Lord's first words to Samuel (11-14)?

b. How did Samuel respond (3:15-17)?

c. How did Eli respond (3:17-18)?

7. What hope came to Israel through Samuel (3:19-21)?

Note: *none of his words fell* (3:19). His prophecies came true.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Making Wise Choices

Most of us make hundreds of choices in any given day, most of which seem so insignificant that we don't even realize we are making them. The fact of the matter is that our smallest choices set the framework for our bigger choices, and all our choices fashion our total effect on the world around us.

It is clear from the story of Eli and his sons that our most important choices, however insignificant they may seem to us, are in our relationship with God. How responsive are we to His love and wisdom for our lives? Do we come to God on our terms or His? The choices we make every day in answer to these questions will determine the rest of our decisions and can profoundly affect the lives of those around us.

Like Samuel, we can not only develop a healthy, constructive lifestyle if we choose to put God first, but also become a person through whom God can bring blessing to others for generations to come. Let's take a closer look at what the Bible has to say about the foundation for making wise choices.

1. What choices did these people make that led to blessing or cursing in the lives of others?

a. Hannah

b. Eli

c. Hophni and Phinehas

d. Samuel

2. We make many choices each day of which we are barely aware. How can we make healthy and unhealthy decisions in these areas?

What we think about ourselves:

How we think and talk about others:

How we relate to God:

3. What guidelines for these choices did God give the Israelites that can help us today?

Leviticus 19:18b

Deuteronomy 6:5

4. a. Why do you think it was hard for Hophni, Phinehas and Eli to follow such simple principles? What do you think tripped them up?

b. What focus and attitudes in Samuel's life made it easier for him to make healthy choices?

c. In light of your answers, what is essential to make wise choices about your relationship to God?

5. How does God promise to respond to our desire to be close to Him and please Him?

1 Samuel 2:30b

Psalm 91:14,15

Psalm 34:4-5,9-10

Psalm 37:25

6. No doubt, God gave Eli and his sons many chances to change their ways. What is God's invitation in the following verses?

Psalm 37:27

Isaiah 1:18

7. The sacrifices were God's provision for forgiveness. So it is that we are never right with God because of our own perfection. What is the perfect sacrifice we trust in today?

John 1:29

Colossians 2:13b-14

Reference: Note 1, sacrifices, p. 21.

SUMMARY

8. From this lesson, what stand out to you as the most important choices you can make for yourself and those around you?

9. What hinders you from making such choices? What helps?

10. How might your life benefit from such choices?

11. Unlike Samuel, Eli and Hophni refused to acknowledge the sacrifices God provided for their sin. Those sacrifices pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, “The lamb of God” (John 1:29). If you have never personally put faith in the perfect sacrifice of Christ to make you clean before God, perhaps you would want to make that most important choice now.

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 Sacrifices. “Early on, sacrifices became the heart of the worship of God in the Old Testament. There were two main purposes for sacrifices: (a) cleansing from sin by means of burnt offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings; (b) expressing thanksgiving and devotion to God through grain and fellowship offerings. But sacrifices by themselves were

insufficient, for God wanted these accompanied by a humble heart and by obedience and devotion to him.” *NIV Topical Bible*, p. 108.

The New Testament stresses that the Old Testament sacrifices of blood did not actually take away sin; rather, they pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (John 1:29). After faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus for sin, the sacrifice God asks of us today is the giving of our lives for His glory (Romans 12:1,2).

2 Reference: Note 3, Prophet, p. 12.

LESSON 3

THE ARK AND THE PHILISTINES

1 Samuel 4:1b-7:2

The author now takes us from the sanctuary at Shiloh to the battlefield at Aphek where Israel once again faced the Philistines. In the first battle, Israel was defeated and lost 4,000 men. As a result, the elders of the land met to discuss the reason behind the great loss. They decided it was because they lacked God's presence on the battlefield; Israel knew God had been responsible for their countless victories in years past.

To achieve God's power and presence in battle, they decided to send for the ark of the Lord.¹ This chest that contained the sacred tablets of Mosaic law symbolized God's presence in Israel. It resided in the sanctuary at Shiloh and was brought up to the battlefield by the priests Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's heretic sons.

When the Philistines heard of the ark being brought into the enemy camp, they were reminded of the Israelite God's powerful deliverance of His people from the Egyptians. Consequently, they were afraid and rallied to fight harder. Israel suffered a devastating loss of 30,000 more men in the subsequent battle.

Israel's grief was fourfold that day:

- (1) In two battles, 34,000 men had been massacred, meaning Philistine domination in much of their land.
- (2) Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had been killed (high priests that Israel looked to for both religious and political leadership).
- (3) The ark, which symbolized God's presence, had been captured by the Philistines.
- (4) Eli, who had been judge over Israel some 40 years, dropped dead upon hearing the news of the day.

When Phinehas' wife learned of all these terrible events, she went into premature labor and died during childbirth. As she gave birth to a son, she named him Ichabod, meaning “no glory,” because she felt the glory of God had left Israel that day. Her statement summarized the events that ended an era in Israel’s history. God had shown clearly that confidence in the ark, the symbol of God’s presence, was insufficient. Their faith in God had eroded into pagan worship of a symbol rather than of the Lord Himself.

The story then moves to Philistine territory. Even though the powerful warriors of the land had defeated the Israeli peasants and farmers, they were not so well equipped to deal with the presence of Israel’s God. As the ark was placed in three of their five major cities, a deadly plague broke out in each city where it rested. After seven months of grief, the Philistine experts in religious matters were consulted for direction. These men proposed to send the ark back to Israel on a cow-drawn cart. Solid gold mice and tumors, representing the plague God had inflicted upon the cities where the ark had lodged, were placed in the ark as guilt offerings to the God of Israel. They released the cows with the cart, believing that if the animals headed for Israel they would know for sure that the plagues had come from the God of Israel. Even when their calves were taken from them,² the cows went directly toward the Israelite town of Beth-Shemesh when they were released.

Israel received the ark gladly, although it seemed that seventy were killed³ upon its delivery. The Hebrew writer of 1 Samuel attributed their deaths to God’s dealing with the sacrilegious handling of the sacred ark.

Nevertheless, the ark was carefully moved to the home of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim, where it remained some forty years. In this dark time in the Israel's history, the return of the ark brought the hope that God was still with them and would not remain inactive forever. As a result, many people humbly turned back to God during the next twenty years.

Read 1 Samuel 4:1b-22.

1. What did the Israelites trust in to save them in their second battle, and who brought it to the battlefield (4:3-4)?

2. a. In review, what had God promised Eli would happen to his sons (2:34)?

b. Why would this happen to Phinehas and Hophni (2:12, 17, 22, 30)?

3. Had Israel won the battle, which do you think would have been praised for the victory: the ark, Eli's sons or God? Why?

4. a. Briefly list the difficult events that Israel experienced almost simultaneously.

4:2

4:10-11

4:12-18

4:19-21

b. What was the greatest cause for grief in Israel (4:22)?

Read 1 Samuel 5:1-12.

5. When God chastened Israel by a devastating defeat, it appeared to the Philistines that Israel's God was powerless. In what ways did God demonstrate his power to these people?

5:1-5

5:6-12

Reference: Note 3, Prophet, p. 32.

Read 1 Samuel 6:1-12.

6. What were the Philistines anxious to do (6:1-6)?

7. What did God communicate to the Philistines through the direction He caused the cows to take the cart (6:7-12)?

8. How did these events affect the nation of Israel over the next twenty years (7:2)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Superstition vs. Faith 1

The people of Israel had become indifferent and rebellious toward the God who had revealed Himself to them. As a result, their personal faith in the one true God had eroded into mere superstition. When a crisis occurred, they sought to attain His supernatural salvation from their situation by carrying the ark, the symbol of God's holy presence among them, to the battlefield like a good luck charm. In their blindness, they proudly had the ark transported by two men who had blatantly mocked God and scorned His temple rituals.

There is a definite difference between superstition and faith. Superstition, when it relates to God, is a vague and often fearful man-made definition of who He is. Faith, on the other hand, is born of personal knowledge and trust in God as He has revealed Himself

throughout the historical documents of the Bible and especially through the life of Jesus Christ. Security and freedom come from a personal relationship with the Lord, who freely bestows His love and grace on every individual who commits his life to God.

Israel learned a difficult lesson: the Lord's power and grace are there for those who have personal faith in Him *before* the crisis occurs. For such people, God's love and saving power are there not only for the crisis, but for every detail of life.

Choosing faith and guarding against superstitious thinking in our relationship with God are choices that really matter. Let's take a closer look at what the Bible has to say about faith versus superstition.

1. a. Define *superstition*. (A dictionary or thesaurus may help.)

b. In like fashion, define *faith* (Hebrews 11:1,6).

