



# E2E

**Eternity to Eternity**

**BOOK 6 | LESSONS 56-65**



**E2E**

**Eternity to Eternity**

**NEW HOPE CHURCH**

2170 E. Saginaw Hwy. | East Lansing, MI 48823 | [nhchurch.com](http://nhchurch.com)

Scripture quotations taken from the (NASB) New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. [lockman.org](http://lockman.org)

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>56. The Birth and Call of Samuel</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>57. Remembering and Forgetting God</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>58. Israel Rejects God's Rule</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>59. Saul Anointed King</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>60. God Rejects Saul</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>61. David Anointed King</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>62. David Fights Goliath</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>63. God Protects David</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>64. Covenant Loyalty, or Just a Friend</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>65. David in the Wilderness</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Small Group Discussion Questions</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>62</b>



# INTRODUCTION

Is it astounding to you that God involves fragile, frail and flawed human beings in His work? He placed Adam in charge of His garden. He chose Noah to represent Him to sinful humanity. He chose Abraham's line to be His very own special people. He picked Moses to lead His people out of captivity in Egypt. Joshua was chosen to lead the people into the promised Land. All of these men were weak in themselves but God worked powerfully through them when they chose to simply trust Him and submit to His authority. When they walked according to their own wisdom and strength they failed miserably.

After Joshua's death, God was the king of Israel. In stark contrast to the nations around, Israel had no human king. At the end of the time of the Judges, God raised up the prophet Samuel to speak for Him. Samuel's miraculous birth, his rise to prominence as a prophet, his work as a priest and as the last judge were all beautiful examples of God's kingly concern for His subjects. Samuel responded wholeheartedly to God's call and tirelessly ministered to the nation of Israel by carrying out sacrifices, calling on God's name and mediating between Israel and God. The goodness and kindness of God flowed generously from Samuel's yielded life.

In spite of all God's favor, God's people rejected His rule during heightened tensions with the Philistines. They insisted that Samuel appoint a human king to replace Him so they would be ruled like the nations around them. Samuel warned the children of Israel that a human king would take the best of their lands, the brightest of their children and exact punishing taxes and use their productivity for his purposes. The people chose to reject Samuel's wise counsel and they gladly accepted King Saul as a substitute for God. The ensuing drama, political intrigue and bloodshed during Saul's reign confirmed God's warnings through Samuel.

The sting of disobedience made the nation ache and grieve for a final Deliverer, a man after God's own heart. A man who could defeat their

giants, right all wrongs, bring justice to lawless places and lead God's people in paths of righteousness. Welcome to E2E book 6.

Richard Bruce 3rd wrote lessons #56, 57, 60 and 63. Jacob Iverson wrote lessons #59, 62 and 65. I wrote #58, 61 and 64. These lessons were all graciously edited by Kevin Mungons. Darla Prether made the lessons presentable with her God given design abilities and Sam Eling gave the lessons an online presence on the church website, nhchurch.com. We sincerely pray that you enjoy the lessons as much as did creating them for you.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RKB3rd'. The letters are stylized and connected, with a large 'R' and 'B'.

Rich Bruce, Discipleship Pastor



# LESSON 56

## The Birth and Call of Samuel

Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani activist, Nobel laureate and girl's education advocate, attributes her courage and resilience to her mother, Toor Pekai Yousafzai. In the face of Taliban threats against her daughter's life, Toor stood firm in her support for Malala's right to learn. Toor nursed Malala back to health after the Taliban shot and seriously injured her on her way to school in 2012. She openly promoted her daughter's pursuit of education even when it was dangerous<sup>1</sup>. Malala's story serves as a powerful testament to the universal bond of motherhood. After all, mothers, more than anyone else, believe wholeheartedly in their children's boundless potential. As we open the pages of 1 Samuel, let's explore the unbreakable bond between a biblical mother and her child. In this 3000-year-old story, the fervent prayer of a woman named Hannah, her passionate vow to God, and the miraculous birth of her son Samuel changed the fate of a nation and the world. As you read, look for the extraordinary moment when God's voice broke through stillness and redirected Samuel's heart. This story invites us to reflect on our own spiritual journeys and the importance of godly parenting. Let's unravel the captivating tale of the birth and calling of Samuel . . .

### Key Scripture

[Hannah, an Israelite woman who was barren, prayed to the Lord for a son.]

**1 Samuel 1:9–11** *Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."*

[When Eli observed Hannah praying fervently, he thought she was drunk. But when Hannah explained her grief and anguish, Eli blessed her, and prayed God would grant her heart's desire. After this incident in the temple,

God remembered Hannah.]

*1:20 It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD."*

[Hannah kept her vow and brought Samuel to the tabernacle to serve the Lord under the guidance of Eli.]

*1:24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.*

[After this divine encounter, Hannah offered a beautiful, heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.]

*2:1 Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD . . . There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God."*

[Samuel grew in stature and favor with God and people. One night, as Samuel lay down in the tabernacle, he repeatedly heard a voice calling his name. He repeatedly mistook that voice for the voice of Eli.]

*3:8 So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." 11 The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. 14 Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.*

[The birth and calling of Samuel marked a significant turning point in the history of Israel, as he would go on to serve as a faithful judge and leader,

guiding the people according to God's will.]

*3:19 Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. 20 All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.*

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 1–3**

Samuel's response to the Lord's call foreshadowed his future role as a prophet, priest, and judge over Israel. A prophet delivers God's words to His people. In this case, God delivered a message of judgment to Samuel over the house of Eli, whose wicked sons consistently disobeyed God and demanded bribes from those who came to the tabernacle to offer sacrifices (1 Sam. 2:12–25). Later in his life, when God directed him, Samuel revealed the same heart he had demonstrated in the tabernacle as a child, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam. 3:10). The story of 1 Samuel 1–3 serves as a reminder of the profound importance of listening carefully for God's direction. Consider the following:

**Godly parenting matters.** Samuel's dedication and call showcase the remarkable power of a mother's prayer and reliance on God. Samuel grew to serve God faithfully in part because of the passionate prayers of Hannah. In addition to praying for her unborn son, Hannah made a vow to consecrate Samuel from birth to God's service and that he would take a Nazarite vow (see Numbers 6). According to Bible commentators, "this double vow of Hannah and its fulfillment gave to Samuel from childhood on the disposition of heart and direction of life towards the Lord, in which all the powers of his mind, all the striving and struggling of his inner and outer life were consecrated for the performance of the holy mission which he had received from the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Hannah's decision to fulfill her vow by presenting her beloved son, Samuel, to the Lord's service under Eli's care was a profound act of faith and sacrifice. The story of Samuel's dedication reminds us to teach children to listen to God's voice and to dedicate our children to God's service.

**Leaders who don't listen to God make very poor leaders.** The foundation of all leadership lies in seeking God's guidance and listening to His voice. Unfortunately, we have all observed moral and ethical failures in church and community leaders. First Samuel 1–3

reminds us that leadership failures have occurred since mankind's fall in the Garden of Eden, when Adam failed to lead well. Eli, the priest overseeing the tabernacle, served as a godly mentor to young Samuel and demonstrated kindness to Hannah. However, as a parent and leader he failed to discipline his own sons, who engaged in wicked behavior while carrying out their duties as priests of God's tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:12–36). God delivered a message of judgement to Samuel on the house of Eli, "I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them" (1 Sam. 3:13). This harsh criticism highlights the fact that God holds leaders responsible. Leaders must remain vigilant in their commitment to God's principles, ensuring that personal entanglements and ambitions do not undermine their spiritual responsibilities.

The long-awaited and prayed-for baby Samuel anticipated a future child born in Israel who would perform similar roles. Jesus, the Prophet, Priest, and King would listen to and obey His Father (John 4:34). Just like Hannah, Jesus's earthly parents dedicated Him in the temple to God's work (Luke 2:21–40). Parents and role models should follow the examples of Hannah, Mary, and Joseph by listening to God's guidance, recognizing that God has entrusted little ones into our care for a very short time. Ultimately we don't "own" our children just like we don't "own" our belongings. We simply steward them for a time, guiding them toward truth, helping them to discern God's voice and obey it.

## Point to Ponder

Your response to life's challenges reveals the depth of your obedience to a still, small voice.

## From Learning to Living

Godly parents and caregivers can foster an environment where children feel loved, supported, and heard. When we take the time to listen to our children, we model the two-way relationship Jesus had with God the Father. Parents can't counter every lie and accusation the world hurls at Christians. Instead, children can learn to hear and obey God's Word and gain confidence in who God declares them to be. As leaders within our families and communities, it's vital to remember the importance of humility, listening to God's guidance, and maintaining a strong moral compass. We lead by example through a foundation of faith, trust in God's plan, and unwavering humility in service to others. Does constant busyness and entertainment ever drown out God's quiet spiritual calling in your life?

## Prayer Point

Dear Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the timeless wisdom found in the story of Hannah and Samuel. Grant us the strength to parent with faith and dedication, nurturing the unique callings of our children as they grow. Guide us as leaders to humbly follow Your divine path, always attentive to Your voice, and make our lives a living testament to the power of faith, humility, and unwavering love. In Your name we pray, Amen.



