



ABUNDANT FAVOR: God Intervenes in the Lives of His People

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 1:1-3:21

First Samuel records the establishment of Israel's monarchy, starting with the birth of Samuel and carrying on to the death of Saul. This narrative happens during a time when everyone does what is right in their own eyes (see Judges 21:25). It's not unlike today's world where most people think they can do whatever they want without consequences. As we know, God is not a fan of relativism. Take time during your study to discuss that this passage shows the depravity of our intentions and actions, as well as the beautiful grace, mercy, and provision of God in the midst of our sin.

There are three distinct stories that make up our nice narrative package of 1 Samuel 1-3. The author of the book (possibly Samuel himself, but nobody knows for sure) starts by telling the story of Hannah and her desire for a son. After Hannah gives birth to a son, Samuel, the story continues to tell of Eli's worthless sons who worked as priests in the temple. Finally, the narrative closes with the Lord specially calling Samuel to a life-time of service. Make sure the group discovers that in all three stories God is behind the work, active in the lives of everyone involved.

God Gives Hannah a Son – 1:1-2:11

The first narrative piece is about Hannah. Hannah is married to a guy named Elkanah, and she's unable to have children. For many people today, it wouldn't have been that big of a deal, but not in those times. Being infertile in Jewish society meant you could be considered an outcast. Other Jews even thought it meant God was punishing you. To add insult to injury, Hannah has a rival wife Phineas (yes, Elkanah had two!) who does have children and makes fun of Hannah for being barren. After some time, Hannah had enough of Phineas and starts praying for a son.

Though she is "deeply distressed" (v. 10), Hannah prays in faith that God will give her a son. Hannah loves God so much, in fact, that if God grants her a son, she promises to give him to full-time ministry! Make sure you communicate to your group the passion, perseverance, and faith of Hannah's prayer. Eli, the priest at the time, saw how devastated she looked in prayer that he thinks she's drunk! But Hannah explains, "I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord" (v. 15).

God honors Hannah's prayer and gives her a son and Hannah keeps her promise and gives her son to the Lord. What is her response after giving Samuel up? She bursts out in worshipful prayer at how wonderful God is.

What's the Big Idea?

This passage gives us a look into corrupt leadership, but that theme is sandwiched between stories of hope. Despite Eli's sons' failures, God intervenes to raise up faithful leadership for his people. The focus is on God: he judges those who don't honor him, yet graciously provides for his people to hear his word and respond to it. The narrative points us to the day when God will send Jesus, the high priest who will be faithful in all that is in God's heart and mind (2:35).

What's the Problem?

We've heard it said, "Pride goes before the fall." Chances are you have seen a spiritual leader not live up to God's standards because they have let power and authority go to their head. Everyone's sinful and our tendency as fallen people, even if we aren't spiritual leaders, is to look to give honor to others and ourselves instead of Almighty God.



Later in chapter 2, we find out that because of Hannah's faithfulness, God gives her more children with Elkanah. I'm sure Phineas is a bit humbled after all this! Help your group experience Hannah's dependence on God in devastating times. Show them how Hannah's life should stir us to lean wholly on Jesus when we face with insurmountable circumstances.

God Punishes Eli's Sons – 2:12-36

The leadership of Eli and his sons sadly illustrates the fact that everyone during this time did what they pleased. In 2:12, Eli's sons are called "worthless." They are priests, so they supposed to be exemplary above all other people. Even more, they are the ones who ministered to God for the people. Talk about having to live up to high standards! Instead of honoring their position, they abuse their privileges as priests to take advantage of the food supply. On top of that, they commit acts of sexual immorality with the women who serve at the entrance of the tent of meeting. It's essential to catch the point from this section that even spiritual leaders are susceptible to grievous sin.

You might be asking, "Where was Eli in all this?" Well, Eli doesn't help the situation. He could have played a more active role in his sons' lives and brought them up in the counsel of the Lord. Instead, Eli acts cowardly and honors his sons above God by letting them profane God's laws. Because of this, God tells Eli, "Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel" (2:31-32a).

However, God doesn't leave the situation hopeless. He promises Eli the day will come when he will send a faithful priest who will "do according to what is in my heart and in my mind" (2:35). This is immediately fulfilled in Samuel, but the ultimate fulfillment is found in Jesus. The most important thing for your group to understand is that the brokenness in this section is not final. God foreshadows the coming of Jesus and for us today, we can take our brokenness to the Lord and trust in Jesus to be our faithful priest who will never let us down.

God Calls Samuel – 3:1-21

During all this, God was still not speaking to his people like he had been earlier in Israel's history. Verse 1 says, "And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." God was giving his people the cold shoulder because of their wickedness. But God, as he had done so many times, intervenes and calls Samuel. This starts an eventual mini turn-around for the nation of Israel. Notice the sheer grace and compassion that God has on his people! He is the hero who steps in and provides a way for Israel to hear his word. God raised up Samuel to be a "prophet of the Lord" (v. 20), which means that he has the authority to speak God's word. God worked through Samuel to bring about his righteousness and glory in his people.

Conclusion

As you prepare to end the study, pray that God would help the group see, like Hannah, that even in the midst of despair, we have a solid rock who can provide everything we need in our lives. Pray also that God will call you and the group members to recognize and repent of your own pride and selfish living. God has provided a faithful high priest named Jesus that has healed our brokenness and brought us back to him.

What's Our Response?

We need to depend on God's grace and trust that he can work in any circumstance we face. We can do this by obeying his commands, humbling ourselves, and having faith that his word is reliable.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 1:1-3:21

LAUNCH

Describe a time in your life when you have been very disappointed because a spiritual leader didn't seem to live up to his or her calling. What did you do?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 1:1-28

1. What is Hannah's situation, and how does she respond?
2. How does God respond to Hannah's cry?

Read I Samuel 2:1-10

3. What stands out to you about the focus of Hannah's prayer?

Read I Samuel 2:11-36.

4. How would you contrast Samuel with Eli's sons?
5. Why does God rebuke Eli for his sons' conduct?
6. What does God promise in the face of the religious abuses of Eli's sons, and who seems to be the immediate fulfillment of this promise?
7. Read Hebrews 2:17-18. In what way is Jesus the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise in I Samuel 2:35?

Read I Samuel 3:1-4:1a.

8. What does it say about God that he intervenes in the history of his people at a time when word from him was rare and everyone was going their own way (3:1; cf. Judges 21:25)?
9. What are the results of God calling Samuel (3:15-4a), and how do these results address the corruption of religious leadership that had come about through Eli and his sons?
10. Read John 1:14 and Hebrews 1:1-3. How is Jesus the ultimate expression of God's heart to speak his word to his people?
11. What are the main things we learn about God from this passage?

APPLY

12. How do you think you would have felt if you were Hannah, crying out to God but seemingly getting no answer?
13. Read John 15:7-8. How do Jesus' words combined with Hannah's experience summarized in I Samuel 2:1-10 encourage you to trust God to do his will in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances?
14. In what ways do you struggle as Eli did with honoring others above God instead of giving him the reverence he deserves?
15. How are you comforted knowing that you can go to Jesus as the faithful priest who will always do what is on God's heart and mind?

What Are the Answers?

- 1. She's barren, so she asks God for a son and promises to dedicate him to the LORD if he answers her.
- 2. He gives her a son.
- 3. Allow the group to discuss.
- 4. Samuel genuinely and humbly ministered to God while Eli's sons wickedly used their spiritual position for their own gain.
- 5. He honored his sons above God by not rebuking them for their wickedness.
- 6. He promises to raise up a faithful priest (Jesus Christ) who will do according to what is in his heart and soul.
- 7. He does perfectly what is in God's heart and soul.
- 8. It shows his graciousness and that God is not going to let his people do life on their own and leave them in the dark.
- 9. God's word came to all Israel, and God worked through Samuel to restore righteousness to Israel's leadership.
- 10. Jesus embodies as well as articulates God's word perfectly and shows overwhelming grace to those who don't deserve to hear his word at all. Because of this, Jesus is worthy of all our praise and adoration.
- 11. Although God in his holiness judges those who honor others above himself, he graciously provides ways for his people to hear his word and respond to it.
- 12. Allow the group to discuss.
- 13. Allow the group to discuss.
- 14. Allow the group to discuss.
- 15. Jesus will never disappoint us, even though we are continually unfaithful to him—he always speaks to God on our behalf. He gives us grace to have faith in him so that even when a spiritual leader may let us down, we may ultimately look to Jesus for leadership in our lives.

Memorize

And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

I Samuel 2:35



GOD ALONE: Learning to Trust God and Not Religion

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 4:1-7:17

Because we are sinners, religion always looks more appealing than God himself. First Samuel 4-7 shows that having symbols of God's presence is ultimately not as valuable as having the presence and blessing of God himself. We can only experience this if we have a right relationship with God. Israel learns this lesson when God lets the Philistines conquer in battle and capture the ark of the covenant, which is a physical representation of God's presence to the Israelites. The most important thing to catch in this section is that it points to the future day when God would embody his presence in Jesus himself and in his people through his Spirit (cf. John 1:14; 14:16-17).

This narrative is a huge chunk. Feel free to read the whole thing, but remember that your students should have already read the passage before coming to the study (if they don't know to do this, tell them!). If you want to narrow the scope of what to read during the study, the questions below focus on 4:1-5:12; 6:1-7:17

The Israelites Lose the Ark to the Philistines – 4:1-5:12

At the beginning of our passage, Israel is about to go to battle against the rival Philistines. Evidently, the battle doesn't take long because by verse 2 there are 30,000 Israelites killed. Notice verse 3 when it says, "And when the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?'" God is the one behind the battle, controlling the outcome. He is going to teach Israel a hard lesson about depending on him alone.

After the tragedy on the battlefield, the Israelites don't turn to God. They turn to religion. They think the solution will be to "bring the ark of the covenant... that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies" (v. 3b). Here's the focus of our entire narrative: religion doesn't save; God does. The Israelites think a good luck charm would save them. They are wrong! In fact, Eli is so overwhelmed when he heard that the ark is captured by the Philistines that he falls off his chair, breaks his neck, and dies! When God's people turn to idols or symbols, he will use hard discipline to turn them in the right direction. Help your students make the connection to their lives, that even in today's world we can let our own idols and good luck charms take the place that only God should hold.

God Returns the Ark to Israel – 6:1-7:2

After God causes quite an episode at Ashdod in 5:1-12, the Philistines decide to return the ark to Israel. They send the ark back to Israel on a cow-drawn

What's the Big Idea?

From watching Israel's battle with the Philistines and the struggle over possession of the ark we learn that God won't allow his people to substitute the blessing of His presence for a mere external representation. He is holy and he blesses his people when they turn to him and worship him alone.

What's the Problem?

Even though God is sufficient for us and worthy of our dependence, we tend to look to religion, idols, and morality for help and rescue in desperate times.



cart with an offering to God. Still unsure if their affliction was an act of God (it's kind of hard to miss if you ask me), they declared that if the cows pulled the ark straight to Beth-shemesh, God was the one causing the tumors, panic, and death in chapter 5. Well, the cows did pull the cart straight to the Israelite camp and when the Israelites see the ark coming, they rejoice (v. 13). Some of the men of Beth-shemesh even gave offerings and sacrifices to the Lord, but others "looked upon the ark of the LORD" and God struck them down (6:19). There is weeping and mourning for the dead men, as the Israelites stand in awe of God. This incident teaches us that God is the "One who is high and lifted up" (Isaiah 57:15) and is utterly and infinitely holier than anyone on earth. We can learn from the Israelites here. Your group will benefit from marveling at the beauty of God's holiness.

Samuel Judges Israel – 7:3-7:17

Our narrative ends with Samuel judging Israel for their sins, namely the sin of idolatry. Remember that Samuel is a prophet and he speaks as one authorized by God to the people. In 7:3, he gives a beautiful promise to Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods... and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." God uses Samuel to start a stream of repentance in Israel. "We have sinned against the Lord," they cry (v. 6). Understand that though God is a jealous God who wants our affections to be on him alone, he is gracious and merciful to forgive us when we confess our sin, turn from idols, and run to him.

In the midst of their confession and repentance, Israel is attacked by the Philistines again. Evidently, the Philistines have short-term memory loss. Though they won the first battle, God made life miserable for them in chapter 5 because they stole the ark and now they want revenge. This time, because Israel turned from their sin, God "thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel" (7:10b). God is faithful to his promises: confess and turn to him and he will fight for us; continue to trust in idols and religion and God will certainly send harsh discipline.