2. a. What characterized the superstitious relationship with God practiced by Phinehas, Hophni, the Israelite elders and the Philistines in the story?

b. What results did they experience from this view of God?

3. In stark contrast, what characterizes the kind of relationship God wants us to have with Him according to Psalm 23 (a Psalm of David)? What blessings come from this relationship of faith and trust?

4. What does this relationship of faith provide in the face of life's greatest difficulties?

Psalm 23:4,5

Psalm 91:1,2,4

Psalm 91:14,15

Psalm 18:35,36

5. a. The faith of Israel had deteriorated into a superstitious view of God. What ultimate blessing came from the hardships God allowed them to experience (1 Samuel 7:2)?

b. What kinds of pressures have you seen which bring about a greater knowledge of God in your life or in the life of someone you know?

6. What did David say resulted in his own life when he genuinely sought the Lord (Psalm 34:4-5)?

SUMMARY

7. As we have learned from the events of this lesson, God wants us to have a relationship with Him based on the truth found in His Word, the Bible. According to the references we have studied, how would you describe the relationship the Lord wants you to have with Him?

8. a. Faith can erode into superstitious fear, rebellion or indifference toward God. What types of things threaten to diminish your personal faith in God?

b. What choices can you make to maintain true faith?

9. As mentioned in the commentary on Building on the Basics for this lesson, personal faith in God as revealed through Jesus Christ is where the Bible says true knowledge of God begins. If you have never made an adult decision to believe in Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord in your life, you may want to take a moment to make that choice now. The following may help you better understand who Jesus is and make the decision to put faith in Him: Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:10-14; Isaiah 53:5-6; Revelations 3:20 (Jesus speaking).

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 *Ark of the Lord's covenant.* This was a chest that symbolized the throne of the Lord and held the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Ex 20:1-17; 31:18). The ark's elaborate gold cover symbolized God's throne in the midst of Israel. It also represented the atonement God offered to reconcile people to Himself. Golden cherubim on either side of the cover symbolized attendants to the Lord enthroned there. Thus, the ark symbolized God's presence and was present at many of Israel's notable victories.

2 *Cows do not abandon their calves voluntarily.* This was an additional Philistine test of Israel's God (6:9).

3 *Seventy were killed* (6:19). Because they looked into the ark, 70 were judged by God for their irreverent curiosity. “Because God had so closely linked the manifestation of his own presence among his people with the ark, it was to be treated with great honor and respect. This attitude of respect, however, is quite different from the superstitious attitude that led the elders to take the ark into battle against the Philistines, thus treating it as an object with magical power.” *NIV Study Bible*, p. 384.

4 *Dagon*. In Canaanite mythology, Dagon was the father of Baal (see Note 1, p. 39) and principal god of the Philistines. The ark was placed next to Dagon’s statue to demonstrate Dagon’s superiority to the God of the Israelites. Dagon was supernaturally toppled to a position of homage before the ark.

LESSON 4

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

1 Samuel 7:2-8:22

The ark rested at Kiriath Jearim while the dreaded Philistines held power over Israel. After its devastating losses, Israel finally realized that only God could bring relief to the situation. As the people mourned, Samuel instructed the people to return to worshipping God and rid themselves of Ashtoreths and all pagan forms of worship they had adopted.¹

The people responded with prayers, fasting and confession. As a result, God empowered Israel to retrieve their land from the control of the Philistines. Thus, peace reigned during Samuel's rule as judge² over Israel.

Samuel traveled a yearly circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah, to provide leadership for the people. He made his home in Ramah where he built an altar and performed priestly³ duties for the people. Samuel loved and faithfully served his people. One author describes him as follows:

Samuel was a giant among the men of God in biblical times. He lived to serve God, not to save himself. He knew without any reservation that following the Lord with all the heart was the highest calling of any man or woman, boy or girl. He was holy and humble and kind. He sought not his own good but always the good of others.⁴

When Samuel grew older, he appointed his sons as judges. However, their dishonesty and avarice disgusted the people and gave the elders an excuse to request a king to replace Samuel's leadership in Israel. Disturbed by their request, Samuel sought the Lord in prayer.

God responded by telling Samuel, "...it is not you they have rejected as their king, but me." God knew their hearts. While the people appreciated His past deliverance, they no longer wanted His control in their nation.⁵

To respond to the people, God gave Samuel a message of solemn warning regarding their preference for an earthly king. In contrast to God's benevolent protection, provision and guidance of Israel, a king would be selfish and oppressive, robbing them of many freedoms they now enjoyed.

The people, nevertheless, continued to demand a monarchy with conventional military organization like the nations around them. The chapter ends with the Lord granting their choice. He Himself would help Samuel select a king for the new era in Israel's history.

Read 1 Samuel 7:2-14.

1. What was the constant threat in Israel at this time (7:3b)?

2. a. What did this threat bring about in the people's attitudes toward Samuel and God at this time (7:3,4,6,8)?

- b. What resulted from these attitudes (7:7-14)?

Reference: *ashtoreths and Baals*, Note 1, p. 39.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Winning the Battles

The Philistines posed a constant threat to the people of Israel. As they were, all of us are threatened by the battles of life. Difficult emotional, physical, spiritual and social issues force us to fight for survival.

What we see from the story in this lesson is that we can choose to fight the battles of life in one of two ways: we can follow God or we can follow our own inclinations and those of people around us apart from God's leadership. When we choose to look to God as our personal commander-in-chief, He promises victory in the battles. Let's examine more closely the choices that matter in winning the battles.

1. What types of battles do we face? What battles are you or people you know facing right now?

2. How does God want us to see Him during the battles of our lives?
2 Chronicles 20:15

Psalm 24:8

Exodus 15:2-3

3. a. After years of peace under God's leadership through Samuel, what did Israel choose? 1 Samuel 8:19,20

b. What warning is here for us?

4. a. What attitudes can subtly keep us from drawing on God's power when we face challenges? What do these verses suggest?

Proverbs 28:26

2 Peter 2:10

Romans 1:21

2 Kings 17:15

Proverbs 16:18

5. According to the following, what *can* and *cannot* give us the victory we need?

Psalm 118:8-9

Isaiah 31:1

Psalm 52:7-8

Psalm 18:27-29

6. a. As recorded in 1 Samuel 4, God's presence at the battle did not assure victory. What steps did Israel need to take before God would fight their battles for them (7:3-6)?

b. How does this apply to us today? What must be our heart attitude before God can fight our battles with us?

7. a. What assures our ultimate success in the battles of life? Review Psalm 27, a Psalm of David, for his answers to this question.

SUMMARY

8. In the battles you are facing in your life today, in what or whom have you tended to trust instead of the Lord? What has kept you from fully trusting Him?

9. a. As you review this lesson, what principles do you want to put into practice in order to win the battles with God's protection and help?

b. What promise(s) would you claim as you trust God in the battle?

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 *Ashtoreths and Baals, pagan worship* (1 Samuel 7:3,4). *Ashtoreth* was a goddess of love, fertility and war, worshiped in various forms by many peoples of the ancient Near East, including the Canaanites. Her worship was often combined with the worship of *Baal*, the god variously known as the son of Dagon and El. Believed to give fertility to the womb and rain to the soil, Baal is pictured standing on a bull to symbolize fertility and strength. The worship of Baal involved sacred prostitution and

sometimes child sacrifice. Worship of Ashtoreths involved extremely lascivious practices. *NIV Study Bible*, pp. 332, 384.

2 Reference: Note 1, *Judges*, p. 11.

3 Reference: Note 2, *Priest*, p. 12.

4 Irving L. Jensen, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Moody Press, 1968, p. 37.

5 *God's purpose for Israel*. Historically, God had established and set Israel apart to be His special representative to the nations of the earth. His design was that Israel would thrive under His care and protection, lifting other nations to her level of understanding of the one true God. Israel, however, seemed intent on rejecting God's leadership and sinking to the level of the nations about them as they imitated pagan forms of worship, government and war.

Reference: Note 5, *God's chosen people*, p. 12.

LESSON 5

SAUL ANOINTED, SAMUEL'S FAREWELL

1 Samuel 9, 10, 12

Israel persisted in its demand for a king in spite of the Lord's warnings about such a decision. Finally, He granted their request charging Samuel, the godly prophet and judge of the day, to guide the people in establishing a monarchy.

The first king of Israel would be a young man named Saul. On a trip to retrieve his father's livestock, Saul found himself with the prophet Samuel, whom God had instructed to privately anoint Saul as king. God supernaturally confirmed his decision to Saul through a series of fulfilled prophecies.