# LESSON 57

## Remembering and Forgetting God

Max Lucado wrote, “You have a God who hears you, the power of love behind you, the Holy Spirit within you, and all of heaven ahead of you. If you have the Shepherd, you have grace for every sin, direction for every turn, a candle for every corner and an anchor for every storm. You have everything you need.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, 2 Peter 1:3 says, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.” Despite this promise, God’s people frequently forget God when life gets tough. This often leads to a series of highs and lows in our relationship with God, marked by periods of remembering Him and periods of forgetting His promises in which we attempt to solve God-sized problems by means of human wisdom.

In our next section of Scripture, Israel continued its cycle of remembering and forgetting God. First Samuel 4–7 begins with a pivotal moment in Israel’s history—the Battle of Aphek. As the Israelites faced defeat at the hands of the Philistines, they made a fateful decision that would lead to the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. This turning point set the stage for the fulfillment of God’s prophecy against the house of Eli. The passage highlights the importance of leadership, repentance, and divine intervention in the relationship between the people of Israel and God. Ultimately, it conveys the idea that a faithful return to God and His guidance leads to deliverance and restoration, even in times of adversity.

### Key Scripture

[Israel had declined considerably at the beginning of Samuel’s life under Eli’s leadership. God’s enemies had returned once again to destroy God’s people.]

**1 Sam. 4:1** *Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. 2 The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. 3 When the people came into the*

camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.” 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of armies who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

[Without consulting God, the Israelites took the Ark of the Covenant into battle, hoping it would bring them victory, but the Philistines defeated Israel, killed 30,000 fighting men, and captured the Ark. In the raging battle, Hophni and Phinehas were killed.]

**4:17** Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head . . . He rushed to Eli to deliver this news, “‘Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken.’ 18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.

[The Philistines captured the Ark and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon. However, Dagon fell repeatedly before the Ark, and the Philistines were afflicted with plagues, leading them to recognize the power of the God of Israel.]

**1 Sam. 5:4** But when they got up early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon’s house step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. 6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories. 7 When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.

[The Philistines decided to return the Ark to the Israelites and send it back with an offering of gold to appease the God of Israel and end the plagues.]

**1 Sam. 6:10** Then the men did so: they took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. . . . 12 And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh. 13 Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their



wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it.

[First Samuel 7 marked the beginning of Samuel’s leadership in Israel. Samuel called the people to turn away from false gods and return to the Lord, and the people gathered at Mizpah, where Samuel offered sacrifices as a priest and sought God’s help.]

*1 Sam. 7:10* Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel. 11 The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.” 13 So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

**Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 4–7**

Samuel wisely diagnosed the core issue—the common denominator in all of Israel’s problems—as forgetting God. The Ebenezer stone served as a reminder for Israel that despite their unfaithfulness the Lord had remained faithful to them. Despite chronic leadership failures, as seen in the tragic story of Eli and his sons, God had raised up a new generation of vigilant and humble leadership in the person of Samuel. The return of the Ark confirmed that the God of the Old Testament would continue to deal graciously with His people. Consider the following:

**Human wisdom often fails.** The Israelites’ decision to bring the Ark into battle reflected a common belief of the time, that holy relics of pagan deities represented a source of magical power and protection in battle. While the pagan nations around Israel practiced sorcery and animism to manipulate their gods, Israel should have known better than to manipulate the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. According to Bible teacher Andrew Reid, the Israelites “appeared to reason that [the initial defeat] was because God was not present with them, and since they associated the ark with him they sought to manipulate his action, somewhat superstitiously, by bringing the ark with them.”<sup>74</sup> Even the Philistines grew afraid when they heard the Ark had arrived and said, “God (*Elohim*) has come into the camp.” (1 Sam. 4:5). The

ultimate defeat and capture of the Ark was a catastrophic loss, not only militarily but also spiritually, as it signified a severe rupture in the relationship between God and His people and a failed attempt to manipulate God using human wisdom.

**God will not be trifled with.** The dramatic punishment meted out by God on the unbelieving Philistines underscored the dire consequences of testing God. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton remind us that Yahweh was not defeated, subordinated, or humiliated by His encounter with Dagon. They say, “While the ark’s presence in the temple of Dagon had been intended to humiliate, the cutting off of the hands and head of Dagon indicated destruction. The head of a conquered foe was typically displayed as evidence of his death (1 Sam. 17:51–54) and cutting off hands was a way of counting casualties as well as mutilation that demonstrated the powerlessness of the enemy.”<sup>5</sup> The Philistines wisely recognized the need to return the Ark to its rightful place to halt the devastating plagues that befell them. This gesture revealed that after these events the Philistines acknowledged and respected God and the author concludes, “So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel,” (1 Sam. 7:13). God’s appropriate punishments and displays of just power produced fear and respect.

Israel’s defeat at Aphek and the subsequent capture of the Ark of the Covenant speaks volumes about God’s character—that He cannot be manipulated by human wisdom but that we must approach Him on His terms. Unfortunately, Israel sought to control God like a common pagan deity, and they treated God’s Ark like a good luck charm. Thankfully, the return of the Ark and the godly leadership of Samuel confirmed God’s undeserved grace toward His people despite their failures and forgetfulness.

Today, you and I should fear God’s wrath. In fact, fear of God naturally occurs when we understand God’s holiness, His justice, and His inflexibility in enforcing His standards. The ebb and flow of Israel’s spiritual journey, a journey marked by moments of spiritual decline and profound restoration and redemption may mirror our own experience walking with God. Like Israel, we need to set up Ebenezer stones to remind us that, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” He will continue to walk beside us if we fear and respect Him.

## Point to Ponder

True deliverance comes when you return to God to humbly seek His guidance and protection.

## From Learning to Living

Much like Samuel's repeated call for Israel to repent and remember the Lord, we should inspire those around us to forsake fleeting pleasures and false deities to fervently pursue a closer connection with God. This week set up a physical reminder in your home or office that will symbolize God's faithfulness thus far in your life. This Ebenezer can take many forms: a bracelet, a plaque, or a wallpaper for your electronic device. Like an ordinary stone, this reminder will not contain any magical power or mystical spiritual force. It will serve as a simple witness, designed to level out the ebbs and flows of remembering and forgetting God.

## Prayer Point

Heavenly Father, please give us wisdom to discern the moments in our lives when we may be undergoing a spiritual decline, much like the Israelites in 1 Samuel 4–7. Just as they faced the consequences of their immorality and worldly wisdom, help us to recognize when we, too, have strayed from Your path. We pray for divine restoration in our lives and communities, knowing that true deliverance comes when we return to You with repentant hearts. In Your holy name we pray, Amen.



# LESSON 58

## Israel Rejects God's Rule

Simon Bolivar, the “George Washington” of South America, liberated six nations from Spanish rule between 1810 and 1830, abolishing slavery and inspiring countless with his message of freedom. Depleting his family fortune, traversing thousands of miles on horseback, and leading a poorly equipped army through the Andes, Bolivar fought valiantly and lost a third of his soldiers. Despite his efforts, his army disbanded, his best friend was assassinated, and he succumbed to tuberculosis at 47, abandoned by the very countries he liberated.

Like the nations that abandoned Bolivar on his deathbed, the children of Israel forgot their liberator. Over centuries, God fostered Israel's rise to prominence in the ancient world, rescuing them from Egypt, nurturing them in the wilderness, and aiding their conquest of the Promised Land. His desire was their liberation from the tyranny of sin and human rulers, positioning them as a beacon of truth to surrounding nations. As you delve into the upcoming verses, try to get a read on God's sentiments as Israel traded His rule for the prevailing human norm at the time—a monarchy.

### Key Scripture

*1 Samuel 8:1 Now it came about, when Samuel was old, that he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. 3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest gain, and they took bribes and perverted justice. 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations.” 6 But the matter was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they*

*have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have abandoned Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you as well. 9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall warn them strongly and tell them of the practice of the king who will reign over them.*

[Samuel sternly warned Israel that a king would tax their goods, use their children in his wars and that he would take the very best from their families and use it in his service. God warned Israel that even though they would cry out for relief from overbearing kings, God would not return to a theocracy.]

**8:19** *Yet the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, 20 so that we also may be like all the nations, and our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” 21 Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD’s hearing. 22 And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their voice and appoint a king for them.” So Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Go, every man to his city.”*

**9:1** *Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, son of a Benjaminite, a valiant mighty man. 2 He had a son whose name was Saul, a young and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome man than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.*

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 8–9**

The time of the Judges is now drawing to a close and Israel was exhausted. They spent 400 years cycling through the disobedience of idol worship, judgments by God, the anguish of oppression and timely divine rescue. God enabled judge after judge to deliver them from humiliation. Now, after claiming God’s ways are no longer valid, they turn their backs on Him (a figurative slap to God’s face) and demand a human king. Consider the following:

**Israel ran ahead of God when they asked for a king.** It’s crucial to acknowledge that God ordained a kingship for Israel from the time of Abraham. The promise to Abraham and Sarah included the birth of kings (Gen. 17:6, 16). God provided specific instructions to Joshua regarding proper kingly conduct (Deut. 17:14–20), and the prophecy foresaw a royal family emerging from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). Despite these divine assurances, the elders and later the people of Israel insistently demand a king. They embrace the spiritually

disconnected Saul, oblivious to the great prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 9:18–19), and ignore that Saul isn't from the tribe of Judah (1 Sam. 9:1). Seeking status, relief from personal responsibility, and a military figurehead, they act impulsively, disregarding God's timeline. This hasty decision, divorced from God's plan, leads to unimaginable heartache and loss for Israel. God, with the capacity to address unreasonable demands, allows them to suffer the negative consequences. As Psalm 106:15 warns, "He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul" (ASV).