Conclusion

During your preparation for the study, pray that the group would see their own idols and religiosity. Pray that they would be comforted to know that God has given us Jesus, so we might experience his presence and reap his blessing. Throughout the study, point your group to the fact that God is the one in control of the events in 1 Samuel 4-7 and that his desire for us is to trust in him alone and not man-made religion.

What's Our Response?

Seek to know God, experience his presence, and reap his blessing through living by faith rather than by trusting in religion or material things.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 4:1-7:17

LAUNCH

What's the difference between trusting in religion and trusting in God?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 4:1-5:12

1. When the Philistines initially defeat the Israelites, how do the Israelites try to solve their problem?
2. How does the Israelites' strategy work when they face the Philistines again?
3. How does the daughter-in-law of Eli the priest assess the situation?
4. In what way does her ironic assessment point to a far greater loss of glory than the capture of the ark and the death of Israel's top religious leaders?
5. How does it go for the Philistines when they have the ark in their possession?
6. What do you think God is trying to show the Philistines?

Read I Samuel 6:1-7:2

7. How do the Philistines decide to deal with the trouble that has come upon them as a result of having the ark?
8. How do the people respond upon receiving the ark in Israelite territory?
9. How do the people respond when God strikes down those who looked into the ark? What does this say about God's character?

Read I Samuel 7:3-17

10. What is Samuel's focus as he interacts with the people of Israel?
11. How does God respond to Israel's repentance the next time they face a military challenge?

APPLY

12. The Israelites trusted in the ark as a spiritual "good luck charm." What are the spiritual "good luck charms" you find yourself trusting in?
13. Samuel's interaction with the Israelites in I Samuel 7 suggests that the root issue for God's people was idolatry: putting other things first in your heart rather than God. What things other than God are currently competing for the place of utmost affection in your heart?
14. God's people experience his presence and blessing today through his Spirit, who lives in those who trust in Christ. Read John 7:37-39 and talk about the picture you think Jesus is trying to paint for us.
15. As you examine this narrative, what are the main things it teaches us about God?

What Are the Answers?

1. They put the ark in their midst in the hope that it will deliver them in future battles.
2. The Philistines defeat them, capture the ark, and kill their top religious leaders.
3. She names her son Ichabod, which means “no glory” because in the loss of the ark and the death of the religious leaders she sees God’s glory departing from Israel.
4. The real loss of glory has come because God’s people have failed to trust him, expressed in their reliance on other things like the ark and the corruption of their religious leaders.
5. God causes the Philistine god to lose its limbs, and he brings judgment on them for taking the ark, which is the sign of his presence that belongs with his people.
6. He wants the Philistines to know that their god is impotent and totally helpless when compared to the true God and that when they are opposed to him, they only face destruction and death.
7. They decide to send the ark back to Israel on a cow-drawn cart with an offering to God. They decide that their affliction is an act of God if the cows pull the ark straight to Beth-shemesh.
8. They respond with gladness and offer a sacrifice.
9. They respond with amazement, wondering who can stand before this holy God. Their reaction shows that God is holy beyond any ability we have to understand.
10. Their need to return to the LORD with all their hearts, evidenced by turning from the foreign gods they had been serving.
11. He singled-handedly defeated the Philistines by throwing them into confusion.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. He’s painting a picture of super-abundant, overflowing life through his Spirit as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.
15. He won’t allow his people to substitute the blessing of his presence for a mere external representation. He is holy. He blesses his people as they turn to him and worship him alone.

Memorize

And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD will all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”

I Samuel 7:3



GOD'S WARNING: The Results of Ultimate Dependence on Man

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 8:1-22

In I Samuel 4-7, we talked about how religion can often be more appealing to us than God himself. The Philistines were crushing the Israelites in battle, so the Israelites turn to the ark for comfort and victory. Well, it didn't work out too well for Israel. In chapter 8, we see the wandering Israelites going astray from trusting God after he so graciously brought them to safety in chapter 7. Have you ever heard the saying, "He bites the hand that feeds him?" That is exactly what the Israelites do. They are turning from the only One who can help during trouble in favor of a human king who will not be as kind and gracious (v. 10-18). God's desire is that we let him reign over our lives as our ultimate King and that everyone else is a distant second. Chapter 8, more than anything, shows that we must trust God for who rules over us in government. Help your students see that having a king is not the solution to problems in the world, but submitting to the true King is.

Israel Demands a King – 8:1-9

Chapter 7 ended with this note: "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" and then had other details about his work. Then, chapter 8 started by saying that Samuel was now old and his sons had become judges, but his sons did not walk in his ways (v. 3). Because of this, the elders of Israel were a tad bit nervous about corrupt young men being in charge of judging. Notice two things here: 1) Samuel, though he's a faithful judge over God's people, is incapable of raising quality, godly children who walk in humility and righteousness (just like Eli's sons!); 2) Israel's elders had enough sense to know what corrupt leadership looked, but their response, as we will find out, is not God-centered.

When the elders approached Samuel in verse 5, they wanted a king to judge them. But, it doesn't seem as if their desire was pure. They asked for a king so they could be "like all the nations." Evidently, their need for a king was driven by a desire to be like the other peoples around them. It came down to peer pressure. During this time of history, when a nation had a king, he was most often worshiped as divine. For this reason, Israel had stayed away from being ruled by a king, for their allegiance was to Jehovah. God commands his people to be holy, yet here we see their desire to be negatively merged with the culture. Make sure to discuss with your group the effect that surrounding culture has on our allegiance to our true King.

When Samuel comes to God and tells him what they have decided, God is by no means surprised. He tells Samuel, "For they have not rejected you, but

What's the Big Idea?

Israel demands a king to judge them like the surrounding nations. This passage teaches us that though God's people reject him as their true king, he gives them what they want to show how badly they really do need him. Ultimately, this passage points to our need for Jesus, the ultimate and perfect king.

What's the Problem?

Though God is a perfect king who will judge fairly and never leave us nor forsake us, we seek to conform to the world by putting our trust in human leadership.



they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you” (vv. 7-8). Though what the Israelites asked for was terribly offensive to God, he grants their request and tells Samuel to give them a stern warning about the results of having a king. As he did with the Israelites, sometimes God gives us over to our sinful desires simply so we will see our brokenness and need for his redemption.

Samuel's Warning, God's Decision – 8:10-22

Samuel obeys God and tells the Israelites what they can expect from a king. The outlook is gloomy, to say the least. God has been perfectly faithful, provisional, loving, compassionate, and forgiving to the Israelites. Yet they want to turn to a man who is sure to let them down. Samuel says that a king will make their sons soldiers and their daughters maids, put their servants to work, and take their best harvest for himself. Finally, Samuel gives them the worst warning: “In that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day” (v. 18). Still, verse 19 says “they refused to obey the voice of Samuel.” In the coming lessons, we'll see how Israel fares with a king. In the meantime, communicate to your group the importance of hearing the Lord's warnings when sin is crouching at the door. Help the group discern areas in their own life where they are not letting the Lord rule and instead want a functional king who is unable to be the ultimate provider, protector, and redeemer in their lives.

Conclusion

As you prepare for you time with the group, pray that God would open their eyes to the deeper meaning in this passage. Similar to the last lesson, God wants to show us that our sinful bent is toward man made things and institutions in order to find guidance, safety, and security. Pray that God would help them understand that even today, though we may not have that deep of a connection to a government ruler, we still seek to have other things or people in place of Jesus Christ, who is the only true and faithful King.

What's Our Response?

We should submit to God's kingship in our lives and reject the desire to put ultimate trust in human leadership like everyone else.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 8:1-22

LAUNCH

Talk about a time you wanted something really badly, got it, and then realized that what you got wasn't such a good thing after all.

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 8:1-9

1. If the Israelites were thinking that one of Samuel's sons would succeed him in giving leadership to the people, what concerns might they have had?
2. What solution do the people offer?
3. What problem does God have with the people's desire?

Read I Samuel 8:10-22

4. What does God say it will be like for Israel to have a king?

5. What does God say in verse 18 about whether the people will be satisfied in the end with having a king?
6. What is sobering about God's failure to respond to his people when they cry out to him in their dissatisfaction?
7. After taking in the consequences of having a king and having God reject them, how do the people respond in verses 19-20?

8. What is sobering about God's willingness to grant the people's desire in spite of their rejection of him?

APPLY

9. In what ways can you relate to the people's desire to reject God as the source of security and significance and search for those things elsewhere?
10. In what way is searching for these things elsewhere than God an expression of "serving other gods" (verse 8)?
11. How does a desire to be like all the people around you play into this? (See verses 5, 20)
12. Read Psalm 84. How does this picture of God's kingship motivate you to submit to his rule in your life?
13. Read Romans 12:1-2. How do these verses speak to our heart's desire to be like the people around us and look elsewhere than God for security and significance?
14. In light of this discussion, how do you think God is calling you to respond to him so that you might experience the blessings of his kingship in your life?
15. What are the main things we learn about God and people from this passage?

What Are the Answers?

1. Samuel's sons were corrupt and didn't follow his example of righteous leadership.
2. They want God to give them a king.
3. They only want a king because it's what all the surrounding nations have. This desire amounts to a rejection of God as their king.
4. He will take the best of their people and possessions.
5. They won't be satisfied and will essentially wish they had never asked for a king.
6. It's sobering to think that they could be so far gone in their pursuit of their own desires that God would fail to respond to them.
7. They reject God's warning and persist in their demand for a king.
8. It's sobering to think that even though God is gracious and wants to keep us from sin, he still lets us make our own choices and reap the consequences that come from them.
9. Allow the group to discuss.
10. Anytime we put anything above God, it becomes our primary god. We must have our ultimate allegiance be to Jesus first and keep everything else in priority.
11. Allow the group to discuss.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. God is gracious and patient with us when we sin, but part of his graciousness is letting us make our own choices and experiencing the consequences. People can be fixated on doing what they want to do in spite of blatant warnings that their desires might not be good. People tend to look for earthly forms of security and significance instead of submitting to God's rule and the security and significance he provides.

Memorize

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

I Samuel 8:7



RENEWED KINGDOM: God Works Salvation in Israel

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 9:1-12:25

In our last study, we saw that God warned the Israelites about what it would be like to have a king rule over them. Unfortunately, they ignored the warning. In our four chapters this week, God is gracious and merciful, however, to bless Israel instead of destroying them for their rejection of him. Saul is chosen and anointed as king by Samuel and then he goes right to work and defeats the Ammonites in battle. Finally, now that everything seems to be in order for Israel, Samuel gives a goodbye speech with a bit of advice for God's people. They are distraught that they sinned against God by asking for a king. Samuel encourages them however to not look back at their evil, but look forward and keep following the Lord with all their heart (12:20).

This passage shows that God takes sin and rejection of him and turns it into redemption for his people. God is gracious and merciful to deal with his people in such a compassionate way. Lead your students to understanding the truth of God's unfailing love for us in his Son Jesus, the ultimate King who has paid the price for our sin and rejection of God.

Saul is Chosen and Anointed as King – 9:1-10:27

When you think of a king, you probably think of someone who is tall, dark, and handsome, right? That exactly describes Saul. Verse 2 actually says, "There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he." Good looks don't always translate to good leadership, but after all, this was God's choice. When Samuel sees Saul, God said, "He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines" (v. 16b). God had heard the cry of the people, even though it was a blatant rejection of his kingship over them. God's choosing Saul as king foreshadows the future day when Jesus will come to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Saul is imperfect (as we will most certainly find out down the road), but Jesus will never disobey God's commands or be unfaithful (see I Sam. 2:35; Heb. 3:5-6).

When Samuel publicly proclaimed Saul as king over Israel, he gave them a summary of their sin: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' But today you have rejected your God" (10:18-19a). When we are stiff-necked about our sin, sometimes God disciplines us by giving us over to our sin, so that he might graciously provide for our redemption and forgiveness.

What's the Big Idea?

After the people demand a king, God grants their request by providing them with Saul. Although God chooses to work through Saul to lead the people, he expresses his displeasure to them for rejecting him as their king, yet still gives grace and calls them to repentance. Here we see God's mercy in continually pursuing his people despite their sin.

What's the Problem?

Even though we serve a great God who has brought us out of sin, slavery, and misery, we still reject him and desire other people or things to rule over us.



Saul Goes to Battle; God Renews Israel – 11:1-15

Saul doesn't waste any time getting acquainted with being a king. During those days, to be a king meant that you were not just a political, economic, and social ruler. It also meant that you were the chief warrior. Israel was being threatened by the Ammonites. Nahash the Ammonite threatened that he would gouge out their right eyes and disgrace Israel. When Saul heard this, he became righteously angry—for Nahash was threatening God's people! Saul gathered together over three hundred thousand men to fight. God was faithful to Israel on the day of battle as Saul and his army "struck down the Ammonites" all day long (v. 11).