When the time came for Samuel to present the new king publicly to Israel, he gathered the people at Mizpah. There he reminded them of God's goodness and power, and of their mistake in preferring a human leader like those of the enemy nations around them. Then, through what appears to have been a casting of lots, God directed the people to Saul, who was found hiding in some baggage. Although modest, Saul seemed to be a choice young man in the prime of life. He was very handsome, and most of the people were delighted with their new king. After giving the people a draft of written regulations for the kingship,¹ Samuel dismissed the people to their homes. Saul returned to his home and fields as well, until the opportunity arose for him to take his place as king.

That opportunity presented itself when the Israelites of Jabesh Gilead sought peace with an Ammonite king who had attacked them. The king replied that he would make peace if he could first thrust out all of the Jabesh Gilead's right eyes and lay them before Israel as a reproach.

When messengers reached Saul with the news of the threat, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily.² Saul proceeded to rally three

hundred thirty thousand Israelite men for the battle and succeeded in completely destroying the Ammonite forces.

The people were wild with enthusiasm over the great victory under Saul's leadership. They assembled at Gilgal to inaugurate Saul's reign in a ceremony convened by Samuel. With this event, Samuel officially stepped down from his position of leadership over Israel.

In his final statements, Samuel reminded the people of God's past goodness to Israel as well as of His discipline. He reiterated that their desire for a king to lead them instead of God was sin and explained that God was graciously blessing them *in spite* of their wrong choice, not because of it. To prove his words were from God, Samuel called upon God to produce a thunderstorm. As the storm came, the people were filled with fear and confessed that they had sinned in many ways other than asking for a king. They pleaded with Samuel to pray for God's mercy on their sins.

Samuel responded by assuring the people that, in spite of all their sins, if they and their king would honor God, God would continue to graciously honor Israel. Samuel concluded with a promise to continue to pray for his people and teach them in God's ways.

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-24.

1. Saul and his servant were looking for his father's donkeys when they sought help from the prophet Samuel. What fact does the writer seem to want to make clear through the story (9:15-17)?

Note: The "high places" in this story are not to be confused with those of pagan worship, which had ceased under Samuel's leadership (7:3,4).

2. What impresses you about God's choice of Saul (9:21)?

Read 1 Samuel 9:25-10:16.

3. Samuel made very specific prophecies regarding Saul (9:25-10:8) that were completely fulfilled (10:9). What were these prophecies designed to prove to Saul about Samuel's words (cf. 9:27)?

Reference: Notes 2 and 3, *Spirit of the Lord and prophesying*, p. 49. Also, Note 4, *prophets*, p. 49.

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27.

4. How was God's choice of Saul as king verified further (10:20-24)?

5. 1 Samuel 11 describes Saul's first responsibility as king, which was leading Israel in battle against the Ammonites. The God-given boldness and leadership (11:6) with which Saul led the Israelites to victory convinced the people that Saul was indeed God's anointed king. What did Samuel then lead them to do (11:14-15)?

Read 1 Samuel 12.

6. What made Samuel a man God could use to lead His people?
(12:1-5, 20-25)

7. a. Even though Israel had rejected God as their king, how did He still help them?

1 Samuel 9:15-16

1 Samuel 10:24-25

1 Samuel 12:14-15, 20-22

1 Samuel 12:23

Note: *Fear of the Lord* refers to *reverent trust* in the Lord.

Reference: Note 1, *Regulations for kingship*, p. 49.

b. What do you see in the character of God from His response to Israel's rejection of Him as their king?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS **God, the Model Parent**

No one who has ever been a parent has found it to be an easy task. The choices parents make are crucial to the emotional well being of everyone in the family and to future generations.

God fully understands the difficulties of parenting. He has faced rebellion and rejection from His children since the world began.

In this lesson, we can see the choices God as a heavenly Father made in the face of Israel's disobedience and rejection. From His perfect responses we can learn -- whether parents or not -- something about the choices that matter in parenting as well as in our relationship to God as His children.

1. Briefly describe the cycle of the people of Israel in their relationship to God. 1 Samuel 12:8-12

2. Optional Review (cf. p. 28). a. Why did a plan to have a king seem best to the people? 1 Samuel 8:19-20

b. What did God know about their real motives? 1 Samuel 8:6-8;
12:12b

c. As characterized by Samuel, why was God's leadership better for the people? 1 Samuel 12:3-5

3. Review God's responses to Israel's rebellion found in the following verses. How would you translate His responses into practical principles for parents today?

1 Samuel 8:9, 10-17

I Samuel 8:18

I Samuel 8:19-22

Note: This is not to imply that it is always appropriate to yield to the will of the child.

4. a. After honoring Israel's choice to reject His leadership, God actually helped them move. (Review question #7 above.) What does this show about His nature as a father?

b. How does the story of the prodigal's son reflect similar characteristics of God as a Father? Luke 15:11-24

5. Many people have misconceptions about God as a heavenly father because of unhealthy relationships with earthly parents or inaccurate understanding of His character. What do the following verses reveal about God as a Father?

Psalm 103:3-5, 8-14

1 John 4:8-10

6. How might we, as adults, respond to the Lord as the Israelites did?

7. How is God's response to Israel a comfort to us in the face of our shortcomings?

8. What can we learn about God's guidelines for our lives based upon David's words in Psalm 19:7-11?

9. What does Deuteronomy 6:4-9 instruct us to do with a knowledge of God and godly principles?

SUMMARY

10. As you have observed God's character as a Father, what principles stand out to you as being important for parents to know and practice?

11. What observations have you made about your relationship with God?

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 *Regulations for kingship.* God would still be able to protect and lead Israel's monarchy if the king was wholly committed to God and would submit to God's leadership as given through the prophets. Kings who did not submit to the moral and religious authority of the current prophet (at this time, Samuel) in essence were disobedient to God and would eventually lose their kingship. So would be the case with Saul later in his reign.

2 *Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily* (10:6). The Holy Spirit gave Saul the power to prophecy.

3 *prophesying* (10:10), here, as in vv. 6,13, appears to refer to an enthusiastic praising of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. *NIV Study Bible*, p. 388.

4 *Prophets* (10:10). "The bands of prophets with which Samuel was associated appear to have been small communities of men who banded together in spiritually decadent times for mutual cultivation of their religious zeal." *NIV Study Bible*, p. 388.

LESSON 6

SAUL'S UNFAITHFULNESS

1 Samuel 13:1-15:35

Saul's first major battle after his coronation was against the Philistines. His standing army numbered 3,000 men; 2,000 with Saul and 1,000 under his son, Jonathan. Jonathan had attacked the Philistines and provoked them to assemble a huge army to attack Israel. Because Israel was terribly outnumbered and at that time had no weapons, most of the men scattered and hid. Samuel had given instructions to Saul to wait for him seven days, at which time Samuel would come to offer sacrifice and call on the Lord to fight the battle for the Israelites.

When Samuel was a little late in arriving, and Saul's remaining men began to desert him, Saul decided to sacrifice the burnt offering himself.¹ As he finished, Samuel arrived and was appalled at Saul's actions, which demonstrated his lack of faith in God in the hour of crisis. The power of God and faithful men of valor, not numerical superiority, had won Israel's previous battles. Because of Saul's disobedience and lack of trust in God, Samuel predicted the downfall of Saul's dynasty and left.

In stark contrast to the king's lack of faith, Saul's son Jonathan and his young armor-bearer decided to single-handedly attack the Philistines. Jonathan's reasoning was, "Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving," he said, "whether by many or by few" (14:6). As these two men charged the Philistines, twenty men were killed. Then God brought panic, confusion and a small earthquake in the enemy camp, and Philistine troops started fighting each other. Saul heard the rumbling and saw the scattering of the enemy camp. As Israelite warriors that had been in hiding began joining the pursuit, Saul once again took leadership of the army. He made a foolish decision, however, when to "avenge himself on his enemies," he bound his men under an oath not to eat all day. At the end of the day of fighting, they

were so physically exhausted that they broke Jewish law by slaughtering animals and eating the meat with its blood.²

Unaware of his father's edict, Jonathan had unwittingly eaten honey in the forest that day, and Saul almost sentenced his son to death for breaking the sacred oath. The men reasoned with Saul that Jonathan did not deserve to die since he was responsible for their great victory over the Philistines. However, because of Saul's foolish oath, his men were too weak to defeat the Philistines, who escaped to their homes with minimal loss.

Even though Saul's leadership was misguided, selfishly ambitious and impulsive, God used him greatly as a military leader over the next twenty years. During that time, the Israelites successfully battled for their small nation against surrounding countries.

Then, twenty years later, another opportunity came for Saul to demonstrate his allegiance to the Lord by obedience to an assigned task. God gave specific instructions through Samuel to completely destroy the Amalekites.³ These nomadic people had attacked Israel at Sinai and killed stragglers on the exodus from Egypt. Now they raided isolated farms on the southern borders of Israel. Conquering them would support Judah against the Philistines as well as carry out a promise of God in Exodus 17:14.

