

Table of Contents (tap to go to study)

The Birth of Samuel - 1 Samuel 1:1-20	3
Hannah Dedicates Samuel - 1 Samuel 1:21-2:11	4
Eli's Wicked Sons - 1 Samuel 2:12-36	5
The Lord Calls Samuel - 1 Samuel 3:1-21	6
The Philistines Capture the Ark - 1 Samuel 4:1-22	7
The Ark in Ashdod and Ekron - 1 Samuel 5:1-12	8
The Ark Returned to Israel - 1 Samuel 6:1-7:1	9
Samuel Subdues the Philistines at Mizpah - 1 Samuel 7:2-17	10
Israel Asks for a King - 1 Samuel 8:1-22	11
Samuel Anoints Saul - 1 Samuel 9:1-10:8	12
Saul Made King - 1 Samuel 10:9-27	13
Saul Rescues the City of Jabesh - 1 Samuel 11:1-15	14
Samuel's Farewell Speech - 1 Samuel 12:1-25	15
Samuel Rebukes Saul - 1 Samuel 13:1-15	16
Israel without Weapons - 1 Samuel 13:16-14:23	17
Jonathan Eats Honey - 1 Samuel 14:24-52	18
The Lord Rejects Saul As King - 1 Samuel 15:1-35	19
Samuel Anoints David - 1 Samuel 16:1-13	21
David in Saul's Service - 1 Samuel 16:14-23	22
David and Goliath - 1 Samuel 17:1-58	23
Saul's Jealousy of David - 1 Samuel 18:1-30	24
Saul Tries to Kill David - 1 Samuel 19:1-24	25
David and Jonathan - 1 Samuel 20:1-42	26
David at Nob - 1 Samuel 21:1-9	28
David at Gath - 1 Samuel 21:10-22:23	29
David Saves Keilah - 1 Samuel 23:1-6	31
Saul Pursues David - 1 Samuel 23:7-29	32
David Spares Saul's Life - 1 Samuel 24:1-22	33
David, Nabal, and Abigail - 1 Samuel 25:1-44	34
David Again Spares Saul's Life - 1 Samuel 26:1-25	36

David Among the Philistines - 1 Samuel 27:1-12	37
Saul and the Witch of Endor - 1 Samuel 28:1-25	38
Achish Sends David Back to Ziklag - 1 Samuel	
29:1-11	39
David Destroys the Amalekites - 1 Samuel 30:1-31	40
Saul Takes His Life - 1 Samuel 31:1-13	41

The Birth of Samuel - 1 Samuel 1:1-20

Topics: Emotions, Grief, Husbands, Isolation, Marriage, Prayer, Vows

Open It

1. In our society what stigma, if any, do you think is attached to being a childless woman? Why?
- * 2. Why is it difficult to be faced with constant reminders of things we wish we had but do not?

Explore It

3. What are the names of the family members described in 1 Samuel 1? (1:1-2)
- * 4. What was a primary difference between the two wives of Elkanah? (1:2)
5. Where did the family go yearly to worship God? (1:3)
6. Who were the priests at this time? (1:3)
7. How did the husband treat Hannah on the occasion of feasts? Why? (1:5, 8)
8. How was Hannah treated? (1:6)
9. Who observed Hannah in the temple? (1:9, 13)
- * 10. What was Hannah's emotional state when the feasting ended? (1:10)
11. What was Hannah's vow before the Lord? (1:11)
12. What did Eli assume about Hannah? (1:13-14)
13. How did Hannah explain her behavior? (1:15-16)
14. What was Eli's response to Hannah's situation? (1:17)
- * 15. How did Hannah's mood change after she had prayed? (1:18)
16. How was Hannah's prayer answered? (1:19-20)

Get It

17. Why does competition tend to arise between family members?
18. What reactions, good and bad, can we have to cruel taunts?
- * 19. Why did Hannah's demeanor change so dramatically after she prayed?
20. What other responses to her predicament could Hannah have chosen?
- * 21. Why is it important to take our requests to God?
22. In what ways do we try to ease the pain of someone's obvious loss or lack?
23. Why does the account in 1 Samuel say that God "remembered" Hannah?
24. What was Eli the priest's role in the life of this family?

Apply It

- * 25. What deep desire do you need to turn into earnest prayer and leave before God?
26. What ongoing trial or grief can you commit to God in prayer?

Hannah Dedicates Samuel - 1 Samuel 1:21-2:11

Topics: Faithfulness, Joy, Judgment, Praise, Sacrifice, Separation, Sovereignty, Strength, Vows

Open It

1. Why is it often easier to make a promise than to carry it through?
- * 2. What are some modern-day instances of a total reversal of fortune?
3. What examples of human arrogance do you see in the world around you?

Explore It

4. Why did Hannah want to stay behind when the rest of the family went to offer the annual sacrifice? (1:22)
5. How did Elkanah react to Hannah's plan? (1:23)
6. What was his main concern? (1:23)
- * 7. What did Hannah take along with the child to the house of the Lord? (1:24)
8. What was the purpose of these items? (1:25)
- * 9. How did Hannah explain her vow and its fulfillment? (1:25-28)
- * 10. What was the prevailing emotion of Hannah's prayer? (2:1)
11. In what way had her position changed with respect to her rival within the family? (2:1)
12. What is one trait of God's character which particularly inspired Hannah's praise? (2:2)
13. What is the ultimate answer for human arrogance? (2:3)
14. What are some of the total reversals named by Hannah as acts of God? (2:4-8)
15. How do the poor and downtrodden of the earth ultimately fare with God? (2:8)
16. How does human strength weigh in against the judgment of God? (2:9-10)
17. Which of Hannah's praises foreshadowed the coming of Messiah? (2:10)
18. How did Samuel's life change? (2:11)

Get It

- * 19. How do you imagine Hannah felt about carrying through with her promise?
20. How would it feel to be delivered or vindicated by God?
- * 21. Why is it important to remind ourselves that God is the source of all good gifts?
22. Why is God opposed to those who are proud and self-important?
23. In what ways do we seek to enhance our strength or security in earthly terms?