After the battle, Saul's heart was clearly directed toward God. "For today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel" (v. 13). Despite the people's sin and displeasure with God alone ruling over them, he provided victory over the Ammonites. Saul gave complete credit to God for the victory. Samuel was excited too, as he directed the people to go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom. Things are starting to look up for the Israelites. Talk with your group about how every event in their lives is directed by God for his glory and our ultimate good in keeping his covenant with his people (see Rom. 8:28).

Samuel's Farewell – 12:1-25

Now that there seems to be some kind of order restored to Israel, Samuel is ready to ride off into the sunset and finish his days as a prophet. Before he leaves, he wants to be assured that he has been above reproach with the Israelites. The people confessed, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand" (v. 4). After this, Samuel gives the people a run-down of Israel's rich history with the LORD God. The main point of his monologue is that if they will fear the LORD, serve him, and obey his voice and not rebel, it will be well for them. And if they don't? Well, God won't be happy.

After Samuel's speech, the people finally realize their sin to ask for a king and are afraid. They even begged Samuel to pray for God to spare their lives. But Samuel compassionately said, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the LORD with all your heart" (v. 20). Samuel doesn't want God's people to sin, but when they do, God forgives if they confess and turn to him. God never forsakes his people and he is even pleased to make us a people for himself (v. 22-23; see 1 Pet. 2:9-10). We can heed Samuel's encouragement today because we have a greater promise in God's Son. When we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one, who is the atonement for our sin (1 John 2:1-2). For whoever is in Christ there is no longer any condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

What's Our Response?

By faith, we must turn to God in repentance, fear, trust, and service after we reject him as our one true King.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 9:1-12:25

LAUNCH

Has there ever been a time in your life when you did something wrong and expected to be punished for it, but received grace instead?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 9:1-2; 9:15-10:27

1. How would you describe Saul based on I Samuel 9:1-2?
2. What does God do through Samuel to affirm Saul as king in 9:15-10:21?
3. In spite of these affirmations of his leadership, Saul's hides himself by the baggage when it's time for him to become Israel's king (10:22). What does this say about his suitability for leadership?
4. What does this passage reveal about God's heart in giving Israel this king?
5. How do the people respond to Saul's kingship?

Read I Samuel 11:1-15

6. How would you describe Saul's first test as king?
7. How does Saul respond to this test?
8. How does God show grace to his people through Saul's leadership, even though they sinned against God by asking for a king?

Read I Samuel 12:1-25

9. What is Samuel's point in verses 1-5?
10. How does God work through Samuel to underline the evil they have committed by asking for a king?
11. How does Samuel tell the people to respond in the face of their sin?
12. How do the people respond when they realize the gravity of their sin?
13. How does Samuel encourage the people regarding God's character in the face of their sin?
14. Read I Peter 2:9-10. How does the people's experience with God in Samuel's day look forward to our experience with God through faith in Jesus Christ?

APPLY

15. What does it mean for you in your life that God extends his grace to us on the basis of his commitment to his great name and his commitment to making people who trust in Jesus a people for himself?
16. In what ways do you need to heed Samuel's call to "fear the LORD and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things he has done for you" (I Samuel 12:24)?
17. What do we learn about God's heart for his people through these chapters?

What Are the Answers?

1. He's tall, choice, and handsome.
2. He tells him that he is favored of all the people in Israel (9:20). He anoints him as a ruler (10:1). He predicts certain circumstances that will come to pass as confirmation of his kingship, and they all happen (10:2-13). He identifies him as king in front of the people (10:17-21).
3. He may have good physical features, but he seems to be fearful, which doesn't inspire confidence in a leader.
4. It shows that he recognizes their rejection of him but also shows them grace by providing a king who would deliver them from their enemies.
5. They're excited, but some people despise him.
6. An enemy ruler tries to press Israel into service at the cost of each Israelite's right eye.
7. He assembles the men of Israel to fight this enemy and defeat it.
8. He uses this king to deliver them from oppression and slavery.
9. He's establishing that he has conducted himself before the people with utmost integrity.
10. He sends a thunder storm at a time of the year when rain is infrequent.
11. They cry out for mercy, asking Samuel to pray for them so that they won't die.
12. He tells them not to fear in spite of their sin. He tells them to fear the LORD and serve him, considering the great things he has done for them.
13. He assures them that God won't abandon them on account of his great name. He assures them that God has good intentions to make them a people for himself in spite of their sin.
14. Just as the people didn't deserve God loving them or making them a people for himself, so neither do we. But God makes us a people for his own possession in spite of our sin through faith in Jesus.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.
17. We learn that even though God lets us experience the consequences of rejecting him, he still relates to us with grace and even works through our rejection to make us the people he wants us to be.

Memorize

For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

I Samuel 12:22-23



KINGDOM TRANSITION: Snapshots from the Reign of Saul

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 13:1-15:35

In these three chapters, we see snapshots of Saul's reign over Israel. It's a pretty depressing picture. Saul, though he is tall, choice, and handsome (9:2), is simply a terrible leader who looks out for himself and his reputation more than seeking the Lord and providing for his people. This narrative section shows mistake after mistake on Saul's part. After defeating the Philistines in 13:1-7, he carelessly makes a sacrifice to God after becoming impatient waiting for Samuel. Immediately, Samuel let Saul know that because of this, God will replace him with a "man after his own heart" as king (13:14). In chapter 14, Saul makes a stupid vow that said anyone who ate anything would be put to death. It's a foolish thing because the Israelite men had just been to battle. Saul's son Jonathan actually is the first to eat something! By God's grace, Jonathan's life is spared. Finally, Saul is given a chance to do the Lord's work in battle again by completely destroying Amalek. Instead of heeding God's command, Saul keeps some things for Israel; this makes God angry. Though Saul's intentions may be been right (he wanted to make sacrifices to God), he disobeyed the command of the Lord. Our passage's message is loud and clear: Saul is not a man after Gods' own heart and one day God will bring a king who will be faithful to what he commands.

Saul Sins Against the Lord – 13:1-23

Almost as quickly as Saul took the throne he is told that his kingdom will soon come to an end. The Israelites are engaged in a battle with the Philistines. It isn't looking good for Saul and his men. During the battle, Saul waits seven days for Samuel to show up. Becoming nervous, and most likely impatient and stressed, Saul did exactly what he is not supposed to do: he offers the burnt offering and peace offering to the Lord. As if that wasn't bad enough, Samuel shows up soon as Saul finishes the offering. Talk about bad timing! After Saul gives his excuse, Samuel forcefully says, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God...your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart" (vv. 13-14).

This is just the beginning of a troubled reign for Saul. The point of this episode is to show Saul's imperfections and selfish desires. Instead of waiting on the Lord, he takes matters into his own hands. When Samuel says that God has sought out a man after his own heart, he is immediately referring to David, who will succeed Saul as king. However, this also points to the greater David, Jesus Christ, who will be the ultimate King, perfect in everything that God commands.

What's the Big Idea?

Although Saul is Israel's king, his lack of obedience and leadership and his unwillingness to accept responsibility for his actions point to a deficit in his heart relationship with God and the need for a true king who has a heart after God's own.

What's the Problem?

No human authority can ever be obedient to God in all that he commands. Still, our tendency is to look to kings and rulers as the ultimate display of leadership and greatness.



Jonathan's Valor, Saul's Vow – 14:1-52

Our narrative jumps in time as it begins with the phrase “One day” in 14:1. Jonathan, Saul’s son, has a crazy idea to go up to the Philistine camp with his armor bearer. One would think Jonathan has a deranged death wish, but verse 6 tells us that it was his faith in the LORD to save Israel that motivates him. Extreme faith in God may take you to severe situations. Being the king’s son, Jonathan probably could have gotten away with not fighting, but he is full of hope in God and knew Israel would be delivered, so he courageously goes where other men will not. Jonathan leads by example, whereas Saul so often led by his title. One of the greatest lines in the movie *Braveheart* comes from William Wallace when he said, “Men don’t follow titles, they follow courage.” We see that in Jonathan and we will see that in David, and of course, we find that ultimately in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Later in chapter 14, it says that the men of Israel were hard pressed from battle. Saul makes a foolish vow that anyone who ate that day would surely be put to death. Jonathan did not hear of the vow and ate some honey. Despite the absurdity of such a vow, Saul was going to stick to his promise and kill his son! Still, because of Jonathan’s faithful courage in battle, the people proclaimed, “Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel?” Their question hits home for Saul and he spares Jonathan’s life. Saul is well on the highway to become a self-centered leader who is more concerned with his image than of the welfare of his people.

God Rejects Saul – 15:1-35

The last section of our narrative is particular saddening. Saul receives a direct command from the LORD, given by Samuel, yet he cannot fulfill it. Saul is told to destroy Amalek and all the Amalekites’ property, but he spares Agag and some animals. God is so grieved that he even says to Samuel, “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments” (v. 10). Could you imagine God saying that about you? No doubt Saul is burdened by his sin because of the earthly consequences (his kingdom would not last), however he is not burdened by the fact that he offended Almighty God. We know this because Saul did not repent correctly. In verse 25 he says to Samuel, “Please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the LORD.” Notice that Saul did not go to God for forgiveness. He asks Samuel—a mere man! Saul’s heart at the beginning of this narrative was drifting far from God, but now we can say it is quite a ways down the river.

Conclusion

Pray that the group will realize the inevitable imperfections of human rulers, and that we cannot put all (or any) of our stock in them to provide guidance and protection. Lead the group to the understanding that Jesus is our ultimate King. He has never disobeyed and he is the complete fulfillment of the man after God’s own heart.

What’s Our Response?

We must humbly submit to and follow God, the only true King of kings and Lord of lords.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 13:1-15:35

LAUNCH

Think of a time when you've been under poor leadership. How has that experience motivated you to experience better leadership in the future or be a better leader yourself?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 13

1. What do you observe about Saul and Jonathan in verses 1-7?
2. What do verses 8-10 say about how Saul handles it when Samuel doesn't show up?
3. How does Saul respond in verses 11-12 when Samuel confronts him on his disobedience?
4. What does Samuel say in verses 13-14 about Saul's disobedience?

Read I Samuel 14

5. How would you describe Jonathan's faith in your own words based on verses 1-15?
6. What order does Saul give in verse 24, and how does it affect Jonathan?
7. Why do you think the author mentions in verse 35 that Saul built his first altar to the LORD after defeating the Philistines in battle?

8. How would you contrast Jonathan and Saul as leaders based on this chapter?

Read I Samuel 15

9. What does God command Saul to do through Samuel, and how does Saul respond?
10. How does Saul respond when Samuel confronts him about his disobedience?
11. How does Samuel characterize Saul's disobedience in verses 22-23?
12. What are the consequences of Saul's disobedience?
13. What do verses 12 and 30 say about Saul's focus in the face of his disobedience?

APPLY

14. In what ways can you relate to Saul's failure to take responsibility for his actions and passion for his own image?
15. How does the obedience of Jesus and our submission to him free us from the need to blame-shift, deny responsibility for our sins and shortcomings, and maintain a certain image?
16. Read Hebrews 10:5-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. How does Jesus fulfill our longing for a perfect King, and how do we as his followers benefit from his perfect kingship?

What Are the Answers?

1. Saul leads by position, but Jonathan leads by example.
2. He takes matters into his own hands.
3. He makes excuses and fails to take responsibility.
4. He says it was foolish and that it would result in God passing over him as king and searching for a king after his own heart.
5. Jonathan entrusts himself to God and takes action.
6. He says that none of his men may eat till he avenges his enemies, but Jonathan unknowingly disobeys his order and stands condemned.
7. Perhaps because he expected Saul to have acknowledged the LORD prior to this.
8. Jonathan is full of faith and trust in God; Saul is rash and unthinking.
9. He tells him to utterly destroy the Amalekites, leaving no person or animal alive. Saul disobeys by killing the people but by leaving the king and the best animals alive.
10. He denies and rationalizes.
11. It's as bad as idolatry.
12. God decides to take away the kingdom from him.
13. He's focused on himself and what the people think of him instead of on God.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. He obeys the Father perfectly and sets us apart for him as a result of his obedience.

Memorize

But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.

I Samuel 13:14



DIVINE VISION: Looking Not at Physical Appearance, but at the Heart

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Remember grade school recess time when all the kids would gather to play kickball? The captains who picked the teams always went for the big, tall, fast, athletic kids, right? No captain ever picked someone because they thought, “I bet they are a great teammate, a hard worker, and have a wonderful personality.” It’s sad, but true. In 1 Samuel 16, we see the same principle. Samuel illustrates that the crooked disposition of the human heart is to look at the external nature of a person and not the internal qualities. Thankfully, God’s vision isn’t like ours! He looks at the beauty of someone’s heart instead of their athletic build, pretty face, or smooth skin.