**Israel defaulted to the cultural norm.** Israel had spent the previous four centuries of the book of Judges exhausting themselves chasing after the gods of the nations around them. The gods of the land tantalized Israel with opportunities to justify immoral behavior that pleased their fleshly desires but each time it ended in disaster. Now instead of building on the harsh lessons of their recent past, they turned and embraced the corrupt, royal system that the nations around used to oppress them! This human tendency to forsake God's standards of normalcy for worldly ones should cause us to search the Scriptures diligently for timeless, biblical principles regarding marriage, media choices, parenting, money management and every other area the Bible addresses.

**Israel ignored the unassuming voice of spiritual maturity.** The prevailing sentiments of the day drown out Samuel's spiritually mature voice. Samuel had faithfully pointed out the fallacies of trusting in a human king (1 Sam. 8:11–17). Bible scholar D. A. Carson notes that "Samuel here paints a grim picture of the side-effects of monarchy. The elder's vision was a narrow one; all they looked for was an effective military leader."<sup>6</sup> Samuel, with a perfect prophetic track record, warned Israel about the potential excesses of having a king. Notably concerning, the word *take* occurs six times in the verses where Samuel described the actions of a king.<sup>7</sup> Mankind has a scary propensity to trust their own thinking more than Gods' thinking.

God gave Israel a tall, handsome king from a distinguished family. Israel welcomed him with open arms but tragically undiscerning hearts. Though the new king possessed all the physical traits of an eminent human ruler, Israel would later realize, to their dismay, that his impressive exterior concealed a profound lack of spiritual substance.

## Point to Ponder

“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.” (Prov. 16:25)

## From Learning to Living

Each of us willingly submits to some form of authority. Reflect on your choices, inviting the Spirit of God to illuminate areas where influences other than Him have seized your affections. Identify instances where you’ve cast aside God’s guidance, aligning more with contemporary norms than the ideals emanating from Heaven. This introspection allows a transformative journey towards embracing a higher, divine standard in your life. Have you thrown off God’s rule and adapted to the norms of our culture?

## Prayer Point

God of all grace, teach me how to be ruled by You. May the ideals in Heaven be my marching orders on earth. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



## LESSON 59

### Saul Anointed King

In a timeless folktale, Hans Christian-Anderson told the story of an emperor fixated on his outward appearance. By pretending to be famous tailors, two swindlers deceived the self-obsessed ruler by claiming they could weave garments so fine, they would be invisible to anyone foolish or unfit for his position. The emperor eagerly commissioned a suit and the “tailors” quickly set to work, weaving the imaginary outfit. After months of waiting, the emperor was presented with “new clothes” but was obviously unable to see the forgery. Too insecure in his position and not wanting anyone to believe he was unfit for his office, he dressed in the imaginary clothing and paraded naked throughout his kingdom.

The emperor’s lack of confidence caused him to desperately try to control what others thought of him. This caused him to not only lose his dignity but to compromise truth. In 1 Samuel 10–11 we find Saul, a young leader who received an incredible call. However, like the emperor, Saul grappled with pride and insecurity. As he stepped into his new role, Saul faced a choice. He could be ruled by his insecurities and fall to the consequences, or he could humbly embrace God’s divine calling.

#### Key Scripture

*1 Samuel 10:1* Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on Saul’s head, kissed him, and said, “Has the LORD not anointed you as ruler over His inheritance?”

[Saul was given signs from the Holy Spirit to confirm that he was God’s choice as leader of Israel. These signs included: servants finding the donkeys Saul had been searching for and Saul temporarily being given the gift of prophecy.]

*10:17* Now Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; 18 and he said to the sons of Israel, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: ‘I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I rescued you from

*the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ 19 But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your catastrophes and your distresses; yet you have said, ‘No, but put a king over us!’ Now then, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your groups of thousands. 20 So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel forward; and the tribe of Benjamin was selected by lot. 21 Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin forward by its families, and the Matrite family was selected by lot. And Saul the son of Kish was selected by lot; but when they looked for him, he could not be found. 22 Therefore they inquired further of the LORD: “Has the man come here yet?” And the LORD said, “Behold, he is hiding himself among the baggage.” 23 So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. 24 Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people.” So all the people shouted and said, “Long live the king!” 25 Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book, and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. 26 Saul also went to his house in Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him. 27 But certain useless men said, “How can this one save us?” And they despised him and did not bring him a gift. But he kept silent about it.*

[Shortly after Saul was declared king, a group of Israelites from Jabesh were besieged by the Amorites. The Israelites were given seven days to call for help. If no help arrived by the end of that time, the Israelites would be enslaved, and their right eyes cut out.]

***11:5** Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and Saul said, “What is the matter with the people that they weep?” So they reported to him the words of the men of Jabesh. 6 Then the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and he became very angry. 7 He then took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, the same shall be done to his oxen.” Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as one person. 8 He counted them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah, thirty thousand.*

[With the help of the Holy Spirit, Saul and his army defeated the Amorites and the men of Jabesh were saved.]

***11:12** Then the people said to Samuel, “Who is he that said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Bring the men, so that we may put them to death!” 13 But Saul said, “Not a single person shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought about victory in Israel.” 14 Then Samuel said*

to the people, “Come, and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.” 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 10–12**

God gave the Israelites exactly what they asked by choosing Saul as king. Handsome, strong, and well-spoken, Saul exemplified the qualities that the Israelites coveted in the rulers of other nations. Unlike those rulers, Saul’s ascension to power could not have been more different. While other kings assumed power by birth or conquest, God plucked Saul from obscurity. When first anointed by Samuel, Saul was declared *nagid* (naw-GHEED) a Hebrew word which means captain, chief, or commander.<sup>8</sup> It conveys someone acting as a prince or representative for another rather than the traditional king we associate with the word. This may have been God choosing to highlight the responsibilities of leadership to serve and shepherd the people. It also could have been God’s way of telling an insecure Saul his responsibilities; Saul’s role was to lead as a prince, in submission to the true King. Consider the following:

**Insecurity can cause you to hide when you should lead.** Saul acted with uncertainty and feared the thoughts and opinions of others. He chose not to tell his uncle that he had been anointed (10:16). He hid among the baggage during the council to find a king (10:22) and “kept silent” when others doubted his calling (10:27). Perhaps Saul recognized that he could not live up to the lofty expectations the people had for a king. Saul’s reluctance can be seen again by the fact that his ascension to the kingship did not change how he lived. Saul was given a position to fill, a legacy to start, and wielded a moral and spiritual authority no other person had been given. Despite this, in 11:5, he’s shown going about his daily work—tending to his flock, rather than stepping into his new responsibilities. One of the main duties of a king was to defend his people from attack, which he not only failed to do when the men of Jabesh were captured (11:1), but he was one of the last people to learn about it (11:1–6). Had Saul embraced his calling, the battle might have been avoided. Like Saul, we often shy away from what God has called us to because we are too focused on what others will think of us. We need to find our identity in who God

has called us to be, rather than who our neighbors, friends, family, or communities think we are.

**Saul immediately failed to meet God's requirements.** Deuteronomy 17 provided the basic principles a king of Israel was to follow. When a king was chosen, he was instructed to write a personal copy of God's law which he was to read every day. This was to ensure the king would have a constant and accurate understanding of his place before God and the people he led (Deut. 17:20). God wanted the king to set the spiritual tone for his people and encourage them with his example. Saul notably failed to follow any of the requirements laid out in Deuteronomy. Like the judges before him, Saul would be used by God for a time, but as a sinner was unable to be the spiritual leader God required for his people.

**Great leaders submit to God's authority.** Commentator Matthew Henry once said, "The spirit of God changes men, [and] wonderfully transforms them."<sup>9</sup> Despite receiving a new "heart" when the Holy Spirit descended on him in 1 Samuel 10:9, Saul appeared unchanged. He was still frightened, still insecure, and he still reluctant to step into his role of king. After he heard about the Ammonite attack (v. 11:6) and the Spirit of God came upon Saul, we finally see his transformation. With the help of the Holy Spirit, Saul acted in complete obedience to God, and we see a glimpse of the king Saul could have been. Gone were his insecurities, replaced with a man confident in his calling and position before God. Only after he submitted did Samuel publicly declare on behalf of God that "I have set a king over you" (v. 11:14). Saul demonstrated that God best uses us when we fully accept his calling and submit to the Holy Spirit's work.

Despite a supernatural call, confirming signs, and a miraculous victory, Saul would always struggle to embrace his calling in the way God required. Like the emperor in the old story, Saul's doubt and focus on the perception of others would eventually cause him to compromise the truth, leading to his failure and rejection by God. Insecurity is a prideful mindset that focuses our attention inward rather than on the external truths of the identity God has called us to. Focusing on the thoughts and opinions of others can cause us to hide from responsibilities or compromise our convictions. To stay grounded, we must submit to God's leading and firmly plant our identities in the truth of what He has declared of us rather than the opinions of others.