Apply It

24. What vow or promise to God do you need to see through to completion?
25. What instance of pride or unhealthy self-reliance do you need to confess today?
- * 26. What unique act of divine reversal can channel your praises to God this week?

Eli's Wicked Sons - 1 Samuel 2:12-36

Topics: Accountability, Consequences, Disobedience, Faithfulness, Family, Greed, Immorality, Injustice, Position, Punishment

Open It

1. What sins are particularly abhorrent when committed by Christian leaders?
- * 2. To what extent do you think parents should be held accountable when their children break the law?

Explore It

- * 3. How does the passage describe Eli's sons? (2:12)
4. How were the priests claiming more than their share of the people's sacrifices? (2:13-15)
5. If anyone sought to argue with them, how did the servants of the priests respond? (2:16)
6. Why did the taking of the meat before the burnt offering particularly grieve the Lord? (2:17)
7. What sign of remembrance did Hannah take with her to the yearly sacrifice? (2:19)
8. How were Hannah and Elkanah blessed for their faithfulness? (2:20-21)
9. What was reported to Eli about his sons' behavior? (2:22)
- * 10. What did Eli do about his sons' sinful practices? (2:23-24)
11. How did the sons respond to Eli's rebuke? (2:25)
12. What characterized Samuel's childhood years? (2:26)
13. Who brought a message to Eli about the conditions in God's house? (2:27)
14. How did Eli's family come into the priesthood in the first place? (2:28)
15. What three questions did the man of God ask of Eli? (2:27-29)
16. In what specific ways was the house of Eli cursed by God? (2:30-33)
17. What sign did God promise to send to show His displeasure with Eli's family? (2:34)
- * 18. How did God propose to remedy the tragic situation in His house? (2:35)

Get It

19. How can the blessings of God be revoked?
20. Why is faithfulness such a valuable quality to God?
- * 21. What does God mean by the pronouncement, "you honor your sons more than me"?
- * 22. How might Eli have responded differently to reports of his sons' behavior?
23. In what ways do parents need to take responsibility for their children's behavior?
24. What kind of person does God seek to serve Him?

Apply It

25. What blessing that you have regarded as a "birthright" can become a reason for humble praise this week?
26. What blessings have you taken for granted for which you want to praise God?
- * 27. How can you begin now to teach your family the proper fear of God?
28. What act of faithfulness can you perform that will remind someone in ministry of your love and support?

The Lord Calls Samuel - 1 Samuel 3:1-21

Topics: Acceptance, Atonement, Blindness, Call, Children, Consequences, Disobedience, Faithfulness, Family, Judgment, Listening, Obedience, Parents, Prophecy, Punishment, Sacrifice, Sin, Sincerity, Submission, Unfaithfulness

Open It

1. How have the relations of children to adults changed since you were a child?
2. What are some examples of a child's refreshing naiveté about God?
- * 3. Why is it sometimes risky to be honest with another person?

Explore It

4. How is Eli described in this passage? (3:2)
5. Why was Samuel lying down in the temple of the Lord? (3:3)
- * 6. How would you characterize Samuel's relationship to Eli? (3:4-5)
7. What did Samuel assume about the voice he heard in the night? (3:5)
8. How many times did Samuel come to Eli before Eli realized what was happening? (3:8-9)
9. How did Eli instruct Samuel to react to the voice he heard? (3:9)
- * 10. What future events did God reveal to Samuel that night? (3:11-12)
11. What decision regarding the priesthood of Israel did God reveal? (3:12)
12. What reasons did God give for judging Eli so harshly? (3:13)
13. How did Samuel react to what he heard God speak? (3:15)
14. What question did Eli ask of Samuel the morning after Samuel met with God? (3:17)
15. How did Samuel respond to Eli's inquiry about what God had said the night before? (3:18)
16. What was Eli's reaction to the prophecy concerning himself and his descendants? (3:18)
- * 17. What was unique about Samuel's words as contrasted to those of the other priests? (3:19)
18. What was Samuel's relationship with God after God first spoke to him? (3:19-21)

Get It

- * 19. What dilemma faced Samuel when Eli questioned him about God's message?
20. What was Israel's relationship to God at the time of this story?
21. How would you characterize our day and age with regard to people hearing from God?
22. What characteristics of the boy Samuel made him a suitable person to hear from God?
- * 23. What was good or bad about Eli's reaction to the gloomy prophecy about his descendants?

Apply It

- * 24. What first step could you take the next time it would be more comfortable to lie than to tell the truth to someone close to you?
25. In what concrete way could you make yourself available to God this week?

The Philistines Capture the Ark - 1 Samuel 4:1-22

Topics: Age, Assumptions, Blindness, Death, Despair, Discouragement, Enemies, Fear, Glory, Grief, History, Humiliation, Name, Risk, War, Wives, Worry

Open It

1. What role does religion play in motivating people to go to war?
- * 2. What are some religious symbols that have been meaningful to you?
3. When was the last time you anxiously awaited some news?