In the last few studies, we have looked at the ascent of Saul to the throne and his quick descent from God’s favor. Things went so badly for Saul that God wasted no time in anointing another man as king. Our passage centers on David’s anointing as the next king of Israel, who will be obedient to God and bring Israel back to spiritual health. This chapter looks ahead to the day that David’s greater son, Jesus, will be king over God’s people and will bring final redemption. The beauty of 1 Samuel 16 is God’s passion for judging by what is on the heart; this chapter illustrates his desire to use people whose hearts are right with him. Saul’s heart was wicked from the start. David’s heart, on the other hand, is humble, prayerful, and repentant. Because of this, Saul is punished and David is rewarded.

Samuel Anoints David as King – 16:1-13

In 1 Samuel 13:14, Samuel said to Saul, “The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people.” This word is immediately fulfilled in David, son of Jesse. Samuel is directed by the LORD to go to Jesse’s house, but not after grieving over Saul. God asks Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul?” Samuel is probably saddened over Saul’s rejection of God and the future of Israel. It’s okay to grieve over leaders who reject the Lord, but we must move on when God commands us to. When Samuel finally gets to Jesse’s house, the Lord teaches him an important lesson about the difference between human and divine vision.

After Samuel meets Jesse, Jesse’s sons come to the sacrifice that Samuel was performing (v. 5). Samuel sees the first son, Eliab, and thinks, “Surely the LORD’s anointed his before him” (v. 6). God scolds Samuel for looking at Eliab’s physical appearance. “For the LORD sees not as man sees,” God said (v. 7b). Every one of Jesse’s sons who passed by were turned down by God,

What’s the Big Idea?

After rejecting Saul as Israel’s king, God sends his prophet Samuel to anoint David as his successor. This passage shows God’s value of the heart over outward appearance in choosing a king and foreshadows the promise of the greater, eternal King Jesus who will be sent to save us once for all.

What’s the Problem?

By nature our hearts are not right with God, so we are bent toward valuing external qualities rather than internal qualities.



but there was still one son left. Jesse calls for David who was working in the fields keeping his sheep. David was the youngest in the family, not an honorable quality in Jewish culture. But God picks David the shepherd to lead his people Israel. In the same way, God chooses Jesus to be the great Shepherd for his people, to lead us to eternal salvation and joy in him. Jesus could have easily been forgotten, as he was born in a horse trough to poor parents in a ghetto town called Bethlehem. That's not much to brag about, but God's vision is not like ours. Pray that the group will know and embrace that we serve a God who does not look to the outer appearance but looks on the heart of his servants to find favor.

David the Musician – 16:14-23

Between verses 13 and 14, there is an interesting exchange. Verse 14 says, "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." Notice back in verse 13, when Samuel anoints David that "the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [him] from that day forward." God has made a clear break with Saul as king and devoted all of his Spirit to nurturing and building up David. As the Spirit leaves Saul, an "evil spirit from the LORD" makes his life miserable. Theologian R.C. Sproul comments, "The empowering and validating presence of God's Spirit must have been removed from Saul at his definitive rejection as king. The Hebrew word [for "evil spirit"] may describe something that is troubling, annoying, or harmful." We can't say that God made Saul demon-possessed, but this verse does show that God is in control even over the forces that affect people spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Because he's going a bit crazy, Saul needs something to soothe his soul. His servants suggest that he needs some tunes to calm his emotions. Well, not only was David fit to be king, but evidently he plays a sick guitar riff, because the musician search finds him to be the best lyre player in the land (a stringed instrument, but I'm betting it wasn't electric). He probably wasn't jamming to Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton, but David's talent was pleasing to Saul. He played well enough to find favor in Saul's eyes and he refreshed him so much that "the evil spirit departed from him" (v. 23).

Before leading this lesson, pray that the group members' hearts would be prepared to honestly look at their attitudes and motivations to see where their vision is focused. Pray that God would open everyone's eyes to the fact that our natural position is to look on the outside and that he would cause us to see people as he does.

What's Our Response?

We need to believe in the Greater David, namely Jesus, and strive for a God-oriented heart that looks to people's inner self rather than external qualities.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 16:1-23

LAUNCH

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” is a famous saying. Why is it a bad idea to judge people externally? Why do we do it so frequently?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 16:1-7

1. Why do you think Samuel was grieving over Saul?
2. What is hopeful about God saying in verse 1 that he has selected a king for himself?
3. What does God send Samuel to do?
4. Why do you think the city leaders trembled when Samuel came to their town?
5. What is the difference between Samuel’s and God’s assessment of Jesse’s first son?

Read I Samuel 16:8-12

6. What does it say about Jesse’s estimation of his youngest son that he didn’t even bother to have him appear before Samuel?

7. What do you think is significant about the positive descriptions of David’s appearance in verse 12 combined with God’s statement about the priority of the heart in verse 7?
8. What happens to David once Samuel anoints him?
9. What do verses 12 and 30 say about Saul’s focus in the face of his disobedience?

Read I Samuel 16:13-23

10. What happens to Saul in this section?
11. How do Saul’s servants try to resolve Saul’s problem?
12. What contrasts do you observe between David and Saul in this section?

APPLY

13. In what ways do you place too much value on outward appearance and neglect the value of a heart that’s oriented toward God in yourself and others?
14. Read I Peter 2:6-8. This passage shows that our temporal and eternal wellbeing depends on the extent to which we orient our lives to God’s value of the heart expressed in Christ. What steps do you need to take to believe in him with what’s happening in your life today instead of disbelieving him?
15. Read Isaiah 53:2-6 (and look back at I Peter 2:6-8). What similarities do you see between God’s choice of David as king and God’s choice of Jesus as King?
16. After God’s Spirit came upon David in verse 13, he began to experience an extended period of difficulty. Read Matthew 3:13-4:1. What parallel do you see?

What Are the Answers?

1. Possible reasons may include Saul's hard-heartedness and concern over the future of Israel.
2. God's choice is a good thing, in contrast to his choice of Saul, which was really condescension to the people's choice and which proved to be a disaster.
3. He sends him to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from among Jesse's sons.
4. It may have been because they knew his reputation as God's messenger and were concerned that they were under God's judgment for some reason.
5. Samuel looks at his outward appearance and assumes he's God's choice, but God rejects him because he's making his decision based on the condition of his heart.
6. It shows that as the youngest son he didn't regard him as being of any consequence to Samuel's visit.
7. It shows that while it's OK to be good looking, outward appearance is irrelevant compared to a person's heart condition.
8. The Spirit of the LORD comes mightily upon him.
9. He's focused on himself and what the people think of him instead of on God.
10. God's Spirit leaves him, and an evil spirit begins to terrorize him.
11. They suggest that Saul calls for David to play his heart and sooth his troubled spirit.
12. David has God's Spirit while Saul has an evil spirit. The LORD is with David, but he's departed from Saul. David brings peace, but Saul is full of turmoil.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Both David and Jesus were easy to overlook and reject, yet God chose them for greatness.
16. Experiencing God's Spirit doesn't necessarily mean that things will go well. They may actually get worse. Yet God's presence and favor bring blessing in the midst of trials.

Memorize

For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.

I Samuel 16:7b



DAVID AND GOLIATH: God Provides a Champion for His People

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 17:1-58

If you've ever watched sports, you've heard the term "underdog." If you watch sports enough, you have probably heard an announcer or two say, "We have a David and Goliath match today." (And if you are a Buffalo Bills fan, you know that you are never Goliath.) In 1 Samuel 17, we witness the original underdog story—the actual battle between David and Goliath. David is the true underdog, a teenager who has no battle experience, and he's facing a giant who is probably a bit scarier than your average soldier.

Last lesson, we finished off with the Spirit of God rushing upon David as he leaves Saul. As our narrative continues, we see yet another battle against the rival Philistines. This time, the Philistines have a new champion named Goliath, a 10-foot tall man who would dominate the WWE and possibly even beat up Chuck Norris. Understandably, no one in Israel wants to fight him. But God, as the ever-present hero, raises up David, a young shepherd boy, to literally knock Goliath's head off and become Israel's champion. This chapter should stir our passion for the honor of God's name and should cause us to look forward to the day when God will raise up Jesus, the ultimate Champion, who will defeat the terrible, sinful giants in our life.

Goliath's Challenge – 17:1-11

As the Israelites and Philistines were facing each other, each army on a mountain side, Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. He probably looked like a Transformer robot with his helmet, mail coat, shin guards, and javelin. Goliath yelled across the valley at the Israelite and mocked them saying, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together" (v. 10). Being 10-feet tall and the Philistine champion, you would think Goliath had room to talk. His challenge sent shivers down the spines of the Israelite soldiers. Here is the primary problem of our passage. Instead of looking to God Almighty, who rescued the Israelites from Egypt, the Red Sea, and the wilderness, they cower in fear to another man! By nature, we are passive creatures who doubt God's strength in tough circumstances. Thankfully, God doesn't let all of his people put their tails between their legs. He stirs David to see God's name honored.

Who is this Uncircumcised Philistine? – 17:12-30

When David arrives at the scene, three of his brothers had already gone to battle with Saul. But there was not much fighting going on: Goliath came forward morning and evening shouting his challenge for 40 days (v. 16). David

What's the Big Idea?

After placing his Spirit upon David, God displays his power and glory through David by empowering him to defeat Goliath. In the midst of weakness, God provides a champion to save his people. This chapter looks forward to the day when Jesus will become our ultimate champion, defeating our sin and the forces of evil in the world.

What's the Problem?

We are passive people who usually recoil in the face of danger because we lack trust in God to provide a way out.



was told by his father to take food to his brothers and when arrived at the Israelite camp, he heard Goliath speak for the first time. The men of Israel are still afraid and David, being the curious teenager, asks, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach of Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (v. 26). This doesn’t go over too well with David’s brother Eliab. Eliab thinks David has evil in his heart. David quips back, “What have I done now? Was it not but a word?” (v. 29). Sure looks like sibling rivalry to me. Perhaps Eliab is jealous that David has some fuel in his fire. No one else in Israel said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?” But David did. He was passionate about God being honored and knew that Goliath was a mere man who had no power over the Most High God. This is a key element in our narrative. We should be fervent about God’s holiness and the honor of his name. Make sure your group understands the importance of being people who, like David, will be courageous and faithful when nobody else will.

David Volunteers to Take on Goliath – 17:31-58

Despite opposition from his family and from King Saul (v. 33), David volunteers to slay Goliath. He’s pretty confident. As a shepherd, David killed lions and bears to protect his flock. Goliath will be no different, he said. Extreme courage and faith help David prepare. He declares, “This uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of [the lions and bears], for he has defied the armies of the living God” (v. 36). David tells Saul that God will deliver him.

Most people imagine David as a scrawny little boy, but if he was able to kill lions and bears, he must have had a few muscles on his teenage frame. We are told in verse 38 that after Saul is convinced to let David fight, he tries to give David his own armor. Now, Saul is a big guy (see 9:2), so David must also be a sizeable young man. This is purely speculative, but it’s not without reason since Saul is going to send him out with his own armor. David’s reaction is skeptical, however. He hasn’t tested the armor and decides to go only with his sling and five smooth stones. He approaches Goliath and after being insulted, David shouts, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (v. 45). This is the bedrock for David’s courage. As you know, he hits Goliath with the fist stone and cuts off his head. The underdog killed the giant.

Conclusion

This is one of the most well-known biblical stories. But it is so much more than a story. In our passage, God provided salvation for Israel in their dark hour through David. God is faithful to his people by raising up a champion who defeats the overwhelming giant. Lead your group to see that God has raised up the ultimate Champion in Jesus who has provided salvation for us amidst our overwhelming giant—sin. When the situation looked insurmountable, Christ came and won the battle for God’s people. Pray that your group would worship and praise God for this great truth.

What’s Our Response?

Like David, we should have a passion for the honor of God’s name and trust in his ability to provide salvation and maintain the honor of his name, even when working through weakness.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 17:1-58

LAUNCH

How is it possible for a weakness in your life to be an opportunity instead of merely being a liability?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 17:1-11

1. How would you describe the setting of this narrative in your own words based on verses 1-3?
2. What impression do verses 4-10 give of Goliath?
3. How do Saul and the people respond to Goliath's challenge in verse 11?

Read I Samuel 17:12-30

4. How does David become engaged with the standoff between the Israelites and Philistines?
5. What does verse 26 say about David's motivation to do something about Goliath's taunts?

