

David, The Man After God's Heart (Student)

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Lesson One

The Contrast

Text: 1 Samuel 9-15

The objective of this lesson: to place the quarter's study in context.

Understanding why David was a man after God's own heart needs to begin with a basic contrast. The contrast is between the man, Saul, who was Israel's first king and the man, David, who was Israel's second king. The two men were unrelated and stood in significant contrast.

So much of David's life has been studied in "happenings" and "incidents" rather than in a continuum. Many ethical questions/issues arise regarding David because David is not placed in the context of his age. Perhaps the best way to have an introduction to David's life is to consider a comparison between David and Saul. God chose both men for the same role. Saul failed miserably and David succeeded admirably. Yet, both men made horrible mistakes. The reasons for one's failure and the other's success is best seen in a comparison of the men.

Perhaps it is needful to consider the expression "after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). The expression contrasts the person who is dedicated to his own will with the person who surrenders his will to God's will. The person who is dedicated to his/her own will is the person who seeks to justify his/her actions. Because self-justification is a priority [either arising from a personal sense of arrogance or a personal sense of personal insecurity], this person is reluctant to repent because he/she is reluctant to accept responsibility for personal behavior. The person who is dedicated to God's will as his/her priority already has accepted a truth about himself/herself: "Compared to God, I am nothing. Left to myself, I make poor choices. In my life, there is never a question about Who is in charge of my life. Even if I make a horrible, embarrassing choice, I know I want God in control of my life. Whatever is necessary for me to reestablish relationship with God, it must occur--and quickly!" This person is continually ready to repent (redirect life and actions) and to accept responsibility for his/her actions.

The focus of this series of lessons will be on the fact that David belonged to God internally because he genuinely possessed the heart of a servant.

It is in this contrast that Saul and David stand as significantly different men. David had to have relationship with God. He was internally motivated. Saul wanted the benefits of association with God. He continually reflected his insecurity in his impetuous, self-serving acts. There is a powerful lesson in that contrast for people of today. Too many seek benefits from God by trying to maintain association with God. What God seeks are those people who want relationship with Him because they belong to Him. God seeks people who serve Him by surrendering self rather than people who seek to associate with Him for self-centered reasons.

In every human interaction, there is an enormous difference between commitment to a relationship and commitment to an association. The most significant of human interactions always are devoted to a pursuit of and a maintenance of relationship. People committed to God always seek relationship not mere association. The manner in which relationship and association react to the realities of personal insecurity are radically different.

Do not blame God for Saul's failure. Saul was hand-picked by God to be the first King of Israel. God did not pick him to fail. God picked him because he had the potential to succeed. God would have made Saul's descendants a continuing dynasty over Israel, just as He later did David, had Saul chosen to depend on God rather than act out of his insecurity (1 Samuel 13:13). Saul had an impressive physical appearance--the physique of a leader (1 Samuel 9:2). Samuel was told by God **the day before** that the following day he would meet the person God selected to be Israel's king (1 Samuel 9:15, 16). When Samuel saw Saul, God confirmed that Saul was the man (1 Samuel 9:17). Samuel confirmed to Saul the role he was to serve as King of Israel and anointed him to become king with the words, "Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?" (1 Samuel 9:1) God also gave Saul a different heart (1 Samuel 10:9).

This does not seek to deny God is Sovereign and can do as He chooses and wills. However, in Saul's case, it is striking from Saul's "passing the blame to others" that Saul made personal choices with horrible consequences. Saul seemed determined to act on his own insecurities rather than in the confidence of God's assurances and incredible power.

God was extremely patient with Saul. Is your impression of Saul this: God had Saul appointed king; Saul quickly disappointed God; and God quickly yanked Saul from his role of leadership. If that is your impression, you need to reconsider it. Saul was in very difficult circumstances when he became king. To the east, the Ammonites were a strong, formidable enemy who could make Israelites miserable (see 1 Samuel 11:1-5). To the west was the conquering Philistine force that defeated and subjugated Israel from the days of 1 Samuel 4. There were no blacksmiths among the Israelites, therefore the Israelites had no weapons (see 1 Samuel 13:19-23).

God always has been a God of incredible patience. Frequently when He acted with wrath in the Old Testament, He did so because abusive humans gave Him no choice. He was a God Who, even at the eleventh hour, would respond to repentance. Consider

Isaiah 55:6-9. Our compassionate God does not withdraw from us easily or quickly. Saul rebelled repeatedly before God withdrew from him. Opportunities for rebellion also frequently are opportunities for displaying incredible trust in and exultation of God.

A huge Philistine military force was assembling at Michmash (1 Samuel 13:5). The people of Israel are terrified (1 Samuel 13:6, 7). Saul's relatively insignificant army was terrified (1 Samuel 13:7), poorly armed, and deserting. Saul, likely feeling quite insecure himself, chose to offer a sacrifice to God when Samuel did not appear at the expected time (1 Samuel 13:8). What should have been a marvelous opportunity to exalt God became an occasion for Saul to elevate himself. Though Samuel plainly declared Saul acted foolishly by rebelling rather than trusting (1 Samuel 13:13), God did not reject Saul as King. He only rejected the possibility of Saul becoming a dynasty through his descendants (1 Samuel 13:13, 14). It was not until later in Saul's rebellion in the incident of the Amalekites that God rejected Saul as King (1 Samuel 15:26-29). Saul's rebellion coupled with his inability to take responsibility for his actions resulted in his destroying any opportunity for relationship with God.

Saul confronted very stressful conditions and circumstances. Would he take matters into his own hands? Would he show extraordinary trust in God? We commonly face similar struggles.

The point of this study **WILL NOT BE** that David never made mistakes as king. He made some horrible mistakes. David was not different from Saul because Saul made mistakes and David did not. As we consider David throughout this quarter, you are challenged to see three things. First, never lose sight of David's heart. Second, note how quickly David was willing to assume responsibility for his horrible actions. Thirdly, note David's readiness to assume responsibility by repenting. When David understood his mistake, he correctly assumed responsibility for his poor choice. He sinned! He did not blame others to justify himself!

The foundation reason for the striking contrast between Saul and David is not to be seen in the mistakes they made. It is seen in each man's reactions to his mistakes.

David's attitudes have some powerful things to teach us about our failures. God's responses have some powerful things to teach us about God.

There is much to be learned from David's attitudes. There is much to be learned from God's responses to David's mistakes. To see those lessons many must be willing to allow challenges to their stereotypes. Many must be willing to think about realities they have not considered previously.

Discussion Questions

1. This study needs to begin with what basic contrast?

This study needs to begin with a basic contrast between the man Saul and the man David.

2. To what does the expression "after God's own heart" refer?

It refers to a person who surrenders his/her will to God's will.

3. What did David have with God? What did Saul have with God?

David had a relationship with God. Saul had an association with God.

4. Discuss why God should not be blamed for Saul's failure.

God personally selected Saul for his role as king of Israel. God saw in Saul the potential to fulfill that role. God gave Saul the essential tools to fulfill his potential.

5. Discuss God's patience with Saul.

God did not reject Saul as King of Israel or withdraw from him as a person the first time he rebelled. There were consequences to Saul's rebellion, but one of them (prior to the Amalekites) was not God's rejection of Saul.

6. Discuss the awkwardness of Saul's position as leader of Israel.

He faced the vicious enemy of the Ammonites on the east and the Philistine conquerors on the west. He faced the massive, well equipped Philistine army with a small, terrified, ill equipped army. He faced a massive army accustomed to winning with a small army accustomed to losing.

7. Did God reject the kingship of Saul when he foolishly offered a sacrifice at Gilgal? Explain your answer.

God did not reject Saul's kingship. God rejected Saul's becoming a dynasty.

8. When did God reject Saul as king?

God rejected Saul when he rebelled upon the capture of the Amalekites.

9. What is **NOT** the point of this study?

The point is not that Saul made mistakes and David made no mistakes.

10. What three things are you challenged to note about David in this study?
- a. *You are asked to take note of David's heart.*
 - b. *You are asked to take note of David's willingness to accept responsibility for his horrible decisions.*
 - c. *You are asked to take note of David's readiness to repent.*
11. Lessons should be drawn from what two powerful things?
- a. *David's attitudes toward personal failure is the first.*
 - b. *God's responses to David's personal failures is the second.*

Lesson Two

David and Goliath

Text: 1 Samuel 17

The purpose of this lesson: to focus on the importance to David of honoring (respecting) God.

When David was probably a teenager, the army of Israel and the army of the Philistines (old enemies!) were again confronting each other. In the book of Judges and the early part of the book of 1 Samuel, Israel spent more time as a conquered, subjugated people than as a free people. The early chapters of 1 Samuel tell how the Philistines took a position of dominance over the people of Israel and kept it for a long time.

Note this was a distressed time in Israel's history. Though they lived in their homes and on their land, they were a captive people who served the Philistines. To gain a sense of the frustrations at that moment, read 1 Samuel 4-7.

Israel finally defeated one of their archenemies, the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:11). After that victory, Saul was finally accepted by the people as Israel's first king (1 Samuel 11:14,15). This was the beginning of the renewal of the kingdom of Israel. The Israelites, because of their wickedness, had been a devastated, subjugated people for years.

Saul's appointment as Israel's king occurred in three stages: the anointing (1 Samuel 10:1); the selection/presentation (1 Samuel 10:24); and the acceptance/approval of the people (1 Samuel 11:14,15). When Saul became king, Israel was just beginning to emerge as a kingdom again. These enslaved people had no standing army to defend the 12 tribes.

In the incident under consideration today, Saul and Israel's standing army was in a confrontational situation with the Philistine army. Israel was beginning to reemerge as a kingdom, but the Philistines were unwilling to abandon their domination of Israel. This battle will not end Israel's difficulties with the Philistines, but it is a critical battle.

Until this moment in Saul's leadership, the Philistines had repressed Israel as a people. The last thing the Philistines wanted was for Israel to emerge again as a local power.

The Philistine army has a champion named Goliath. For that time, he was a huge warrior. While we, because of diet and nutrition, have become accustomed to huge people existing, a person the size of Goliath was rare in their exposure. Not only was he huge by their standards, but he was impressively fitted with armor and weapons.

Goliath regarded himself as unbeatable in a fight with any Israelite. He was physically intimidating to almost all Israelite opponents. His solution to the immediate crisis: "Let's

settle this confrontation with a conflict between two men instead of two armies." The result of the fight between the two men would be "winner take all."

Rarely were there battles fought at night then. The rules of war were quite different. Daily Goliath would come out on the battle field of the valley of Elah and challenge the army of Israel with a proposal. Paraphrased, he said, "There is no need for a lot of people to die! I will represent the Philistines. You choose a warrior to represent Israel. The two of us will fight until one of us is the victor. Then the people of the looser will serve the people of the winner." Goliath taunted the army of Israel with this challenge for forty days! The challenge went unaccepted because everyone in Israel's army was terrified of Goliath.

Goliath was not only defying Israel. His action also defied the God of Israel.

David's three older brothers were serving in Israel's army. Jesse, his father, was concerned about his older sons. He sent David with some food for his sons and for the officer over them and to bring him news from his sons (Jesse was an old man).

Basically, Jesse wanted what any parent wants--news about his sons in the army.

David left his family's flock under a keeper's oversight, and he took the gifts to the valley of Elah. He arrived as both armies prepared for battle, and he heard Goliath's challenge. David was amazed that Goliath could taunt Israel's army, the army of the living God, and no Israelite accept Goliath's challenge.

David could not understand how Israel allowed an uncircumcised gentile to defy God! It was much more than a lack of courage. It was a lack of dependence on God.

He heard the Israelite soldiers discuss what King Saul would give the warrior who fought Goliath and won, and confirmed what he heard. When David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David's inquiry, he was angry at David. "Why are you here? Why are you not with the sheep in the wilderness? You are here for all the wrong reasons! You just want to see the battle!" Eliab's accusatory questions confused David.

David was intrigued by King Saul's rewards as well as Goliath's insults against the living God. His oldest brother's response is quite understandable. (1) There is the matter of sibling rivalry. (2) There is also the matter of Eliab refusing Goliath's challenge.

David's inquiry led to information being given to King Saul, to an interview with King Saul, to King Saul proposing David use his armor, to David rejecting the use of the king's armor. David declared the same God who protected him when he defended his sheep would protect him against the Philistine. The end result: a young shepherd with the simple tools of a shepherd faced a trained, hardened, huge warrior. He did not merely face Goliath--he ran toward him to engage him! This man may have made the army of Israel tremble, but not the young David.

The fact that King Saul would turn to the young David might indicate just how desperate Saul was. David's faith in God must have been most impressive!

The Philistine was insulted that Israel sent him a boy to do "a man's work." He cursed David by Goliath's gods and promised to feed David's flesh to the vultures and the wild beasts. David's reply in 1 Samuel 17:45 is insightful:

Goliath did not consider David a worthy opponent.

"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and 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 taunted."

David's confidence was not in himself but in God.

David's courage and motive did not arise from some arrogant assessment of his personal ability. Both came from his commitment to God. Goliath had not insulted Israel; he had insulted God. David said it would be the dead bodies of Philistine warriors that would feed the vultures and wild beasts.

David was not intimidated by Goliath's contempt.

One well placed stone knocked Goliath out. David used Goliath's own sword to complete the death of the unconscious man by decapitating him. When it became visibly obvious that their champion was dead, a terrified Philistine army fled. A now bold Israelite army pursued the fleeing Philistine army back to one of their fortified cities inflicting heavy casualties. The Israelite warriors returned to plunder the Philistine camp.

The stone assured Goliath's death. Goliath's own sword ended Goliath's life.

The young man's feat amazed King Saul. Evidently, David took Goliath's head as a trophy. Instead of arrogantly declaring his personal greatness, David declared allegiance to Saul. Though David was responsible for a great victory, he clearly understood that Saul was king.