Rather than obey God's command through Samuel, Saul decided to spare the Amalekite king, Agag, and the choicest livestock from the battle spoils. When Samuel heard of this, he was so angry that he cried out to God all night before confronting Saul the next day. Samuel's fierce denunciation put the king's arrogant disobedience on the level of idolatry and witchcraft (15:23). Samuel informed Saul that the Lord had rejected him as king over Israel.

In response to Samuel's confrontation, Saul lied, made excuses and then made a show of repentance in a desperate effort to save his reputation

with the people (15:30). Samuel finally agreed to worship with Saul, and, after putting the brutal king Agag to death, Samuel left for Ramah. There he mourned for Saul.

The Lord also grieved over Saul's choices of unfaithfulness and disobedience as the king He had appointed over Israel. For the rest of his life, Saul would go deeper and deeper into evil practices, finally destroying himself (1 Samuel 31:5).

In the context of these events in Israel's history, the stage is now set for David, God's choice to replace Saul as king.

Read 1 Samuel 13:1-22.

1. a. What was Saul's response to his situation (13:5-10)?

Reference: Note 1, *Saul's anxious action*, p. 60.

b. Why did Saul's response to his situation render him a failure as a leader for Israel (13:13-14)?

Read 1 Samuel 13:23-14:23.

2. a. Saul had 600 men left (13:15, 14:6-7) and only Saul and his son Jonathan had weapons. In contrast to his father, how did Jonathan and his armor-bearer respond to the situation?

b. How did they seek God's leading as they went (14:8-10)?

c. What was Jonathan's response to God's leading (14:11-12)?

3. How did God respond to their faith (14:13-23)?

Read 1 Samuel 14:24-45.

4. a. What foolish decisions did Saul make, and what resulted (14:24, 38-39, 44)?

Reference: Note 2, *eating meat with blood*, p. 60.

b. How did his decisions make Saul appear as a leader?

Read 1 Samuel 14:47-15:35.

5. a. How did Samuel establish his authority over Saul (15:1)?

b. What were Saul's orders from God (15:2-3)?

Reference: Note 3, *completely destroy*, p. 60.

6. How did Saul disobey the orders (15:7-9)?

7. a. How did Samuel suffer over Saul (15:10-11)?

b. When Samuel left to seek Saul early in the morning, what had Saul done (15:12)?

8. a. How did Saul greet Samuel (15:13)?

b. How did Samuel respond to Saul's greeting (15:14, 16-19)?

9. a. What was Saul's reaction to Samuel's confrontation?
15:20-21,24b

15:30

b. What did Saul's responses reveal about him?

10. a. Why did Samuel pronounce Saul unfit to be king (15:22,23,26)?

b. Of what did Samuel assure Saul (15:27-29)?

11. What mourning followed (15:35)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Decision-making under Stress

Saul was not fit to be king over Israel because he was not a man of faith. He seemed to have only a vague knowledge about God and little, if any, personal relationship with Him. Consequently, Saul was neither sensitive nor obedient to God. When the crisis came that is recorded in 1 Samuel 13, he chose not to trust God to protect Israel. Instead, he desperately attempted to take control of the situation himself. When he sacrilegiously offered the sacrifice, Saul was impatiently doing what he saw as religiously "necessary" to get on with handling the battle.

Many people in biblical times made this mistake, and we can easily make such a misjudgment today. When the situation seems critical, it's easy to stop trusting God and start taking matters into our own hands. The results, as for Saul, are confusion and a "less than the best" outcome.

How should Saul have responded in the moment of crisis? Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about the choices that matter in decision-making under stress.

1. a. What caused the stress that Saul was experiencing in 1 Samuel 13? Of what do you think he was afraid?

b. What similar stresses press in on us today?

2. a. How did God plan to win the battle? 1 Samuel 14:15, 20-23

b. Why was God's plan outside the realm of Saul's thinking and not Jonathan's?

3. What do these verses suggest that Saul needed to remember about God and His plan?

Mark 10:27

Isaiah 55:8,9

4. What biblical truths are important to keep reminding ourselves of when we are under stress or in the midst of a crisis?

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:28

Ephesians 3:20

2 Samuel 22:31-34

5. How can we receive the direction we need in a crisis according to the following?

James 1:5-6

Proverbs 3:5-6

Philippians 4:6-7

6. What do the following verses remind us to do in a crisis?

Psalm 27:13-14

1 Peter 5:7

7. What did David do as he faced the stresses of his life?

Psalm 5:2-3

Our urgency and impatience stem from the shortness of our vision and the imperfection of our knowledge of all the facts. God's seeming leisureliness arises from His perfect knowledge of all the facts and His perfect control of all the circumstances. Author Unknown

SUMMARY

8. a. What stress or crisis points are in your life right now?

b. As you reflect on this lesson, what guidelines for decision-making are helpful to you as you make decisions concerning your situation(s)?

9. Why is it best to continue trusting God, even when things look hopeless to you?

10. What would be your prayer in making decisions under stress?

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *Saul's anxious action* showed that he had faith in his small army, not in the God of Israel, to fight the battle. As king, Saul had no right to officiate in sacrificial rituals since he was not a priest, but evidently Saul believed that as king he could undertake any role he chose. Furthermore, disobedience to God's instructions through the prophet Samuel was indeed disobedience to God, the *real* king of Israel. Saul's folly showed his unfitness to rule his small and weak nation whose only hope was in God fighting the battles with them.

2 *broke Jewish law...eating meat with blood.* Leviticus 17:14 states twice that "the life of every creature is in its blood." The Israelite received the gift of life from God and was not allowed the superstitious pagan practice of eating "life" that is "in the blood" to increase one's life-force. Also, since life is sacred, blood (a symbol of life) had to be treated with respect (Genesis 9:5-6). Eating blood was therefore strictly forbidden in Israel. *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 18, 168.

3 *completely destroy the Amalekites* (15:3). Deuteronomy 25:17-19 gives the reasons behind God's order to make full riddance of this nation. The Amalekites had savagely captured and killed the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of the Israelite exodus out of Egypt and had brutally murdered these stragglers. In the years that followed, the Amalekites had continued to show no fear of God as they continually sought to kill God's people. First record of their attack on Israel was in Exodus 17:8f. They attacked Israel with the Canaanites (Numbers 14:45), with the Ammonites and Moabites (Judges 3:13), and with the Midianites (Judges 6:3,33). Now that Israel was strong enough to take on the Amalekites, God ordered their complete destruction, fulfilling the

prophecy of Deuteronomy 25:18. It had become apparent that as long as an Amalekite remained alive, no Israelite was safe in the south of Israel. The Hebrew term *completely destroy*, sometimes translated *completely devoted*, refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to destruction. God himself dedicated these things or persons to destruction because they violently and steadfastly impeded or opposed his work over a long period of time. Abraham was told that his descendants, the Israelites, would remain in bondage in Egypt for 430 years, delayed from entering Canaan, because "the sin of the Amorites [Canaanites] has not yet reached its full measure." Before God brought destruction, a civilization had to have been steeped in pagan idolatry for *so long* that knowledge of God was completely ignored. The burning of children as gifts to the gods (Leviticus 18:21), sodomy, bestiality and others loathsome vices (Leviticus 18:25,27,30) characterized the nations that God completely destroyed.

When God's grace, mercy and long-suffering were ignored as these crimes persisted, his judgment would surely come. The complete destruction of such nations prevented their corrupting Israel and the rest of the world. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament*, pp. 106-109.

LESSON 7

DAVID, SAMUEL AND SAUL

1 Samuel 16

God had made an irrevocable decision to take His hand of blessing from Saul as king, and to choose “a man after His own heart” (13:14). Samuel grieved for Saul until God urged him to move forward and anoint a man of God’s choosing for the throne.

To anoint another man as king could cost Samuel his life, because such an act could be seen as treason by King Saul. To protect the prophet, the Lord instructed Samuel to move in a cloak of secrecy. He was to go to Bethlehem in Judah with the stated purpose of making a sacrifice to the Lord. The family of Jesse, from whom the new king would come, was to be invited inconspicuously to the ritual.

Jesse had eight sons, and each of the older seven were brought before Samuel one by one. In Samuel’s eyes, the attractive eldest son named Eliab was the obvious choice, but God’s choice was Jesse’s youngest son, David, who had to be brought in from his shepherding responsibilities in the fields. David was outwardly handsome, but since he was the youngest in the family and only a shepherd boy, he was not the predictable choice of a king from a human standpoint. The writer makes clear, however, that God knew that young David’s inner qualities suited him to become a godly king for Israel.