### Point to Ponder

Looking inward for validation can lead you to prioritize others' expectations, rather than seeking and following God's will.

### From Learning to Living

When someone places their faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, God gives them a new heart and a new identity. Believers should understand that new identity and know how it impacts the way we view God, ourselves, and others. Read Romans chapters five and eight and write down all that is declared of someone "in Christ." How does this impact your identity and how should it reshape how you view others' opinions?

### Prayer Point

Lord, we wrestle with insecurity. We pridefully focus our attention on how others view us, and we place ourselves at the center of our identities. Lord, help us to put to death this old way of life and find our identities in You. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



# LESSON 60

## God Rejects Saul

In the early church, a couple named Ananias and Sapphira wanted to appear generous, so they sold a piece of property and gave some of the proceeds to the church. However, they conspired to keep a part of the money for themselves while presenting the rest as their full contribution. When Ananias presented the money to the apostles, Peter confronted Ananias with his deception and dishonesty, “Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.” Upon hearing Peter’s rebuke, Ananias “collapsed and died” (Acts 5:5). Later, when Sapphira arrived, unaware of her husband’s death, she also lied about the money and met the same fate. This story serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of complete honesty, integrity, and sincerity in one’s actions, even in matters of faith and giving. It underscores that partial obedience or an attempt to deceive God can have severe consequences.

The theme of obedience, a cornerstone of a right relationship with God, runs deep through the pages of Scripture. Lessons like the story of Ananias and Sapphira echo from generation to generation, reminding us of the importance of having a heart of submission and surrender to the Lord. Let’s explore another poignant example of disobedience in the life of King Saul, an example that continues to echo today as we seek to navigate our own faith journeys.

### Key Scripture

[In 1 Samuel 13 we see Saul, the first king of Israel, facing the biggest challenge of his reign.]

**1 Samuel 13:5** *Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.*

[The troops with Saul trembled with fear at the approach of this mighty host.]

Saul, seeking to bolster his troop's courage in the face of an overwhelming enemy, unwisely rushed ahead of God and offered a sacrifice without waiting for God's anointed priest.]

*13:8 Now he waited for seven days, until the appointed time that Samuel had set, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. 9 So Saul said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 But as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. 11 But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Since I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come at the appointed time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, 12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I worked up the courage and offered the burnt offering." 13 But Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly! You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for the LORD would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.*

[Saul's actions again revealed his wayward heart two chapters later. He disobeyed God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekites and their possessions. Samuel rebuked Saul for his disobedience and delivered God's rejection of Saul as king.]

*15:12 Samuel got up early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was reported to Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal." 13 So Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the bellowing of the oxen which I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have completely destroyed . . ." 18 Samuel replied, "The LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go and completely destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are eliminated.' 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Instead, you loudly rushed upon the spoils and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD! . . ." 22 "Samuel said, 'Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.'*"



[Despite Saul's subsequent admission of guilt and pleas for a pardon, Samuel re-emphasized God's decree that He would remove Saul from the throne of Israel.]

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 13–15**

Samuel, when delivering His first message of judgement against Saul said, “The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart,” (1 Sam. 13:14). That phrase means God sought a King who valued the same things that God valued, someone who saw the world with God's eyes. Unlike King Saul, the next king consistently waited on God while obeying Him fully, giving God the glory for his victories. King David made mistakes, but he took responsibility for those mistakes when confronted by God's messenger. King Saul's actions, on the other hand, exemplified lack of humility, impatience, and disobedience to God's commands. Ultimately, King Saul's rebellious heart spelled his downfall. Consider the following:

**True strength comes when we wait on the Lord.** Isaiah 40:28–31 says, “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” God intentionally tested Saul's faith by making him wait seven days for Samuel's arrival. Samuel had given clear instructions, “And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do” (1 Sam.10:8). Unfortunately, Saul didn't wait, and he offered the burnt sacrifice before Samuel arrived. This impulsive decision revealed a lack of trust in God's plans. Waiting on God, even in the face of overwhelming difficulties, demonstrates faith and trust in His perfect timing and infallible Word.

**Humility means accepting God's reality.** Saul's impulsive actions betrayed a severe lack of humility. In a flagrant violation of God's command, Saul presumed to take on the role of a priest by offering burnt offerings before battle. This reflected a prideful and individualistic attitude. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 15 Saul again took matters into his own hands by sparing the livestock and King Agag of the Amalekites. Although he didn't take the time to obey God, Saul spared a moment to, “set up a monument for himself” (1 Sam. 15:12). Au-

thor Eugene Merrill said, “When Saul saw the fatness of the Amalekite sheep and cattle and when he considered the enhancement of his own glory and prestige in bringing back Agag, king of Amalek, as prisoner, he could not resist returning them as public exhibits of his leadership (v. 9). That this was Saul’s intent is clear from verse 12, which speaks of Saul’s erecting a monument to his own honor at Carmel.”<sup>10</sup> Humility involves recognizing our limitations, seeking God’s wisdom, and acknowledging our need for God’s guidance and authority in our lives.

**Partial obedience is disobedience, no exceptions.** In 1 Samuel 15, God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, but Saul spared King Agag, and the best livestock. Early the next morning Samuel rebuked Saul for his blatant disobedience. Saul claimed that he had spared the best livestock to offer as sacrifices to God. When Samuel countered that God values obedience more than sacrifices, Saul attempted to shift the blame onto the people, saying that they had decided to spare the livestock without his knowledge. Despite Samuel’s rebuke, Saul did not acknowledge his error or express remorse for his actions. Saul’s partial obedience led to his rejection as king. God values wholehearted obedience over outward acts of worship or sacrifice. Partial obedience is a total rejection of God’s authority.

Just like Ananias and Sapphira, Saul failed the heart test. Although outwardly Ananias and Sapphira appeared noble by giving to the church, inwardly they had a secret they didn’t want anyone else to know about. In Saul’s case, making sacrifices and defeating God’s enemies looked good from the outside, but God saw his heart. He knew the pride that had lodged there that rejected His authority and impatiently ran ahead of Him. King David, on the other hand, was a picture of Christ, who would fully obey His Father, to the point of death on a cross. Jesus exemplified perfect humility, perfect patience, and perfect submission to God’s will. May we do the same in all our interactions.

## Point to Ponder

“My son, give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways.”  
(Prov. 23:26)

## From Learning to Living

Christians often straddle the line between obedience and disobedience. As an example, consider this scenario. The Holy Spirit convicts us to stop watching movies and TV shows with sexual content in them. So we stop watching TV shows with overt sexual scenes, but we keep watching shows with sexual innuendo and skimpy clothing. As we strive for obedience, we must take deliberate steps to identify areas where we might be practicing partial obedience or making compromises. Consider the media you consume, the daily behaviors you practice, and the way you speak. Do you hear any “bleating of the sheep,” or “bellowing of the oxen,” in these arenas that might betray compromise? If so, ruthlessly eliminate it until the Holy Spirit confirms that you’re back in alignment with God’s Word.

## Prayer Point

Dear Heavenly Father, we come to You in gratitude, seeking Your guidance and strength. Help us recognize where we may fall short in obeying Your commands, and grant us the courage to fully obey, knowing only complete obedience pleases You. Instill in us patience to wait on Your perfect timing, even in uncertainty. May we trust Your plan fully. Above all, fill our hearts with humility, acknowledging our limitations and our need for Your guidance. In Jesus’ name, we pray for Your grace to live out these principles. Amen.



# LESSON 61

## David Anointed King

What Adam and Eve deemed as desirable fruit, God labeled as forbidden. While God recognized Abel's righteousness and blessed him, Cain perceived Abel as evil, deserving of death. God issued a command to Babel's generation, urging them to scatter and populate the entire earth, yet they regarded God's words as mere suggestions. Noah's generation, in contrast, viewed what God deemed good as evil, and what God considered evil as good. Abraham and Sarah embraced concubinage as a brilliant idea, a view God considered rebellion. Moses, despite not viewing himself as a great leader, was seen as such by God. Aaron, surprisingly, deemed a pagan golden calf an apt representation of a holy God. The Kadesh Barnea crowd faced the challenges of conquering the Promised Land and concluded that God's size mirrored their fears. Throughout generations, mankind has consistently demonstrated an unwillingness to perceive things as God does.

In 1 Samuel 16, God declared Saul unfit for service, a verdict Saul adamantly refused to accept. Saul had disqualified himself from the kingship of Israel. Intruding into the priest's office, he offered an unauthorized offering, and he further usurped God's authority by sparing Agag, the king of the Amalekites. These acts of rebellion unequivocally rendered Saul unsuitable for the role of Israel's king. Despite Samuel's grieving over Saul's actions, God, undeterred, instructed Samuel to anoint a new king.

### Key Scripture

*1 Samuel 16* Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long are you going to mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, because I have chosen a king for Myself among his sons." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

[God encouraged Samuel to go to Bethlehem and invite the elders of the

town to a sacrifice to the Lord. He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.]

*16:6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is standing before Him.” 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

[Each one of Jesse’s sons passed before Samuel but each one was rejected by God. Finally, Samuel asked if he had seen all of Jesse’s sons. Jesse responded by sending for the youngest son David who was tending sheep.]