Evidently King Saul was not certain that David would beat Goliath. Do not let it escape the class's attention that the victorious David had the spirit of servant allegiance rather than the spirit of arrogance.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Discuss the situation in Israel when this incident occurred.

They were a conquered people who lived in subjugation to the Philistines.

2. Why had the Israelites been devastated and subjugated for years?

They had failed to obey God.

3. Who was Goliath? Describe him as a warrior.

He was extremely tall, physically intimidating, and experienced as a warrior. His armor was as impressive as he was--large, made of bronze, and quite impressive.

4. What challenge did Goliath issue daily for over a month?

"There is no need for a lot of warriors to die. Choose someone to fight me to the death. Then the people of the loser will serve the people of the winner."

5. Why was David at the valley of Elah?

He, at his father's request, was taking food to his three older brothers and their military leader.

6. Discuss why David's older brother was angered by David's inquiry.

a. *Sibling rivalry.*

b. *Eliab's failure to respond to Goliath's challenge.*

7. Discuss King Saul's reactions to David's inquiry.

Read 1 Samuel 17:31-39. At first Saul discouraged David. He felt David was too inexperienced to be a match for Goliath.

8. How did Goliath feel about David being his opponent?

He was insulted! He regarded David as an unworthy opponent.

9. What did David say to Goliath?

"You come to me with weapons. I come to you in God's name. Today I will kill you, behead you, and the vultures and wild animals will feed on Philistine corpses."

10. Discuss David's motives and courage.

David's courage did not lie in his ability, but in God. David was not distressed by taunts against him, but by taunts against God.

Lesson Three

David and Saul (early)

Text: 1 Samuel 18, 19

The purpose of this lesson: to give an example of a quality of David being a man after God's heart. The quality: the nature of God, not the injustice of Saul, determined how David treated Saul.

The purpose of this lesson does not center on a chronological timeline concerning the earliest contacts between King Saul and David. Three factors are suggested for consideration of those earliest contacts: (1) the purpose of the writer in that material; (2) the nature of servant/royalty relationship at that time; and (3) the author's condensing of material of interest to us but not of interest to the intended original readers. Today we need to avoid the temptation to make scripture say more than scripture says. Often our motives for knowing are not identical to the author's motives in revealing.

There are many questions that can be raised in the earliest history concerning David and Saul's interaction and relationship. The author of 1 Samuel did not include enough information to answer those questions. Most answers include significant speculation. We do not need the answer to all those questions to see the qualities/characteristics that created the closeness between David and God.

Obviously, after David killed Goliath he rose to prominence quickly as an important person among Saul's valiant men. Though David declared he was a son of Saul's servant (1 Samuel 17:58), he rapidly became a close friend of Saul's son, Jonathan. What began as an amiable relationship between friends became a relationship Saul held in contempt.

David's rise in significance began with his killing Goliath. Remember, this young man did something with confidence in God that no other warrior in the Israelite army would attempt. Everyone else was too afraid! A person with the faith and courage of David would be an obvious asset to Saul's military efforts. David's continued success would increase his importance to Saul as he resisted the domination of the Philistines. While David became a person that a suspicious King Saul should "keep an eye on," David at the same time became a person that Saul's son, Jonathan, admired and loved. Evil looks with suspicion on godly motives; godliness looks with love on godly motives.

Each student is asked to consider this reality: the problems that existed between Saul and David were instigated by Saul's weak faith and character flaws, not by David. Saul came to hate and fear David, but David only served Saul. Though David had many "self" justifications for despising Saul, David kept only a sense of respect for Saul because King Saul was chosen by God to be Israel's king. Though Saul attempted to provoke and destroy David in numerous ways, David refused to act as Saul's enemy.

Literally, Saul lived as long as he did because David refused to function as Saul's enemy.

Make certain that your students understand that the tension in the Saul-David association was generated by Saul, not David. David would not let Saul determine who he was or how he acted. David chose to determine who he was and how he acted instead of reacting to King Saul's godless behavior. The moment a person starts reacting, he or she places the control of himself or herself in another person's hands. That person determines who "I am" rather than God and me determining who "I am."

The problem in the King Saul-David association began with Saul's jealousy. David served a dual role to Saul: (1) a valiant man in Saul's military (especially in trying to break the Philistine's control over Israel); and (2) a musical comforter to Saul when he was controlled by the depression of his dark moments. Once as David returned from a victory over Philistine forces, he was greeted by some Israelite women singing and dancing. Their song declared Saul had killed thousands and David had killed ten thousands. David was popular with and admired by many of the Israelite people.

The godly person functions in many roles to ungodly people. While the ungodly seek to "use" people, the godly seek to "serve" people for their benefit to awaken them to God's greatness. Ungodly users feel danger and threat from godly servers. The more you serve the more you are appreciated by other honest people who see the situation for what it is, yet your service is of no threat to the ungodly. Jesus himself is an example of that truth.

King Saul was deeply offended by David's reception. He wanted to be seen and honored by the Israelite people as Israel's deliverer. The fact that these Israelite women made David more prominent than King Saul angered the king. From the moment of that incident onward, King Saul looked at David with suspicion.

Ungodly people feel threatened when their personal ambitions do not achieve what service rendered by faith in God accomplishes.

Amazingly, we always use our attitudes and motives to explain the actions of people we distrust. If "that" would have been "my" motive, "that" must be "his or her" motive. If "I" would have acted in "that" way, "he or she" must be acting in "that" way. Though King Saul had nothing to fear from David, King Saul's suspicion became jealousy and anger, his jealousy and anger became hate, his hate become imagined danger, and imagined danger made David an enemy to be destroyed. He intended to destroy David before David could destroy King Saul and his family.

Among Satan's greatest deceptions is the personal conviction that other people's actions can be explained by "my" motives and attitudes. David's same characteristics produced jealousy and hate in Saul but love and devotion in Jonathan, Saul's son.

David was the opposite of Saul. David had absolute confidence in God (as demonstrated in his facing Goliath). Saul did not include God as a factor in his decisions (all he wanted was God's protection; he did not think in terms of honoring God). David was a man of faith who placed matters in God's hands. Saul was faithless and took matters in his own hands. David had such confidence in God that he believed God was at work in his dire distress--he often asked for more faith and protection, but he frequently declared his God knew what He was doing. Saul commonly questioned God's decisions/actions and sought to justify his own. King Saul seemed to think God operated capriciously, but he (Saul) functioned on the basis of reality.

Seeing why David was "a man after God's own heart" becomes more obvious by seeing the contrast between King Saul and David. Emphasize those contrasts. Note Saul's behavior was that of a person who wanted to use God to compensate for his own insecurity. David's behavior was that of a secure person who wanted to serve God.

It was obvious to the fearful King Saul that God was with David (1 Samuel 18:12). Samuel earlier told King Saul in unmistakable terms that God was no longer with him, and God's decision was not reversible (1 Samuel 15:26-29). As the situation unfolded, King Saul knew David, not his son Jonathan, would be the next king of Israel (see 1 Samuel 20:30, 31 and 24:16-20).

The person who experiences God's withdrawal recognizes God's presence in others. The negative attitudes of the one who experienced God's withdrawal are irritated by God's presence in others.

Though King Saul made David's life miserable, David refused to function as King Saul's enemy. Though King Saul sought opportunity to kill David, David showed nothing but respect for King Saul. Though David had opportunities to kill King Saul, David refused to kill the king. David also prevented his followers from killing King Saul.

David illustrates that basically we are in charge of who and what we are as a person. David would not give King Saul the right to determine who or what he was as a person. King Saul's behavior might necessitate David's actions as one who fled, but King Saul would not make David a hate-filled, hostile person.

It is essential for us to understand that David's attitude toward King Saul was founded on his attitude toward God. David's attitude toward God: "God knows what He is doing; a person must not 'second guess' God!" Thus, when God makes Saul King of Israel, that was God's decision, not David's. Though David was anointed by Samuel to be Israel's future king, his anointing did not give David the right to kill God's present anointed.

A second attitude that made David a "man after God's own heart": the guiding conviction that God knows what He is doing.

On the two occasions David had opportunity to kill King Saul (who was seeking to kill David). David declared that he could not kill God's anointed (1 Samuel 24:8-12; 26:6-12). The fact that King Saul served as King of Israel was God's business, not David's. David understood that in spite of King Saul's actions, there was no justification for David killing King Saul.

Even though David was anointed by Samuel to be Israel's future king, he refused to take matters in his own hands. He did not look for a self-justification for eliminating Saul as Israel's king. David's attitude: God made Saul king. God would end Saul's kingship. God would do it in His own way by His own decision.

David understood this truth: leave God's affairs in God's hands!

Satan is very successful in tempting us to believe that we are doing God's will-- especially when we are more concerned about our desires than God's purposes!

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What impact on David came as a result of his defeating Goliath?

He quickly rose to a place of prominence among King Saul's valiant men.

2. What reality is each student asked to consider?

The problems in the King Saul-David association were caused by King Saul's character weakness and flaws, not David's.

3. What made King Saul jealous and suspicious of David?

King Saul's jealousy expressed itself as a result of the Israelite women who welcomed David's return from a successful battle with the Philistines. The women sang that Saul had killed thousands of Philistines, but David had killed ten thousands of Philistines. Saul was offended that they honored David's acts above his acts.

4. What two roles did David assume in his service to King Saul?

David played music for Saul when Saul was controlled by depression, and David was a warrior in Saul's army that fought against the Philistines.

5. Why was King Saul deeply offended by the reception the women gave David?

He wanted to be honored as Israel's deliverer. He wanted no rival to that position.

6. How do people often use their attitudes and emotions?

People often use their own attitudes and emotions to explain/understand other people's motives and actions.

7. Name some ways in which David was the opposite of Saul.

Ways in which David was opposite to King Saul: He trusted God enough to render service to God's great name whereas Saul tried to use God for his own purposes; David accepted God's decision while Saul took matters into his own hands; David trusted God even when he was distressed, but Saul trusted only himself when he was distressed; David knew God was in charge and acted with purpose, but Saul often thought there was no reason for God's actions.

8. Though King Saul made David's life miserable, David refused to become what?

David refused to become Saul's enemy.

9. What was the foundation of David's attitude toward King Saul?

David's attitude toward God was the foundation of David's attitude toward Saul.

10. Discuss this statement: "leave God's affairs in God's hands."

At the center of the discussion should be this truth: God knows what He is doing. God's actions are not determined by my desires, but by His purposes.

Lesson Four

Friendship In the Face of Discouragement

Text: 1 Samuel 19, 20

Purpose of this lesson: David would not allow the consequences of King Saul's hatred to govern his attitude.

Astoundingly, love can thrive in an environment of hate. King Saul's household was under the primary influence of the King's hatred for David. Yet, in the environment of hate, Jonathan (the king's son) loved David deeply. Jonathan loved David more than he loved his father. Jonathan knew no loyalty greater than his loyalty to David.

While King Saul's hatred for David increased as his jealousy and fear grew, the King's son (Jonathan) grew in his love for David. The same actions and attitudes that produced hate in Saul produced love in Jonathan. While Jonathan had great respect for his father, his loyalty and love for David was even greater.

David and Jonathan's friendship is one of scripture's great friendships. Scripture says their souls were knit together (1 Samuel 18:1). Early in their friendship, Jonathan gave David his robe, armor, belt, sword, and bow (1 Samuel 18:4).

David and Jonathan shared the bonds of a true friendship. This was a friendship that existed in spite of King Saul's aggressive discouragement.

1 Samuel 19:1 states that even though King Saul instructed his servants and son to kill David, Jonathan "delighted" in David. He warned David of his father's intent, and he urged David to go into hiding. He promised to plead with his father on David's behalf and to tell David what he found out.

Jonathan's loyalty to David even as his father was determined to kill David evidences the depth of friendship the two men shared.

Jonathan urged his father not to kill David. He reminded the king that David was a valuable source of blessing and benefit to Israel. He said, "If you kill David, you will kill an innocent man. You have no cause to kill David!"

Jonathan's attempt to discourage the King from killing David coupled with Jonathan's determination to affect a reconciliation of his father with David was an enormous act of personal courage. For a son to tell his father he is wrong was not a small thing.

On this occasion, King Saul listened to Jonathan. Jonathan called David and told him of his conversation with his father. He assured David the danger had passed by bringing David to Saul and reestablishing David and Saul's association.

On some occasions Jonathan was ineffective--especially as Saul's hatred and fear grew. However, this time he was genuinely effective in bringing about a temporary reconciliation.

In time, King Saul made two attempts to kill David. The first was when David played music for the deeply depressed king. The second was immediately after that incident when King Saul tried to kill what he thought to be a sick David. Both times David escaped. The second time he escaped with the help of his wife, King Saul's daughter.

The reconciliation Jonathan mediated was truly temporary. King Saul's anger and fear grew beyond Jonathan's persuasiveness. The fact that his own children aided David must have increased King Saul's frustration.

David fled to Samuel at Ramah. In his distress, David asked Jonathan, "What did I do? What is my evil? Why is your father trying to kill me?" Jonathan did not believe King Saul was trying to kill David. He was very close to his father. He declared his father would not hide this intent from him.

It is understandable if someone is angry at you "with cause to be angry." It is confusing if someone is angry at you when there is no understandable cause. David had no idea why King Saul hated him enough to kill him. He was genuinely loyal to Saul. He had not acted in ways to create a fear of him in Saul. Saul's murderous jealousy confused David. Saul in his jealousy had hidden his intent from Jonathan. Jonathan assumed the closeness existing between him and his father made it impossible for King Saul to hide this intent from Jonathan.

David replied, "Your father knows we are close friends. He does not want you to be grieved, so he is not telling you. However, the truth is that he is near success." Jonathan felt such loyalty to David he said, "I will do anything you want me to do."