Read I Samuel 17:31-40

6. What action does David take in verses 31-32 in light of Goliath's challenge?
7. How does Saul respond to David's offer?

8. How does David make a case for his ability to defeat Goliath?

9. What does verse 37 say about the source of David's confidence that he'll be able to defeat Goliath?

Read I Samuel 17:41-58

10. How does Goliath react to David in verses 41-44?

11. What does David's response to Goliath in verses 45-47 say about the source of his confidence?

12. What is ironic in verses 48-51 about the way David kills Goliath?

13. How does this irony enhance God's glory?

APPLY

14. What are some of the passions in your life that compete with a passion for the honor of the living God, and how do you need to trust him for an overriding passion for his name?

15. In what way does this study deepen your appreciation for Jesus as the true champion?

16. What do David's statements in I Samuel 17:26, 36, and 45-47 say about the specific kind of weak person God works through to display his glory?

17. Read Isaiah 59:9-20. How does God's work on our behalf through Jesus Christ compare with and eclipse his work through David in I Samuel 17?

What Are the Answers?

1. The Philistines and Israelites faced off for battle.
2. He's an ominous, fear-inducing warrior.
3. They're really scared.
4. While taking provisions to his older brothers who are fighting in the army, David hears Goliath's taunts.
5. He doesn't think it's right for Goliath to taunt the armies of the living God.
6. He offers to fight him.
7. He tells him he can't do it because he's a youth while Goliath is a professional warrior.
8. He notes God's past faithfulness to him and expresses confidence that God will also be faithful to him as he fights Goliath.
9. Goliath is taunting the armies of the living God, and David is confident that God won't stand for that.
10. He reacts to him with contempt and tells David he'll feed him to the birds and beasts.
11. He's confident of victory because he's defending the honor of God's name, because he knows this will result in the whole earth knowing of God's glory, and because the LORD is fighting the battle.
12. An untrained youth kills a professional warrior without the benefit of conventional weapons and finishes him off using his own sword.
13. It proves David's point that the battle belongs to the LORD and that he doesn't need human strength to accomplish his purposes.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. God works through weak people who are passionate about the honor of his name.
17. Just as God raised up David as a champion for his people when there was no one else to help, he has raised up Jesus as our champion when there is no one else to help. But the salvation he accomplished through Christ was much more profound and far-reaching, and Jesus is a far more glorious champion than David.

Memorize

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."

I Samuel 17:45



TOTAL SURRENDER: Trusting God Even in the Midst of Adversity

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 18:1-20:42

Killing Goliath the giant vastly helped David's public image. If he were living today, he might have found his face on the cover of GQ. People were going crazy over the valor of David. Even Jonathan, the king's son, found David to be a true blood brother. Our narrative package of I Samuel 18-20 covers a lot of ground. Saul becomes terribly jealous of David and therefore wants to kill him. Sadly, Saul thinks that murdering David will solve his problems. Little does Saul realize that his problems don't originate with David, they are products of his wicked heart.

This passage teaches us that even in the midst of very dire circumstances we can turn to God and trust that if we are faithful to him, he will provide deliverance. During the study, focus on the fact that God is still sovereign—even when things look badly—and that David stays faithful to Saul even though it might cost him his life. God gives David the strength to fulfill his duty and in our lives today, we can trust God to do the same.

Saul Becomes Jealous of David – 18:1-30

Immediately after the battle with Goliath, David and Jonathan become best friends. Jonathan feels so much allegiance to David that he gives him his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt (v. 13). This reveals Jonathan's incredible respect and honor for David. In later chapters, we will see that this friendship becomes stalwart and unbreakable. As David fights more and more battles, the Israelites give him much praise. The women sing in the streets, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This is not pleasing to Saul. His ego swells and he begins to let jealousy seethe into his heart. Saul proclaims: "What more can he have but the kingdom" (v. 8). This simply means that David is practically the second most powerful man in the kingdom. The very next day "a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul" (v. 10) that causes Saul to be angry with David. This word "harmful" is the same Hebrew word (ra') as in 16:14, which can mean evil. From that day on Saul continued to search out ways to kill David. Saul even tries to get his daughter to marry him "that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him" (v. 21).

Saul is afraid of David, because he has the Spirit of the LORD, yet instead of turning to God, he willfully becomes David's enemy. Nevertheless, David hopes in God and stays faithful to Saul during this grave adversity. This chapter, if you hadn't noticed already, shows the utter ugliness of Saul's heart and how far he has drifted from God.

What's the Big Idea?

God is with David during adversity, expressed in his success in battle, his deliverance from Saul, and his covenant love with Jonathan. This passage shows us that God reigns over all our circumstances for his purposes and shows grace to his people by granting them favor, deliverance, and covenant love.

What's the Problem?

Our fallen nature causes us to turn to ourselves or other things in the face of adversity instead of turning to Almighty God.



Saul Pursues David – 19:1-24

Chapter 19 is a continuation of Saul's disgust with David. Saul spoke to his servants about killing David and even asks Jonathan to kill him! Jonathan goes before his father and pleads for David's life. Then Saul, as if he had a split personality disorder, says, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." We see two things here: 1) Saul lies—as we'll soon find out; 2) He uses the LORD's name in vain! In verses 8-10, David comes back from war and for a third time, a harmful spirit from God comes upon Saul. David is playing the lyre again when Saul tried to chuck his spear at him. This is the third time this has happened (see 18:11). Notice how Saul, not seeking the Lord, is hopelessly distraught and overwhelmed and how David, humble and God-fearing, is at ease and continually has victory after victory. This section illustrates the peace and security we can find when our faith and trust is in God. Saul's is obsessed with making a name for himself, whereas David is seeking to make God's name famous. Help your group follow David's example by seeking the Lord for mercy and grace to be humble and dependent on him alone.

David and Jonathan Plan – 20:1-42

In the final chapter of our narrative, David asks Jonathan to tell him the reason Saul is after him. "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life? (v. 1). David tries to remain humble and broken and he looks deep inside himself, wondering if perhaps he has committed a sin. Of course that is not so; David is innocent. David and Jonathan make plans for David to escape Saul's evil conspiring (vv. 5-17). During the new moon feasts, David will be hiding in the fields. It's going to be a nerve racking three days for David, but through this he leans deeper on the Lord for strength, protection, and deliverance.

When the feasting began, Saul does not say anything about David's absence until the second night. When Jonathan explains that David had asked to be excused to return home, Saul's anger is ignited. Saul asks Jonathan why he is good friends with David because as long as he lives, Jonathan's kingdom will not be established. Jonathan does not think like his father, however. Jonathan is not concerned with worldly success—something that Saul will never understand.

As the story unfolds toward the end of chapter 20, discuss with the group the unshakeable faith of David and Jonathan in the LORD and how it was their comfort and refuge in such a time of uncertainty. Help them grasp that if David could lean on God in a time when people were seeking to kill him, we can trust in God in anything. The passage, like others, points to Jesus and his sufferings. He suffered, not so that we won't have to, but so that we might run to him during our suffering (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:15-16).

What's Our Response?

Turn to God in faithfulness despite the adversity you face in the things God has for you to do.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 18:1-20:42

LAUNCH

What are the signs that God is with a person?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 18

1. Jonathan makes a covenant with David and gives him his robe and sword (verses 1-4), which signified that he was conferring his rights as crown prince upon David. How does this strike you as unusual?
2. What evidence do you see of David's prosperity or blessing in this chapter?
3. To what does the author attribute David's prosperity or blessing?
4. How does Saul respond to David's blessedness?
6. Look again at verses 9 and 20-23. What does it say about God that he is both behind David's affliction and David's deliverance?

Read I Samuel 20

7. Summarize the plan Jonathan and David devise in verses 1-23.
8. What do verses 14-17 say about the source of Jonathan's commitment to David?
9. How does Saul respond when David misses dinner for a second night in a row?

Read I Samuel 19

5. How does God show his favor to David in this chapter?

APPLY

10. Think about a hard circumstance you're facing. What difference would it make to see that this circumstance is part of God's bigger plan for your life?
11. How does Jesus' death on your behalf and his covenant with you (if you're his follower) assure you of his favor and good intentions as you face hard circumstance (see Romans 8:32)?
12. Read Matthew 6:33. Just as Jonathan sought a kingdom other than his own, Jesus calls us to do the same. In what ways do you find yourself seeking your own kingdom, and how do you sense God calling you to change to ensure you're seeking his kingdom?
13. Read Romans 8:28-39. In what ways do these themes show up in this passage in a way that suggests that God acts similarly toward his people as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ?
14. What contrasts exist between David's experience and the experience of Christ's followers in Romans 8?
15. Read I Corinthians 11:25-26. How does Jonathan's covenant with David picture Christ's covenant with his followers?

What Are the Answers?

1. Most people fight to keep power and eliminate potential sources of opposition. They don't give it away.
2. His covenant with Jonathan, success in battle, favor from the people, and Michal's love.
3. The LORD was with him.
4. He fears him and tries to kill him.
5. He rescues him from Saul through Jonathan in verses 1-10, through Michal in verses 11-17, and through the prophets in verses 18-24.
6. It shows that the adversity David faced didn't happen by accident but to fulfill God's purposes for David.
7. Jonathan feels out Saul about David and uses arrows in a field to signal a hiding David about Saul's disposition toward him.
8. Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as much as his own life.
9. He accuses Jonathan of conspiring against him and calls for his death.
10. Allow the group to discuss.
11. Allow the group to discuss.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. God brings good through all circumstances and makes them more than conquerors, keeps us connected to his love in the midst of all kinds of circumstances, and lets us experience this love in the context of relationships with other followers of Christ.
14. Although God's love for his people is always certain through faith in Christ, physical deliverance isn't a guarantee.
15. Just as Jonathan is committed to David even up to death, Christ has shown his commitment to his people in the same way. But Jonathan and David's covenant only had temporal impact while Christ's covenant with his people has eternal impact.

Memorize

Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'"

I Samuel 20:42



ROCK AND REFUGE: Turning to God in Times of Distress

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 21:1-22:23

In 1 Samuel 21-22, Saul is on a full-fledged pursuit of David. The scene for this study looks like something from Mission Impossible. God gives David a mission, which he chooses to accept, that is full of dangerous twists, turns, and escapes that Harry Houdini would be jealous of. The only thing missing is a sweet car chase with explosions.

Chapter 21 begins with David going to a city called Nob. David first finds the priest and asks him for bread to eat and a sword to carry. David's next stop is Gath (Goliath's hometown). Here, David pretends to be a crazy-man so he isn't killed by Achish the king. Finally, David makes a stop at Adullam, where he puts his family for safe keeping. Our narrative ends with Saul killing the priests at Nob because they conspire against him by helping David.

This study, just as so many others, shows David's dependence on God in the face of adversity and more importantly, God's protection of David. God has promised to make David the next king of Israel and God never backs down from his promises. As you prepare for the lesson, pray that the group will see God's work behind the scenes to preserve David and how David desperately clings to the Lord even when the circumstances seem overwhelming.

David Flees from Saul – 21:1-22:5

After David and Jonathan confirm their covenant in chapter 20, David moves on to Nob to meet Ahimelech the priest. To maintain confidentiality, he tells Ahimelech that he is on a secret mission from the king. David is alone and must act quickly because he knows that Saul is hot on his trail. David wants something to eat and all the priest has is the holy bread from the temple (v. 6), so he gives it to David. Also, David wants a weapon. The only one there was the massive, powerful sword of Goliath. "There is none like that; give it to me," David said (v. 9). This exchange seems to go well, but after it's too late, David realizes that a servant of Saul named Doeg is in the temple. He heard everything that was said and in 22:9 he tells Saul what happened. Help the group understand and discuss that though things seem to keep getting worse for David, God is orchestrating every event. God uses suffering and persecution for many reasons, one of the main reasons is building up faith (see Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-3).

David then goes to Gath, Goliath's old stomping grounds, and runs into king Achish. David's reputation is well known in Gath as the one who has "struck down...his ten thousands" (v. 11). In order not to be killed, David pretends

What's the Big Idea?

During great tribulation for David as he is pursued by Saul, God continually cares for him as he flees. In the same way, we can look to Jesus during times of distress in our lives, trusting that he will be a great shield and refuge.

What's the Problem?