After Samuel anointed David, “the Spirit of the Lord was on David from that day forward” (16:13).¹ God’s Spirit would empower David, not to achieve personal greatness but to be a gift from God *to the nation* of Israel. David would be anointed by God to *shepherd* Israel as carefully and humbly as he had shepherded his father’s flocks on the Judaeen hillsides. Unlike Saul, David was devoted to God and could be lead by God to guide, protect and care for Israel.

The last half of 1 Samuel 16 records how God arranged for David to be brought into Saul's court. At the same time God gave His Spirit's power to David, He withdrew His Spirit from the unfaithful Saul. As a result, Saul suffered depression. One of Saul's attendants suggested that a musician who played the lyre might soothe Saul and drive away the evil spirit² that caused Saul's emotional pain. Another servant knew of David, son of Jesse, who had such talent, and the young man soon found himself in the king's court.

Saul loved the winsome personality and soothing gifts of his new courtier (16:21) and made him his armor-bearer as well. While David faithfully carried out his responsibilities for Saul, the Lord sovereignly worked to prepare the young shepherd boy for the throne.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

1. a. What was Samuel doing when the Lord approached him with a new assignment (16:1)?

b. What does this tell us about Samuel's character?

2. What was Samuel's new assignment, and how was he to overcome its difficulties (16:1-5)?

3. a. In his own wisdom, whom would Samuel have chosen as king and why (16:6-7; 17:13)?

b. How did God explain His differing judgment to Samuel (16:7)?

4. What do you observe about Samuel's relationship to the Lord (16:8-13)?

5. a. What difficulties do you think David might have experienced in his father's house after this?

b. What did God give David to provide for his need (16:13)?

Reference: Note 1, *Spirit of the Lord*, p. 70.

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

6. What problem did Saul develop and how did his servants seek to alleviate it?

Reference: Note 2, *evil spirit from the Lord*, and Note 3, p. 70.

7. How was David described to Saul (16:18)?

8. Describe how David entered Saul's court (16:19-23)? What gave him favor with the king?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Self-Worth That Matters

As we study his life, we will see that David was not a perfect man. The Bible does not hide his failures. However, the Bible does reveal the outstanding characteristic of David's life: he had a heart of extraordinary tenderness toward and responsiveness to the Lord.

It was such a heart, 1 Samuel 16:7 says, that made David a person of great worth before God. Despite the fact that people would not have chosen David as king, the Lord anointed the young man because of his heart of love and reverence for his Creator. In spite of the glaring imperfections we will discover later in David's life, the Lord honored him because of his humility and faith before God.

What makes us valuable in our own eyes? How does the God who created us define worth? What values and mindsets make us of great worth as human beings? Are the biblical answers too difficult to achieve, or are God's answers simpler than our own and those of the world around us? Saul valued personal achievements as king, and God gave his position to one better. Let's see what the Bible has to say about the choices that produce self-worth that matters.

1. What does God say gives us self-worth that matters, according to the following? 1 Samuel 13:14b; 16:7

2. The following heart attitudes in David made him a man of worth in God's perspective.

a. How did David view God's creation?

Psalm 19:1-6

b. Briefly describe David's perspective on godly principles for life.

Psalm 19:7-11

c. What were David's continual prayers for himself? Psalm 19:12-13

d. What was the desire of David's heart? Psalm 19:14

3. What strengthened David in his pursuit of godliness? 1 Sam 16:13,18

Reference: Note 1, *Spirit of the Lord*, p. 70.

4. What does God do in our hearts when we receive Christ?
2 Corinthians 5:17

Ezekiel 36:26-27

5. When we choose to grow in our relationship with the Lord, how does He go about creating a heart of true worth in us? Ephesians 1:17-19a

6. Like the people of Israel, all of us are prone to stray from God's leadership. The Bible calls this sin. How can we keep our hearts pure when this happens?
1 John 1:9

Psalm 32:5

7. What choice must we continually make?

Ephesians 5:17-18

Galatians 5:25

8. How do the following verses describe the heart God creates in us as we walk in the power of His Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-23

Psalm 15:2-5

SUMMARY

9. a. How do you feel you need to be in order find worth in the eyes of the world?

b. Do you find it easy or difficult to adopt God's values on your worth?

Why?

10. Have you ever asked God to fill your life with His Spirit as he did David's? The following prayer may be helpful to you.

Dear Father, thank you that it is your strength and my willingness that produces worth that matters in my life. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I might grow to know you better and become more like you as your power works within me. I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 *the Spirit of the Lord* (16:13). God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity, three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12, John 14:16,17). When we ask God (Luke 11:13) to “fill” us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as “Christ in us,” as in Colossians 1:27b.

came upon David from that day forward (16:13). The Holy Spirit’s divine power went along with David’s anointing, “and he found himself inwardly advanced in wisdom, and courage, and concern for the public, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. Some think that his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in music, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit’s coming upon him.” *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, p. 305.

2 *evil spirit from the Lord* (16:14-16,23). There are several possible explanations of this phrase. *Evil* may be used in the sense of *troubling* here. The evil spirit was a spirit of gloomy, suspicious melancholy, bordering on madness, affecting the mind of Saul. To the Hebrew, every visitation, good or evil, came directly from God. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 286.

Matthew Henry writes: “Those that drive the good Spirit away from them do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. He (Saul) grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented, timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling.” *M. Henry’s Commentary*, p. 305.

“This statement (*evil spirit from God*) and similar ones in Scripture indicate that evil spirits are subject to God’s control and operate only within divinely determined boundaries.” *NIV Study Bible*, p. 400.

3 Reference: *Satan, demonic jealousy*, p. 86.

LESSON 8

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17

Once again, the Philistine army had invaded Judah's territory northwest of Keilah. Saul and his army camped across a valley from the enemy. Because of his disobedience, Saul no longer had the power of God's Spirit upon him for battle. Even so, Saul might have felt prepared for this battle had it not been for a new and frightening development. The Philistines had a warrior of giant dimensions named Goliath who challenged Israel to representative combat. The code of convention for warfare at that time made it utterly humiliating for Israel to ignore or decline Goliath's challenge. However, neither Saul nor anyone in his army had the courage to go against the giant Goliath.

At this point in the story, David is introduced as if never mentioned before. Commentators assume that the biblical author used a different writer's account for the story of David and Goliath for dramatic effect,¹ inserting 1 Samuel 17:15 to draw it together a bit with his own writings. At any rate, the story begins as David was tending sheep. His father interrupted David's work to send him, with supplies, to his three oldest brothers at the battlefield. David arrived at the front to learn of the giant Goliath's challenge to Israel. David was appalled that anyone would so "defy the armies of the living God." David's oldest brother tried to silence David by angrily accusing him of wickedness and conceit. Declaring innocence to Eliab's accusations, David continued to inquire about the situation with Goliath.

When Saul heard of this, he sent for David, who immediately volunteered to fight the giant. He argued that even though he was just a boy, he had fought and killed both lion and bear to protect his father's sheep. David was sure that the Lord, who delivered him from the paw of the lion and bear, would give him victory over the heathen Philistine.

Rejecting any kind of battle armor, David went out to fight Goliath with only his staff, a sling and five smooth stones from the stream. A verbal battle of great significance between David and Goliath followed.

Goliath declared his self-confidence and the curse of his gods on David, and David declared his confidence in “the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel.” David assured Goliath and the Philistines that the battle would be fought and won by the Lord (17:47).

David proceeded to kill the giant with one small stone slung deep into his forehead. After Goliath’s defeat, the Israelites immediately pursued the enemy to the gates of their major cities of Gath and Ekron in Philistia.

Overnight, David was the national hero of Israel. Curious to know more about David, Saul sent Abner, commander of his army, to bring the young man. Michal, Saul's daughter, had been promised as a reward to the one who would defeat Goliath.

Read 1 Samuel 17.

1. Why were the Israelites afraid (17:4-11)?

2. What did David learn about the battle that appalled him (17:23-26)?

3. a. What was David’s brother Eliab's response to David (17:28-29)?

b. What might his brother really have been feeling?

4. a. Humanly speaking, why was David ill-equipped to fight Goliath (17:33,38-40)?

b. How did Saul demonstrate faith in allowing David to fight (17:8-9; 17:38-39)?

5. What was David's source of strength and confidence in his battle against Goliath (17:34-37)?

6. a. What was Goliath's perspective on David (17:41-44)?

b. What did David declare to all before the battle began (17:45-47)?

7. What stands out to you about David's victory (17:48-50)?

8. What did David's courage and faith produce in the Israelite army (17:51-52)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Weapons Against Fear

1. What types of things do we fear?

2. What might David have feared as he went out to fight Goliath?

3. What perspectives kept David from fearing Goliath?

1 Samuel 17:37,46-47

What was the focus of David's concerns?

1 Samuel 17:45,46

4. Even if David had lost the battle with Goliath, he would have been a hero because of his courage and faith. How can this principle apply to a situation we might face today?