David's understanding of the situation was simple: "Your father knows the strength of our friendship. In that knowledge, he does not wish to grieve you." David understood how close King Saul was to success in killing him. Jonathan's loyalty to David continued to be greater than his loyalty to his father. King Saul was not a just or godly man; Jonathan was a just, godly man. The values of the father and the son were distinctly different.

David proposed a test to be conducted with Jonathan's help. It was the time of the new moon. Israel functioned on a lunar calendar. The first day of the month was based on the first sighting of the new moon. This was an occasion of religious feasting, also a time for rest, worship, and sacrifice. From this first sighting of the crescent moon all Jewish festival days were calculated. In Old Testament Jewish society, the first sighting of the crescent moon was extremely important.

The test basically involved King Saul's reaction to David's absence from the King's new moon feast. The King expected David to be at this feast. It was David's responsibility to be present.

Jonathan was to declare to his father, if the King asked, that David was absent from the King's feast of the new moon so he could attend a family sacrifice at Bethlehem. If the King thought David's absence was good, all was well. However, if the King was angry because David was absent, he planned to kill David.

If the King agreed with Jonathan's permission for David to be absent, that was to be the trusted sign that all was well. If the King was angry at Jonathan's decision, that was to be the trusted sign that the King intended to kill David.

If the King was angry with David with just cause, then David asked Jonathan to kill him rather than turning him over to King Saul. Jonathan said such would never happen! Instead, he devised a means of informing David of his father's reaction.

David would prefer to be killed by his friend than by his enemy. Jonathan intended that David not be killed regardless of what Jonathan learned.

Before the feast was concluded, Saul was so angry with Jonathan that he called him "the son of a perverse, rebellious woman." He said Jonathan was a disgrace to the family. The King said the only way Jonathan would rule Israel was if David were killed. The King even threw a spear at his son!

The King left no doubt in Jonathan's mind as to his intent. Jonathan endured a double insult: (1) The knowledge that his father was not as close to him as he thought, and (2) the knowledge that the death of his best friend was intended by his father.

An angry Jonathan left the table without eating, informed David of his father's reaction, and wept with David as he urged David to flee.

The manner that Jonathan left the feast was evidence of the depth of his friendship with David. David's covenant and weeping evidenced the depth of his friendship with Jonathan.

King Saul's hatred made it impossible for David and Jonathan to enjoy their friendship. David never had the joy of being with Jonathan again. Yet, David refused to harm King Saul.

While King Saul's jealousy, fear, and hatred of David made it impossible for David and Jonathan to share the joys of their friendship, David refused to allow King Saul's hatred for him to create an attitude of hatred in him.

For Thought And Discussion

1. Discuss the joys and benefits of a special friendship.

This discussion will be unique to each person in the class. Listen and seek to understand the value/benefit the person declares.

2. List the feelings and emotions a person would experience if he or she had a special friendship destroyed by the hatred of someone outside the friendship.

This also will be unique to each person in the class. Capitalize on as many shared feeling and emotions as possible.

3. Can love survive in an environment of hate? Illustrate your answer.

Yes, love can survive in an environment of hate. The hate of King Saul for David and the love of Jonathan for David illustrates this fact.

4. Why was David and Jonathan's friendship one of the great friendships in the Bible?

Jonathan's love and loyalty for David exceeded his closeness to his father in a period when father-son relationships were primary. David did not resent the King's son for the King's attitudes and actions.

5. What reasons did Jonathan use to urge King Saul not to kill David?

- a. *David is a valuable asset to Israel and thus to you.*
- b. *David is innocent.*

6. How did Jonathan assure David on this occasion that the danger has passed?

He assured David by bringing David to Saul and reconciling the two.

7. From the readings, explain how David was able to escape King Saul's attempt to kill him the second time.

Michal, the King's daughter and David's wife, urged David to flee promptly, helped David escape, and produced a figure in bed that made it look like David was still there.

8. Why did Jonathan refuse to believe King Saul was again trying to kill David?

Jonathan did not believe the King was trying to kill David because his father had not indicated this intent to him. He felt he was too close to his father for this matter to be hidden from him.

9. What was David's explanation for Jonathan's ignorance of King Saul's murderous efforts?

David's explanation: Your father knows we are good friends, and he does not wish to grieve you.

10. What test did David propose?

David proposed a test that would examine King Saul's reaction to David's absence at the feast of the new moon.

11. Discuss the significance of the new moon in ancient Jewish society.

The new moon determined when a month began and was critical to determining when important festival days and times of national worship were to be held.

12. If Saul reacted to David's absence with understanding, what would this reaction verify?

That reaction would verify there was no danger.

13. If Saul reacted to David's absence with anger, what would this reaction verify?

That reaction would verify King Saul intended to kill David.

14. From today's reading, how did King Saul react to David's absence the first day?

King Saul thought perhaps David was "unclean" and was purifying himself to prepare to take the feast.

15. From today's reading, how did Jonathan inform David his life was in danger?

He used an arrow and an instruction to the boy gathering his arrows to declare the news to a hiding David. After the boy left, David and Jonathan said good-bye to each other in a face-to-face encounter.

Lesson Five

David Fled

Text: 1 Samuel 21

Purpose of this lesson: to emphasize that attacking a special friendship did not alter David's attitude toward God or control him as a person. He refused to react to hatred by hating.

Though David was confident of King Saul's intent, Jonathan likely was not confident. Not until Jonathan's message would the matter be certain. Nor could the urgency of the moment be determined prior to Jonathan's news. Remember, these were not times of cans, plastic, or vacuum packaging. In times when almost everything was prepared from basic ingredients for immediate consumption, there was not a lot of preparation that could be made. One often prepared when he or she knew an existing need.

(1) David and Jonathan disagreed concerning King Saul's intent to kill David. However, their disagreement did not threaten their friendship relationship. (2) This was a traumatic, confusing time for both David and Jonathan. Each had to confront unbelievable realities. David's fleeing from Saul would involve major transitions for David. It is difficult for a person to believe he or she needs to make major transitions, and it is difficult for the person in actuality to make those transitions. Humans always find themselves hoping it will be unnecessary to make a major transition. The author gave a brief account of what must have been a major ordeal for both men.

When Jonathan informed David of his father's intention to kill David, both David and Jonathan knew David needed to leave the area immediately (1 Samuel 20:41,42). David left so quickly that he had neither provisions nor weapon.

Remember, immediately prior to this incident David's wife, Michal, saved David's life from King Saul's murderous intent (1 Samuel 19:11-17). David fled to the only place he felt any sense of security and safety--to Samuel at Ramah. Samuel was a revered leader in Israel even as an old man. Evidently the need for David to flee escalated quickly by their time frame and standards. David's options likely were limited by the power and influence of the King. Angering the people who controlled the power was dangerous, thus David's options increasingly would be limited. Anyone who was close to or knew Saul knew David had fallen from the status of trusted ally to the status of feared enemy. It was not physically healthy to aid the enemy of the King! Ahimelech proved that was truth even if the aid was given in ignorance of the King's anger!

The chronology of the recorded events in David's flight from King Saul is difficult to determine. Not all of the "whats," "whens," and "whys" can be determined. Rather than trying to reconcile all the events and happenings, your attention is directed to (1) the significance to David of the happening and (2) the effect of the happening on David. It is in noting David's reactions that you will understand the core reasons for David being a

man after God's own heart. In noting these things you will see the things in David's character that appealed to God.

The events of 1 Samuel 21 give rise to a number of questions that the material does not answer. What is the chronological order of the recorded events? Why did Ahimelech give David the Bread of Presence (an incident Jesus' referred to in order to declare to the Pharisees they did not take into account everything--Matthew 12:1-8, especially note verses 3 and 4). Is either Abiathar or Ahimelech a priestly title at that time? Why was Doeg "detained before the Lord" at Nob, and what did that mean? Did David take Goliath's sword to Goliath's home town (Gath)? The entire class period could be spent trying to answer such questions with speculation. As far as the author of this material is concerned, that would be a pointless effort because it would not deal with the concern of the author of 1 Samuel. Focusing on David's reactions to traumatic events provides insights into the reasons David had a special relationship with God, and that understanding is of great value to anyone who wishes to be a person of faith.

As a general context for these events, note several things. (1) David, prior to his flight from King Saul, was an important military figure in Saul's government. (2) With David's flight from King Saul, David went from the height of influence and power in Israel to the depths of humiliation. (3) The land in which the women sang David's praises for his military victories against the Philistines became a place in which David was no longer safe. (4) King Saul confronted a dual problem: (a) the necessity of continuing to press his war with the Philistines; (b) the desire to pursue David as an enemy. Securing his position in Israel depended on Saul's victory over the Philistines and Saul's killing David. Thus Saul was not able to devote himself exclusively to one objective.

Help the class have a general context for the events. David's flight from King Saul did not occur in a vacuum. This was just one event of significance occurring at the moment. The Philistine conflict was very much alive at that moment and truly dangerous. If the King did not make sound choices, the tensions of that moment could quickly cost him his life. Of major concern to King Saul was maintaining his position as Israel's king, and doing such involved more than a single concern.

As David fled from Gibeah of Benjamin (Saul's home), he moved toward the southwest increasing the distance between him and Saul. As he left the territory of Benjamin, he passed by the city of Nob. Since the destruction of Shiloh by the Philistines, Nob became the new city of the priests. The fact that the bread of presence was displayed there could indicate that at this time the tabernacle was located there. This city was near the area David left.

Nob was the city (we likely would call it a village) in which Israel's priests lived at that time. It seems to be the site of national worship at that time. It was located between Gibeah, King Saul's home, and Jerusalem--likely close to Jerusalem. Do remember at this time there was neither royal residence nor Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The royal residence for the king would not be built there until David's reign as King. The temple would not be built there until Solomon's reign as king.

Ahimelech the priest was visibly concerned that David was alone. It was customary for David to be leading a group of men. What was the significance of David being alone? David tried to reassure Ahimelech by declaring he was on a secret mission for the King. The men that commonly accompanied him would meet him at another place. Because the situation apparently arose suddenly, David needed food. Could Ahimelech provide him anything?

Ahimelech's physical reaction to David's appearance alone indicates the events of this visit were unusual. Perhaps Ahimelech knew the King distrusted David. Perhaps he realized it was a "no win situation." David tried to protect Ahimelech from accusations that Ahimelech favored David over Saul by the responses he gave Ahimelech.

The only bread Ahimelech had available was the holy bread--the 12 loaves that were replaced weekly to represent Israel's 12 tribes before God (Leviticus 24:5-9). This bread was to be eaten only by the priests. Ahimelech offered David this bread if his men had not had sexual intercourse. David assured Ahimelech that his warriors had not had intercourse (apparently this was a prerequisite for preparing for battle in Israel's military).

This is a difficult passage (verses 5 and 6) both to grasp in the Hebrew or to translate into English. Evidently Israelite soldiers were expected to abstain from sexual intercourse prior to a battle.

Having received the bread (five loaves, verse 3), David next asked for a weapon. The only weapon there was Goliath's sword (which David brought there as was customary), so David took Goliath's sword to arm himself.

It was customary for a soldier who achieved a significant victory to place a battle trophy before his God. David's victory over Goliath would qualify for this practice. (David gave Goliath's sword to the priests for this purpose). The point of this practice was to declare the superiority of your God over the God of your enemy (remember the events of 1 Samuel 4 and 5?).

Watching this entire incident was a man named Doeg, an Edomite. [Edomites were not Israelites (descendants of Jacob). They were descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother.] Why Doeg, an important servant in the King's service, was "detained before the Lord" at Nob is a source of considerable discussion. In the events to follow, the important matter is not "why" he was there, but the fact that he was there and witnessed Ahimelech's gift of bread and a sword to David.

Doeg will be a primary figure in an important future event. This informs us of how Doeg knew what happened.

The situation was so dangerous that David fled to the Philistines to the home town of Goliath. David, who had killed so many Philistine warriors beginning with Goliath, must flee the territory of Israel in an attempt to seek security among the Philistines. Some of

the King's servants recognized David, partially were correct in their identification, thought David was Israel's king, wanted David arrested, and made David realize his enormous danger. When David understood the seriousness of his predicament, he "disguised his sanity." He pretended to be insane. He marked on the doors of the gate (likely the King's area). He drooled saliva down his beard.

The danger from King Saul had to be severe for David to flee to a city controlled by the Philistines. Remember, their combat was what we would call "hand to hand" contact. Though they had no capability of making or sharing pictures, David likeness would be known to the Philistines (1) by virtue of his victory over Goliath and (2) by the nature of combat at that time. David's battle success against the Philistines assured his notoriety among the Philistine people.

His insanity ploy worked! Achish, the Philistine King of Gath, had no desire to arrest David. This allowed David to escape Gath and continue his flight from Saul.

There was no way for David to "hide who he was" while in Gath. His only hope was to destroy the King's interest in him. If the King believed David was insane, David quickly lost his value as a prisoner.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Discuss the emotions you would experience if you went from the status of great respect to the position of being despised.

The response will depend on the view and values of each student. Listen and use the information shared by the class to increase the interest of the class.

2. What did both David and Jonathan realize when Jonathan discovered King Saul's determination to kill David?

They realized David needed to leave the area if he were to preserve his life.

3. How quickly did David leave the area?

He left so quickly that he had neither food nor weapon.

4. Why is your attention directed to the significance and effect of the happenings on David?

The intent is to direct the class and teacher away from speculation about the answers to difficult inquiries and toward David's actions that provide insights into David's character and his love of God. The point is not that David was the perfect person who never made mistakes. The point is that David depended on God even when he made mistakes.

5. State 4 facts about the general context of the events surrounding David's flight from Saul.
- Before David fled, he was an important part of King Saul's military and government.*
 - David quickly went from prestige status to humiliation.*
 - For David, the land of praise quickly became the land of danger.*
 - For Saul, the war with the Philistines was an on-going reality that required responses from him.*

6. Why was Nob the city of the priests?

The Philistines destroyed Shiloh.