Explore It

- * 4. What were the Israelite losses in battle before and after the priests brought the ark of the covenant to the battlefield? (4:2, 10)
- * 5. After their initial defeat by the Philistines, what strategy did the elders of Israel take for granted in approaching the next battle? (4:3)
6. Who accompanied the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield? (4:4)
7. How did the army of Israel react when the ark of the covenant arrived at the front? (4:5)
8. What reaction did the news of the ark's arrival provoke among Israel's enemies? (4:7)
9. With what historical event concerning God and the Hebrews were the Philistines familiar? (4:8)
10. How did the Philistine commanders motivate their troops to fight harder rather than be discouraged? (4:9)
- * 11. What became of the ark and the priests at the end of the battle? (4:11)
12. How did news of the battle's outcome reach Shiloh? (4:12)
13. Why was Eli anxiously awaiting news from the front? (4:13)
14. Of all the bad news reported to Eli, what was the proverbial "last straw"? (4:18)
15. What other family member ultimately died as a result of hearing the bad news? (4:19-20)
16. How did the naming of Phinehas' son relate to the worst outcome of the battle against the Philistines? (4:21-22)

Get It

17. Why do you suppose the elders decided to bring the ark to the battlefield?
- * 18. Why isn't it safe to assume that the presence of the symbols of God guarantee the presence of God?
19. How were the lives of the people waiting at home affected by the decisions of the priests and elders?
- * 20. When are we most likely to become overconfident?
21. What does the phrase "fear of God" mean to you?

Apply It

- * 22. What symbol of God's presence and power can you resolve not to take for granted?
23. How can you voice your concerns about an important issue the next time it differs from the majority?

The Ark in Ashdod and Ekron - 1 Samuel 5:1-12

Topics: Enemies, Fear, Giving Up, God, Humiliation, Idolatry, Intimidation, Self-Centeredness, Sickness, Suffering, Traditions, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What is one artifact or souvenir you have from another country?
2. Why would a person or group seek to transfer a difficult responsibility to someone else?
- * 3. In what circumstances might a “winner” seek to return the prize he or she has won?

Explore It

4. Where did the Philistines place the ark once it was in the city of Ashdod? (5:2)
5. What did the Philistines find on the first morning after placing the ark in the temple of Dagon? (5:3)
6. What did the Philistines find the second morning, after standing up their idol once already? (5:4)
7. How did the Philistines’ superstition carry into future generations? (5:5)
- * 8. What misfortune befell the “victorious” Philistines when they took the ark of God into their territory? (5:6)
9. Besides the damage to Dagon, what were the repercussions of the ark’s presence in Ashdod? (5:6)
- * 10. What did the Philistines conclude about the power of the God of Israel over their god, Dagon? (5:7)
- * 11. What was the general conclusion regarding what should be done to try to reduce the panic? (5:7)
12. Where did the people of Ashdod send the ark? (5:8)
13. What result followed the ark from city to city? (5:9)
14. What did the people of Gath do with the ark? (5:10)
15. How did the people of Ekron react to receiving the ark of God? (5:10-11)
16. Besides the suffering caused by disease, what effect did the presence of the ark have among the Philistines? (5:11)

Get It

17. What different conclusions might the Philistines have reached when they found Dagon fallen over the first morning after the arrival of the ark of God?
18. How do we feel when cherished symbols of power are revealed to be powerless?
- * 19. What kept the Philistines from enjoying their victory over Israel?
20. Why might the Philistine rulers have decided to move the ark from one of their cities to another?
21. How might an Israelite spy have reacted if he had been able to witness the events in Philistia?
- * 22. Ultimately, who is able to defend the reputation of God?

Apply It

- * 23. Rather than be disheartened when a specific “setback” for the church comes to your attention, how could you turn your dismay into a prayer that God would vindicate His own name?
24. This week, in defending yourself from a difficult person or situation, how can you find a creative way to avoid simply passing the trouble on to someone else?

The Ark Returned to Israel - 1 Samuel 6:1-7:1

Topics: Advice, Atonement, Bargaining, Celebration, Consequences, Curiosity, Death, Disobedience, Fear, Foolishness, Guilt, Hardheartedness, Image, Impulsiveness, Instructions, Intimidation, Joy, Judgment, Mercy, Motives, Mourning, Punishment, Questions, Remembering, Restitution, Restoration, Sacrifice, Sin, Unbelievers

Open It

1. Do you think “chance” thinking or “cause and effect” thinking is more prevalent in our society?
2. Who are the wise persons or counselors to whom we turn when we find ourselves in trouble?
- * 3. Why do you think human beings so commonly ask, “Why is this happening to me?”

Explore It

4. How long did the ark of God remain with the Philistines? (6:1)
5. To whom did the Philistine people turn when they were desperate for a solution to their problem? (6:2)
- * 6. Why did the diviners recommend sending gold back to Israel along with the ark? (6:5)
7. How did the Philistine wise men know that it would be a miracle if the two cows went straight to Israel with the cart instead of heading back to their pens? (6:7)
8. What “test” did the Philistine diviners design to determine whether God was really behind the plagues that came upon them when they took the ark captive? (6:8-9)
9. Who followed behind the cart to see what would become of it? (6:12)
10. What was the ark’s first stop once it arrived in Israel? (6:13)
11. What were the people doing when they saw the ark coming on the cart? (6:13)
- * 12. What was the reaction of the Israelites to the unexpected arrival of the ark? (6:13)
13. What appropriate action did the Israelites take to acknowledge God’s hand in the miraculous return of the ark? (6:14)
14. What was the significance of five gold tumors and five gold rats? (6:17-18)
15. What specific first resting place of the ark was remembered by Israel long after it was moved? (6:18)
16. How did God react to the mishandling of the ark by His own people? (6:19)
- * 17. What sin caused the deaths of seventy Israelites? (6:19)
18. Why was the ark sent on from Beth Shemesh? (6:20)

Get It

19. What assumptions underlay the recommendation of the Philistine wise men to send back an offering with the ark?
- * 20. Why was it a problem that some of the Israelites looked inside the ark?
21. What is your first reaction when confronted by an unexpected miracle from God in your life?
- * 22. In what ways is it a heavy responsibility to be the people of God?

