

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

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Lesson One

The Contrast

Text: 1 Samuel 9-15

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.

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.

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.

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).

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 I Samuel 4. There were no blacksmiths among the Israelites, therefore the Israelites had no weapons (see 1 Samuel 13:19-23).

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.

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!

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.

Discussion Questions

1. This study needs to begin with what basic contrast?
2. To what does the expression "after God's own heart" refer?
3. What did David have with God? What did Saul have with God?
4. Discuss why God should not be blamed for Saul's failure.
5. Discuss God's patience with Saul.
6. Discuss the awkwardness of Saul's position as leader of Israel.
7. Did God reject the kingship of Saul when he foolishly offered a sacrifice at Gilgal? Explain your answer.
8. When did God reject Saul as king?
9. What is **NOT** the point of this study?
10. What three things are you challenged to note about David in this study?
11. Lessons should be drawn from what two powerful things?

Lesson Two

David and Goliath

Text: 1 Samuel 17

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

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'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 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:

"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 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.

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 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.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Discuss the situation in Israel when this incident occurred.
2. Why had the Israelites been devastated and subjugated for years?
3. Who was Goliath? Describe him as a warrior.
4. What challenge did Goliath issue daily for over a month?
5. Why was David at the valley of Elah?
6. Discuss why David's older brother was angered by David's inquiry.
7. Discuss King Saul's reactions to David's inquiry.
8. How did Goliath feel about David being his opponent?
9. What did David say to Goliath?
10. Discuss David's motives and courage.

Lesson Three

David and Saul (early)

Text: 1 Samuel 18, 19

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

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.

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.

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

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What impact on David came as a result of his defeating Goliath?
2. What reality is each student asked to consider?
3. What made King Saul jealous and suspicious of David?
4. What two roles did David assume in his service to King Saul?
5. Why was King Saul deeply offended by the reception the women gave David?
6. How do people often use their attitudes and emotions?
7. Name some ways in which David was the opposite of Saul.
8. Though King Saul made David's life miserable, David refused to become what?
9. What was the foundation of David's attitude toward King Saul?
10. Discuss this statement: "leave God's affairs in God's hands."

Lesson Four

Friendship In the Face of Discouragement

Text: 1 Samuel 19, 20

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.

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).

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 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!"

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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 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.

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!

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.

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.

For Thought And Discussion

1. Discuss the joys and benefits of a special friendship.
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.
3. Can love survive in an environment of hate? Illustrate your answer.
4. Why was David and Jonathan's friendship one of the great friendships in the Bible?
5. What reasons did Jonathan use to urge King Saul not to kill David?
6. How did Jonathan assure David on this occasion that the danger has passed?
7. From the readings, explain how David was able to escape King Saul's attempt to kill him the second time.
8. Why did Jonathan refuse to believe King Saul was again trying to kill David?
9. What was David's explanation for Jonathan's ignorance of King Saul's murderous efforts?
10. What test did David propose?
11. Discuss the significance of the new moon in ancient Jewish society.
12. If Saul reacted to David's absence with understanding, what would this reaction verify?
13. If Saul reacted to David's absence with anger, what would this reaction verify?
14. From today's reading, how did King Saul react to David's absence the first day?
15. From today's reading, how did Jonathan inform David his life was in danger?

Lesson Five

David Fled

Text: 1 Samuel 21

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
2. What did both David and Jonathan realize when Jonathan discovered King Saul's determination to kill David?
3. How quickly did David leave the area?
4. Why is your attention directed to the significance and effect of the happenings on David?
5. State 4 facts about the general context of the events surrounding David's flight from Saul.
6. Why was Nob the city of the priests?
7. What immediately concerned Ahimelech?
8. What did David tell Ahimelech concerning his mission?
9. What did David first request? On what condition would Ahimelech give David bread from the Bread of Presence?
10. What was David's second request?
11. Who witnessed this incident?
12. Where did David flee?
13. How did David escape Gath?

Lesson Six

David's Trials As He Fled

Text: 1 Samuel 22

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!