7. What immediately concerned Ahimelech?

Ahimelech was concerned that David was alone.

8. What did David tell Ahimelech concerning his mission?

It was a secret (and seemingly sudden) mission given to him by the King.

9. What did David first request? On what condition would Ahimelech give David bread from the Bread of Presence?

David first requested food. Ahimelech would provide some of the Bread of Presence to David's men if they had not had sexual intercourse recently.

10. What was David's second request?

David's second request was for a weapon.

11. Who witnessed this incident?

Doeg, an Edomite, witnessed this incident.

12. Where did David flee?

David fled to the Philistine city of Gath.

13. How did David escape Gath?

David escaped Gath by pretending to be insane.

Lesson Six

David's Trials As He Fled

Text: 1 Samuel 22

Purpose in this lesson: to emphasize that David followed God in spite of stress and uncertainty. His quality of accepting responsibility powerfully contributed to David being "a man after God's own heart."

Please note the picture of King Saul is the picture of an increasingly paranoid man. A paranoid man with power is dangerous! King Saul trusted no one!

Help your class realize that paranoia opposes the qualities that God wishes to characterize His people. Paranoia often leads to an ungodly imagination.

Especially note the different forms of stress on David. Two things quickly reveal a person's character and values: (1) his or her use of power, and (2) his or her response to personal distress. As a successful person in King Saul's administration, David had power, then he lost power when a paranoid King Saul wanted to kill him, and then he regained an inferior power when the distressed followed him.

Commonly a person's character is revealed by the manner he or she handles power and handles distress. It is especially demanding to lose power and then regain power.

The author of 1 Samuel pictured David this time in David's life as a desperate man under numerous stresses. The author used David's stress to provide insights into David's character. He helped us understand why God valued David.

In determining context in any scripture, it is essential to seek an understanding of the author's objective in his written statement. Making a statement say what we wish it to say is without justification. Every scripture means what the inspired author meant when he wrote it. The author used David's stresses to provide insight into David's character.

If the related events are in chronological sequence, a lonely, desperate, abandoned David fled to an enemy's city (Gath of the Philistines) searching for security. All he found was danger. In the ingenious ploy of insanity, David narrowly escaped Achish's imprisonment.

The author of a Biblical book does not always write chronologically. He seeks to make a point as he recorded happenings. The visit to Gath illustrated David's desperation and his loneliness. It is easy in a circumstance of desperation and loneliness to become your own god.

He fled from Gath to reside in a cave. What effects would you experience if you totally changed your daily lifestyle? David went from the prosperity of the King's table and the

prestige of a leader in King Saul's military to the frugal existence of a hunted man living in a cave. It is difficult to imagine the dramatic change in his lifestyle! Some would conclude God had abandoned them!

There is a significant contrast between living in a city and living in a cave. We would regard existence in such a city as primitive, but we would regard existence in a cave as less than primitive. Loss of lifestyle powerfully influences many people's faith in God and self-image. Often people say, "How could God let this happen to me?"

In 1 Samuel 22:1-5 the author likely condensed the happenings of a lengthy period into a few, brief details. A fleeing David tried going to a city "to get lost." It did not work! Now David tried going where no one lived to exist alone. It would take time for searching people to know where David was in hiding. If your view is a massive group suddenly, instantly joined forces with David, you likely need to change that view. The exodus to his leadership probably occurred a few people at a time.

Help your class understand that these five verses are a summation of happenings rather than a full account of all that happened. The events involved time enough (1) for a gathering of people to occur and (2) for two trips to Moab (one to seek asylum for David's parents; one to transport his parents to Moab).

From one view the champion of the common man was sought by other common people. That surely may be correct. Also consider another view. The man who had been surrounded by the elite was surrounded by the disgruntled. Whereas he had been a leader of valiant men, now he was the leader of discontented men. Whereas he had led men who were equipped with good weapons, he now led men who were poorly equipped. Remember, he fled without a weapon! Whereas he had led men who were military men, it is unlikely that many of these men were military men--maybe primarily common people, farmers and herdsmen?

Both views are possible. It would be quite demanding to provide leadership for a demoralized group. It is always easier to pull down than it is to build up. It takes less effort to complain than it takes to encourage.

Samuel told the people long before they recognized King Saul as King that they would pay a heavy price to support a king--the loss of sons and daughters in the king's service, the loss of fields and orchards to support the king's servants, the loss of harvests, the loss of work animals, the loss of flocks, and generally the loss of the freedom they experienced (on some occasions). Perhaps the people fleeing to David were destroyed by such losses to the King. Perhaps they, like David, were victims of injustice.

It is possible that these were the people "who fell through the cracks" as Israel transitioned to leadership through an earthly king. In the past, God did through judges what Saul sought to accomplish as a king.

The men who came to David were in debt and bitter of soul. They do not sound happy! Would you prefer to be among (and lead) a group with purpose, a future, and rejoicing in victories or a group who lost purpose, had no future, and came to you in a sense of hopeless defeat? These men were quite willing for David to be their leader. It says much about David's character that he influenced these men rather than allowing them to form his attitudes.

David's influence through the encouragement of the demoralized is a powerful tribute to his character. Such encouragement is easy to talk about but hard to practice.

Among this group were David's parents. No one connected to David was safe from angry King Saul's paranoia. David solicited and received from the King of Moab the opportunity for David's parents to live in his land under his protection until David knew "what God will do for me." Remember, Jesse (David's father) was the grandson of Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:17).

Help your class think about (1) the danger David's parents faced and (2) how a possible danger to your parents would affect you as an adult child. Stress at this time David had no idea of (1) where God was going or (2) how God would use him to get there.

The prophet Gad came to David instructing David to leave his defensible place and return to the territory of Judah. It is possible David's stronghold was located in a region dominated by the Philistines. God's prophet instructed David to return to a region controlled by King Saul. To us, moving closer to Saul would not make sense. Yet, David complied with Gad's instruction. He moved from a stronghold to a forest.

It takes an enormous trust in God to follow an instruction that, in current circumstances, does not make sense to you.

The next recorded incident demonstrates the paranoia of King Saul. He was at home in Gibeah surrounded by trusted men. He questioned their loyalty, all of whom are either his servants or Benjamites! In our words, the King said, "What has David given you? Did he give you your positions? Why did none of you tell me my son plotted against me (likely a reference to the new moon incident)? You knew an ambush was planned for me, and you said nothing?"

Help your class see the King's paranoia in the manner that he treated those who showed him great loyalty.

At that juncture, Doeg the Edomite declared what he witnessed at Nob. He related how Ahimelech assisted David.

Perhaps this was a significant opportunity for Doeg. Since he was not an Israelite, he would not have to contend with the feelings and emotions toward Israelite priests that the Benjamites contended with. This could indicate he was a "godless man." Perhaps it

could indicate that he resented what happened to him at Nob. Whatever his motivation, this was a significant opportunity for Doeg to ingratiate himself to King Saul.

Upon hearing Doeg's report, Saul had Ahimelech and the other priests at Nob come to him. He declared they sided with David to conspire against him. Ahimelech said that was not true. He had done nothing that he would have refused to do in the past. It was customary for him to inquire of the Lord for David. Was not David a part of Saul's inner circle? Was he not loyal to Saul? Had not Saul honored him? Was he not the King's son-in-law? How could Ahimelech possibly know Saul and David were enemies?

There was no justification for Saul's questioning Ahimelech's loyalty.

King Saul pronounced the sentence of death on the priests and ordered his personal guards to kill them immediately. The guards (Israelites) refused to kill God's priests. Then King Saul ordered his servant, Doeg the Edomite, to kill the priests. He immediately seized his opportunity and killed 85 priests. He further took men to Nob and slaughtered everything--men, women, infants, children, and livestock. Interestingly, the man who failed to inflict such destruction on the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15) inflicted it on a city of his own people! What he refused to do as an act of faith, King Saul did as an act of paranoia!

Saul's sentence of death was an expression of his paranoia, not an expression of just cause. Had Saul done to the Amalekites what he did to Nob, God would not have withdrawn His spirit from Saul. Doeg's execution of the people in Nob provided him opportunity number two to ingratiate himself to King Saul.

One person, Abiathar, escaped Nob's destruction, fled to David, and reported the incident. Note a characteristic of David you will see frequently. David assumed responsibility: "It is my fault! I feared Doeg would tell King Saul!"

State the ways David could have justified himself by sharing blame. It was not David's fault King Saul was angry and paranoid. It was not David's fault that Doeg lacked integrity and used opportunity to advance himself. However, also note what David clearly understood: if he had not gone to Nob, the deaths would not have occurred.

For Discussion:

1. How would you personally react to a radical, downward change in daily lifestyle?

This will be as individual as the experiences of each member of the class. Listen and let them declare lessons.

2. Discuss the various forms of stress on David in the incidents of the cave and Doeg's slaughter.

In the discussion, these incidents can serve as a focus: (1) David's radical change in lifestyle as he was reduced to living in a cave; (2) the effect it would have on David to see his parents afraid; (3) David providing leadership for a discontented group; (4) the deaths of the priests and the people at Nob.

Lesson Seven

David's Flight Became More Complex

Text: 1 Samuel 23

The objective of this lesson: To emphasize that David was devoted to God in spite of danger and difficulty, not because of convenience and easy living.

Israelites whose homes and farms were in the "frontier" [the "no man's land" between the area controlled by the Philistines and the area controlled by Israel] were at the mercy of the circumstances created by the war. One day they might live in a city with an outlying farm in a "quiet zone." The next day they might be living in the "battle zone" as the Philistines and Israelites fought or pursued through their area. If that was an area's situation, survival became the key consideration.

Living in an area of constant physical threat and uncertainty produces a different thought pattern and a different type of lifestyle.

Evidently the city of Keilah was in such an area. One of the primary objectives of armies at war is to control a growing amount of territory. The Philistines considered it in their military interest to control Keilah. They attacked Keilah at a vulnerable, critical time. The grain crops which guaranteed the survival of its families had been harvested. Survival required several steps when one's food supply depended primarily on grain crops. [1. There must be planting. 2. There must be harvesting. 3. There must be separation of the grain from the stalk. 4. There must be separation of the grain from the undesirable chaff. 5. Finally, there must be transformation of the grain into food.] The Philistines attacked at a time when the harvested grain must be separated from the stalk. If the Philistine army successfully plundered the threshing floors of Keilah, they virtually assured the inhabitants of Keilah a period of little or no food. The result would be significant weakness and disease or slow, agonizing deaths produced by starvation. For Keilah, the circumstances were grave! In time, a weakened populace at the walled city of Keilah easily might have to surrender itself to the Philistines.

The plundering of Keilah's threshing floors generated a grave survival threat to the city. Very much at issue was who would control the territory of Keilah. It was a survival situation.

David asked the Lord if he should take his forces to deliver the inhabitants of Keilah from the Philistines. The Lord said he should. However, the men in David's forces did not wish to attack the Philistines at Keilah. They felt exposed and uncomfortable in Judah. They had no desire to be the focus of the fury of the Philistines' army and of King Saul's army. Running from King Saul in the territory of Judah was enough risk!

Remember David supplied leadership to a small army of disgruntled men. Leaving a secure, defensible place to return to the territory of Judah is a tribute to David's

leadership ability. Not every man in his army had a quality relationship with God! To attack the Philistines (who had lots of "backup" to call for if needed) did not make sense to these men (who had no "backup" regardless of the situation). Why increase their woes by having both the armies of the Philistines and of King Saul determined to capture them?

David asked the Lord a second time if he and his force should go deliver Keilah. The Lord told him to go, and He would give David victory over the Philistines. With this assurance from the Lord, David went, slaughtered the Philistines, and deliver the Israelites who lived at Keilah.

Evidently David's second inquiry convinced the men. Either that, or David exerted his influence and authority over them.

History never occurs in a nice, simple sequence in which a single thing happens at a specific moment. Verse 6 indicates that David's battle at Keilah and Abiathar's flight to David from Nob occurred in the same time frame. [One of the most challenging realities this writer dealt with while doing mission work involved understanding life in the world at home and life in the world of missions went on simultaneously. The rest of the world does not stop because of the events where you happen to be!]

Help your students grow in their grasp of historical perspective. In history, many things occur in the same time frame. The challenge of the historian true to the events that occurred must determine (1) what was a primary influence, what was a reaction to the primary influence, and what was unrelated to the occurrence, and (2) how to reveal in an understandable way what happened.

After the battle that slaughtered the Philistine forces attacking Keilah, David and his men took up residence in the walled city. Saul heard [it does not say how] that David was then at Keilah and was confident that he had David trapped. David heard [it does not say how] that Saul was planning to attack Keilah. Saul hated David so much that he would attack a city of Israelites in order to kill David!

This is a good illustration of the power of hatred. King Saul was quite comfortable killing other Israelites if he could kill David. Hate has a way of justifying anything it wishes to do.

David asked Abiathar to bring him the ephod Abiathar brought with him. David used the ephod to seek further answers from the Lord. The procedure of inquiring from the Lord seems to have involved asking "yes and no" questions. The question David asked: "When Saul attacks Keilah, will the people of this city surrender me to Saul?" The Lord informed David they would.

This ephod was part of the clothing a priest (likely the high priest) wore on worship occasions. There is not a lot of certain information to be shared on the ceremonial ephod. Such an ephod was not a part of priests' daily attire, but part of their attire when

they approached the Lord. It had special sacred use on occasions when the priest (usually the high priest) sought God's will.

There was an appropriate way for a godly person to seek God's will in a matter, and an appropriate way for a priest to seek God's will in a matter.

David basically sought an answer from God to just one question.

The desire to physically survive the moment causes people to make strange decisions! Though the inhabitants of Keilah had been delivered from the Philistines by David and his men, for the sake of their own survival they would turn David over to Saul in full awareness of what Saul would do to David!