Apply It

23. In what concrete ways can you show respect for the Bible?
24. How could you make restitution a part of your next act of repentance?
- * 25. In what concrete way could you model the fear of the Lord for your friends or children?

Samuel Subdues the Philistines at Mizpah - 1 Samuel 7:2-17

Topics: Administration, Atonement, Authority, Change, Correction, Danger, Fasting, Fear, Heart, Idolatry, Leadership, Miracles, Mourning, Obedience, Peace, People, Persecution, Persistence, Protection, Remembering, Repentance, Restoration, Revenge, Running, Sacrifice, Security, Sin, Spiritual Disciplines, Success, Thankfulness, Victory, War

Open It

1. How would it feel to take part in a religious observance and see armed troops bearing down on you?
- * 2. What do you suppose would provoke people all over the country suddenly to turn to God?
3. What sorts of places tend to become national memorials?

Explore It

4. Although the ark was again within the borders of Israel, what was the mood of the subdued Israelites? (7:2)
- * 5. How did Samuel define “returning to the Lord with all your hearts”? (7:3)
6. What was God’s promise if Israel would rid itself of idolatry? (7:3)
7. What characterized the spiritual climate of Israel under the judgeship of Samuel? (7:4)
8. What was Samuel’s role when he assembled all the people at Mizpah? (7:5)
- * 9. For what purpose had the Israelites assembled at Mizpah when they were attacked? (7:5-6)
- * 10. What were three significant actions taken by the people of Israel in the process of repenting? (7:6)
11. How did the assembled Israelites feel when they heard that the Philistines were attacking? (7:7)
12. What was the people’s request of Samuel when they realized they were under attack? (7:8)
13. What was Samuel doing as the army was approaching? (7:9)
14. How does the passage characterize God’s response? (7:9)
15. By what miraculous circumstance was the Philistine army defeated? (7:10)
16. What was the significance of the stone Samuel set up between Mizpah and Shen? (7:12)
17. What was Israel’s relationship to the powerful Philistines in the ensuing years? (7:13-14)
18. What was Samuel’s title and function throughout his lifetime? (7:15)
19. In what locations did Samuel judge Israel and worship God? (7:16-17)

Get It

- * 20. Why did Samuel see Israel’s repentance and abandonment of idols as a necessary first step to their military deliverance?
21. How might the story have been told to future generations at the Ebenezer stone?
22. Why might some people consider the offering of a sacrifice in the path of the enemy army as foolish?
- * 23. When the people reacted to the approaching army by asking Samuel to “cry out to the Lord our God for us,” how had the stage been set for God’s positive response?
24. What are some of the concrete ways we can demonstrate that we are returning to the Lord with all our hearts?

Apply It

- * 25. What would be a good first step for you as you seek God’s response to a request that is especially important to you?
26. How could you, figuratively, set up an “Ebenezer” stone? Create a small reminder of a particular instance of God’s unmerited favor so that you remember to praise Him for it?

Israel Asks for a King - 1 Samuel 8:1-22

Topics: Age, Anger, Answers, Arguments, Authority, Backslide, Children, Choices, Comparisons, Complaining, Consequences, Desires, Disagreements, Disobedience, Ego, Envy, Family, Foolishness, Forsake, Freedom, God's Will, Government, Habits, Hardheartedness, Humanness, Idolatry, Instructions, Leadership, Materialism, Parents, Priorities, Rebellion, Rejection, Representatives, Stubbornness

Open It

- * 1. What example can you recall, from your experience or from the media, of someone who chose to ignore good advice?
2. What sort of stubbornness do you find particularly maddening in other people?
3. What do you think is the appeal of royalty for those nations that have the institution?

Explore It

4. Whom did Samuel intend to succeed him when he died? (8:1)
5. In what ways did Samuel's sons differ from their father? (8:3)
- * 6. What request by the elders of Israel angered Samuel in his old age? (8:4-6)
- * 7. What were some of the reasons that the Israelites wanted a king rather than a priest/judge? (8:5)
- * 8. How did God help Samuel put the people's request in perspective? (8:7)
9. What was God's overview of Israel throughout its history? (8:8)
10. God commanded Samuel to listen to the people's request, but what else was he to do? (8:9)
11. What were some of Samuel's predictions about what life would be like for the king's new subjects? (8:10-17)
12. According to Samuel's prophecy, how would God respond if they found that they did not like the king? (8:18)
13. How were the people affected by Samuel's warnings? (8:19)
14. What were the primary reasons that having a king appealed to the people of Israel? (8:20)
15. When Samuel brought the reaction of Israel before God, what did God command him? (8:21-22)
16. What did the delegation of elders do at the end of the interchange with Samuel? (8:22)

Get It

17. How can Samuel's predicament help us to keep perspective when we are rejected because of our stand for Christ?
- * 18. Why did God include the request for a king in the same category with idolatry?
19. Why was it hard for the Israelites to see the negative side of the Israelites' request?
20. In what way was Israel more "free" than other nations before it was ruled by a king?
- * 21. In what way is the desire to be like the people around us more of a hindrance than a help to our spiritual lives?
22. In what way is your life not "like other people" and yet it is good because God has ordained it?