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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?

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.

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.

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).

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.

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?"

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

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?

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!

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!"

For Discussion:

1. How would you personally react to a radical, downward change in daily lifestyle?
2. Discuss the various forms of stress on David in the incidents of the cave and Doeg's slaughter.

Lesson Seven

David's Flight Became More Complex

Text: 1 Samuel 23

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 might 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.

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.

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!

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.

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!]

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!

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.

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!

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

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!

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.

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.

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

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What likely difficulty did people living in the territory between the Philistine army and the Israelite army experience?
2. What is one of the primary objectives of an army at war?
3. What was the common result of having threshing floors plundered?
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?
5. Explain why history never occurs in nice, simple sequences.
6. When David learned from the Lord that he was in danger in Keilah, what did he do?
7. What is discouraging to men and women who make willing sacrifices for the good of others?
8. Of what did the people of the wilderness of Ziph inform King Saul?
9. Why did King Saul fail to capture David?
10. Did the Lord's protection mean a life of ease? Explain your answer.

Lesson Eight

David's Continuing Attitude Toward Saul

Texts: 1 Samuel 24, 26

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.

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.

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!"

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!

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.

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!"

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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!"

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.

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.

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!*

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.
2. Discuss how vulnerable King Saul was to death in the incident at the cave.
3. How did David feel about his act of cutting the King's robe?
4. How did David declare humility before the King?
5. When Saul realized what occurred, how did it affect him?
6. In the incident at King Saul's camp, what did David take? What would Saul know?
7. When we know God, what changes in us?

Lesson Nine

David and Nabal

Text: 1 Samuel 25

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!

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!

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 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 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.

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!"

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Why were shepherds in wilderness areas often nervous?
2. In what way were David and his men different in their treatment of Nabal's shepherds?
3. Discuss Nabal.
4. Discuss the contrast that existed between Nabal and his wife Abigail.
5. Why was David's request for a gift of food from Nabal appropriate?
6. How did Nabal insult David through David's ambassadors?
7. What was David's first intention?
8. What action did Abigail take to prevent a disaster?
9. Why in David's intended act would he be guilty of shedding innocent blood?
10. What happened to Nabal when he heard of Abigail's actions?

Lesson Ten

David, Abner, and Joab

Text: 2 Samuel 2, 3

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.

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.

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 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.

While there were numerous battles in that long civil war conflict, the author chose to focus on one key battle. David's sister, Zeruiah, 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.

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."

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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!"

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.

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 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.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. In the history of David's life, the situation in this lesson has changed dramatically. How?
2. After King Saul's death, what two things did Abner do?
3. In the battle that began at the pool of Gibeon, how did the struggle begin?
4. Discuss Asahel's death.
5. How did Joab's desire to avenge his brother's death almost prolong Israel's civil war?
6. How did David demonstrate his character in Abner's death?

Lesson Eleven

David, Uzzah, the Ark, Michal

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

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.

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.

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.

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.]

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.

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

For Thought and Discussion:

1. What was the basic context of David bringing the Ark to Jerusalem?
2. What two things was David seeking to make Jerusalem?
3. What did Uzzah do? Why?
4. For David, what things did Uzzah's death call into question?
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?
6. When Michal thought King David's behavior was inappropriate, what did David declare?

Lesson Twelve

David, Bathsheba, and Uriah

Text: 2 Samuel 11

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.

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!

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Relate the incident of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah.
2. Using King David as an example, what is a common progression of evil in a righteous person.
3. What are some lessons to be learned from the David-Bathsheba-Uriah incident.

Lesson Thirteen

Why?

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

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.

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.

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).

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

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

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."

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.

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.

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!

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."**

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 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.

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's 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!"

For Thought and Discussion:

1. Why are people impressed with a righteous person's failures? Use King David to illustrate your answer.
2. Contrast David and Saul in their attitudes toward themselves and God.
3. Of what did Abigail remind David when David purposed to kill Nabal and his men?
4. Give four reasons for David being a man after God's heart.