Amazingly, the people of Keilah would not feel a sense of loyalty and indebtedness to David in the time of crisis. However, it must be remembered that being loyal to the king was extremely important.

Upon hearing they were in danger, David and his men left Keilah. Upon hearing David left Keilah, Saul ceased his preparations to attack.

David's choice to leave Keilah ended the crisis. There is no mention of David's feelings or emotions on having to leave Keilah. Nor is there any indication that he was vindictive when he left.

Few things are as discouraging to unselfish men and women willing to make sacrifices for the good of others as to be unappreciated for their efforts. Rarely do unselfish Christians make sacrifices for others because they anticipate power, control, wealth, prestige, or glory. Most of the time they are encouraged by a genuine "Thanks!" produced by an awareness and appreciation of what was done and of the personal prices paid to do it. To have the beneficiaries of one's efforts criticize or be disloyal to the persons who produced their blessings is extremely discouraging!

A genuine "Thank you!" is one of the most encouraging things we can give unselfish, sacrificial people. However, it must be a genuine expression of appreciation, not an attempt to manipulate, not a perfunctory deed.

While David was in the wilderness of Ziph, Jonathan came to encourage David. These had to be discouraging, frustrating times for David. Jonathan knew it! Jonathan had a dream. Though he was the King's son, his dream was not becoming Israel's king! His dream: David would be king; and Jonathan would be beside David. Jonathan said even his father knew David would be king of Israel. Again, the two men made a covenant. Again, the two friends went separate ways.

It is the responsibility of godly friends to know when a friend needs to be encouraged.

The people who lived in the area reported David's presence to Saul. Saul instructed them to learn everything about David's habits and hiding places they could, then he would come capture David. Saul almost succeeded. David literally fled for his life on a daily basis. Only when Saul had to respond to a Philistine raid did David have opportunity to rest from the struggles of his escape.

Do not forget that Israelites who were loyal to King Saul existed. There was a known tension between those loyal to David and those loyal to King Saul.

The Lord did not allow Saul to capture David. However, the Lord's protection did not mean a life of ease!

Never should we assume that God is not active in a situation because inconveniences or hardships occur.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What likely difficulty did people living in the territory between the Philistine army and the Israelite army experience?

They experienced the uncertainty of what the day would bring: a day of peace or a battle ground.

2. What is one of the primary objectives of an army at war?

A primary objective is to expand and control territory.

3. What was the common result of having threshing floors plundered?

A common threat was the threat of starvation.

4. When David asked the Lord if he should attack the Philistine warriors threatening Keilah, what answer did the Lord give? Why did David not immediately attack the Philistine force?

The Lord said David should attack the Philistines at Keilah. David did not immediately attack because his troops felt it was an unwise thing to do.

5. Explain why history never occurs in nice, simple sequences.

In any given timeframe, many different things happen at the same moment. The challenge is to determine what is an influence and what is a reaction.

6. When David learned from the Lord that he was in danger in Keilah, what did he do?

He and his men left Keilah.

7. What is discouraging to men and women who make willing sacrifices for the good of others?

It is discouraging to the unselfish, sacrificial people to be unappreciated by those who benefit from their efforts.

8. Of what did the people of the wilderness of Ziph inform King Saul?

They informed King Saul that David was there.

9. Why did King Saul fail to capture David?

The King had to leave the area in order to respond to a Philistine raid.

10. Did the Lord's protection mean a life of ease? Explain your answer.

The Lord's protection did not mean a life of ease. David lived on the brink of capture in difficult circumstances in a region where people would betray him.

Lesson Eight

David's Continuing Attitude Toward Saul

Texts: 1 Samuel 24, 26

The objective of this lesson: to verify that David's treatment of King Saul was based on conviction, not on convenience.

At this point in David's life, his attitude toward King Saul was amazing without regard to a deeper context. When a deeper context is considered, David's attitude toward the King was nothing short of incredible. At this point King Saul has made it impossible for David to associate with his best friend on a daily basis, has separated David from his wife, has caused the relocation of David's parents, has forced David to live in the wilderness with discontented people, and has forced David to live as a fugitive in his own country. Under those circumstances, already having been anointed the future King of Israel by Samuel, it would seem David would feel no obligation to King Saul at all.

King Saul gave David many, many reasons to hate him and seek vengeance, yet David refused to be ruled by anger or injustice.

Again, King Saul was at David's heels in yet another determined effort to kill David. Both King Saul and David are in the area of Engedi. Saul has with him 3,000 chosen men. They are much closer to each other than the King realized. In King Saul's pursuit of David, he goes into a cave to relieve himself. David and at least some of his men are hiding in the recesses of the cave.

This was in an area where shepherds placed their flocks at night, in a storm, or at times of danger. Generally, such caves had long, low entrances. A wall could seal up much of the enclosure. With a small "entrance yard" surrounded by a wall and one entrance, one man (a shepherd) could control everything that went in and out.

Saul entered such a place. He would have walked from sunlight into the darkness of the cave--when entering, his eyesight would have been poor. If he watched the entrance of the cave, he would have been completely unaware of David's presence.

Unknowingly, the King made himself extremely vulnerable to David. David easily could have killed Saul. Paraphrased, David's men said, "This is the moment you waited for! The Lord has given him into your hand to kill!"

Saul was in such a vulnerable, unaware position, David could have killed him without Saul knowing he was in danger. David could have hidden the body in the cave until the time of danger was passed. The situation was ideal for vengeance. In fact, some of his men suggested it was nothing less than the Lord providing David this opportunity. Note that righteous motives and acts often are not understood by other people.

David quietly cut off a lower piece of the King's robe. After the act, David was distressed that he had even done that! David controlled his men and would not let them kill King Saul. King Saul was anointed to be King by God, and it was not David's prerogative to kill God's anointed!

The King's robe symbolized his position and authority. A loyal subject would not desecrate the King's robe because of the robe's symbolism. David regarded himself a loyal subject. His conscience reacted against his act.

David waited until Saul left the cave and was too far from him to begin a fight. Then David revealed himself to the King by crying out, "My lord the King!" When the King looked behind him, he saw David humbling himself before the king--in a full bow with his face to the ground signifying humble submission.

Saul only realized his danger when the danger had passed. David used the opportunity to affirm his subjection and loyalty to the King.

David's conversation was striking. "Why does the King listen to people who declare David seeks your harm? Just now I could have killed you, but you are the Lord's anointed. I refused to kill you even though you are seeking to kill me. We will allow God to judge the motives of each of us. Who am I that you should seek to kill me? I am a nobody who is not worthy of such effort from you. I will let God plead my cause and rescue me from you!"

David used the piece of the King's robe to verify he had opportunity to kill the King. Notice David used the opportunity to emphasize motives: righteousness versus unrighteousness, God being in control, the unworthiness of the King being concerned about David.

King Saul knew David could have killed him! The realization of David's righteousness coupled with the realization of how close to death he had been caused the King to weep. He confessed to David that David was more righteous than he. People simply did not allow an enemy to escape safely! He confessed David would be Israel's next king. He asked David to swear that he would not kill Saul's family when he became King, which David swore.

Having a "near death" experience has a sobering effect on most people. Realizing "I could be dead now" quickly brings a person face to face with reality.

After this incident, Saul went home. However, his remorse did not last long. David's period of peace was not long.

If anger and jealousy are unresolved, they are bigger than soberness. If they continue, soberness dies.

Again the Ziphites reveal David's general whereabouts. They go to King Saul's home to report David's general location. Saul quickly took a force of 3000 battle hardened men to pursue David.

Saul's tactic this time is the reverse of his past tactic. In the past he delayed while intelligence was gathered. This time he went to the area promptly.

David knew King Saul was coming. King Saul's forces made camp in the area of pursuit. David knew precisely where the camp was and the layout of the camp. The camp was configured to protect the King.

The passage suggests David knew Saul was coming, knew where Saul camped, and knew the layout of the camp. Perhaps part of this information came from David's observation. The camp was configured to give the King maximum protection.

Abishai was eager to accompany David to the camp and kill King Saul. Because of an act of God, the entire camp of King Saul's was sleeping soundly. Though Abishai wanted to kill the King with a single thrust of his spear, David would not permit the killing of God's anointed. David declared to Abishai that the Lord would destroy Saul in the manner and at a time He chose. All David permitted was taking the spear at King Saul's head and taking the king's water jug.

Abishai wanted to kill Saul quickly without alerting the camp. David would not let him. David gave basically two reasons: (1) King Saul was God's anointed; and (2) God did not need help--He would end King Saul's reign by His own means in His own time.

After David placed a significant distance between himself and King Saul's camp, David again revealed himself. After chiding Abner for not protecting the King, David addressed the King. "Why are you trying to kill me? What evil have I done to you? If the Lord sent you after me, I will offer the Lord a sacrifice. If people sent you after me, let them be cursed! I am not worthy of such attention!"

This incident was a great humiliation to Abner! Protecting the King's life was his number one responsibility. Accomplishing the mission was number two. It was unacceptable to put the King's life at risk! David basically again declared (1) his righteousness in his devotion to the King; and (2) that it was a waste of the King's time and effort to view David as his enemy.

Again, Saul knew how close he was to death. He confessed he sinned, and he promised to make no future attempts to harm David. The King declared he had been a fool and made a serious mistake.

Saul clearly understood how close to death he had been. He also saw himself for what he was.

David asked the King to send one of the young warriors to collect the spear. He also affirmed that the Lord would preserve him. After King Saul again found his life spared because a righteous David refused to kill the Lord's anointed, the King returned home and David went on his way.

Again, for the moment, Saul was brought to his senses rather than being ruled by his anger and jealousy.

Note: knowing God changes a person. When a person knows God, that understanding changes the way the person treats other people. The Lord's Spirit departed from King Saul, and he acted as an unrighteous person. The Lord's Spirit was with David, and he refused to kill the Lord's anointed *even though the Lord's anointed unjustly made David's life miserable!*

Knowing God changes the way we look at other people and treat other people. Knowing God constantly challenges us to see people from God's eyes, not our trials. Consider Matthew 5:43-48.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Explain how it would be understandable to us if David felt nothing but a desire for vengeance toward King Saul.

Recount the numerous ways King Saul caused David suffering and inconvenience. Note the King's actions were unjust! In no way did David deserve such treatment.

2. Discuss how vulnerable King Saul was to death in the incident at the cave.

In the position of relieving himself and in the conviction he was not in danger, David could have quickly and easily killed the King.

3. How did David feel about his act of cutting the King's robe?

This was an act of disrespect. If one was the King, his robe should not in any way be desecrated--it symbolized the King's position and authority. Thus David's conscience convicted him for not showing appropriate respect for the King.

4. How did David declare humility before the King?

After the King was some distance away, he bowed to the King (showing submission) and declared himself unworthy of all the King's efforts. He was of no danger to the King. The King had no reason to be afraid of him.

5. When Saul realized what occurred, how did it affect him?

The king realized the unrighteousness of his actions, and the king wept. He knew who God was with, and it was not him.

6. In the incident at King Saul's camp, what did David take? What would Saul know?

David took the spear and water jug at the King's head. Saul would have known David easily could have killed him--David had that opportunity.

7. When we know God, what changes in us?

When we know God, it changes the way we look at and treat people.

Lesson Nine

David and Nabal

Text: 1 Samuel 25

Purpose of this lesson: to focus on David's human nature and to focus on David's spirit of repentance.

David and his men located themselves for some time in the wilderness area of Maon (Maon was a town). Often shepherds took flocks of sheep and goats to wilderness areas to graze. When such occasions were necessary, shepherds were nervous. What we would consider to be outlaw groups frequented the same areas. When shepherds and such gangs met, shepherds were at a decided disadvantage. Being a shepherd in the wilderness involved some serious risks!

*Remember that an enormous geographical area is **not** under consideration. It would be wise for David to relocate after his encounter with King Saul. The King changed his mind frequently. Please note a wilderness area was often a dangerous place for shepherds.*

However, David and his men were different! They did not represent risk or danger! They were protection! David and his men made certain nothing bad happened to the shepherds or their flocks!

*David and his men did **not** represent danger to the shepherds--they represented security. They neither demanded anything or took anything. The shepherds could go about their work with a feeling of protection.*

A rich man named Nabal had shepherds with significant flocks of sheep and goats in the wilderness near the community of Maon. Nabal lived in the city of Carmel [not Mount Carmel]; was a Calebite [a clan of Israelites]; and was married to a beautiful, intelligent woman named Abigail.

Nabal must have been a good business man in his circumstances. He seemingly was a "city dweller" with extensive livestock holdings (much like Lot). He seemed to live in the town/city of Carmel while servants managed his flocks in the wilderness area. Nabal seemed to be good at making money, but not good at working with people.

Nabal and Abigail, though married, were genuine contrasts. The contrast was not in intelligence. Nabal was intelligent, else he would not have been a rich man who was successful in business. However, Nabal loved money and used people to acquire money. Abigail cared about people. She was a wise encourager. Even servants who feared approaching Nabal did not fear approaching Abigail. Abigail was a "people person" who knew how to respect and work with people. Nabal was not a "people person"--he was harsh and mean-spirited with others.

The contrast is not in the intelligence of the two, but in the wisdom of the two. Successful greed requires intelligence. Respecting people requires wisdom. Nabal loved money. Abigail respected people. Nabal seemingly was not approachable, but Abigail was approachable.

The time came for Nabal to have his sheep sheared. This was a time of celebration because hard work literally became profit! David sent a delegation to Carmel to carry his greeting to Nabal and to [appropriately] request a gift of appreciation in the spirit of the season. David's ambassadors were to report the protection David and his men provided the shepherds, invite Nabal's inquiry about their protection, and request a gift of food to be determined by Nabal. Given that the season of sheering represented a festive time of the year, and given that Nabal was a rich man, David's request was reasonable and appropriate.