Apply It

- * 23. Before you make requests of God this week, how could you go about seeking His perspective on what is best for you?
24. How can you resolve to think about the next words of warning you receive from a Christian brother or sister?

Samuel Anoints Saul - 1 Samuel 9:1-10:8

Topics: Advice, Authority, Blessing, Direction, Doubt, Family, Gifts, Giving Up, God's Will, Heart, Honor, Hospitality, Humility, Instructions, Invitation, Limitations, Obedience, Possessions, Preparation, Prophecy, Questions, Reputation, Sacrifice, Timing, Wisdom

Open It

- * 1. How would you assess your chances of suddenly being singled out for a prestigious national position?
- 2. Why are we awed when a person is able to predict the future with accuracy?
- 3. If you have ever been prayed over individually for a blessing, what was the experience like for you?

Explore It

- 4. What unique physical characteristics set Saul apart from his peers? (9:2)
- 5. How did Saul and his servant come to be traveling through the land? (9:3)
- 6. Why was Saul inclined to go home without the donkeys? (9:5)
- 7. When Saul and the servant disagreed about the next step of the search, whose opinion prevailed? (9:6)
- 8. Why did the servant want to consult with the prophet before heading home? (9:6)
- 9. Who were the first people to give Saul directions to help him find the "man of God"? (9:11)
- * 10. Why was Samuel not taken by surprise when Saul and his servant arrived in the town where the prophet was staying? (9:15-16)
- * 11. For what special mission had God singled out Saul? (9:16)
- 12. What had God commanded Samuel just the day before Saul's arrival? (9:16)
- 13. What information and what honors did the prophet have waiting for Saul when they first met? (9:19-20)
- * 14. What objection did Saul raise when he first heard Samuel's prophecy? (9: 21)
- 15. When Samuel escorted Saul on his way back home, why did he send the servant on ahead? (9:27)
- 16. What important symbolic action accompanied Samuel's pronouncement over Saul? (10:1)
- 17. What three signs did Samuel predict as proof that Saul's anointing was truly from God? (10:2-6)
- 18. What specific instructions were given to Saul before he parted company with the prophet? (10:8)

Get It

- * 19. In what ways did God use His faithful servant, Samuel, to answer the prayers of His people?
- 20. What might be your reaction if you had experiences similar to Saul's while performing a mundane task?
- 21. God acted to "change" Saul, but what were some natural aspects of his character that were previously unsuited to kingship?
- 22. What are some of your thoughts and feelings when you are the recipient of an award or honor?
- * 23. How does it make you feel to know that God uses us in spite of our weaknesses and natural limitations?
- 24. Why would the fulfillment of three specific signs help Saul believe that God was at work?

Apply It

- 25. What practical signs of esteem can you prepare in advance this week for someone who has an important task?
- * 26. What specific new habit of listening can you adopt to help you be ready when God wants to use you to answer someone's prayer?

Saul Made King - 1 Samuel 10:9-27

Topics: Affirmation, Answers, Appearance, Call, Change, Complaining, Criticism, Disobedience, Doubt, Government, Hiding, History, Instructions, Opinions, People, Popularity, Prophecy, Questions, Rules, Silence, Stress, Weaknesses

Open It

- * 1. When was the first time you wished you could “crawl into a hole” rather than make an appearance or presentation in public?
- 2. In what circumstances might you tend to tell the truth but not necessarily the whole truth?

Explore It

- 3. What event, prophesied by Samuel, surprised the people who had known Saul before? (10:11)
- * 4. How did Saul respond to his uncle’s questioning about his travels and his interactions with the prophet? (10:14-16)
- 5. What important detail did Saul leave out of the story he told his uncle? (10:16)
- 6. How did God characterize Himself in the words He spoke through Samuel? (10:18)
- 7. By what action did Samuel say that Israel had “rejected your God”? (10:19)
- 8. What was the methodology used by Samuel to discern and appoint God’s choice for king? (10:20-22)
- * 9. When the whole nation came together at Mizpah for Samuel to discern whom the Lord had chosen as Israel’s king, where was Saul? (10:21-22)
- 10. Who revealed the whereabouts of Saul so that he could be brought forward as king? (10:22)
- * 11. What did the people notice about Saul when they brought him out of his hiding place? (10:23)
- 12. How did Samuel present Saul to the people in order to enhance his popularity? (10:24)
- 13. How did the people react to their new king? (10:24)
- 14. What task remained for Samuel to do before the people went home? (10:25)
- 15. What was the significance of writing down the rules of the kingship and depositing them before the Lord? (10:25)
- 16. When Saul returned home to Gibeah, who accompanied him? (10:26)
- 17. How was Saul treated initially by a small minority of the people? (10:27)
- 18. What was Saul’s response to his critics among the Israelites? (10:27)

Get It

- * 19. What might have motivated Saul to keep the prophecy and anointing for the kingship from his uncle?
- * 20. What was good or bad about Saul’s response to his critics?
 - 21. Why would you be eager or reluctant to assume a position of national honor and responsibility?
 - 22. What “leadership qualities” did Saul have?
 - 23. What sorts of characteristics might cause people to disrespect a leader?
 - 24. To what extent is it a problem that “image” matters so much in politics?