We forget that God is the only Almighty and when hard times come, we run to other things for protection.



to be insane, drooling on his beard and scratching the doors and gates. He probably looked very foolish (and crazy, of course) but his life is spared. In fact, King Achish says in verse 15 that he already has enough crazy men living in his house; he doesn't need one more. Immediately after escaping Gath, David went to the cave of Adullam. His father and brothers and other men who were in distress came to him there—about 400 men! David pleads with the king of Moab to let his family stay there while he flees Saul. Notice that even in the face of death, David cares for others. He is seeking to take care of his mom and dad and friends who are hurting. Verse 2 of chapter 22 says, “He became captain over them.” What a beautiful foreshadowing of Christ! When we were lonely and afflicted, Christ became our captain by saving us. Hebrews 2:10 says, “For it was fitting that [God]...in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” The Greek word for founder literally means leader (the KJV uses the word “captain”). Notice the similarity between David and Jesus. Both lived in great turmoil, yet both brought people to safety. And we know that Christ's work is far greater than David's, for Christ has brought us to eternal glory through his perfect life, death, and resurrection.

Saul Kills the Priests at Nob – 22:6-23

Once Saul finds out that David has been discovered, he throws a pity party for himself. “No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me” (v. 8). Don't forget that pride is often expressed in extreme self-pity. After Saul stops whining, Doeg speaks up about what went down at the temple. He tells Saul that Ahimelech provided David with food and a sword. Out of jealousy and rage, Saul commands his servants to kill Ahimelech and the other priests of Nob. None of them obeyed. Saul then told Doeg to do his dirty work and Doeg killed 85 priests that day. How shameful that a king of God's chosen people would commit such a dastardly deed. Fortunately, one of Ahimelech's sons escaped and found David. In the last verse of our passage, we see David's faith in God stronger than ever: “Stay with me; do not be afraid...With me you shall be in safekeeping” (v. 23).

Conclusion

Here again we see the same theme of David's resolute trust that God will deliver him. It has been said that the safest place to be wherever God has you. David not only knew that truth, he experienced it. Help your group come to the great pleasure of trusting in God in dim situations. Pray that you and your group would experience the Lord as a rock and refuge and that your hearts would fully cling to Jesus, the powerful captain of your salvation.

What's Our Response?

We must turn to God and have faith that he will be our refuge in times of trouble.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 21:1-22:23

LAUNCH

How do you respond when you're in a desperate situation?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 21:1-9

1. Read I Samuel 20:30-31. Why is David on the run as I Samuel 21 begins?
2. How does David explain himself when he comes to Ahimelech?
3. What does David seek from Ahimelech, and how does Ahimelech respond?

Read I Samuel 21:10-22:5

4. Read I Samuel 17:4. What does it say about David's state of affairs that he would flee to Goliath's hometown?
5. How do the servants of Gath's king respond when they see David?
6. How does David react when he hears them talking about him in this way, and how does the king respond to David?

7. Read Psalm 34. How does David process his time in Gath as expressed in this psalm?

Read I Samuel 22:6-23

8. How would you describe Saul's disposition in verses 6-8?
9. What information does Doeg give Saul in verse 9?
10. How does Saul respond to this information in verses 10-19?
11. What do Saul's actions say about the condition of his heart?
12. How does David respond to the news of Saul's actions in verses 20-23?
13. Read Psalm 52. How does David process the events of this section in this psalm?

APPLY

14. What does it look like for you to practically take refuge in God during a desperate situation you're currently facing or may face in the future?
15. Read I John 2:18 and Daniel 7:21-22. In what ways do Saul's actions place him in the notorious antichrists that these verses speak about?
16. Reread Psalm 52:5-9. Where are you tempted to turn other than God when you face desperate times?

What Are the Answers?

1. Saul wants to put him to death.
2. He tells him he's on a secret mission from the king.
3. He seeks food and weapons. Ahimelech gives him consecrated bread and Goliath's sword.
4. He's really desperate.
5. They recognize him as the warrior of Israel who's reported to have slain tens of thousands.
6. David was fearful and feigned insanity, and the king sent him away.
7. He sees his deliverance as an answer to prayer and an expression of God's goodness.
8. He's paranoid and full of self-pity.
9. He tells him about David's interaction with Ahimelech.
10. He calls for Ahimelech and has Doeg murder him and the people of his city.
11. His actions reveal a heart that's extremely hardened to the Lord that he would wipe out his priests because of his crazed obsession with destroying David.
12. He grieves that his own actions brought this about and takes Abiathar into his care.
13. He takes comfort in knowing that God will show his love to those who take refuge in him forever while bringing destruction upon those who oppose him.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. He waged war against and overpowered God's people.
16. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house?"

I Samuel 22:14



SEEKING THE LORD: God Protects, Directs, and Provides for David

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 23:1-29

In this lesson, we see a lot more of the same thing: Saul pursuing David; David running from Saul. The chapter begins with a rumor of another war. Even though David is running from Saul, he seeks the Lord as to whether he should fight the Philistines or not. David wins the battle and by this time, Saul is in Keilah. David is pretty nervous but God is still in control, keeping his promise to his anointed king. The end of verse 14 says, “And Saul sought [David] every day, but God did not give him into his hand.” God uses Jonathan to give David some much needed encouragement, as he tells David that “the hand of Saul shall not find you” (v. 17).

Later on in the chapter, stubborn Saul (which would be a great name for a rock band) is still chasing David. The humorous part is that they are on different sides of the same mountain. Just in time for David, a messenger comes to Saul saying that the Philistines have once again launched an assault on the land. This chapter shows us the wonderful sovereignty of God that he has grace and mercy on David in keeping him safe from the hand of Saul.

David Saves the City of Keilah – 23:1-14

As the chapter begins, David gets notice that the Philistines are fighting in Keilah. David twice asks God, “Shall I go?” God confirms his answer both times with a resounding yes. David and his men went down to Keilah and “struck them with a great blow” (v. 5). You’d think that the Philistines would have learned their lesson by now, but apparently that memory loss from earlier is still plaguing them. After David defeats the Philistines, he hears word that Saul is in the same area he is. Even during David’s confusion and fear, he takes time to seek the Lord (vv. 10-12). God is always near us and all we must do is call on him. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.” This chapter (as is a lot of I Samuel!) is about calling on the Lord and drawing near to him during trouble.

By God’s grace, David escapes from Saul yet again. In verse 14 we are told that God is the one saving David. “And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.” Lead your group to the freedom-giving truth that God is completely sovereign and will not let any man overpower his plan and purpose.

What’s the Big Idea?

Despite Saul’s ongoing pursuit, God will not let David fall into Saul’s hands. God delivers David from Saul’s pursuit as David seeks the LORD for guidance and draws encouragement from Jonathan. In the same way, God delivers us through his Son Jesus, the great high priest, to give mercy and grace when we need it.

What’s the Problem?

During times of trouble, we worry and forget that God is faithful and that no man can overpower his will.



Saul Pursues David...Again – 23:15-29

Sooner or later Saul is going to have to give up on catching David, right? You would hope so, but for now at least, Saul continues to have tunnel vision, focusing only on David's capture. After David leaves Keilah to go through the hill country, Jonathan finds David and encourages him in the Lord. Jonathan promises David that Saul will not find him and that David will soon be king. Jonathan even says that "Saul knows this" (v. 17). No doubt this support is appreciated by David. Remember that we are commanded to do this as well. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." We were not created to deal with hostility alone. God has given us Christian brothers and sisters to run this marathon of life with.

David keeps moving as Saul keeps pursuing. After a few stops at random places, they find themselves in the wilderness of Maon, on a mountainside. They are on different sides of the mountain while Saul and his men are closing in as David is running away. In verse 27, we again get a glimpse at God's sovereign work in the situation. God sends a messenger to Saul telling him that the Philistines have yet again sent a raid on the land. Saul, being the king, leaves to protect the nation and his people. David escapes and "went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi" (v. 29).

Conclusion

Whenever David sought the Lord, his life was spared. Throughout the past three lessons or so, we have not seen Saul seek the Lord once. God is clear in what he expects from people regarding their dependence upon him. And he is just as clear when he says how he will treat us: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Prov. 3:34; 1 Pet. 5:5b). Your group should see how we can learn from David's example of complete faith in God during awful circumstances. Tell them to look to Jesus, the great shepherd and overseer of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25), for divine help and direction.

What's Our Response?

We need to turn to God for help and direction, trusting that he is faithful.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 23:1-29

LAUNCH

What is your first impulse other than God when you need guidance or direction?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 23:1-14

1. Describe the crisis that draws David into action as this narrative begins.
2. What is David's first response to this crisis?
3. How does Saul react in verses 7-9 when he learns that David is at Keilah?
4. How does David respond when he hears this news?
5. What does verse 14 say about how God shows up in this situation?

Read I Samuel 23:15-18

6. What does God do to show his faithfulness to David in verses 15-18?

7. How specifically does Jonathan encourage David?

Read I Samuel 23:19-29

8. What is David's predicament in this section?
 9. How does God deliver David?
 10. Read Psalm 54. How does David process his experience with the LORD?
-

APPLY

11. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What connections do you see between the way David sought the LORD through Abiathar, the priest, and the way God calls his followers to seek him through Jesus, our great High Priest?
12. Read 2 Timothy 4:16-17. What parallels do you see between the encouragement that Jonathan offered David and the encouragement Jesus offers us as his followers?
13. How does David's experience and Hebrews 4:14-16 motivate you to make God your first impulse when you need guidance or direction?
14. How does Jonathan's manner of encouraging David challenge you as you seek to come alongside the people in your life who need encouragement?
15. Look at Psalm 54 again. Think about a situation you're facing that requires God's help, sustenance, or deliverance and talk about how you can trust him with what you're facing.

What Are the Answers?

1. The people of Keilah need help because the Philistines are plundering them.
2. He seeks the LORD's direction.
3. He plans to besiege the city and capture David.
4. He seeks the LORD's direction again.
5. He prevents David from falling into Saul's hands.
6. He brings Jonathan to encourage him.
7. He encourages him in God by reminding him of God's promises to him and by making another covenant with him.
8. The Ziphites tell him David's location, and Saul moves to capture him.
9. He draws him away with the news that the Philistines are attacking.
10. He cries out for God's help and affirms him as the one who helps, sustains, and delivers him from all trouble.
11. Just as David drew near to God through the priest, we can draw near through Jesus to receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.
12. They both stand by when no one else does, and Jesus' encouragement provides strength as well as deliverance.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this."

I Samuel 23:17



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

OPPORTUNITY OR TEMPTATION: Learning to Trust God for His Perfect Plan

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 24:1-22

During the last several studies David has fled Saul. During each study, you would have to wonder why David has not taken the opportunity to kill Saul. That would relieve a lot of David's stress, right? Well, in our passage from I Samuel 24, David finally gets a clear shot at taking Saul down. While David is in the wilderness of Engedi, Saul follows him. At one point, nature calls for Saul and he has to relieve himself. As he's doing his business, David has a chance to strike him with his sword, but he proclaims to his men that he cannot harm the LORD's anointed king. This passage shows the protection and provision of the Lord for those who wait on him, instead of taking matters into their own hands.

David Spares Saul's Life – 24:1-7

After defeating the Philistines, David is on the run again. He returns back to the wilderness of Engedi to seek a hiding place from Saul. Somebody rats out David though, telling Saul where he is. Saul and three chosen men go looking for David, but Saul needs to take a pit stop and relieve himself in a cave. The phrase for relieving oneself literally means "to cover his feet" in Hebrew—you can probably imagine why! Saul picked the one cave that David and his men were hiding in. David's men proclaim, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you'" (v. 4). As David cuts the edge of Saul's robe with his sword, his heart sinks, because he is convicted. "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed" (v. 6). Here we get a glimpse of David's loyalty. Even though Saul has been voraciously seeking his life, David is convinced that it would be wrong from him to take the king of Israel's life. Notice David's conviction, too. He didn't kill Saul, yet still feels bad in his heart that he even considered it. Very often, sin is not simply a deed; it is an attitude or intention of the heart. Help your group understand that we need to confess and repent of our selfish motives and thoughts, not only our evil actions.

Saul and David's Conversation— 24:16-22

After David spares Saul, he cries out in verses 9-10, "My lord the king...Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks your harm? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you.'" David pledges his allegiance to Saul as God's anointed. This shows first David's devotion to God, secondly, to his country, and thirdly, to Saul. This is one of the reasons that David is called a man after God's own heart. He wants to be full of integrity

What's the Big Idea?

As David is being pursued by Saul, he has a chance to take Saul's life. Not wanting to harm the LORD's anointed, he spares him. David had a chance to end his terrible plight and move on. However, he didn't take this test from God and turn it into evil. This passage shows us that God protects and favors those who trust him and wait for his perfect plan.

What's the Problem?