The time of sheep shearing was a festive occasion. The sheered wool would soon become money. Hard work and long term investment would soon be profit rather than potential. David respected and protected Nabal's servants. Nabal benefited from David's protection in a "dollars and cents" way. Appreciating David and his men's help and saying "Thank you" at this festive time was entirely appropriate.

However, Nabal did not respond with appreciation or respect. He responded with insults. Remember the area was small. Remember that greedy Nabal was successful in business and likely "politically correct." He likely knew what happened to the priests at Nob. He likely knew Saul's campaigns in the area to capture David as the King's enemy. If he did not align himself with the right side, he had a lot to lose. It likely did not seem prudent to help a man the King hated. So he responded, "Who is David? Everywhere servants are rebelling against their masters! It is not appropriate to take food prepared for my shearers and give it to people I do not even know!"

There were likely numerous factors at work in Nabal's rejection of David's request: greed, the deaths of the priests at Nob, and the fact that Saul was king. Nabal was being a good business man, not a good human being.

However, Nabal did not need to insult David in rejecting David's request.

David's ambassadors took Nabal's insults back to David. None of Saul's injustices angered David, but Nabal's insults enraged David. He told his men to arm themselves for battle. David's intent was to kill every man who worked for Nabal before the next morning.

It was certain that David would hear Nabal's insults. David did something uncharacteristic of his responses to King Saul's harassment (whom he also served and received only injustice): David reacted and by reacting gave Nabal control of his feelings and actions.

A young servant heard Nabal's insults. He did not go to Nabal declaring the folly of Nabal's insults (Nabal's response invited disaster rather than averting trouble), but the servant quickly reported the matter to Abigail. The servant affirmed to Abigail that David and his men had shown the shepherds extraordinary kindness, respect, and protection. He urged Abigail to act promptly with wisdom to prevent great consequences on those who worked for the worthless Nabal.

The servant's actions indicate that in delicate considerations Nabal was not approachable, but Abigail was. This servant knew Nabal's response had been a thoughtless, dangerous response. He also knew Abigail was much more capable of responding to this crisis than was Nabal.

Abigail's actions and words were remarkable. She quickly took food prepared for the shearers and sent it by some servants to David. The servants were to intercept David before he arrived. Then she followed in an undetectable manner and arrived after the gift was presented to David and his men.

Abigail's plan was quick, thoughtful, and wise. Obviously, she knew how to respond to a dangerous situation quickly when she was under pressure. Her hidden approach to David may have been to keep Nabal from preventing her action as well as not unduly angering David prior to her appearance. Abigail's gift to David had to be received by David as an act of respect, not as an expression of condescension. David must be honored, not patronized.

Consider her words and actions. (1) She immediately honored David by bowing [though she was the wife of a rich man and David was living as a renegade]. (2) She assumed full responsibility for the incident--she failed to see the young men coming. (3) She pledged loyalty to David and called him lord [the precise opposite of Nabal's insults] (4) She urged David not to cover his hands with innocent blood in an act of personal vengeance, something David had never done. Nabal was not worth David doing an evil act! (5) David would surely become Israel's king, and David did not need this act of evil on his conscience when he became King.

Focus on the wisdom of her encounter with David. Contrast her thoughtful actions and words with Nabal's insults. Make the point that David had never acted in personal vengeance. That motivation made this incident entirely different--it was a reaction, not an action based on a commitment to God.

This wise woman deeply, immediately impressed David. He blessed God for Abigail's actions, words, and wisdom. Though David had killed many men avenging God, David had never killed a person avenging himself. Had David acted in anger against Nabal and his servants, his anger would make David act in ways he never acted previously. David realized what a significant transition would occur in him if he allowed anger to make him guilty of shedding innocent blood.

David immediately recognized wisdom when he heard/saw it. In a righteous person, wisdom is more powerful than personal anger. David recognized Abigail's words and acts as a gift from God.

David accepted her gift and encouraged her to leave in peace. Later, at an appropriate time, she told Nabal of her actions. Upon hearing what she did, Nabal's heart died within him. Ten days later, Nabal died. After Nabal's death, David [with Abigail's approval] married Abigail. Evidently David had not seen Michal since she helped David escape from Saul. Saul [legally] took Michal back into his own family and gave her to be Palti's wife.

This paragraph is not an attempt to justify David's decision to marry Abigail. This lesson does not focus on a polygamy or divorce question. God's intent of one husband for one wife was from creation, not from the coming of Jesus. The focus of the lesson should remain on David's character and willingness to repent.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Why were shepherds in wilderness areas often nervous?

The wilderness could be a dangerous place for shepherds. Lawless groups could put their work and lives in jeopardy.

2. In what way were David and his men different in their treatment of Nabal's shepherds?

They protected the shepherds and their flocks from threats rather than posing a danger to them or their work.

3. Discuss Nabal.

He obviously was a capable business man. However, he loved money more than people. He used people to fulfill his greed. He was not skilled at showing respect to people or at recognizing the value of others.

4. Discuss the contrast that existed between Nabal and his wife Abigail.

Nabal loved money and used people. Abigail respected people. To Nabal, goods (food) were money. To Abigail, goods (food) were a means of showing respect and appreciation to people.

5. Why was David's request for a gift of food from Nabal appropriate?

It was the time of the year to give such gifts. It was appropriate to express appreciation to David and his men for their kindness to Nabal's shepherds. Nabal could surely afford to be gracious and thankful.

6. How did Nabal insult David through David's ambassadors?

He did not recognize David as a future king of Israel. Nabal spoke of David as a rebellious, evil person. He declared David's request was unwarranted and unreasonable.

7. What was David's first intention?

David's first intent was to kill all the men who served Nabal. He would destroy Nabal by destroying his work force.

8. What action did Abigail take to prevent a disaster?

She sent a gift of food to David, assumed full responsibility for the incident, reminded David that this action was unlike him, declared confidence in the fact David would be Israel's next king, and declared Nabal was not worthy David's anger.

9. Why in David's intended act would he be guilty of shedding innocent blood?

Basically, it would be an act of personal vengeance rather than a defense of the honor and glory of God. This action would be about David, not about God.

10. What happened to Nabal when he heard of Abigail's actions?

When Nabal heard, his heart turned to stone. Ten days later, Nabal died.

Lesson Ten

David, Abner, and Joab

Text: 2 Samuel 2, 3

The purpose of this lesson: to stress that David was a man of character and integrity.

The situation changed dramatically! Saul and his sons were killed by the Philistines. David was in the process of consolidating Israel under his leadership. King Saul's loss to the Philistines in the battle that cost him and his sons their lives was costly to Israel as a nation. Not only did Israel lose their king, but they also lost territory and numerous battle-hardened, experienced warriors. Israel, which was not in wonderful condition under Saul's leadership, was now weakened further, vulnerable, and divided. The Philistines must have rejoiced at the situation because circumstances surely favored them.

Make certain your students realize a primary transition has occurred: David was no longer a fugitive fleeing from Saul; he was a settled man seeking to reunite Israel. Instead of fleeing Saul, David was pursuing the healing of a kingdom.

David and his forces [with God's approval] went to the area of Hebron where the people made him king of Judah. He settled there, had sons by six wives [not likely all the children he had in the Hebron area], formed political alliances through marriages, and planted the seeds of what would become future disastrous rivalries among sons who sought David's throne.

David had time to live in a secure situation and have a family. Though he exercised poor judgment, he was no longer "a man on the run."

Abner, the commander of King Saul's army, made Saul's son, Ish-bosheth ("man of shame"), King over what was left of Israel [excluding Judah]. Abner moved him east of the Jordan River to a new capitol, Mahanaim. Abner, a relative of dead King Saul, was the man of power in Israel. Ish-bosheth was King Saul's son and the symbol of royal presence.

The rule of Saul's family did not cease with Saul's death. Abner was related to Saul [either a cousin or an uncle]. He was so influential and powerful that he declared Ish-bosheth [Saul's son] King and moved the center of the kingdom across the Jordan River to Mahanaim. This move placed greater physical distance between the King and the battle line.

The end result: there was a long period of tension and civil war among the Israelites. In this period, David sought to consolidate Israel as a single nation. In this civil war, the forces of Saul's family steadily grew weaker and David's forces steadily grew stronger.

With David the King of Judah and Ish-bosheth the King of the rest of Israel, the Jewish kingdom was even more divided. Both kings want there to be only one king. The result: civil war. Even more Hebrews were fighting Hebrews.

While there were numerous battles in that long civil war conflict, the author chose to focus on one key battle. David's sister, Zeruah, had three sons: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. These three men figured prominently in David's army. Joab was the commander over David's forces. The other two brothers were elite warriors in David's army. They were capable of both great loyalty and thoughtless acts.

This one battle was not the entire civil war. It was a significant battle that revealed some of the difficulties in healing the kingdom of Israel.

In the author's chosen incident, the two forces were on opposite sides of the pool of Gibeon. Much like the occasions that involved Goliath's challenges to Israel's army, each side decided it served no purpose to have a huge battle with lots of deaths. Each side decided to have twenty-four less experienced warriors [twelve men from each side] engage in battle to provide an indication of which group was strongest. Nothing was settled because the twenty-four men killed each other. When that occurred, a full battle broke out. Eventually the forces of representing Saul's family fled from David's forces. From that time forward, a name given to the pool of Gibeon was "the field of the sword" or "the field of the sides."

Since all twenty-four contestants killed each other quickly, nothing was resolved. The place was called "the field of the sword" or "the field of sides" because the twenty-four men killed each other with swords they thrust into each other's sides.

In the process of the battle, Asahel [Joab's youngest brother] decided that he would pursue and kill Abner. Asahel was quite fast, and Abner was quite experienced. Abner, confident that he could kill Asahel, did not wish to do so. He either feared or respected Joab, Asahel's brother. Abner tried twice to convince Asahel to discontinue his pursuit. When Asahel refused, Abner killed him with the back of his spear--an indication of how close to Abner Asahel was.

A young, fast, inexperienced warrior was determined to kill an older, slower, experienced warrior. Generally in battle, one tried to fight someone else of similar ability/experience. Abner ineffectively tried to convince Asahel to battle someone else who was similar in experience and skill. Abner's experience was evident in the way he killed the younger, faster Asahel.

Asahel's death made this civil war a matter of personal vendetta for Joab. Abner killed Joab's youngest brother, so Joab as an avenger of blood had the right to kill Abner if he could.

For Joab, the battle became about something much more important than reuniting the kingdom of Israel.

The battle continued until evening. Finally Abner convinced Joab to call a truce. Both sides acknowledged it was not appropriate for Israelites to pursue and kill Israelites. Each side counted their losses and made lengthy journeys back home.

Both sides realized the folly of Hebrews fighting Hebrews. The civil war losses would only weaken the kingdom of Israel as they resisted the Philistines. Though both sides realized the foolishness of the situation, even with a truce they did not trust each other.

The civil war took a decided turn in David's favor when Ish-bosheth insulted Abner. Abner reacted to the insult by swearing he would make David King of Israel. From that time forward Ish-bosheth was afraid of Abner. He knew Abner controlled the power, and he knew Abner made him King.

The Abner/Ish-bosheth controversy only strengthened David. Ish-bosheth spoke before he thought.

Abner sent messengers to David affirming that he could make David King of Israel. He asked David to make a covenant with him. David immediately accepted the opportunity with one condition: his first wife Michal [King Saul's daughter] would be returned to David.

Abner made it very clear that the power was his. If David and Abner agreed for David to be King of Israel, Ish-bosheth could do nothing to prevent that from happening. Ish-bosheth was a voice without power if he did not have the loyalty and assistance of Abner.

Remember Michal loved David when they were first married, but also remember that Michal [by her father's decree] was the wife of another man for years.

Michal was returned to David. Abner began the process of convincing Israel to turn to David for leadership. Finally, Abner came with 20 men to David in Hebron. David honored Abner with a feast. The agreement for David to become King of all Israel was confirmed. Abner left in peace with David's blessing.

David genuinely respected and honored Abner. The man who refused to kill Saul respected the man who served Saul as the leader of Saul's army.

Joab returned from a raid after Abner departed. When he learned that Abner was at Hebron, he criticized David. "He came to deceive you! He came to learn how to attack you!"

Joab's eyes only saw through his hatred of Abner, never through the healing of the kingdom of Israel.

Unknown to David, Joab sent messengers to catch up with Abner and have him return to Sirah. At Sirah, as Abner thought all was well, Joab killed him to avenge the death of

his brother. When David heard what Joab did, he was both grieved and frustrated. He wanted everyone to know he had nothing to do with Abner's death. In fact, he (1) placed a curse on Joab and his descendants; (2) commanded the people to mourn Abner's death; (3) expressed his personal grief in a tribute to Abner; and (4) refused to eat during the day of Abner's burial.

Abner had no reason to think that Joab was acting through personal hatred rather than through David's peace.

David's grief was genuine. It was intensified by the fact that David saw a much larger picture than did Joab--David saw the picture of peace for a nation at war with itself.

The people were pleased with David's proper reaction to Abner's death. They understood that Abner's death had nothing to do with David's desire.

David's reaction to Abner's death was appropriate, and the people saw that reaction as being appropriate. In a very stressful moment, it was obvious to all that David had nothing to do with Abner's death. Had that not been evident, it is likely that civil war could have been renewed.

David acted as a man of character in Abner's death. He sought to do something extremely difficult in a time of civil war--heal a nation. Joab's act would have made that healing impossible had not David been a man of character and humility. Again, David placed an extremely difficult situation in God's hands -- "May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil." Joab acted in hate to pacify his desire for personal vengeance. David acted in respect in the desire to heal a nation.

Rather than act as though he was above the problem, David decried the fact the problem occurred. He genuinely honored Abner. He genuinely condemned Joab. Because a humble David showed sincere respect for a man who had been his enemy, he touch the hearts of people.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. In the history of David's life, the situation in this lesson has changed dramatically. How?