5. David found confidence in knowing he was in the will of God. Why is it important to know that we are in God's will in order not to be afraid?

6. How can we know we are in God's will? How did David stay in God's will?
Psalm 40:8

Psalm 139:23-24

Psalm 143:10

Psalm 142:1-3a

7. What do these words of David encourage us to do in the face of fearful situations?

Psalm 34:4,6,17-18

Psalm 32:6-7

8. David did not have visible armor. What did David know?

Psalm 28:7a

Psalm 31:3a

Isaiah 41:10

SUMMARY

9. What fears in your life or the life of someone you care about are concerning you today?

What does the story of David and Goliath encourage you to believe about those things that you fear?

10. What principle(s) have you discovered or rediscovered in this lesson that can help you defeat fear?

Perhaps you would like to take a moment to tell the Lord about your desire to practice this principle.

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 Commentators assume that, for dramatic effect, the biblical author used a different writer's account for the story of David and Goliath, inserting 1 Samuel 17:15 to draw it together a bit with his own writings. By eliminating David's previous history, the document used was able to emphasize the drama of the story: David, the unknown shepherd boy, saved the day for Israel by defeating the experienced giant warrior and won the princess for his bride (18:18). It is such a glorious story that it might even appear as a mere legend were it not the only explanation for David's prodigious rise from obscurity to fame.

LESSON 9

SAUL ATTACKS DAVID

1 Samuel 18:1-19:24

After defeating Goliath, David had risen to the status of a national hero. In addition, David seemed to possess a lovable personality, and everyone from Saul's children and servants to the masses of Israel became loyal to him.

Saul, however, was watching for the one Samuel the prophet had predicted would take his throne, and David became the prime suspect. Consequently, demonic¹ jealousy began to overcome Saul which led him into the lifelong pursuit of removing the threat of David to his dynasty.

Initially, Saul tried twice to kill David while the young courtier was serving in the palace. Evidently, these unsuccessful attempts were not obvious to David. Saul then decided to send David to the Philistine battlefield with a frequency that he felt sure would lead to David's death. David only became more popular as a phenomenal warrior. Then, when Saul's daughter Michal fell in love with David, Saul bribed David to kill one hundred Philistines in exchange for her hand in marriage. David killed *two* hundred Philistines and entered the royal family as the king's son-in-law.

In desperation, Saul issued blatant orders to his servants and to his son Jonathan to kill David. Jonathan reasoned Saul out of this edict, but only temporarily. Jealousy over David's additional victories on the battlefield led to Saul's insistence on David's death. Saul's daughter Michal, David's wife, saved David this time, as she lowered him from a window during the night. David fled to Samuel at Ramah, and Saul pursued him there. God intervened to save David this time by causing Saul and all his men to go into a state of prophesying.²

It was becoming more and more clear to Saul that God had indeed chosen David as his replacement as king. Nevertheless, Saul chose to remain David's enemy in a hopeless attempt to frustrate God's plan.

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-16.

1. What were Saul's feelings toward David (18:8-9,12,15)?

2. What were the feelings of others about David?

The crown prince Jonathan (18:1-4):

Saul's officers (18:5):

The people of Judah and Israel (18:16):

Note: The huge southern tribe of Judah from which David came as well as the other eleven tribes of Israel were included here.

3. What resulted from Saul's feelings about David (18:10-11,13)?

Reference: Note 1, *Satan, demonic jealousy*, p. 86.

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30.

4. Because of his victory over Goliath, David was entitled to marry one of Saul's daughters (17:25). How did Saul take advantage of David's humble refusal to take what was his (18:17-19)?

5. How did God arrange for David to enter the royal court despite Saul's actions against David (18:20-27)?

6. a. Of what had Saul become convinced, and what did he intend to do about it (18:28-29)?

b. What continued to result from Saul sending David into battle (18:30)?

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-17.

7. What reversed Saul's first declaration of intent to kill David (19:1-7)?

8. What prompted Saul's hatred again and what resulted (19:8-10)?

9. Saul sent his men to David's home to kill him. How was David saved this time (19:11-17)?

Note: *idol* (19:13,16). This was a wooden image of a pagan god. Michal may have had it for decoration or superstitiously for good luck. Neither would have indicated a reverent lifestyle.

Read 1 Samuel 19:18-24.

10. How was Saul's next attempt to kill David thwarted?

Reference: Note 3, *prophesying*, p. 49.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Victory over Jealousy

Jealousy is an emotion that periodically creeps into all of our lives. Someone around us achieves or possesses something that we wish could be ours, and an overt or covert wish for that person's demise is born in our hearts. When Saul allowed jealousy to overtake him, he became paranoid and devious, resistant toward God and unreasonable in his actions. Jealousy finally led to his complete ruin.

Like Saul, our decisions about jealous thoughts can make or break us. The choices we make regarding tendencies toward jealousy are ones that matter greatly. Let's take a careful look at the biblical principles that help us experience victory over jealousy.

1. a. Why was Saul jealous of David? What qualities did David possess that Saul did not?

2. What do you think are the root causes of jealousy toward others?

Reference: Note 3, *godly jealousy*, p. 86.

3. Describe the kind of person Saul became as a result of his jealousy. What attitudes and actions resulted from Saul's jealousy?

b. How can jealousy affect our lives?

4. How does the Bible describe jealousy?
Proverbs 27:4

1 Corinthians 3:1,3

James 3:14-16

5. a. The most important choice we can make to offset jealousy is determining who our "audience" will be as we live our lives. Who was David's "audience?"

Psalm 19:14

Psalm 139:23-24

b. Who was Saul's "audience?" What do these verses suggest?

1 Samuel 15:12b, 30a

6. a. What principle does Colossians 3:23,24 give us regarding our primary "audience" in life?

b. If Saul had followed this principle, how would it have helped him?

c. Why does making God the primary audience for who we are and what we do offset jealousy?

7. In addition, what mindsets do these verses refer to that can allow us *to overcome* or *be overcome* by jealousy?

Overcome

Be overcome

Proverbs 29:23

Philippians 2:3,4

James 3:13-17

Galatians 6:4

Galatians 5:16-17

Galatians 5:22-26

8. a. It is God's will that we experience victory over jealousy. What does He promise when we ask Him to help?

1 John 5:14,15

Philippians 2:13

b. What healthy and constructive emotion can replace jealousy when we ask for the Lord's help? 1 Corinthians 13:4

SUMMARY

9. Everyone experiences the temptation to become jealous. Of what people are you prone to be jealous? What are the results if you justify your feelings of jealousy?

10. What principles in this lesson are most helpful to you in dealing with the temptation to harbor jealousy?

11. What does God promise if you turn to Him when you are battling jealous feelings?

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 *Satan, demonic jealousy.* The Hebrew writer makes clear that all spirits are under the control of God, as was evidenced by the presence of Christ in the New Testament. The Bible teaches that evil powers are under the rule and organization of Satan, an angelic being who led a prehistoric heavenly revolt against God. Satan was cast out of heaven with his rebelling host of angels (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-8). Under his leadership, these angelic beings, known as demons, are very organized in their attacks on human beings (Ephesians 6:12). A demonic spirit of jealousy had access to control Saul because of his choice to disregard God's leadership in his life.

2 Reference: Note 3, *prophesying*, p. 49.

3 *godly jealousy.* The Bible speaks of God as being a *jealous* God (ex: Exodus 20:5), but His is a "holy" jealousy (Joshua 24:19). He is jealous of the worship of other gods (including devotion to anything before God) because such leads to our own harm. We can find God jealous toward anything that hurts us, such as straying into patterns of living that ignore godly principles (sin). It is not unlike the jealousy of a spouse whose marriage is threatened by a partner having an affair. The outside person threatens the marriage covenant and intimacy. Similarly, God is jealous for our good and for our intimacy with Him. Godly jealousy is not to be compared with the selfish jealousy depicted in this lesson which leads to destructive attitudes and actions.

LESSON 10

JONATHAN AND DAVID

1 Samuel 20

Out of fear and insane jealousy, Saul resurrected his commitment to destroy David, who by all indications was the one God had anointed to replace Saul as king of Israel. Saul's son Jonathan thought he had put an end to his father's enmity against David and was taken by surprise when David came to him to inquire about Saul's deadly pursuit. Together Jonathan and David devised a plan to determine if Saul had resurrected his intent to murder David.

Sure enough, when David's name came up in a dinner discussion between Saul and Jonathan, Saul became hostile toward Jonathan for befriending David. Saul declared David a threat to his dynasty and once again decreed that David must die. When Jonathan pleaded David's innocence, Saul hurled a spear at his own son, and Jonathan left the table in fierce anger.

As planned, Jonathan met David to tell him the results of their test of Saul's intentions. The two men submitted to their conclusion that the Lord would have David leave the king's court. They wept together and reaffirmed their covenant of friendship in the Lord before parting.