Apply It

- * 25. How could you pray for courage the next time you are tempted to decline a call of God?
- 26. In what current situation might it be effective to maintain silence in the face of your critics?

Saul Rescues the City of Jabesh - 1 Samuel 11:1-15

Topics: Affirmation, Anger, Authority, Celebration, Challenge, Confidence, Consequences, Deceit, Delegation, Enemies, Grace, Help, Holy Spirit, Humiliation, Humility, Intimidation, Isolation, Leadership, Mercy, Neighbor, Opposition, Perspective, Popularity, Relationships, Representatives, Respect, Responsibility, Revenge, Unity, Victory

Open It

1. What is an example that demonstrates the saying, “Actions speak louder than words”?
- * 2. How does it feel to be reduced to your last line of defense?
3. How would you go about motivating someone to do something that involved some risk?

Explore It

4. Why did the people of Jabesh Gilead propose a treaty with the Ammonites? (11:1)
5. What condition did Nahash the Ammonite insist on before he would accept the Israelites’ surrender? (11:2)
6. What “last ditch effort” did the Israelites undertake before surrendering? (11:3)
7. What was Saul’s reaction to the plight of Jabesh Gilead? (11:6-7)
8. What added strength and authority to Saul’s response? (11:6)
9. How did Saul motivate all Israel to join him for the rescue of Jabesh Gilead? (11:7)
10. What was the size of the army that Saul led into battle? (11:8)
11. What message did Saul send to Jabesh Gilead? (11:9)
12. What ruse was employed to take the Ammonites by surprise? (11:10)
13. What was Saul’s battle plan? (11:11)
14. What was the result of the Israelite attack? (11:11)
15. How did Saul’s authoritative response make the people feel toward his former critics? (11:12)
- * 16. What consequence did the people propose for Saul’s critics? (11:12)
- * 17. What was Saul’s reaction to the idea of getting revenge on his detractors? (11:13)
- * 18. What positive plan did Samuel the prophet initiate instead of vindictiveness within Israel? (11:14)
19. What did the Israelites do at Gilgal following the victory at Jabesh Gilead? (11:15)
20. What was the mood in Israel after Saul’s stunning victory? (11:15)

Get It

21. To whom should we be able to turn when “our backs are up against a wall”?
22. What are the pros and cons of not just defeating but humiliating an enemy?
23. What was good or bad about Saul’s way of motivating solidarity?
- * 24. What is the advantage of showing mercy to one’s detractors rather than getting even with them?
- * 25. In what sense is Saul’s rescue of Jabesh Gilead an example of actions speaking louder than words?
26. Why is it good to mark a communal milestone with public thanksgiving or celebration before returning to the routines of daily life?

Apply It

- * 27. The next time you are vindicated or proven right, in what concrete way could you show mercy toward those who were wrong?
28. What “victory” should your church, Bible study, or family commemorate together before moving on?

Samuel's Farewell Speech - 1 Samuel 12:1-25

Topics: Accountability, Awe, Backslide, Challenge, Character, Choices, Conscience, Consequences, Covenant, Faithfulness, Fear, Forget, Forsake, Guilt, Help, Heroes, History, Idolatry, Obedience, Prayer, Punishment, Rebellion, Repentance, Reputation, Restoration, Righteousness, Sin, Vows

Open It

1. What politician or leader can you think of who can back up his or her claims of a clear conscience?
- * 2. What sort of events are the most likely to inspire awe toward God?

Explore It

3. What was Samuel's age and stage of life when he made his farewell speech? (12:2)
4. What were some of the common corruptions of power in the days of ancient Israel? (12:3)
5. How did the Israelites judge Samuel's honesty and integrity? (12:4)
- * 6. What pattern was repeated over and over in the history of God's dealings with Israel? (12:6-12)
7. For what sin did God punish Israel by defeat at the hands of the Philistines and Moabites? (12:10)
8. What instruments did God use to deliver Israel when they cried out to Him? (12:11)
- * 9. What was the most recent sin of which Samuel accused Israel? (12:12)
10. Why did Samuel feel that Israel didn't need a king? (12:12)
- * 11. What two conditions would Israel have to fulfill in order to keep God's blessing? (12:14)
12. What sign did Samuel perform to convince the people that they had displeased God? (12:16-17)
13. How did the people respond to the sign provided by Samuel and God? (12:18-19)
14. According to Samuel, why are idols "useless"? (12:21)
15. Why would God not reject Israel despite their unfaithfulness? (12:22)
16. Why did Samuel agree to pray for the people again? (12:23)
17. What two things did Samuel ask the Israelites to do in order to avoid God's wrath? (12:24)
18. According to Samuel, what would be the consequence if Israel continued to do evil? (12:25)

Get It

19. Why is it important to establish personal integrity before becoming a critic of others?
- * 20. What is the meaning of the expression, Israel "forgot the Lord their God"?
21. Why would rain at harvest time inspire awe of God and His prophet?
- * 22. What is it about calamity that causes people to reassess their attitudes and deeds?
23. In what way was Israel's call to follow God made more difficult by the installation of a king?
24. How is the living God set apart from useless idols?

Apply It

25. How might you present your requests to God so that you invite His best in your life?
- * 26. What is one personal story of God's deliverance that could remind you to "fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart" this week?