*16:12 So he sent word and brought him in. Now he was reddish, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” 13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel set out and went to Ramah. 14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. 15 Saul’s servants then said to him, “Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.*

[Providentially they asked David, who was a skilled harp player to go into the king’s presence and soothe the king’s fears by playing the harp. Scripture indicates that David’s ministry to him was very effective and that Saul “greatly loved” David (1 Sam. 16:21).]

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 16**

Captivated by Eliab’s poise, Samuel appeared convinced that one of Jesse’s noble sons, present at the sacrifice, would ascend to become the next king of Israel. However, God, who “does not see as a man sees” (1 Sam. 16:7), directed Samuel to anoint David—a young, inexperienced shepherd in the world’s eyes, but a man after God’s own heart. This powerful lesson highlights the importance of seeing life from God’s perspective, recognizing that His evaluation of character and purpose often differs from worldly judgments. In a providential arrangement, God orchestrated David’s regular presence in the king’s court, where he played soothing music on his harp. Consider the following:

**David was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz.** David’s godly legacy included Boaz, his ancestor. David also possessed many of Boaz’s admirable qualities. Much like Boaz, who willingly overlooked Ruth’s Moabite heritage and saw her as God declared her to

be, David steadfastly viewed Saul as God-anointed until God personally removed him from office. Boaz's trust in God prevented him from taking advantage of Ruth's vulnerable situation, paralleling David's refusal to attack Saul when he was at a disadvantage. While Saul perceived the throne as a position of preeminence, David mirrored Boaz in viewing leadership as an opportunity to serve the needs of others. Taking cues from God's heart, David didn't seek to rise to the top and dominate like Saul; instead, he adopted the form of a servant-leader, akin to Boaz.

**The Spirit of God left Saul and came upon David.** Scholars engage in lively discussions about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament (OT). While the New Testament states that God permanently seals believers with the Holy Spirit at salvation (Eph. 1:13), assuring that the Spirit will never abandon them, the Old Testament presents instances where the Holy Spirit comes upon individuals and then "leaves."<sup>11</sup> According to OT Scriptures, four classes of people experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for a time. First, judges such as Othniel, Jephthah, Gideon, and Samson, were empowered by the Holy Spirit during times of dire need. Second, craftsmen such as Bezaleel required Spirit-directed skills for crafting instruments of worship from various materials. Prophets constituted the third class, with some being indwelt temporarily while others, like Micah, seemed empowered by the Spirit throughout their lives. The fourth class comprised Israel's civil leaders, including Moses, Joshua, and David, who needed special abilities and powers to meet humanly impossible demands. Bible scholar Leon J. Wood noted that in each instance God "came upon" OT believers, God gave them important tasks requiring special abilities and skills to be executed carefully and proficiently.<sup>12</sup> While this information provides insight into the Spirit's work, it doesn't address all our inquiries. Questions persist about the Spirit's OT role in salvation, highlighting the importance of trusting the all-knowing, all-wise God, even when certain aspects remain beyond our understanding. We must remember that a lack of information does not indicate a lack of goodness on God's part. Rather it causes us to depend on the all-knowing, all-wise God, and trust Him like a child.

**An evil spirit from God terrorized Saul (1 Sam. 16:13–14).** The Bible mentions eight instances of an evil spirit from the Lord, with one involving Abimelech's conflict with the Shechemites (Judg.

9:23), and the remaining seven linked to King Saul. Bible scholar Daniel Howard asserts that understanding the meaning of 1 Samuel 16:13–14 requires observing four movements of spirits in this passage.<sup>13</sup> Firstly, the Holy Spirit moves and descends upon David (v. 13c), but this movement ceases when Samuel relinquishes leadership and departs from Ramah (v. 13d). Subsequently, the Holy Spirit departs from Saul, and an evil spirit takes His place (v. 14b). Howard emphasizes that these movements are significant and interconnected, collectively narrating the transfer of power—both spiritual and political—from Saul to David. As the Holy Spirit leaves Saul and an evil spirit fills the void, the observable disturbance in Saul’s spirit becomes evident. Ancient observers witnessing this disturbance would likely conclude that God had abandoned Saul, signifying a shift in allegiance to David. The movements of the spirits, as detailed in these passages, effectively convey the story of the transfer of power from Saul to David.

From God’s perspective, the transfer of power was complete, yet Saul failed to embrace God’s reality before his death. Instead of relinquishing the throne to David, Saul persisted in creating his own distorted version of reality. Deluding himself into thinking he was still the reigning king, Saul envisioned his sons inheriting his throne. Saul clung to the customs of his time and even attempted to eliminate David, God’s designated heir. In this tragic narrative, Saul’s refusal to align his perspective with God’s perspective led to misguided actions and a distorted understanding of his own authority. Embracing God’s perspective is crucial for navigating life with wisdom and aligning our actions with His sovereign plan.



## Point to Ponder

You may not see reality as God sees it, but you should.

## From Learning to Living

God's Word clearly reveals His plan for our lives—not “a version of reality” but reality itself. Consider for a moment that your version of events, past and present may not line up with God's version. You and I can be holding on to our false reality as tightly as King Saul clung to his. Trust the Spirit of God to give you indications where your thinking is not aligning with His. Ask spiritually mature people to honestly evaluate your life in areas where you are not seeing things as God sees them.

## Prayer Point

God of all grace, Your version of reality stands as the only correct one. I appreciate the gentle, kind voice of the Holy Spirit who faithfully guides me into all truth, especially during those moments when I may resist seeing life through Your perspective. In humility, I surrender my understanding to your divine wisdom and seek continuous alignment with Your truth. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



## LESSON 62

### David Fights Goliath

On June 22, 1938, two boxers faced each other for the title of heavyweight champion of the world. In one corner stood young, African American fighter, Joe Louis, and in the other, stood experienced German boxer, Max Schmeling. Each seemed to fight on behalf of his country, representing not only himself and his people but also the ideologies of the two nations. Schmeling—a man Hitler portrayed as an Aryan superman—represented Nazism and the fascist forces sweeping across Europe. Louis represented the opposing ideals of freedom and democracy. Tensions were high before the bout—so high that President Roosevelt personally urged Louis to defeat Schmeling and newspapers touted the fight as an epic showdown between good and evil. At the sound of the bell, both fighters came out swinging. To the amazement of those watching, Joe Louis won by knockout within the first two minutes of the match.

In 1 Samuel 17, we find what is undoubtedly one of the most famous stories in the Bible, David and Goliath. “Leadership gurus have used this story to motivate corporate leaders to take on new challenges,” David Platt says. “Secular books have been written using this story to inspire unexpected people to muster up their strength to do extraordinary things.”<sup>14</sup> However, the story is not about any of those ideals. Like the fight between Louis and Schmelling, it’s the story of two representatives, fighting on behalf of their people. you read the following Scripture, notice David’s carefully cultivated faith, and see if you can catch a glimpse of redemptive battle Christ fought on behalf of us all.

#### Key Scripture

*1 Samuel 17:2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. 3 And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. 4 And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a*

span. 5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron.

[Goliath issued a challenge; if an Israelite champion could defeat him, the Philistines would be the Israelites' slaves. If Goliath defeated an Israelite champion, they would be slaves to the Philistines.]

**17:11** *When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

[David's brothers were fighting in Saul's army and David was sent by his father to take them supplies and bring news from the front. As he arrived at Saul's camp, Goliath came to the front lines and began taunting the Israelites]

**17:26** *And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*

[David was taken before king Saul and volunteered to fight Goliath; trusting in the God who delivered him from a lion and bear, to defeat the giant.]

**17:37** *And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"*

[Saul tried to equip David with his armor, but it was too cumbersome for David. Instead, David armed himself with his staff and 5 stones from a nearby brook.]

**17:45** *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. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand." 48 When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.*

[David defeated Goliath and cut off his head. The Philistines fled when they heard their champion had been defeated.]

**Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 17–18**

Few, if any, fights in history had stakes as high as this. Failure to defeat Goliath would result in Israelites' slavery. Goliath's description may be one of the longest of any character in the Bible, showing just how intimidating he was.<sup>15</sup> We can understand the fear of the Israelites and their unwillingness to confront a formidable foe who stood nearly nine feet, nine inches tall. But David showed little regard for the giant's size or strength, choosing instead to rely on God's covenant. Israel was His chosen nation and He would protect them when they followed and trusted Him. David quickly reminded those around him that God would fight on their behalf, and victory belonged to Him.

Like Louis fighting Schmeling, God made quick work of Goliath, bringing the giant to his face in reverence, just like he did to the idol of Dagon in 1 Samuel 5. No man or idol can stand a chance when God works to bring salvation. Consider the following:

**Saul lacked faithfulness.** When a giant seemed beyond his ability to fight, Saul fled. When David seemed unequipped for battle, Saul tried to force David to wear ill-fitting armor. Saul only had faith in what he could control instead of trusting that God would fight for the Israelites. A king who would "go out before us and fight our battles" was the one requirement Israel demanded from their leadership (1 Sam. 8:19–20). By running away and refusing to fight Goliath himself, Saul failed in that duty. This lack of faithfulness, to his role, his people, and his God is a common theme throughout 1 Samuel. The writer of 1 Samuel was attempting to show the readers why Saul should not have been king and why Israel should have embraced leadership that relied on God's guidance.