In the story of Jonathan and David, we have one of the most beautiful friendships ever recorded. David, the shepherd boy warrior who became a national hero, and Jonathan, a man some twenty years David's elder and heir to the throne of Israel, were both men of deep faith in God (14:6; 17:45-47). That love for God knit their hearts together in a supernaturally-strengthened brotherhood covenant (18:3,4; 20:8,42). Even though Jonathan realized that David, not he, would inherit the throne of Israel, he loved, supported and protected David.

Their covenant to each other also included considering each other's family members as their own (20:15). Years later, after the simultaneous

deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David actually sought out and took Jonathan's crippled son into his palace as his own in fulfillment of his covenant with Jonathan.

Up to this point in the story, we have seen many of David's qualifications as a leader...his unhesitating trust in God and keen awareness of God's love and purposes for Israel; his skill and leadership in battle and humble reception of the nation's praises; and his genuine personality that won the hearts of everyone from the king's own children to the whole nation of Israel.

Yet, Saul alone was filled with anger and jealousy toward David. His disturbed mind and resistance to God's will would motivate Saul to pursue David for the next ten to fifteen years. Even so, God would turn this devastating situation into David's final training ground for his reign as king of Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 20:1-23.

1. Why did David go to Jonathan (20:1)?
2. Briefly describe the conversation that followed (20:2-11)?
3. What promises did Jonathan and David make to each other (20:12-17)?

4. What was Jonathan's plan designed to determine (20:18-23)?

Read 1 Samuel 20:24-42.

5. What was Saul's incredible response to David's absence (20:24-31)?

Reference: Note 1, *ceremonially unclean*, and Note 2, *New Moon festival*, p. 94.

6. What was Jonathan's defense of David, and how was it received (20:32-34)?

7. a. Why do you think David wept harder at this meeting with Jonathan (20:41b)?

b. Of what had David become completely convinced and why (18:1,3-4; 20:17b)?

8. How did Jonathan reassure and comfort David (20:42)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Gift of Friendship

One of the greatest gifts God can give us are deep friendships born out of mutual commitment to the Lord. Whether with a spouse, a family member or someone outside our family, the bond of love which God's Spirit produces in Christ-centered friendship is strong, unselfish and fulfilling.

Such was Jonathan and David's friendship. For better or for worse, these men were committed to supporting each other. Together they rejoiced over victories and wept over losses, all the while, growing in faith and in understanding of the Lord's faithfulness.

All of us yearn for intimate friendship. The friendship of Jonathan and David is a picture of the deep friendship God wants to give each person. The Bible has a great deal to say about choices that matter in developing deep friendships. As we continue our study of the life of David, let's make some observations about the gift of friendship.

1. What do you observe about Jonathan's love for David?

2. a. What unusual obstacles did they face in their friendship?

b. What effect did these seem to have on the relationship?

c. Why do you think the obstacles had this effect instead of destroying their relationship?

3. a. Jesus said a true friend will lay down his life for another (John 15:13). What can this mean in everyday life?

b. How does 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a describe the type of love that builds deep friendship?

4. How do these verses characterize friendships that meet real needs?
Proverbs 17:17

Proverbs 27:9

Romans 15:7

Galatians 5:13

James 5:16

5. What must be guarded against in order to preserve friendship?
Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 29:22

6. a. Where does the gift of friendship come from according to
James 1:17?

b. From where did the strength in Jonathan and David's relationship come? What does Ephesians 3:16-19 suggest?

7. Jonathan's and David's deep friendship is similar to the relationship the Lord wants to have with each of us. What does Romans 8:32-39 say about this friendship? How is it superior to the best of earthly friendships?

SUMMARY

8. What kind of friend does the story of Jonathan and David encourage you to be?

9. a. What is your desire in the area of friendship?

b. Is anything keeping you from experiencing the kind of relationship that you need with God or others?

c. Perhaps you would want to take a moment to pray about your friendships.

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *ceremonially unclean* (20:26). David would have had to wash and put on clean clothes to be ceremonially clean or to consecrate himself for the religious festival.

2 *New Moon festival*. “Each month of the year was consecrated to the Lord by the bringing of special sacrifices (Numbers 28:11-15) and the blowing of trumpets (Numbers 10:10; Psalms 81:3). This observance also involved cessation from normal work, especially at the beginning of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24-25; Numbers 29:1-6; 2 Kings 4:23; Isaiah 1:13; Amos 8:5).” *NIV Study Bible*, p. 405.

LESSON 11

EVENTS AT NOB

1 Samuel 21-22

Knowing that Saul was after his life, David ran in fear. Although he had never instigated rebellion against the king, David found himself branded as a fugitive and outlaw by Saul.

Even the priest Ahimelech at the sanctuary of Nob was frightened to give David aid. Desperate for help, David lied to allay the priest's suspicions. Saul's servant Doeg was there, and, though David knew Saul would find out if Ahimelech helped him, he still persuaded Ahimelech to give him food and a weapon.

Driven to extremes by the danger in which he found himself, David's life continued to hang by a thread. He sought refuge in the Philistine city of Gath, where he pretended to be insane in order to keep the Philistines from killing him.¹

Finally, David went to his native tribe of Judah where his family² and about four hundred fugitives joined him in hiding in the cave of Adullam near Bethlehem. David became the captain over this defensive force, but was careful to put his aged parents under the keeping of the Moabite king.

With every report of David's actions and whereabouts, Saul built his fantasy that David was conspiring against him. Because of these imaginings, Saul became guilty of gross brutality and wanton bloodshed against his own people. He summoned the priest Ahimelech and his sons, accused Ahimelech of treason and proceeded to have Doeg the Edomite³ slay eighty-five priests and every man, woman, child and animal in the city of Nob.

Only one son of Ahimelech named Abiathar escaped the massacre and fled to David's stronghold at Adullam. Upon hearing the news about Nob, David blamed himself and confessed his sin before Abiathar (who by seeking refuge with David showed his knowledge that David intended no harm to the priesthood). David made a solemn promise to personally undertake Abiathar's protection.

David now had both a prophet (22:5) and a priest at his side, a luxury only a king of Israel normally experienced. At the same time, Saul no longer had either. He had shown supreme folly in massacring the priesthood and blatantly resisting the hand of God.

Read 1 Samuel 21:1-9.

1. Where did David go after he became convinced that Saul intended to kill him (21:1)?
2. What lies did David tell to dissuade Ahimelech's fears about helping him (21:2)?
3. What did Ahimelech do for David (21:3-9)?

Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

4. Find Gath on your Bible's map. David seemed naive of his own reputation when he sought refuge in this Philistine city. What unforeseen situation arose, and how did David deal with it?

Reference: Note 1, *In Gath*, p. 102.

Read 1 Samuel 22:1-5.

5. Find north central Judah, where Adullam was located, on the map. Describe the people who joined David in his stronghold there (22:1-2).

6. Who instructed David to leave the cave, and where was he told to go (22:5)?

Read 1 Samuel 22:6-23.

7. Saul's paranoia led him to trust only his own tribe to be near him (22:7). What other evidences of Saul's instability are in the events of this passage (22:6,8,13,17-19)?

8. In what ways did Ahimelech show strength and courage before Saul (22:14-15)? How did he represent David?

9. David had resorted to a seemingly harmless lie rather than faith in God for help at Nob. What did he recognize to be the result of his lack of faith (22:20-22)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Overcoming Selfishness

As human beings, we are prone to want our best before that of others. From the time we are born, we have a natural bent towards selfishness. While self-preservation and care for our needs is the first step to enable us to sustain a giving lifestyle, self-centeredness can ruin our lives, rendering us useless and even cruel as human beings. We can see this clearly from the life of Saul, whose selfish clutching at kingly power led him to commit appalling acts of brutality.

The Bible states clearly that a lifestyle of unselfish and sacrificial giving leads to the greatest joy and happiness. Biblical principles repeatedly establish that you cannot give more than you will receive in return for giving. There is an old adage that says: "Giving is receiving; Receiving is giving; That is the art that lies behind living." Such a statement would certainly pass the test of biblical truth which encourages us to develop and enjoy a lifestyle of giving. Let's examine some of these principles as we look more closely at a choice that matters: overcoming selfishness.

1. What was the obvious focus of Saul's attention (1 Samuel 22:8)?
2. What did selfishness produce in Saul's relationships? What can happen in our lives if we follow selfish inclinations?
3. How did selfishness affect Saul emotionally? How can self-centeredness affect us emotionally?
4. How did selfishness affect Saul's relationship with God? How can it affect our relationship with God?
5. Ultimately, individuals who let themselves become ruled by selfishness instead of the Lord can become wicked and treacherous people. In light of this truth, what can result from a selfish lifestyle?
Isaiah 48:22

Proverbs 13:15

Job 15:20

6. What do you think is the difference between taking proper care of ourselves and selfishness?

7. a. Even though Jonathan knew David would take the throne of Israel from him, how did he respond to David (cf. 1 Samuel 18:3-4; 23:16-17)?

b. How do you think Jonathan benefited from his unselfish attitude toward David?