Because we often forget that God has a perfect will and plan and that it will come about in his timing, we take matters into our own hands instead of trusting God.



and honor in all he does. In David's plea, he communicates that his aim is not to kill Saul, so Saul should have no desire to kill David. David tells Saul that the Lord will judge between them (vv. 12, 15). For your students, they should realize that God is in control and will have vengeance on their enemies—no matter what has been done to them (cf. Deut. 32:35; Prov. 20:22; Heb. 10:30).

After David finishes, Saul says, "Is that your voice, my son David?" Realizing his stupidity, Saul begins to cry. He even confesses that David is more righteous than himself. "For you have repaid me good," he said, "whereas I have repaid you evil" (v. 17). This is paraphrased by Paul in Romans 12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Saul only sinks into deeper misery; David is delivered into another stronghold. Help your students embrace the fact that leaving situations in God's hand—instead of falling in to the temptation to do our will—is the Christlike way to act.

The short lesson of this passage is that God protects and favors those who wait on him and trust in his perfect plan. God is sovereign over all things and will not let any wicked deed go unpunished. Pray that the group would cling to Christ and trust in him though evil waves may surge all around he is our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer.

What's Our Response?

Like David, we should trust in God and wait on his perfect plan, believing that he will lift us up in his time.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 24:1-22

LAUNCH

How can you tell the difference between the Lord's opportunity and the devil's temptation?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 24:1-3

1. Describe the setting in your own words.

Read I Samuel 24:4-7

2. How do David's men interpret this situation?

3. How does David respond to his men's encouragement?

4. What motivates David to keep his men from harming Saul?

Read I Samuel 24:8-15

5. What does David do after Saul leaves the cave?

6. What is the essence of David's words to Saul?

7. In what ways does David express trust in the LORD in his words to Saul?

Read I Samuel 24:16-22

8. How does Saul respond to David?

APPLY

9. Read Matthew 4:1-10. What parallels do you see between David's opportunity to kill Saul and the opportunity Satan gave Jesus?

10. Read Romans 5:10. How does David's treatment of Saul in I Samuel 24:19 look forward to Jesus' treatment of those who trust him?

11. Read Romans 12:19 and I Peter 5:6. How does David exemplify these commands?

12. How do you see God at work in this chapter, and how does David respond to God's work?

13. How can you relate to the temptation to seize opportunities prematurely and take matters into your own hands instead of waiting for God and his perfect timing?

14. How does David's and Jesus' experience encourage you to humble yourself under God's mighty hand and trust him to exalt you at the proper time?

15. Read Philippians 1:8-9. What can you apply from these verses to help you discern between God's opportunities and temptations that don't come from him?

What Are the Answers?

1. David. Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself, but David and his men are in the inner recesses of the cave.
2. They conclude that God has given Saul into David's hands.
3. At first he cuts off a corner of Saul's robe. Then he feels guilty and keeps them from harming Saul.
4. David realizes that Saul is the LORD's anointed, his chosen king, and that it's not right for him to harm him in light of that.
5. He follows him out, calls to him, and prostrates himself before him.
6. He assures him he has no evil intentions toward him, evidenced by his having the chance to harm him but not taking it. He questions why he would seek to harm him and commits himself to the LORD.
7. He acknowledges the LORD's providence in letting Saul fall into his hands. He trusts God to judge between him and Saul. He trusts God to deliver him from Saul's hand.
8. He cries out and weeps. He acknowledges that David has been good to him while he has dealt wickedly with him. He also acknowledges that David will someday be king and secures his promise not to kill his descendants once he takes power.
9. Both had an opportunity to receive their kingdom prematurely. Both rejected this opportunity by entrusting themselves to God and relying on the principles of his word.
10. Just as David had mercy on his enemy Saul by sparing his life, so also Jesus has mercy his enemies by forgiving their sin and sparing their lives.
11. David lets God take vengeance on his enemies instead of taking matters into his own hands. He humbles himself and lets God lift him up in his time.
12. God protects David and orders circumstances in a way that assures David of his favor. David humbles himself before Saul and trusts God's overall plan and timing.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you."

I Samuel 24:12-13



GOD WILL REPAY: Putting Matters in God's Hands, Not Ours

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 25:1-44

Our passage this time is almost a replica of chapter 24. David almost takes matters into his own hands by killing someone, however this time he needs someone to speak some sense into him. David is on the move yet again as he approaches the wilderness of Paran. Nabal, a very rich, yet harsh and evil man, is shearing his sheep in Carmel and David sends some of his men to ask for food and supplies. When the young men talk to Nabal, he is not very compliant. Once David finds out, he's ready to brawl, saying, "Every man strap on his sword." Abigail, the beautiful and intelligent wife of Nabal, hears that Nabal denied David's men what they asked for. Quickly, she devises a plan to deliver to David's men what they want and to plead for her husband's life. After talking to Abigail, David is convinced that he would have sinned had he killed Nabal.

Discuss with your group the importance of not only being a wise counsel to someone who is about to make a very ill-advised decision, but also to be humble and repentant when reprovved for a wrong we are about to commit. The chapter ends with Nabal being "struck" by the LORD (v. 38) and David marrying Abigail. On top of that, David married a few more ladies as well (definitely not a practice we should seek to imitate today!).

David's Vengeful Heart— 25:2-13

The beginning of our narrative shows one big caution: even godly people can be driven by anger. David is fleeing further from Saul and finds himself in another wilderness. He hears that there is a rich man who is shearing sheep in the fields. This man's name is Nabal. Nabal is called "harsh and badly behaved" (v. 3). In fact, Nabal's name means "fool" in Hebrew. David sends young men to ask Nabal for whatever he has (v. 8). They are hungry and tired from running and hiding and they probably just want a nice bottle of water to quench their thirst. Well, Nabal's reaction is not what David expects. David told his young men to say, "Peace be to you, and peace be to your house" (v. 6) to Nabal, but he responds with, "Why should I give my hard earned things to men I don't know!" Immediately, David's temper flares up and he yells to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" (v. 13). It's safe to assume that God is not first on David's mind here. We could probably say that David is not walking in the Spirit and that he is living by the flesh. Even people who walk closely with God and long to know him are susceptible to fits of rage with a vengeful attitude. David isn't perfect, but God, in his beautiful grace and wonderful mercy, protects David from doing something he would regret.

What's the Big Idea?

God works through Abigail to keep David from taking his own vengeance on Nabal when Nabal scorns David's servants. Like the last lesson, this passage illustrates God's mercy as he protects his people from taking matters into their own hands and vindicates them as they trust in him.

What's the Problem?

We doubt that God is sovereign and providential in our lives, so we want to take matters into our own hands instead of trusting him.



Abigail's Plan and Plea – 25:14-35

Now Nabal has a wife who could be confused with supermodel and a rocket scientist. Verse 3 describes her as “discerning and beautiful.” She finds out about Nabal’s negligence of David’s men. The young servant told her, “David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm...Now... harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (v. 14-15, 17). The servant perceives Nabal’s absurdity in sending away David’s men. Abigail acted quickly and gathered bread, wine, sheep, grain, and fruit to send them with the young man to David.

She follows behind the young servant and when she meets David, she pleaded with him to not kill Nabal or his household. Abigail practically calls David out for wanting to kill Nabal, telling him that he would have blood on his hands. “As the LORD lives,” she said, “and as your soul lives, because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal” (v. 26). Notice how David responds with an open heart and mind, seeing his sin and tendency toward revenge. He blesses Abigail for her discretion and warning him of the wrong he would have committed. We should be responsive when God sends people into our lives to show us the right thing to do. By his mercy, God saved David from committing a terrible sin. He will do the same for us if we open our hearts to his truth.

Nabal's Death, David and Abigail's Marriage – 25:36-44

After Abigail and David’s conversation, Abigail went to her husband to tell him what happened. The text says Nabal’s “heart died within him, and he became as stone.” The news is devastating to Nabal that he became a vegetable. Ten days later, the LORD takes Nabal’s life. David did not take matters into his own hand and God repaid Nabal’s evil with justice. When David hears of this, he praises God, saying, “Blessed be the LORD who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing.” When we are faithful to the Lord and pursue him and his goodness, he will take care of our enemies or the sour circumstances in our lives. We are called to be holy, not avengers of evil.

Pray that this chapter sinks into your groups mind and heart (as well as yours!). Know that God is infinitely faithful, even when we are not. Discuss with the group the importance of depending on God and trusting that he will continue to give us mercy and grace despite our brokenness and tendency to take matters into our own hands.

What's Our Response?

We must recognize and respond to the expressions of God’s gracious and merciful providence in our lives.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 25:1-44

LAUNCH

Talk about a time when someone warned you not to do something but you ignored the warning and suffered for it.

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 25:2-13

1. How does this passage describe Nabal?
2. How does this passage describe Abigail?
3. What is the focus of the drama in this narrative?
4. How does David respond when he hears Nabal's response to his men?

Read I Samuel 25:14-31

5. How do Nabal's men respond after Nabal rebuffs David's men?
6. What additional insights do verses 14-17 give about this unfolding drama?
7. How does Abigail respond when she hears the men's report?
8. What do verses 21-22 reveal about David's heart and intentions?

9. What stands out to you about Abigail as she meets David?
10. What does Abigail say to David to try to dissuade him from killing Nabal and his men?
11. Think about a recent or current situation in which you haven't been sure what to do. What signposts of God's providence (people or circumstances) do you see that may be his way of protecting or vindicating you in a way similar to what David experienced?

Read I Samuel 25:32-38

12. How does David respond to Abigail?
13. In what way is Nabal's demise in verses 36-38 a confirmation of what this passage has already revealed about him?

Read I Samuel 25:39-44

14. Why does David praise God in verse 39?
15. Summarize the happy ending of this story.

APPLY

16. What does it say about our need for God's grace in our lives that David was so careful not to take matters into his own hands against Saul in I Samuel 24 but so willing to do so with Nabal?
17. Read Romans 8:31-39. How do the truths of these verses counter the temptation to vindicate yourself and lead us to trust in the vindication God provides you through faith in Christ?

What Are the Answers?

- 1. He's rich but harsh and evil.
- 2. She's intelligent and beautiful.
- 3. David sends his men to ask for kindness from Nabal. But Nabal rebuffs them, even though David's men have conducted themselves honorably toward Nabal's men.
- 4. He gathers his men, intending to kill Nabal and his servants.
- 5. They report what happened to Nabal's wife Abigail.
- 6. David's men were good to Nabal's men and provided protection to them. Nabal is so worthless that no one can speak to him.
- 7. She prepares gifts to appease David.
- 8. He thinks he wasted his time in showing kindness to Nabal, and now he wants to kill him and all his men.
- 9. Allow the group to discuss.
- 10. She reminds him that God has kept him from shedding blood and taking his own vengeance. She reminds him that he will be king someday. And she encourages him not to let unnecessary bloodshed blemish his future kingship.
- 11. Allow the group to discuss.
- 12. He praises God and her for keeping him from shedding blood and taking his own revenge. He grants her request not to kill Nabal and his men.
- 13. His drunkenness, his heart turning to stone, and the LORD striking him confirms the worthlessness of his character.
- 14. He praises God for vindicating him against Nabal and keeping him from taking his own vengeance on Nabal.
- 15. David and Abigail get married.
- 16. It shows the wavering nature of our hearts and our constant need of God's grace to keep us from ruining our lives.
- 17. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!

I Samuel 25:33



GOD TESTS DAVID: The Righteous and Faithful will be Rewarded

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 26:1-25

For the third straight chapter, the LORD tests David by putting an opportunity to kill someone in his way. No doubt most people would have ended the heartache and pain by putting Saul to death. Not David. He wanted to be faithful to God and his anointed king. As in chapter 24, David has someone telling him to do evil (kind of like that little devil on people's shoulders), but David listens to the LORD's command instead. This chapter shows us that we can experience hope and encouragement because God protects those who trust in him. If they haven't by now, your group should definitely be learning that it is not only better, but it is right and holy, to leave matters in God's hand instead of trying to fix things ourselves.

David Spares Saul's Life Again – 26:1-12

Most people would consider David the luckiest man in the world throughout the I Samuel narrative. There are hundreds of men with Saul seeking his life, but God always provides a way of escape. In our chapter, Saul's men find where David is once again. I'm sure that Saul's intelligence officers would put any other's to shame—they always know exactly where David hides! Nevertheless, because God is with David and he is the new anointed king, harm will not come his way.