**David had the character to be king.** When David heard Goliath's taunting, his response wasn't one of fear like those around him, but to remember his identity as someone under God's covenant. He asked, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the living God" (17:36). Calling Goliath "uncircumcised" was not just a comment about his physical appearance. It was a challenge to those cow-

ering in fear to stand with the confidence of a people protected by the living God. Faith this strong can only be grown over a lifetime of choosing to walk in faith and seeing God at work. It didn't matter if he was fighting a giant or shepherding his father's flock, David showed a steadfast commitment to his calling to and to the promises of God. This showed the "heart" God mentioned when choosing David as the future king, and proved his suitability to be Israel's future shepherd.

**Jesus is the better David.**<sup>16</sup> God orchestrated history and the stories of the Bible to point to Jesus and reflect aspects of God's redemptive plan. Scholars refer to these reflections as "types." Authors of scripture knew they were writing for the future, a future they did not understand and one that pointed to the coming Messiah (1 Pet. 1:11). When we read the story of David and Goliath we can see glimpses of Jesus, scattered throughout the story. For example, David left Bethlehem at the behest of his father, acted as the mediator between Israel and their enemies, and brought salvation from slavery on behalf of his people. Likewise, Christ left his home to serve as the mediator and representative of us all and brought victory over the slavery of sin and death—our greatest enemy. Jesus emerged as the superior Savior, the supreme Judge, and the ultimate Redeemer.

When Goliath fell and the Philistine's fled, word of what God did by the hands of a boy representative spread through Israel like wildfire. David didn't wake up one day with the faith to be used by God to accomplish this mighty deed. He had to cultivate the faith, choosing to trust God in the small moments. You can't wake up one day expecting to be able to face Goliaths. You must train yourself by relying on God's promises in your daily life, so you are ready to face challenges when they arrive.

## Point to Ponder

God calls you to faithfulness rather than victory—victory belongs to Him.

## From Learning to Living

Cultivating faithfulness takes conscious time and effort. Read Psalm 9 this week. Find three examples of God’s unchanging attributes. How can these characteristics encourage you to live faithfully, with a steadfast commitment to who God has called you to be?

## Prayer Point

Heavenly Father, thank You for choosing to use us as Your representatives to help spread the news of salvation found in Jesus. Let us not take that role lightly and choose to walk in steadfast faithfulness. In the name of Jesus, Amen.





## LESSON 63

### God Protects David

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* to Lorenzo de' Medici, to advise the young prince on the acquisition, maintenance, and utilization of monarchical power. This political treatise delves into the art of ruling and the strategies needed to maintain a king's power. It contains infamous lines such as, "If an injury has to be done to a man, it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared," and "it is much safer to be feared than loved."<sup>17</sup> The text advises Lorenzo on political maneuvers, diplomatic strategies, and methods to exercise authority within a medieval ruling court. The cruel and heartless strategies described in the book have immortalized "Machiavellian" tactics as treacherous, cunning, and coldly expedient.

King Saul never read *The Prince*, but just like in Machiavelli's time, alliances shifted like shadows in the tumultuous corridors of King Saul's court. In 1 Samuel 19, King Saul's trust and loyalty teetered on a precarious edge, vacillating between a desire to use David for his own purposes or to kill him to eliminate the threat he posed to his rule. Although David faced a perilous situation in King Saul's court, God worked through David's allies and inexplicable miracles to protect and elevate His anointed successor to Israel's throne.

#### Key Scripture

**1 Samuel 19:1** Now Saul told his son Jonathan and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. **2** So Jonathan informed David, saying, "My father Saul is seeking to put you to death. Now then, please be on your guard in the morning, and stay in a hiding place and conceal yourself. **3** And as for me, I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are hiding, and I will speak with my father about you; and whatever I find out, I will tell you." **4** Then Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul and said to him, "May the king not sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. **5** For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel; you saw it and

rejoiced. Why then would you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death for no reason?" 6 Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, David shall not be put to death." 7 Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before. 8 When there was war again, David went out and fought the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled from him. 9 Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. 10 And Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he escaped from Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. 11 Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, informed him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death!" 12 So Michal let David down through a window, and he went and fled, and escaped. 13 And Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothing. 14 When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." 15 Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed, so that I may put him to death." 16 When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head. 17 So Saul said to Michal, "Why have you betrayed me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal said to Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I put you to death?'" 18 So David fled and escaped, and came to Samuel at Ramah; and he informed him of everything that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. 19 But it was reported to Saul, saying, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied. 21 When Saul was informed of this, he sent other messengers, but they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again the third time, yet they prophesied. 22 Then he went to Ramah himself and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 So he proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; but the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 19**

In Deuteronomy God commanded that each new king of Israel, “Shall write for himself a copy of this Law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear the Lord his God . . . so that his heart will not be haughty.” 1 Samuel gives no indication Saul ever did this. By this point in 1 Samuel, Saul had succumbed to pride, jealousy, and paranoia. As David gained popularity by adding to his victories and by winning the people’s admiration, Saul’s insecurities and anxieties grew. Saul’s jealousy, the seed of conflict, bloomed dramatically as Saul repeatedly pursued David to kill him. Consider the following:

**David faced a very real and present danger.** To grasp the gravity of David’s situation, we must understand ancient court dynamics and the Near Eastern view on loyalty and power. Ancient Near Eastern people viewed any appearance of overshadowing the king as a disloyal threat to the king’s power and authority. As the *IVP Bible Background Commentary* notes, “People in the ancient Near East placed high value on the stature and appearance of the king . . . the king who carried the aura of a great champion was the pride of his people. A few examples include Sargon of Akkad, described as mighty in battle; Tukulti-Ninurta of Assyria, who had no rival on the battlefield; Nebuchadnezzar, a valiant man strong in warfare; and Gilgamesh, a heroic warrior . . .”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, culturally David’s successes in battle directly challenged Saul’s kingship. Consider the what the women of Israel had begun to sing in 1 Samuel 18:7, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.” Even though Samuel had anointed him as the future king, he remained loyal to Saul and served him by commanding Saul’s armies and playing music in his presence. Despite David’s obvious loyalty, Saul felt justified in eliminating a member of his court that eclipsed and overshadowed him militarily. Gilgamesh and Nebuchadnezzar would have done the same! David had to navigate the intrigues of Saul’s court wisely as many of Saul’s courtiers and loyalists would have gladly killed David for Saul to address the cultural tension. Saul’s court became a battlefield that forced everyone to declare a side.

**God worked behind the scenes to protect David:** God’s providence and divine protection shine through in this chapter. The fact that Saul’s own children protected David contradicted ancient expectations. Any threat to Saul’s rule also posed a threat to Jonathon’s

ascension to the throne. Yet the text says Jonathon “greatly delighted in David,” and he reminded his father of David’s past usefulness to him (1 Sam. 19:1–6). Michal, for her part, risked her own life and her father’s wrath by informing David of the threat to his life, aiding David’s escape, and lying about it. The most stunning display of God’s protection of David came in the form of forced prophesy. Three times Saul sent his followers to take David. Each time as they approached Samuel and a company of prophets, they could continue no further as they became controlled by the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy uncontrollably. Saul himself tried to confront David and humiliated himself by losing control of his own body and disgracefully exposing himself publicly. The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* points out, “He not only shamed himself in front of Samuel but also laid aside his kingly regalia, confirming his rejection as king.”<sup>19</sup> The text shows us God’s hand at work—shielding David from the wrath of a madman willing to use any means at his disposal to eliminate his enemy while also making David look more like a king every minute.

Reflecting on these events, David sang in Psalm 59:9–10:

*You are my strength, I watch for you;  
you, God, are my fortress,  
my God on whom I can rely.*

Despite Saul’s relentless pursuit to eliminate him, David exercised wisdom and relied on God. His shrewdness in winning the hearts and minds of those close to Saul combined with God’s divine protection made David untouchable. Enemies of God always seek to eliminate those who act “better than” them or who expose their sin through their godly actions. Our reaction to opposition and drama will make it abundantly clear if we trust in God’s protection and or if we have bought into cultural lies about overshadowing and “judging” others for their sinfulness.

## Point to Ponder

Is your life marked by a calm, dignified confidence in God—or by Machiavellian machinations and drama?

## From Learning to Living

Navigating the challenges of modern life often mirrors the trials faced by David in Saul's court. We grapple with politics, strained relationships, or unexpected opposition in our workplaces, schools, and homes. David's story reminds us to exercise wisdom, patience, and resilience in the face of adversity. Take a moment to reflect on a challenging situation you've faced recently. Consider how your own actions and decisions made that situation better or worse. Consider how God's hand guided and shielded you in that circumstance. We can trust God's plan in these painful moments, allowing us to experience the kingly calm evidenced by David when Saul hurled a spear at him.

## Prayer Point

Almighty God, in the complexities of our lives, grant us the wisdom to discern Your guiding hand amidst the trials we face. Help us align our actions with Your divine will and grant us the strength to navigate the challenges with grace and resilience. Amen.