8. What does the Bible say about the unselfish person?
Luke 6:38

Proverbs 22:9

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

9. How does the Lord strengthen us as we seek to focus on the needs of others?

2 Corinthians 9:8

Philippians 4:13, 19

10. a. When we get weary from giving, what are we encouraged to do and why?

Galatians 6:9

1 Corinthians 15:58

b. What model prayer did the Psalmist give us regarding the choice of an unselfish lifestyle in Psalm 119:36 (NIV)?

SUMMARY

11. What does *selfishness* produce that you want to avoid?

12. What does *unselfishness* promise that you want to have in your life?

13. Are there areas in which you struggle with selfishness in your relationship with God or with others? In what ways would you like to grow?

LESSON 11 NOTES

1 *In Gath*, the Philistines relaxed because they believed David had become insane. Insanity was often believed an affliction of the gods, and madmen were treated as taboo, if not holy people who should not be harmed in any way. David's ruse was therefore quite clever and proved effective. David F. Payne, *1 & 2 Samuel*, p. 113.

2 *The Israelite family* was a very vital and important unit in their society, and it was not surprising that his family came to David's aid. They were no doubt in considerable danger as relatives of David as well.

3 *Edomites* were not of the Hebrew faith, therefore would have no problem with killing the priests. Doeg was self-seeking and obviously ruthless.

LESSON 12

DAVID PURSUED BY SAUL

1 Samuel 23-24

Saul had convinced himself and many people in Israel that David was a conspirator and a treasonous outlaw. After brutally slaying eighty-five priests and the people of the town of Nob for assisting David, Saul heard that David and his men were in the Judaeian town of Keilah. In his demented thinking, Saul somehow imagined that God was allowing him to capture David within Keilah's walls and gathered his men to go after him.

David *was* in Keilah, a town God had directed him to rescue from Philistine raiders. When David heard that Saul was coming, he sought God's direction through the high priest's ephod¹ which Abiathar had brought from Nob. The Lord directed David to leave Keilah, because it would be destroyed like Nob had been if its people protected David.

David was obviously shaken by Saul's pursuit, and Jonathan came to comfort him at Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph. While God's protection had made it impossible for Saul to get to David, Jonathan found easy access to his friend. He assured David with the words: "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this" (23:17). This would be Jonathan and David's last meeting before Jonathan's death (31:2), as their undiminished devotion to one another surfaced again.

However, the encouraging visit was followed by a very close call on David's life. Saul was assisted in his search for David by the people of Ziph, who had been led to believe David and his men were treasonous outlaws. Just as Saul and his men were closing in on David, a messenger came with word that the Philistines were raiding the land. Saul had to leave immediately and abandon his pursuit of David until later.²

David fled to Engedi, but as soon as Saul had dealt with the Philistines, he pursued David again, this time with 3,000 of Israel's best soldiers. During the pursuit, Saul went to relieve himself in the very cave where David and his 600 men were hiding. David had the perfect chance to kill Saul, but chose instead to simply cut off the edge of the king's robe. Even for this act, however, David began to feel guilty.³ After explaining to his men, who wanted to kill Saul, that it was wrong to harm the anointed king of Israel, he went forth from the cave to confront Saul from a distance. David pleaded his innocence to the charge of conspiracy against the throne, presenting the piece of Saul's robe as proof of his words.

Saul wept, amazed at the graciousness of David. The king's response was appreciative, humble and repentant. He spoke of his fear that God would establish David as king of Israel and wipe out Saul and his family in the process. He asked David to take an oath that he would spare Saul's family. David did so, and the two men parted. Saul went to his palace, and David went with his men back to their stronghold. Saul still could not be trusted.

Read 1 Samuel 23:1-14.

1. a. What situations called for wisdom on David's part, and how did he obtain wisdom to make these decisions (23:2-4, 9-13)?

b. What was the result (23:5, 13-14)?

Reference: Note 1, *ephod*, p. 112.

2. a. What had Saul wrongly assumed (23:7)?

b. How did this make Saul look later?

c. What obvious fact was Saul denying (23:14b)?

Read 1 Samuel 23:15-29.

3. a. David and his men escaped to the rocky, cave-pitted wilderness of Ziph, just southeast of Keilah.

b. What might David have been feeling?

c. How were David's emotions temporarily relieved (23:15-18)?

4. What aid did Saul receive (23:19-24)?

5. Describe David's narrow escape (23:24b-28).

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-22.

6. a. What were David's options when Saul entered the cave (24:4-7)?

b. Optional: Why might the choice to kill Saul have been unwise politically as well as spiritually?

7. What arguments did David use to attempt reconciliation with Saul (24:8-15)?

8. a. How did Saul respond to David in this sane moment (24:16-20)?

b. What did Saul seek to get from David at this time (24:21-22)?

9. a. What more do you think David needed to hear from Saul?

b. Optional: Given the story thus far, why did David have to remain a fugitive?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Benefits of Forgiveness

In his book, *The Freedom of Forgiveness*, David Augsburger tells the story of a Quaker woman who opened the door of her room one night and was shocked to find a robber going through her bureau with a rifle. As she quietly closed the door, the man turned to point his gun at her.

"Put that down," she said, "I'm going to help you because you must need whatever I have much more than I do, if you have to steal for it."

The burglar, dumbfounded, watched as she opened a secret drawer and pressed her jewelry on him, telling him she was sorry that his need was so urgent. Suddenly the man dropped his gun and fled, taking nothing.

The following day, she found an anonymous note in her mailbox that read: *Madam, I have known only hate and fear. I can deal with them. But I was powerless before your kindness.*

Few people discover the power of love and forgiveness because these are unnatural responses to hurts from others. We can learn from David, however, that forgiveness has greater benefits than revenge. Saul had slandered David throughout Israel and left innocent blood in his path as he tracked David like a criminal. But when given the chance to kill Saul, David chose to forgive him instead; and it was a good choice.

In this lesson, we will observe some biblical truths about God's forgiveness, our forgiveness of others, and the benefits of choosing both.

1. As we saw earlier, David recognized his need for God's forgiveness. What was his continual prayer? Psalm 19:12-13

2. How does God respond to our request for forgiveness? What attributes of God cause Him to respond this way?
Psalm 51:1

Psalm 103:8-10

3. What is God's penalty for sin, and how does a holy God forgive?

Romans 6:23; Romans 5:8

Colossians 1:13-14; 2:13-14

Reference: Note 1, sacrifices, p. 21.

4. To whom can we go for forgiveness? Mark 2:5-12

5. What happens when God forgives our sin?

Isaiah 43:25

1 John 1:9

6. How can we receive God's forgiveness, and what is the result?

Psalm 32:5

Acts 3:19

7. In light of God's free gift of forgiveness, how are we to respond to those who have hurt us?

Colossians 3:13

1 Peter 3:9

8. a. What focus replaced the revenge and hatred that could have captivated David's thoughts?

Psalm 36:5-12

b. What are some choices David made as he forgave? Psalm 37:1-8

c. How do you think David benefited from his focus and choices to forgive in the face of Saul's attacks?

SUMMARY

9. a. If you have never personally made the choice to receive the complete forgiveness God offers through Jesus Christ, why not take a moment to confess your need for forgiveness and receive God's pardon through Christ.

The following prayer may be helpful to you:

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that my sin has separated me from you. I believe that you paid the penalty for all my sins when you died on the cross. I now receive the complete forgiveness that you offer. Take control of my life and make me the person you created me to be. Amen.

b. If you made that decision, how can you know that He heard and answered your request? 1 John 5:14-15

10. If you have received Christ at an earlier time, how has the forgiveness of God benefited your life?

11. What principles in this lesson are most helpful to you in dealing with hurt?

12. What benefits of forgiveness motivate you to forgive?

LESSON 12 NOTES

1 *Ephod*. David sought God's direction through the *high priestly ephod* that Abiathar, the sole surviving priest of Nob, had brought with him when he fled from Nob to David. The ephod was the garment worn by all priests, but the ephod of the high priest held the breastplate containing the *Urim and Thummin* (Exodus 28:29,30). These objects are not specifically described, but were perhaps stones that were used to cast lots or otherwise receive direction from God regarding His will.

2 The biblical writer was clearly trying to dramatically illustrate God's protection of David here.

3 It is not certain why David felt guilty (24:5); perhaps because the king would be humiliated by the damaged robe, or more likely that taking a piece of the king's robe would be symbolic of a desire to take the throne of Saul.

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