Samuel Rebukes Saul - 1 Samuel 13:1-15

Topics: Anger, Choices, Compromise, Consequences, Decisions, Delay, Despair, Disobedience, Doubt, Excuses, Failure, Faith, Fear, Foolishness, Guilt, Hiding, Hopelessness, Humiliation, Instructions, Intimidation, Leadership, Patience, Peer Pressure, Punishment, Rationalizing, Rejection, Schedule, Self-Righteousness, Stress, Temptation, Timing, Waiting, Weaknesses, Worry

Open It

- * 1. What experience comes to mind when you think of endless waiting (or waiting so long that you feel like giving up)?
- 2. What feelings go along with being completely overpowered at a team sport?
- 3. What experience have you faced that proved to be a test of your character?

Explore It

- 4. How old was Saul when he was named king of Israel? (13:1)
- 5. How long was Saul king of Israel? (13:1)
- 6. How many men did Saul keep with him as an “armed guard”? (13:2)
- 7. How were the Philistines provoked into attacking Israel? (13:3)
- 8. What was Saul’s response to the Philistine threat? (13:3-5)
- 9. What were the numbers of the Philistine forces assembled to fight Israel? (13:5)
- 10. How did the Israelites react to the massive Philistine army? (13:6-7)
- 11. What was the mood of Saul’s troops waiting at Gilgal? (13:7)
- 12. How long did Saul wait for Samuel? (13:8)
- * 13. What circumstance prompted Saul to go ahead with the burnt offering? (13:9)
- 14. When did Samuel arrive at Gilgal? (13:10)
- 15. What was Samuel’s question to Saul? (13:11)
- * 16. How did Saul rationalize his actions? (13:11-12)
- 17. How did Samuel judge Saul’s action? (13:13)
- * 18. What difference did Saul’s choice make? (13:13-14)
- 19. What provision did God make for Israel, knowing that Saul had proven unworthy? (13:14)
- 20. How many men were left in Saul’s army after this incident? (13:15)

Get It

- * 21. Why was Saul particularly vulnerable to the temptation to take matters into his own hands?
- 22. From the hindsight of the storyteller, what do we know about Samuel’s intention to arrive at the appointed time?
- 23. What rings true or false about Saul’s reasoning about needing God’s blessing before battle?
- * 24. What commands of God can become tests of our character?
- 25. In what ways can people be motivated to face tremendous odds without resorting to simple self-preservation?

Apply It

- * 26. What verse of Scripture could you post in a prominent place to remind you to wait for God’s timing rather than to take matters into your own hands?
- 27. What could you say or do to help your fellow Christians trust God in a circumstance where they feel increasingly afraid?

Israel without Weapons - 1 Samuel 13:16-14:23

Topics: Achievements, Alone, Answers, Confidence, Confusion, Convictions, Courage, Enemies, Faith, Follow, God's Will, Heroes, Initiative, Intimidation, Leadership, Loyalty, Miracles, Opportunities, Persistence, Plans, Restoration, Risk, Success, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What act of individual bravery has impressed you lately?
2. Why does the bravery of one individual often set the stage for others to dare something difficult?
3. What are the characteristics of the initiative-takers you know or know of?

Explore It

4. In what ways were the Philistines flexing their muscles before Israel? (13:16-17)
5. Why did the Philistines deprive the Israelites of the blacksmith's trade? (13:19)
6. How did the Israelites have their farming implements sharpened? (13:20)
7. How were the Israelite soldiers armed? (13:22)
- * 8. What plan did Jonathan propose to his armor-bearer? (14:1)
9. Who was aware of Jonathan's plan besides his armor-bearer? (14:1, 3)
10. Where was Saul staying while the Philistines were on the move? (14:2)
11. What was the ancestry of the priest who was with Saul on the outskirts of Gibeah? (14:3)
12. What physical barriers would Jonathan have to navigate in order to reach the Philistines? (14:4)
- * 13. How did Jonathan express his faith when he proposed the plan to his armor-bearer? (14:6)
14. What was the servant's answer to Jonathan's plan? (14:7)
15. What method did Jonathan propose for determining whether God would give them victory? (14:8-10)
16. Why did Jonathan go ahead despite the Philistine taunts? (14:10)
17. What was the Philistine taunt when they saw Jonathan and his armor-bearer? (14:11-12)
- * 18. What was the initial Philistine loss at the hands of Jonathan and his armor-bearer? (14:14)
19. What was the effect of the initial loss on the rest of the Philistine troops? (14:15)
20. How did Saul determine who had started the rout of the Philistines? (14:17)
21. Why did Saul cut short the consultation of the ark of God? (14:18-19)
22. When Saul and his men entered the battle, what was the condition of the Philistine troops? (14:20)
23. What was one of the symptoms of confusion among the Philistines? (14:20)
24. What groups joined in to help defeat the Philistines? (14:21-22)
25. What was God's part in the battle that followed Jonathan's bravery? (14:23)

Get It

26. What was particularly pitiful about the Hebrew army as they faced the Philistines?
- * 27. What did Jonathan know about God's nature that enabled him to be bold?
28. Why were the Philistines feeling cocky in relation to the Hebrews?
29. Why might Jonathan have decided to act alone, without telling his father's troops?
30. Why are we more likely to "come out of hiding" when the enemy is already in retreat?
- * 31. From God's perspective, why were Jonathan's actions wise?

Apply It

- * 32. In what circumstance or area of life has God given you the faith to blaze a trail where others see only hopelessness?
33. What problem confronting you this week could be put in perspective by reminding yourself, "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving"?