# LESSON 64

## Covenant Loyalty or Just a Friend

We exist to revel in a dynamic connection with God. He equipped us with a heart designed to comprehend Him, a soul that passionately longs for His presence, a mind capable of contemplating Him, a will empowered to choose Him, and a conscience guiding us back to His embrace. Remarkably, we use these same faculties to navigate our interactions with each other. These unique abilities distinguish humans, granting us the profound opportunity to forge relationships at an unparalleled depth. Simultaneously, humans possess an unrivaled potential to cause unspeakable pain and heartache. Loyalty, therefore, guides our interactions with one another, while the devastating impact of betrayal threatens to unravel the delicate fabric of our hearts and society.

In 1 Samuel 20, David found himself ensnared in a harrowing tale of epic betrayal. David's bravery paid for the peace Saul savored. Even Saul's own son, Jonathan, recognized and cherished David's authentic loyalty, lovingly committing himself wholeheartedly to David (1 Sam. 18:1). Despite his courageous triumph over Goliath, ascension to a military leadership role, and unwavering dedication to King Saul's cause, Saul viciously betrayed David.

Try to imagine what David felt as he fled from Saul and left the people he loved and cared for. As you read the following verses pay attention to David's heart, burdened by the weight of betrayal and reflecting the raw and intense emotions that accompany human anguish in the face of relational struggle.

### Key Scripture

**1 Samuel 20:1** Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and he came and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?" **2** He said to him, "Far from it, you shall not die! Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without informing me. So why would my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!" **3** Yet David vowed again, saying, "Your father is well

*aware that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, ‘Jonathan is not to know this, otherwise he will be worried.’ But indeed as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is just a step between me and death.”*

[David devised a plan to know Saul’s true intentions and his feelings about his and Jonathan’s friendship. David decided to breach royal protocol and not attend the feast of the new moon in the royal court. He told Jonathon to tell Saul that he had excused David to attend a sacrifice in Bethlehem. David knew that if Saul reacted angrily to their ruse, Saul intended to kill him. Jonathon agreed to circle back with news about Saul. The plan was for Jonathan to pretend to practice with a bow and arrow in a field while David secretly looked on. If Jonathan told the boy helping him to look beyond where David was hiding, then Saul was trying to kill him. They sealed a covenant of loyalty and protection between their families and parted ways. David hid himself in the field and awaited news. When Saul found out David was not coming to the feast he exploded.]

**20:30** *Then Saul’s anger burned against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness? 31 For, as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now then, send men and bring him to me, for he is doomed to die!”*

[Jonathan left the feast in humiliation and went to inform David. David watched as Jonathan shot the arrows beyond him and the boy disappeared looking for them. Then David knew Saul was indeed trying to kill him. David and Jonathon were heartbroken and sobered by what Saul’s choices meant for their families.]

**20:41** *When the boy was gone, David got up from the south side, then he fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, until David wept immeasurably. 42 Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in safety, since we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’” So David set out and went on his way, while Jonathan went into the city.*

### **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 20**

David risked being perceived as disloyal and seditious by skipping Saul’s feast, potentially unleashing a whirlwind of negative drama. His fall from national hero to despised fugitive happened swiftly. Saul, declaring a death sentence for David (1 Sam. 19:1), intensified the drama in the court. The threat extended beyond David to encompass his entire family. In Israel’s cultural context, Saul could have



authorized the killing of David's next of kin to eliminate potential heirs to the throne. This perilous situation not only excluded David from the spiritual life of the nation but also severed ties with his wife (Saul's daughter). Additionally, his close relationship with Jonathan introduced another layer of political intrigue. Consider the following complexities of this tumultuous turn of events:

**Saul demonstrated a self-centered perspective**, while David exemplified covenant love. Saul applied fleshly, human standards to his relationships, employing the typical earthly principle of dominate or be dominated. He selfishly used others for his purposes, discarding them when they fell short of his expectations. Saul demonstrated his dominance and worship of self in how he gauged the worth of others by their willingness to follow his agenda. In stark contrast, David and Jonathan enjoyed a spiritual friendship, diverging from typical earthly relationships. They rejected the expected dominate-or-be-dominated principle, fostering a connection based on covenant love. Saul resorted to hijacking the peace of others with painful drama when they refused to align with his selfish ends.

David's perspective of others was tied to his loyalty to God and to God's purposes. He chose to see Saul and Jonathan as a king and prince in Israel until God removed them. His heart easily became one with Jonathan's since they both shared God's values. Their relationship was spiritual—their friendship was based on something outside of themselves, greater than their petty, human desires. Their love reflected the covenant love (Heb. *chesed*) that God declared for Israel (see Psalm 136). *Chesed* is a love based on a sacred promise. It is a love based on God's eternal covenant and program not on performance. God stubbornly continued to view Israel for who He declared them to be instead of assigning an identity to their behavior. They failed but God never saw them as failures. David, the object of Saul's undeserved animosity, reflected this same stubborn covenant love (*chesed*) when he refused to identify Saul as his enemy, even as Saul hunted him down to kill him.

**David constructed his framework for healthy relationships around God's standards**, in stark contrast to Saul, who constructed a make-believe universe that revolved around his ego. The relationships of Saul and David served as lenses that magnified their spiritual condition and maturity. Saul concealed his true motives, while Da-

vid embraced transparency and vulnerability. David's relationships revealed a transparent and vulnerable heart, while Saul's true heart remained shrouded in clouds of selfishness. Saul's loyalty extended only to the present moment, while David would have willingly given his life for Saul.

Jonathan showed great foresight when he made a covenant pact with David and his descendants. This was a weighty decision in the ancient world. Bible scholar Joyce Baldwin states that "Jonathan was swearing loyalty to David at a cost. He was surrendering his right to the throne so that David could be pre-eminent. The context in which this kind of commitment was expected and given was after subjugation by a great power, when the conquered had to 'love the new king as themselves'. The voluntary commitment to sacrificial love is rare and deeply moving."<sup>20</sup> Jonathan's readiness to align with God above all other earthly influences serves as a profound and instructive example for us.

Instead of responding in humility to God's declared will, showing loyalty to David, and relinquishing the throne, Saul embarked on a rampage of betrayal against both God and man. Despite wielding the power of a king, from God's perspective, he no longer held the position. In stark contrast, Jonathan wholeheartedly believed in God's plan, fully expecting David to ascend to the throne. He even declared, "If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness (*chesed*) of the Lord, that I may not die?" (1 Sam. 20:14). Jonathan's willingness to surrender his will to God's should serve as an inspiration for all of us.

## Point to Ponder

The quality of your relationships with God and others reveals your spiritual maturity.

## From Learning to Living

Take out a piece of paper and list the relationships you are currently investing in. Consider how you can enhance each relationship by cultivating a loyalty to that person that surpasses what you expect from them. Choose to see them for who God says they are instead of reducing them to the level of your wants and perceived needs. Think of ways to actively serve that person despite their shortcomings. Note: This exercise only applies to positive relationships—no one should endure physical, sexual, or verbal intimidation from an abusive person.

## Prayer Point

Dear Relational God, I come before You, recognizing the intricate tapestry of relationships that shape my life. I pray that You would illuminate my mind, making it acutely aware of your desires for the lives of those closest to me. May my thoughts be aligned with Your wisdom, and my understanding be attuned to the needs and aspirations of those whom I hold dear. In the depths of my heart, Lord, cultivate a profound sense of compassion and love. Teach me to love as You love, unconditionally and sacrificially. Help me navigate the complexities of human interactions with grace and wisdom, always reflecting your character in my responses. In the spirit of Jonathan's surrender and devotion, I ask for the strength to invest wholeheartedly in relationships, with an unwavering commitment to Your eternal values. May my connections with others be marked by authenticity, loyalty, and a shared journey towards a deeper understanding of Your divine love. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.



# LESSON 65

## David in the Wilderness

**K**intsugi is the centuries-old Japanese art form of mending broken pottery with gold. The artist will take a piece of pottery and intentionally shatter it so it can be remade as something more beautiful. This process often takes months as the craftsman painstakingly glues the broken remains back together, and then adorns the cracks with gold lacquer. The result of the process is a piece that is more beautiful than the original. This showcases both the weakness and beauty of the pottery and highlights the incredible creativity and care of the artist.

In 1 Samuel 21–31, we read how David lost everything; his friends, his wife, his promising career, his security, and possibly his chance to become king, when he was forced to flee Saul and hide in the wilderness. David’s world was shattered. However, God did not leave David in pieces. Instead, God painstakingly shaped David to display both his brokenness and value, while highlighting God’s greatness and care.

### Key Scripture

[After David parted with Jonathan, he came to Nob and a priest named Ahimelech]

**1 Samuel 21:1** *Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?” 2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.’ 3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found.”*

[Believing David was on a mission of King Saul’s, Ahimelech provided David with the priests’ bread and the sword of Goliath which was housed there. David tried to hide among the Philistines in Goliath’s hometown of Gath but was quickly recognized as the one who slayed their champion. David was only able to escape by feigning insanity.]

**1 Samuel 22:1** So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard about it, they went down there to him. **2** Then everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him. **3** And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." **4** Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. **5** But Gad the prophet said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left and went into the forest of Hereth.

[Meanwhile, an Edomite named Doeg, who witnessed Ahimelech help David, reported what happened to Saul.]