David was no longer a fugitive running from the King. He was a settled man recognized as a king.

2. After King Saul's death, what two things did Abner do?

(1) He made Ish-bosheth King. (2) He made Mahanaim the new center of the kingdom of Israel.

3. In the battle that began at the pool of Gibeon, how did the struggle begin?

Twenty-four young warriors [twelve men selected from each side] engaged in a battle.

4. Discuss Asahel's death.

He was determined to kill Abner. Abner urged him twice to fight someone else. When Asahel refused and persisted in his pursuit, Abner rammed the rear of his spear through Asahel.

5. How did Joab's desire to avenge his brother's death almost prolong Israel's civil war?

Through deceit, he killed Abner. Abner had come to David and left in peace. He likely thought Joab was acting in David's behalf. When Joab killed Abner, he could have turned Israel against David and thereby refueled the civil war. Instead of healing, the result could have been angry distrust.

6. How did David demonstrate his character in Abner's death?

(1) He placed a curse on Joab and his descendants; (2) he commanded everyone to mourn Abner's death; (3) he expressed his personal grief in a tribute to Abner; (4) he refused to eat anything the day of Abner's burial.

Lesson Eleven

David, Uzzah, the Ark, Michal

Texts: 2 Samuel 5, 6 and 1 Chronicles 10-16:3

Purpose of this lesson: to stress that Uzzah's death was of profound significance to David

The context of this situation should be seen as David's determination to continue to unite Israel as a single kingdom. In 2 Samuel 5 we learn numerous things. (1) David was made King over all Israel. He was requested to lead the Hebrews as a shepherd, not as a dictator. (2) David made Jerusalem the new capitol of the nation. Jerusalem was not under Israel's control or Judah's control--it previously belonged to the Jebusites. Thus it is a "neutral" city that favored neither side as far as past history was concerned. (3) David made Jerusalem his royal city by having his palace built there. He settled in his new home, married additional wives and added concubines, had eleven sons who were born in Jerusalem (the author named them and acknowledged that daughters were also born to David at that time), (4) and the Philistines were decisively defeated.

*Stress that this incident (David's attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem and Uzzah's death) was in the sequence of King David's determination to reunite Judah and Israel as a **strong** single nation.*

The occurrence of David's determination to move the Ark to Jerusalem was his effort to make the royal city also the site of national worship. The royal city, the political capitol, would also become the geographical site of national worship. This would further consolidate the nation as a single kingdom. By building a permanent Jewish temple there, this would become the unquestionable, permanent center of Judaism.

To combine the royal city and the site of national worship would add great strength to Israel as a single nation. To make the King's city the city for the nation to assemble to worship God would unite the kingdom as nothing else could. Remember, later when Jereboam assumed the role of King over the ten breakaway tribes, he established different sites of worship (1 Kings 12, especially verses 25-33).

Recall some background. When the Philistines returned the Ark to Israel in 1 Samuel 6:1-16, they returned it on a new cart (verse 7). It was obvious to the Philistines this method was "the god appropriate way" to return the Ark. They seemingly were correct--in ways that only God could have guided/directed, the Ark returned to Israelite territory. The Hebrews at Beth-shemesh were so ignorant in their view of God and the proper treatment of the Ark, they viewed God and treated the Ark inappropriately. As a result, they suffered the consequences--massive death. The last recorded time the Ark was transported with obvious God approval was on a new cart built by the Philistines. When

David brought the Ark out of its seclusion to be placed in the Jerusalem tent he prepared for it, he and the Levites again transported the Ark on a new cart.

Stress David and the Levites were transporting the Ark in the last recorded way the Ark was successfully transported. Also stress that method was fine for the Philistines, but not fine for Israel. The Levites were given specific instructions on how to transport the Ark (Exodus 25:13-15).

When the Ark was in danger of falling from the cart, Uzzah touched it to stabilize it. As a result, Uzzah died immediately. His act did not honor God. It violated the God declared method for moving the Ark given in Exodus 25:13-15 [do remember Uzzah's action occurred many, many generations from the declaration in Exodus 25. It is obvious that even those "who should know" did not know.]

Uzzah did what he thought was a good, respectful act. He did not know (perhaps realize) that using a cart opposed a specific directive from God. Do stress there is a significant distinction between rebelling against a specific directive from God and imposing an accepted human tradition or preference.

When Uzzah touched the Ark, he quickly died. David was shocked! He was both angry and afraid [the original language may suggest David was angry at both Uzzah and God]. Again, place the happenings in context. The Ark was moved at David's request. This was the man who faced Goliath, who trusted God as he lived among the Philistines, who refused to kill King Saul because of his respect for God, and who [even in times of deep distress] knew God's kindness and protection. Before all David's distresses, God obviously was with David. David captured Jerusalem in the understanding God was with him. Even in moving the Ark, David was certain he sought God's purposes. He was (1) strengthening the union of the nation and (2) honoring God. Uzzah's death was extremely confusing for David. He was certain (1) he honored God all his life, (2) he was strengthening the union of Israel as God wanted, and (3) he was elevating the status of God in the entire nation.

David's objectives were good, godly objectives. He has no reason to think God was not with him. Though he was ignorant of the appropriate way to move the Ark, he intended no disrespect to God. Uzzah's death was extremely confusing to David--enough so to make him angry with God.

With Uzzah's death, many things were called into question. Why did this happen? Was he wrong in one, two, or all three of these things? Suddenly David knew a kind of terror he had not known previous--he was afraid of God! He had been terrified by people, but he had not been terrified of God. His past relationship with God sustained him! He knew God sought his best interest in all past circumstances even when he was deeply distressed. What did Uzzah's death mean? Was God no longer with David? Did God not want the Ark in Jerusalem? Was God not honored by what David did? This incident was not just about Uzzah. In a fundamental, relevant way it was about King David as well.

The critical question for David was, "Why did this happen? What does this happening mean?" That is the common question we still ask today when something goes in a manner we do not understand and in a manner we hold in disapproval.

A confused, grief-stricken, afraid David immediately decided it was too dangerous to take the Ark to Jerusalem. He did not know what the appropriate thing to do was. He decided the Ark again should go into seclusion, so he sent the Ark to the home of Obed-Edom.

The immediate decision King David had to make was this: Is the city of Jerusalem in danger if I bring the Ark there? The second question he had to answer quickly was this: What should be done with the Ark?

In three months, it was reported to David that the family of Obed-Edom was blessed [in unspecified ways] because of the presence of the Ark in his home. Immediately some basic questions were answered for the King. God was not dangerous! The Ark was not dangerous! Jerusalem would be in no danger because the Ark was present in the city! Uzzah's death did not mean King David was doing the wrong thing in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem!

Side thought: how would you feel if someone touching the Ark unexplainably died, and the King sent the Ark to your house? The contrast is between destruction/disaster and blessing. In 1 Samuel, the presence of the Ark commonly brought destruction/disaster. Uzzah's death associated destruction/disaster with the presence of the Ark. The report that the Ark brought blessings to the family of Obed-Edom stood in sharp contrast with the immediate and past incidences of destruction/disaster.

Associating the presence of the Ark with blessings answered numerous questions for King David.

A second time David began bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. Note this time they are "bearing the Ark" (verse 13, NAS). Every six paces sacrifices were offered [this was an elaborate, expensive trip filled with ceremony--all of which occurred because of David's desire, not God's directive]. Evidently, leading this elaborate ceremony was a dancing David who was not clothed in his royal clothing. It was a noisy occasion with shouting and trumpet blasts.

There were no scriptural instructions on the proper methods/manner to be used in moving the Ark from seclusion to the royal city. The elaborate ceremony was the product of King David's and the Levites thinking. He moved the Ark in a manner that seemed appropriate to him, and obviously God accepted it. The fact should not be ignored that this was a specific incident in which God accepted honor from a well intentioned human without benefit of specific command.

Michal saw the procession and the leaping, dancing King David as the Ark entered Jerusalem. The woman who once loved David and helped him escape the murderous

wrath of her father (1 Samuel 18:20; 19:11-17) despised David. After David finished the ceremonial placement of the Ark in Jerusalem, he returned home to bless his family. Michal met him and criticized his actions. To her, David acted in an embarrassing manner, not at all in a manner befitting royalty. David informed her that he was acting as one who honored God, not as a King. He regarded putting off the royal attire, wearing part of the priests' garments, leaping, and dancing as appropriate conduct before the Lord.

Michal's perspective was that David functioned in a manner inappropriate for a king. David's response was that he was honoring God, and those who respected God knew that. He was not functioning as a king, but as one who was loyal to God (the true King) seeking to give praise to Him.

The author noted, for whatever reason, Michal died childless.

The NAS does not translate the verse in a manner that indicates specifically why Michal died childless. Was it David's decision? Did God prevent her from conceiving?

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What was the basic context of David bringing the Ark to Jerusalem?

*David wanted to **strengthen** the union of Judah and Israel into a single kingdom (nation) again. By making a capitol from a city that (1) was close to the border of Judah and Israel and (2) had no past history with either Hebrew side, he would strengthen the union if that city became not only the center of the kingdom but the site of national worship.*

2. What two things was David seeking to make Jerusalem?

David sought to make Jerusalem both the royal city (the place where the King lived) and the site of national worship (for the three national worship assemblies-- Deuteronomy 16:16).

3. What did Uzzah do? Why?

Uzzah touched the Ark as it was being transported on a new cart. He wanted to stabilize the Ark because it was in danger of falling from the cart.

4. For David, what things did Uzzah's death call into question?

The biggest question for David was the "why": Why did this happen? Was he wrong in his objectives? Did this mean God was angry with David? Did this mean God was not with David? Did this mean God did not want the Ark in Jerusalem? Did this mean Jerusalem was in danger if he took the Ark to that city?

5. Three months later David was informed that the family of Obed-Edom was blessed because of the Ark's presence in his home. What did David then understand?

David understood God was not dangerous. He understood the presence of the Ark was not dangerous. He understood there was no danger to Jerusalem because the city housed the Ark. He understood God did not oppose David's bringing the Ark to Jerusalem.

6. When Michal thought King David's behavior was inappropriate, what did David declare?

Basically, David declared he was not acting in the capacity of a king, but in the capacity of one who (without shame) honored God. Michal needed to realize that her criticism of King David demonstrated more disrespect to David than the King's actions demonstrated to God.

Lesson Twelve

David, Bathsheba, and Uriah

Text: 2 Samuel 11

The objective of this lesson: to stress that even righteous people fall to temptation. Becoming a "person after God's own heart" does not grant a person immunity to temptation nor the ability to avoid all the consequences of evil.

The Bible often tells us of a person's successes and failures. That was not commonly the case in the cultures of the Old Testament. One of the challenges of the historian working in ancient history is to determine actually what happened. Most kings kept records (often embellished) of their achievements, but said little or nothing about their failures.

The Bible focused on people's strengths and weakness. While the Bible commends people's strengths, it neither ignores nor justifies their spiritual failures. Christians must understand they are righteous before God because of God's continuing forgiveness, not because they are "beyond" evil.

King David was a truly successful man in very difficult circumstances and times. His success was based on the fact that the Lord was with him. He depended on God, and God sustained him--even in the most trying circumstances!

The key to human moral success is God's presence in our lives. God sustains us when we allow Him to be our primary influence. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Paul was spiritually strong when he was weak and totally dependent on God. The presence of God in Paul's life made him strong, not Paul's past experiences and achievements.

Scripture is frank about a person's accomplishments and also about a person's failures. Among the reasons are two prominent ones. (1) The Bible frequently reminds us that we are not God. Humans are not divine, not even the best of them. (2) There are important lessons to be learned from failure as certainly as there are lessons to be learned from success. It is as important to understand why a spiritual person failed as it is to understand why the same person succeeded.

Being a righteous person does not make us God. It increases our understanding of God's thoughts and actions, but it does not place us in a position to "evaluate" or "second-guess" God's thoughts and actions. The honest person who belongs to God is willing to learn from his or her failures as well as his or her successes. That involves admitting and accepting responsibility for failure as well as success.

At the time of year when the heads of kingdoms commonly waged war, David sent Joab (the commander of his army), his leaders, and his army to fight a battle against the Ammonites at the city of Rabbah.

Our common times of spiritual, moral, and ethical crisis often result from self-indulgence in moments of pleasure and ease rather than in times of commitment and responsibility.

David arose from what likely was his regular afternoon nap. The geographical situation of his palace enabled him to look down on the houses surrounding the palace. He observed a beautiful woman bathing. Though he had numerous wives, the woman piqued his desire and interest. Note the progression that began with his observation of the woman. (1) He saw. (2) He inquired. (3) He sent. (4) He indulged himself. It has been observed that evil entices a person to consider an idea, then urges the person to investigate the idea, and then allures the person to yield to the temptation to indulge himself or herself.

The beginning of David's failure in this incident did not occur because David was in need with no way to address his need. It began as a matter of arrogant self-indulgence (he was King; he had the power to create opportunity to do as he wished).

Nothing was stated regarding Bathsheba's role in this evil. The focus was on David the King. Please remember it was not 21st century America. The King was the most significant, powerful man in Israel. Bathsheba existed, as did all Israelites, as a servant of the King (review Samuel's statement in 1 Samuel 8:10-18). The responsibility for what occurred was placed by scripture on King David. 2 Samuel 11 begins a series of chapters that focus on David's failures (chapters 11-20--adultery, murder, rape of the King's daughter, and rebellions). The events of those times are in total contrast to the events and times when David fled from King Saul.

Avoid the temptation to excuse David's actions on the basis of Bathsheba's actions. Avoid the temptation to consider the incident from today's culture or ethical responsibilities. Remember women did not have the rights American women are accustomed to having. Remember that David was King--a concept most of us do not relate to or comprehend. This is not stated in a desire to exonerate Bathsheba, but in a desire to keep the focus on David. Americans often seek to escape responsibility by deflecting blame. This is not the approach of the Bible.