In verse 6, David feels a bit daring and he asks his men, "Who will go down with me into the camp of Saul." Immediately, Abishai says, "I will go down with you." Certainly if David had this many narrow escapes, he was worthy to be trusted. The two proceed to go to the camp at night. When they see Saul, he is sleeping, for the LORD caused a deep sleep to fall upon him and his men (v. 12). Abishai tells David that the LORD has delivered Saul into his hand. Abishai played devil's advocate in this passage. "Go ahead!" he says. "God has given you Saul!" Abishai uses the Lord's name in vain. Without a doubt, this is a test of David's faith, character, and dependence upon God instead of an opportunity for deliverance. David responds with knowledge and wisdom, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish" (v. 10). David knows that Saul's end will come soon and that it is not for him to determine—it's the LORD's decision. David simply takes Saul's spear and water jug, again showing Saul that we was this close to taking his life. The group should be looking for areas in their own lives where they need to look to God in faith for his vindication, instead of trying to bringing it about themselves. Help them understand that even in the

What's the Big Idea?

David has a second chance to kill Saul, but he spares him. Again, we learn the wonderful truth that God protects his people, delivers them, and vindicates them as they trust in him. This lesson should lead us to experience hope and encouragement because of God's ultimate protection and vindication through his Son Jesus.

What's the Problem?

We are selfish, impatient people who want situations to work out the way we want them to and at the time we want them to.



smallest things in life, we must surrender ourselves to God and let him decide the circumstances.

David's Appeal to Abner and Saul – 26:13-25

After moving to the other side of the mountain, David called out to Abner, Saul's right-hand man, "This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed." Though David is Saul's enemy, he still has high regard for him because he is anointed by the LORD as king of Israel. While David is yelling to Abner, Saul recognizes his voice. David again asks what he has done to deserve this affliction. Saul confesses to acting foolishly and blesses David (same song, same verse as chapter 24). David shows Saul his spear and says, "The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed" (v. 23). In other words, David says that he is acting righteously by not killing Saul. "God will bless me, though you curse me," David cries. Notice David's utter dependence on God, though most would think the situation calls for drastic measures. David has been anointed and promised the throne and he understands that God is his judge. Like David, we are to remain patient and confident in the Lord, that all his promises have their truth in Christ (see 2 Cor. 1:20).

Let your group see the beauty in depending on God for vindication instead of trying to manufacture revenge for ourselves. God is the ultimate judge and we are to be subject to him in every circumstance, even when it appears as if we have divine opportunities for deliverance. Discuss this with your group and seek God for how to distinguish between sinful temptation and divine opportunity.

What's Our Response?

We should live by faith that God's perfect plan will come in his timing.

What Are the Questions?

1 Samuel 26:1-25

LAUNCH

When are you most tempted to trust yourself and take matters into your own hands instead of trusting God?

EXPLORE

Read 1 Samuel 26:1-5

1. Describe the setting of the narrative in your own words.

Read 1 Samuel 26:6-16

2. Summarize the action in verse 6-7.

3. How does Abishai interpret David's success in sneaking into Saul's camp?

4. How does David respond to Abishai's suggestion?

5. How does David express trust in God as he responds to Abishai?

6. If you follow Christ, what are you dealing with right now that calls for the assurance that God is for you?

7. What does David do before he leaves Saul's camp?

8. What insight does verse 12 give about the reason for David's success?

9. What does David do next?

Read 1 Samuel 26:17-25

10. What is David's point as he interacts with Saul?

11. How does Saul respond to David's words?

12. How does David express trust in the LORD in his closing words to Saul?

APPLY

13. What are the main things we learn in this passage about God's care for his people?

14. Read John 7:29-30. How does David's experience anticipate the way God would later defend his Son Jesus?

15. If God is for you in the same way he was for David, what encouragement can you draw as you think over this chapter?

16. Look again at 1 Samuel 26:10-11a. Just as David trusted God and chose not to take matters into his own hands, in what way do you think God is calling you to do the same?

What Are the Answers?

1. Saul discovers where David is and gathers 3,000 men to search for him. But David tracks Saul and comes to the outskirts of his camp.
2. David recruits two of his men and sneaks into Saul's camp while he is sleeping.
3. He sees it as God delivering Saul into David's hands, and he volunteers to kill him.
4. He won't let Abishai kill Saul because Saul is God's chosen king.
5. He leaves it to God to end Saul's life in his time and on his terms.
6. Allow the group to discuss.
7. He takes Saul's spear and water jug.
8. The LORD caused a sound sleep to fall on Saul and his men so that David and his men were safe.
9. He distances himself from Saul's camp and calls to Abner, Saul's general, to call him to account for not protecting King Saul.
10. He questions why he would pursue him when he has done no wrong, wonders if someone provoked him to do this, and asks why he would spend his time pursuing someone as insignificant as him.
11. He acknowledges his sin in being hostile to David and asks him to return to him.
12. He entrusts himself to the LORD's justice, recognizes that the LORD is the one who delivered Saul into his hand, and affirms his trust in God's ability to deliver him from all distress.
13. He is the one who deals with our enemies as he delivers his people from trouble.
14. Just as Saul couldn't harm David, so Jesus' enemies couldn't harm him until the appointed time.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed.

I Samuel 26:23



DIVINE HELP: God Protects and Vindicates David Again

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

1 Samuel 27:1-31:13

As we close out 1 Samuel, we cover a wide swath of narrative in this final lesson. You do not need to read chapter 31 during the study, but it is important that your students know what it says. This narrative focuses on one theme: God pursues his people and rejects those who reject him.

David Lives with the Philistines – 27:1-28:2

Immediately after experiencing deliverance from the LORD, David doubts God's protection of his life. In 27:1, David says, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines." What a drastic change of heart and attitude! David turns to his flesh as he worries whether God will continue to watch over him. Certainly we have experienced this before, but God has a perfect track record of never letting his people down. Make sure the group understands that God's promises are always just that—promises! He can't break them.

David goes to King Achish for help, but this time, David doesn't present himself as a crazy man (see 21:10). In fact, David asks an upfront question, "Can I live in one of the country towns? (v. 5). Achish gave him Ziklag and he stayed there for 16 months! Surely David is wondering if he will ever become king. As the chapter ends, the Philistines are yet again gathering for war against Israel. Achish tells David that he is to go to battle against Israel for him. David responds very proudly, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." This shows David's tendency toward arrogance and vanity, as he puts himself before God. David is God's anointed king, but he is not at all perfect. This passage should point us to David's greater son, Jesus, who will never question God's plan or doubt his promises.

Saul and the Medium of En-dor – 28:3-25

After Samuel dies, Israel mourns and Saul kicks all the mediums and sorcerers out of the land. Samuel was the last judge of Israel and attempting to do something good (he hasn't gotten much right), Saul drives out the witches and warlocks. However, when Saul tries to call on the LORD because of the Philistine threat, God did not answer. Saul gets nervous, so he seeks the help of (you guessed it) a spiritual medium. Saul's servants find a woman who lives in En-dor, so Saul visits her and the medium gets her Ouija Board and crystal ball. Okay, not really, but I'm sure the situation got pretty weird. This illustrates Saul's complete collapse. Not only does he make a law outlawing spiritual mediums, but he breaks his own law! When God is silent, people go to

What's the Big Idea?

In the narrative, God graciously pursues his people with goodness and love despite their sinfulness. These chapters give us a picture of God favoring David, who loves him, and rejecting Saul, who likewise rejects God. This passage shows us that God's mercy rests on those who have right relationship with him and that his wrath afflicts those who reject him.

What's the Problem?

We do not seek to find our worth, significance, and strength in God so we resort to puffing ourselves up and seeking our own glory instead of God's.



extreme measures to get guidance. Saul has become more and more miserable in the last several chapters and this is the culminating act of his life before he dies in chapter 31. Continually loving and seeking the LORD, unlike Saul, not only glorifies God, but it will mean peace and joy for our own soul.

The medium, per Saul's request, calls up Samuel. As he appears, Saul becomes very afraid. Saul complains that the Lord is silent, but Samuel tells Saul what he already knows. "The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David" (v. 17). Your group should remember the reason why. If they do not, Samuel tells Saul once again in verse 18: "Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek." Saul is beside himself, falling to the ground weak and helpless. Saul was a miserable, lonely, obsessed man because his life was not one which sought the LORD's face. God's mercy on those who love him should amaze your group—help them come to see how the opposite is present in Saul's life and that we should hate every grievous way in us that opposes God's commands.

The Philistines Reject David – 29:1-11

In this short situation, we see that the Philistine commanders slap some sense into Achish. There was no way that David was going to fight against and kill his own people. The commanders realized this and said, "Is this not David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'" This shows the Lord's kindness to David, which delivered him from the hand of the Philistines and from having to fight against his own people. Even though David has not been honest and is living selfishly, God has honors him. This doesn't give us a license to sin and try to get away with what David did. Instead, it should draw us to worship God and desire to live holy lives because God honors those who are right with him.

Conclusion of I Samuel – 29:1-31:13

In chapter 30, David faces an harsh situation. After defeating Ziklag in battle, his wives and children are captured by the Amalekites. It was so bad that the people wanted to stone David. "But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God" (v. 6). Here's a turning point for David—he finally comes back to full fellowship with the LORD after not seeking God's honor for a few chapters. David inquires of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" (v. 8). God commands David to go and he vindicates David. He rescues his wives and everything that the Amalekites stole is recovered. Chapter 31 ends the book and tells the story of Saul's death. During battle, Saul was wounded by arrows and the outlook was not positive. Giving up on the battlefield, verse 4b says, "Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it." His death is a sad ending to a sad life.

In the lesson, the students should continue to look to Jesus, the ultimate expression of God's love and faithfulness. As great as David may seem, he is still just as broken as you and I. He is not our example; Christ is the ultimate example of what we should strive to be. Most importantly, I Samuel should point us to gospel truth and transformation only found in Jesus Christ.

What's Our Response?

We should seek our strength in the LORD and not ourselves and should not resort to God-less, selfish speech.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 27:1-31:13

LAUNCH

Talk about a time when you tried to solve a problem on your own instead of turning to God and created a big mess for yourself.

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 27:1-28:2

1. What does David do as this chapter begins?
2. How did David manage to thrive securely side-by-side with the Philistines, Israel's perennial enemy?
3. What insights does 28:2 give about David's motive in pursuing this course of action?
4. In what ways can you relate to David's mistake of engaging in misguided self-talk instead of strengthening yourself in the LORD your God?

Read I Samuel 28:3-25

5. As this section begins, why is Saul afraid?
6. How does Saul react?
7. What happens as Saul seeks this sorcerer?
8. How would you compare and contrast David and Saul's problems at the end of chapters 27 and 28?

Read I Samuel 29

9. Explain in your own words David's dilemma?
10. How does God work to deliver David from the mess he's gotten himself into?
11. What contrast do you see between the end of chapter 28 and the end of chapter 29?

Read I Samuel 30

12. Summarize David's crisis as this chapter begins.
13. How does David respond to this crisis?
14. How does God work to turn a tragedy into a triumph? How does David's response in the aftermath of this triumph show his understanding of the way God has been gracious to him?

APPLY

15. Read Psalm 23:6. How do you see the LORD's goodness and love following David in these chapters?
16. Read Matthew 27:45-46 and Hebrews 13:5. How does Jesus' suffering and death deliver us from experiencing the abandonment from God that we as well as Saul deserve for our disobedience?
17. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. In light of these verses and God's graciousness to David, what practical steps do you need to take to turn to God in a crisis you're facing and strengthen yourself in the LORD your God?

What Are the Answers?

1. He flees from Saul to live among the Philistines.
2. He performed raids on other people who were common enemies to the Philistines and Israelites, but he told the Philistines he was attacking the Israelites.
3. He indulged in self-talk that was devoid of God's perspective.
4. Allow the group to discuss.
5. The Philistines are preparing a massive attack.
6. He seeks the LORD. When God does not answer him, he seeks a sorcerer.
7. He has her call up Samuel, who reiterates God's word that he has rejected him because he himself had rejected God's word.
8. They're both in grave situations. But God has not abandoned David while he has abandoned Saul.
9. The Philistines are preparing to attack the Israelites, and they want David to fight with them against his own people.
10. He causes the Philistine leaders to distrust him, so they won't let him fight with them against the Israelites.
11. Saul's dilemma ends in hopelessness at night, while David's dilemma ends in hopefulness in the morning.
12. The Amalekites have plundered Ziklag and captured the women and children. David's men want to stone him.
13. He strengthens himself in the LORD his God and seeks his direction.
14. He leads David to someone who knows where the Amalekites are. He allows David and his men to recover their families and goods and destroy their enemy.
15. God delivers David from Saul's pursuit. He delivers David from attacking his own men. He lets David recover the women and children and defeat the Amalekites.
16. Even though we were the ones who deserved the Father's abandonment because of our rejection of him, Jesus experienced that abandonment in our place so that we would never need to.
17. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

I Samuel 30:6