**22:11** Then the king sent a messenger to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. **12** Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he replied, "Here I am, my LORD." **13** Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?" **14** Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, the king's own son-in-law, who is commander over your bodyguard, and is honored in your house? **15** Did I just begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything against his servant or against any of the household of my father, because your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair." **16** But the king said, "You shall certainly die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!" **17** And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the Lord to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not inform me." But the servants of the king were unwilling to reach out with their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. **18** Then the king said to Doeg, "You, turn around and attack the priests!" And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. **19** He also struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; he also struck oxen, donkeys, and sheep with the edge of the sword. **20** But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David. **21** Abiathar informed David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. **22** Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would certainly tell Saul. I myself have turned against every person in your father's household. **23** Stay with me; do not be afraid, even though he who is seeking my life is seeking your life. For you are safe with me."

## **Recommended Reading: 1 Samuel 21–22 and Psalm 63**

These stories help demonstrate David’s training to be the ideal king. David’s sovereign circumstances prepared him to sit on the throne when it was finally time. The difficulties he experienced refined David’s character and helped him learn that no matter the circumstances, God had his best interests in mind. Dr. Thomas Constable also pointed out that these stories show how “God is working out His plans for both Saul and David. They help us see how God works and uses the choices people make to accomplish His will.”<sup>21</sup> Consider the following:

**The wilderness can be a place of preparation and growth.** God frequently used seasons in the wilderness to prepare people for a future calling. Abraham traveled for years after God called him out of Ur before he became a father to a great nation. Moses spent 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness before God called him to lead the Israelites out of slavery. The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert before conquering the land promised to them. Time in the wilderness can feel frightening like it did to David; it can feel pointless; it can feel lonely, but the time spent in the wilderness has a purpose. Author Charlie Dyer observed that the wilderness “was where God continually demonstrated that His grace was sufficient. Whether it was supplying manna to a hungry nation, or having David affirm ‘The Lord is my Shepherd; I have all that I need.’”<sup>22</sup> Sometimes we may feel like we’re wandering in the wilderness, and although we may not understand why, we can rest knowing that every valley has a purpose. If we let Him, God will use the low points in our lives to draw us into a closer reliance on Him and to prepare us for our future calling.

**God can use community to help define calling.** First Samuel 22:2 tells us that while David was alone in the wilderness, God surrounded him with a unique group of people. “Then everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him, and he became captain over them.” By bringing this motley band together, God provided a community for David. When we are feeling low or isolated, one of the worst things we can do is retreat from people. Ecclesiastes 4 tells us that “two are better than one . . . for if either of them falls, the one will lift his companion.” Other people can help provide the strength and encour-

agement needed to help navigate difficult situations. This community also provided David with a small arena to prepare him to govern a rebellious Israel by leading a disgruntled band of fugitives. Singer-songwriter Andrew Peterson reminds us that “If you want to know what God has called you to do, look around to the community that you find yourself in and ask yourself, ‘How can I use my calling to love them well? How can I use my gift to serve, to lay down my life for these people?’”<sup>23</sup> Because of David’s willingness to step into the community and recognize his calling, this rag-tag bunch became one of the most famous groups of the Old Testament: David’s Mighty Men. “The transformation of this group was a credit to David’s leadership under God, and a reminder to the Church today that under godly leadership the Lord can transform marginalized people of the world to become mighty men and women of God.”<sup>24</sup>

**David provided a model for faithfulness and compassion.** At the command of King Saul, Doeg the Edomite gruesomely murdered 85 priests along with everyone in the city of Nob, including women and children (22:19). Only one of Ahimelech’s sons, Abiathar, escaped and informed David of the slaughter. David blamed himself for the massacre, knowing that when Doeg saw him at the tabernacle, he would surely report his movements to an unstable Saul (22:22). As he took responsibility for what happened, David could have withdrawn in sorrow or questioned God for allowing tragedy. Would anyone blame David for wallowing in self-pity or throwing up his hands and leaving? Instead, he praised God’s faithfulness. Written after David heard of the incident, Psalm 52 ends by saying “But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the faithfulness of God forever . . . And I will wait on Your name, for it is good.” David was also present for Abiathar. Often when we are going through difficulties it can be easy to have tunnel vision; where we are so focused on the light at the end of the tunnel, we are unable to see what is immediately in front of us and ignore others who need our help. David’s conscious effort to care for Abiathar should be a challenge to us all to consider others more valuable than ourselves, despite our current circumstances.

“And Saul searched for David every day, but God did not hand him over to him. (23:14).” David would spend about 13 years hiding from Saul in the wilderness. Like the Japanese making beauty from brokenness, God used those years to reform David into the king Israel



needed. When we go through seasons in “the wilderness” it can be hard to trust God. We may not be able to see or know the *why* behind what is going on, but like David, we can trust that God is caring for us and is working for our good and His glory. Charlie Dyer encourages us that “Though we might not understand all that happens in our lives, we can be confident that the specific path on which God takes us is the right one because it’s His name—that’s at stake.”<sup>25</sup>

### Point to Ponder

“Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ever murmur nor repine; content, whatever lot I see, since ’tis my God that leadeth me.” —“He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought” by Joseph Gilmore

### From Learning to Living

Challenging circumstances are often placed in our lives like rocks in the middle of a stream. Like the water, we can go around on either side—and with each direction, a different reaction. On one side we can trust God’s goodness despite our circumstances and on the other, we can doubt, deconstruct, or despair. Like David, we need to make sure we have the foundation necessary to trust God when we run into difficulties. This week read Psalm 52 and note three of His attributes. What do attributes reveal about His faithfulness?

### Prayer Point

Heavenly Father, today I feel burdened by \_\_\_\_\_ so I ask for your help. I want to remember that you are caring and \_\_\_\_\_. Despite feeling as though I am lost and alone, I trust that you care for me and will walk with me through \_\_\_\_\_. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The purpose of the Small Group Ministry is to be a vessel, through community, for discipleship. Small Groups are meant to reinforce the four scriptural principles set forth as the purpose of New Hope Church:

*“The purpose of this church is to glorify God by producing maturing followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ through the four scriptural principles of **Learning, Loving, Worship and Prayer.**”*

Small Groups will seek to accomplish this through creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for people to wrestle with the truths of God as they mature in their faith.

---

**As Pastor Mark says, “What you believe about *GOD* determines what you *DO* next.”** Based on this week’s Scripture, sermon, and devotional reading, please consider the following questions placed within these two categories:

### **GOD**

1. What do you believe about God? What do you learn about God’s character from this week’s Scripture passage, message, and devotional?
2. What stirs up praise, love, or thankfulness to God? During prayer time, PRAISE HIM for who He is, His character, His attributes, or THANK HIM for what He has done/is doing.

### **DO**

1. What do you learn about humanity or yourself specifically from this week’s Scripture passage, message, and devotional?
2. Is there something God is asking you to do? What do you believe you are to do next? How will you seek to be obedient to what you are learning?
3. What is the tension/challenge in obeying God? Can you identify what you are feeling or what’s causing a reaction?
4. How can your small group support you in yielding to what God wants you to do?
5. How can you pray for yourself or others according to these verses?

### **PRAYER TIME**

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Siobhann Tighe, "Malala Yousafzai's Mother: Out of the Shadows," BBC News, April 18, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-39550681>.
2. John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 & 2 Samuel* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 51.
3. Max Lucado, *Traveling Light: Premier Library Edition*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 33.
4. Andrew Reid, *1 & 2 Samuel: Hope for the Helpless* (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2008), 32.
5. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), electronic ed.
6. D. A. Carson, *The New Bible Commentary* ISBN: 978-0-8308-1442
7. Ibid.
8. L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Historical Books* (Abbotsford, Canada: CeeTec Publishing, 2000).
9. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary: 1 Samuel*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/matthew-henry/1Samuel>.
- Jobe, Mark. "Bold Steps, Don't Give Up—Part 1." Moody Radio. <https://www.moodyradio.org/programs/bold-steps-with-dr-mark-jobe/2023/08/2023.08.25-dont-give-up---part-1/>.
10. Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Samuel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* Vol. 1, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 447.
11. Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf And Stock Publishers, DATE), page #.
12. Ibid, 53-63.
13. Howard Jr. Daniel M The Transfer of Power From Saul to David In 1st Samuel 16:13,14 JETS 32:4 (December 1989)
14. David Platt, "The Real Meaning of David and Goliath." *Radical*, January 6, 2021, <https://radical.net/message/the-real-meaning-of-david-and-goliath/>.
15. Michael Rydelnik, *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).
16. Raef Chenery, "David & Goliath—1 Samuel 17." YouTube, July 24, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTEYKYJwPLo&t=3233s>.
17. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981).
18. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1 Samuel 9:2.
19. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1 Samuel 19:24.
20. Joyce Baldwin, *1st and 2nd Samuel*, (Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale).

21. Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel* (Plano Bible Chapel, 2023), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf>.
22. Charlie Dyer, *Experiencing the Land of the Book* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2023).
23. Andrew Peterson, "Your Community Defines Your Calling," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejtJIEbp7k4>
24. *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).
25. Charlie Dyer, *Experiencing the Land of the Book*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2023).





# HOPE

A NEW HOPE BIBLE STUDY  
*BOOK 6*

NH