David was informed by Bathsheba that she was pregnant. David knew she was married to Uriah the Hittite. Uriah's name is a Hebrew name perhaps suggesting that some earlier male in his family converted to Judaism and established citizenship in Israel.

When righteous people make bad choices, they are astounded by the consequences of their choices. The unrighteous frequently are unconcerned about the spiritual or moral implications of their choices. Thus the bad choices of the righteous provide Satan a golden opportunity to exploit and deceive the righteous. The righteous often began a desperate search for the means to hide their bad choices. That panic decision frequently provides Satan an excellent opportunity to deceive them.

David attempted to hide his evil act by having Uriah sent from the battle to report on the conflict. Evidently David's intent was to cover his evil by making it possible for Uriah to

appear to be the child's father. After David heard Uriah's report, he urged Uriah to go home. Immediately, unknown to the King, Uriah refused. He slept with the King's servants.

David was convinced he could hide his deed by manipulation. It is unlikely that David's deed was hidden from those in the palace. (Why would his servants report to him that Uriah did not go home?) Palace servants could be controlled--after all, he was King! The thing David seemed to fear most was public opinion.

When the fact that Uriah did not go home was reported to King David, he sent for Uriah and asked him why he did not go home. Uriah said since the army was in the field fighting a battle, it was inappropriate for him to go home and enjoy the pleasures of being at home. (Wonder what that reply did to David's conscience? Maybe nothing!) Uriah declared he would not dishonor his fellow troops by going home.

Our "simple solutions" to cover the evil we commit are never "simple." Take this incident as an example. Seeing led to lust. Lust led to inquiry. Inquiry led to adultery. Adultery led to murder. Escalation! Escalation! Escalation! Always the "next step" is simple, logical, and will solve the crisis. The result of indulgence is being trapped by the evil deed. The deed must be hidden at all costs--the disaster is not considered to be the fact the deed occurred, but the discovery of the deed by others. Be certain that God will reveal our evil!

David told Uriah to remain in Jerusalem another day, and then David would send him back. That night David invited Uriah to eat with him. David deliberately got Uriah drunk hoping a man uninhibited by alcohol would abandon his convictions and go home. Still, even a drunk Uriah slept with the King's servants.

Do not overlook the fact that a righteous man tried to use evil to encourage another righteous man to violate his conscience.

The next morning David wrote to Joab, David's commander, instructing Joab to arrange the battle in a manner that would kill Uriah. Unknowingly, Uriah carried his own death warrant to his field commander. Joab did as the King requested (ordered) and sent a report on the battle to David. The battle strategy was unwise and unprofessional! However, when the report was sent to King David, the messenger was instructed to tell David of Uriah's death.

"Murder by proxy" seemed a lesser evil to David than having his mistake revealed. Though David did not actually take Uriah's life, his motives caused Uriah's death. Motives are more important than technicalities! Read Matthew 6:1-18 and note how important motives are to God.

Instead of being angered by the poor battle strategy, David declared soldiers knew the risk of war. He urged the messenger to encourage Joab by instructing him not to let the events discourage him.

David used an act of war in the conviction he could cover a murder. Uriah died needlessly because King David wanted him to die.

After Bathsheba appropriately mourned her husband's death, David took her to be his wife. Evidently this event was close enough to her time of conception that it would appear the child was conceived after she married the King. The author observed that this incident was evil in God's sight. David's ingratitude for his blessings resulted in adultery and murder.

For months prior to the child's birth, David was convinced he succeeded. The righteous easily can blind themselves to their own evil. God sees and knows what the righteous think is hidden. Never should the righteous allow themselves to think that they have fooled God. See Galatians 6:6-10.

John T. Willis observes in his commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel there are several obvious lessons to be learned from this incident. (1) Satan never stops pursuing the righteous. Belonging to God does not provide a person immunity to temptation. (2) Doing evil always embarrasses a righteous person who yields to temptation. Righteous people who sin typically think they can hide an evil act by covering it with other evil acts. (3) The righteous person who yields to evil will be exposed by God

Emphasize the lessons to be learned from David's mistake. God has not failed us when we submit to temptation; it is our choice, not God's. When we make mistakes, we need to accept responsibility rather the trying to hide the mistake. Never deceive yourself into believing you can hide your spiritual and moral failures.

In the following chapter, it is evident that (1) God forgives the person who (a) accepts responsibility for his/her evil and (b) is genuinely penitent. (2) Yet, often evil is so powerful that divine forgiveness does not eliminate the consequences of evil. (3) God uses even evil occurrences to produce good. (4) Even the most godly people must depend on God for mercy.

Note the force and objective of divine forgiveness for the responsible righteous. The fact that we repent of an evil act does not mean divine forgiveness will eliminate all consequences of the act. Though we suffer the consequences, God can use our mistakes to further His purposes. We all need divine mercy--always!

If you think you know all the details about (1) the workings of good and evil and (2) God's character, remember that (a) God allowed Bathsheba to remain as David's wife and (b) God allowed a son of David and Bathsheba to become Israel's next King and to build the first Jewish temple.

The point is simple: do not give your assumptions or human convictions the status of a full understanding of revelation. Do not permit yourself to make the mistake of the Pharisees in Matthew 12:1-8.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Relate the incident of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah.

Simply tell the basic story of what happened. Reserve commentary on the "whys" and insights until class interaction--which can be now if you choose.

2. Using King David as an example, what is a common progression of evil in a righteous person.

See; inquire; send (make possible); indulge.

3. What are some lessons to be learned from the David-Bathsheba-Uriah incident.

(1) Satan never stops pursuing the righteous. (2) A righteous person is always embarrassed by his or her evil acts. He or she is easily deceived by the conviction that "I can hide what I have done." (3) The righteous person who commits evil always will be exposed by God.

Lesson Thirteen

Why?

Texts: 1 Samuel 13:8,14; 16:7; Psalms 89:19-21; Acts 13:21-23

The objective of this lesson: to expand understanding of why David was a man after God's own heart.

Christians tend to be far more impressed with a person's failures than with his or her successes. This tendency can be illustrated in many ways. For example, consider the too common statement made by one Christian to another: "Yes, **but** do you know what he (she) did (or was)?" Though he or she obviously repented evidenced by his/her redirection of life, the past still lives as the most important measure of him or her.

Seemingly there are times that some Christians think "only good people can be saved." These perspectives seem to characterize some people who are third or fourth generation Christians. However, when Christianity began in the first century, every first responding convert was a first generation Christian. The Paul we so admire as an evangelist and writer was a blasphemer and murderer prior to conversion (see Acts 26:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:12-16).

Consider the man David for example. Most Christians are more likely to remember David from the incident of adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) than with David's compassionate courage expressed at the incident of Keilah (1 Samuel 23) [or any of David's faith experiences in his flight from King Saul]. A part of that reaction involves the human fascination with a man devoted to righteousness who committed adultery instead of a man devoted to righteousness who expressed his faith in God. [Expressing faith in God is what a person devoted to righteous is supposed to do; committing adultery is not what a person devoted to righteousness is supposed to do.] Yet, a part of this reaction focuses on our fascination with the failures of a person devoted to righteousness.

It would be unlikely that you would find anyone who has any knowledge of the Bible that is not familiar with the basic story of David and Bathsheba. It would be likely to find people with some knowledge of the Bible who could not relate any of David's wilderness experiences. We generally seem more attracted to evil acts than to righteous deeds.

A key consideration is to be seen in the contrast between King Saul and King David. God selected both men to be King of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1,9,10; 16:1, 13). Both men were physically impressive--they had the physical stature of a leader among the Israelites (1 Samuel 9:2; 16:12).

The keys to being "a man after God's own heart" is evident in the contrast between Saul and David.

Saul was impetuous and self-centered. The Lord was to serve Saul [a manipulation attitude] rather than Saul serving the Lord. Consider the incident recorded in 1 Samuel 13:8-14.

Saul's impetuous, self-centered nature is quite obvious in the incident where he offered the sacrifice rather than waiting for Samuel to offer the sacrifice.

Two situations are called to your attention. Consider each carefully.

Focus the class on Saul's motives in each incident.

The first is seen in Saul's declared reasons/justifications for offering a sacrifice rather than continuing to wait for Samuel to offer that sacrifice (1 Samuel 13:11,12). 1st reason: "my army was deserting me." Saul's confidence rested in military strength, not divine action. Saul's attitude: "I must have my full army," not, "God will act in this confrontation regardless of the size of Israel's army."

Make certain your class comprehends Saul's reasoning. Make it evident that Saul's confidence was in the physical and in Saul, not in God.

2nd reason: "Samuel, you did not come on time, and the enemy was preparing to attack," not, "God is here now no matter what the enemy is doing." As King Saul repeatedly demonstrated, it was always someone else's fault. Never did he appropriately assume responsibility for his failures in judgment or action.

Make certain your class realizes Saul was quite involved in what we call "the blame game." In the "blame game" it is always someone else's fault. "I" am exonerated because "you" are to blame.

3rd reason: "The Philistines will attack me before I ask the Lord to be with me," not, "The Lord is with me; He is the reason I am King, and I am here at this moment." The attitude was the attitude commonly found in idolatry: If I am to be blessed by the god, I must convince the god to be on my side and bless my endeavor. It is an attitude of manipulation rather than an attitude of trust.

Help your class understand the enormous gulf between manipulating the divine and trusting the divine. Sometimes the difference is obvious in motive. That act may be the same, but the motives are vastly different. Idolatry's concept of gods involved manipulation of the gods. Faith in Jehovah, the Creator God Who lives, is based on trust.

The second situation is seen in Saul's statement, "So I forced myself." Saul tried to guarantee success in his endeavors **by taking matters into his own hands**. In a crisis moment, Saul placed his confidence in Saul, not in God. Saul did not do this once, but repeatedly. 1 Samuel 13, 14, 15 illustrate in three significant incidents how Saul based

his actions on what seemed wise to Saul--even in an incident when God plainly revealed exactly what He wanted!

King Saul in this incident, in the incident of chapter 14 (the vow that the army should not eat), and in the incident with the Amalekites all involved an impetuous Saul taking matters into his own hands.

David was a striking contrast to Saul. A significant reason for David fighting Goliath was the fact that a man who did not belong to Jehovah taunted the army of the living God (1 Samuel 17:26, 46, 47). The reason David gave for not killing King Saul (when David had opportunity to kill the man who was determined to kill him) was dependence on God (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:8-11). When David realized his evil because he was confronted by the prophet Nathan, David immediately acknowledged his failure and was willing to die for what he had done (2 Samuel 12:13, 14). Perhaps David's attitude toward himself is best seen when Abigail asked him to realize the true nature of his plans when David purposed to kill Nabal and his men: **(1 Samuel 25:26) Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, since the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand."**

Saul was typically Saul centered. David typically was God centered. Saul was dedicated to preserving his position of King. David was dedicated to honoring God's greatness. Saul trusted Saul. David trusted God.

In Acts 13:16-41, Paul gave an overview of Israelite history that led to an emphasis on Jesus Christ. This overview was presented to a knowledgeable audience in a synagogue. God led Israel from Egypt (Acts 13:17), to which the audience would agree fully. God preserved Israel in the wilderness (Acts 13:18), to which the audience would agree fully. God gave Israel Canaan (Acts 13:19), to which the audience would agree fully. God gave Israel judges as leaders (Acts 13:20), to which the audience would agree fully. God gave them the monarchy in which David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:21-22), to which the audience would agree fully. Through David, God gave Israel a Savior named Jesus (Acts 13:23, 24), to which some in the audience did not agree.

The point: first century Israelites (generations after David's death) still regarded David as the man after God's own heart--though they were quite familiar with David's failures.

The point: first century Israelites and God-fearers accepted as fact that King David was (1) a man after God's own heart and (2) was the forefather of the Messiah promised Israel.

Israel looked upon David as a spiritual success, not a spiritual failure.

Why was David "a man after God's own heart"? Was it because he was perfect? Obviously not! Then why? Four reasons are given for your consideration. (1) David understood that human existence is about God, not about selfish ambitions. Even if ambitions are rooted in acts of God [like David's anointing], God determines your purposes, not your selfish ambitions [like David' refusal to kill King Saul]. (2) David never questioned Who he wanted to control his life. He made some horrible choices! However, consciously rejecting God was not one of them! (3) David accepted responsibility for his actions/choices, even when he did evil! (4) David constantly stood ready to repent when he made mistakes. Someone else was not to blame! There was no justification of failure! "I sinned! It is my fault!"

Make certain your class has a clear grasp of each of the four reasons. Surely you may add your own insights as well!

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Why are people impressed with a righteous person's failures? Use King David to illustrate your answer.

Righteous people are supposed to do righteous acts, but righteous people are not supposed to do evil acts. Many people are familiar with David's evil act with Bathsheba, but some of those people have no awareness of David's righteous acts in the wilderness.

2. Contrast David and Saul in their attitudes toward themselves and God.

Saul often thought of making himself prestigious in Israel's eyes and thereby securing his position as King. David commonly thought of making God prestigious as the honored, great God. David trusted God to advance him, so he did not need to seek self-advancement. With Saul, the primary concern was Saul. With David, the primary concern was God.

3. Of what did Abigail remind David when David purposed to kill Nabal and his men?

She reminded David that, though he had killed many, he always killed because the ungodly opposed God. He never killed in vengeance seeking to vindicate himself. She stressed the motive in the act, not merely the act.

4. Give four reasons for David being a man after God's heart.

(1) He understood life was about honoring God, not about physical ambitions. (2) He knew he wanted God in control of his life--that was never questionable. (3) He accepted responsibility for his failures. (4) He was ready to repent when he was made aware of his mistakes. He did not try to justify himself by blaming others.