Jonathan Eats Honey - 1 Samuel 14:24-52

Topics: Accountability, Answers, Authority, Consequences, Criticism, Discernment, Discipline, Disobedience, Enemies, Example, Fairness, Fasting, Fear, Follow-Through, Foolishness, Frustration, Guilt, Ignorance, Impulsiveness, Injustice, Intimidation, Judgment, Justice, Leadership, Mercy, Parents, Power, Pride, Punishment, Rules, Self-Righteousness, Silence, Sin, Unfairness, Vows, Words

Open It

1. What instance do you know about in which one person was embarrassed because he or she didn't know something that everyone else knew?
- * 2. To what extent do you think penalties should be more lenient for people who break a law unintentionally?

Explore It

3. What decision of Saul was causing distress for his troops? (14:24)
4. What temptation was placed before Saul's army? (14:25-26)
5. What action did Jonathan take that the others wanted to but were afraid to do? (14:27)
- * 6. Why did Jonathan eat some of the honey he found on the ground? (14:27)
7. What was the immediate result when Jonathan ate the honey? (14:27)
- * 8. What piece of information did Jonathan learn after he had already eaten the honey? (14:28)
9. What was Jonathan's assessment of Saul's vow? (14:29-30)
10. How did the exhausted army behave at the end of the day? (14:31-33)
11. What remedy did Saul offer when he saw the sin of the troops? (14:33-34)
12. What did Saul do for the first time after the troops had already begun to eat? (14:35)
13. Before the troops left to do battle again, what did the priest propose to do? (14:36)
14. How did Saul know that a sin had been committed by someone in Israel? (14:37-38)
- * 15. What new oath did Saul swear, assuming that he and his family were innocent? (14:39)
16. What was Jonathan's response when confronted with his guilt? (14:43)
17. What was Saul prepared to do when he found out about Jonathan's mistake? (14:44)
18. Who intervened on behalf of Jonathan? (14:45)
19. Why did the people consider it unjust to put Jonathan to death? (14:45)
20. What reputation did Saul gain as a warrior king? (14:47)

Get It

- * 21. Why is a vow not something to be taken lightly?
22. How did Saul's original vow hurt his military progress?
- * 23. How did Saul's vow lead to the sin of the people at the end of the day?
24. Why was the priest unable to get a word of direction from the Lord?
25. Why were the troops afraid to tell Saul who had sinned?
26. When is it good to break a promise?
27. When is it important to keep a promise, no matter what?
28. If you had to choose between keeping a bad promise and going back on your word, which route would you take? Why?

Apply It

29. What difficult decisions facing your church or governmental leaders can you commit to prayer this week?
- * 30. In what tangible way can you remind yourself to assess the possible consequences before you promise anything?

The Lord Rejects Saul As King - 1 Samuel 15:1-35

Topics: Accountability, Accusation, Assumptions, Compromise, Consequences, Dishonesty, Disobedience, Enemies, Evidence, Excuses, Follow-Through, Forget, Greed, Guilt, Hypocrisy, Instructions, Judgment, Leadership, Materialism, Motives, Peer Pressure, Punishment, Rationalizing, Rejection, Revenge, Sin, War

Open It

- * 1. What are some of the primary reasons people rationalize their behavior?
- 2. How might it feel to be authorized to carry out revenge against someone who had committed a terrible wrong against your family?
- 3. Why does someone just breaking into politics seek the endorsements of well-known public figures?

Explore It

- 4. To what authority did Samuel appeal when he gave God's command to Saul? (15:1)
- 5. What did God command Saul to do to the Amalekites? (15:2-3)
- 6. Why were the Amalekites so hated by the Hebrews? (15:2)
- 7. Why did the Hebrews warn the Kenites to get away from the Amalekites? (15:6)
- 8. After winning the battle, what part of the population and livestock did Saul and his men destroy? (15:7-9)
- 9. How did Samuel learn of Saul's disobedience? (15:10-11)
- 10. How did God feel about Saul after he disobeyed? (15:11)
- 11. What was Samuel's reaction to God's revelation about Saul? (15:11)
- 12. What was Saul's greeting for Samuel when Samuel caught up to him? (15:13)
- 13. What was Samuel's sarcastic remark, serving notice that he was not fooled? (15:14)
- * 14. Where did Saul place the initial blame for saving the prime animals? (15:15)
- * 15. Whom did Samuel hold responsible for disobeying God? (15:16-19)
- * 16. How did Saul rationalize his behavior even after Samuel's confrontation? (15:20-21)
- 17. How did Samuel express God's mind about religiosity versus true obedience? (15:22-23)
- 18. What was the judgment that Samuel pronounced against Saul for his disobedience? (15:26)
- 19. How did Saul demonstrate that he was desperate to have the legitimacy of Samuel's presence? (15:27)
- 20. By what figure of speech did Samuel turn Saul's desperation into another statement of God's judgment? (15:28)
- 21. What truth did Samuel emphasize to Saul about God's nature? (15:29)
- 22. How did Agag (the Amalekite king) feel when he was called before Samuel? (15:32)
- 23. What did Samuel say and do when he confronted Agag? (15:33)
- 24. After this incident what contact was there between Samuel the prophet and Saul the king? (15:34-35)

Get It

- * 25. In what way was Saul obeying the letter or the spirit of God's command?
- 26. How was God showing His concern for the Hebrews by commanding them to destroy the Amalekites?
- * 27. Why does God prize obedience more highly than offerings or sacrifices?
- 28. What are modern-day equivalents of Israel's offerings and sacrifices?
- 29. In what way is rebellion and arrogance toward God like idolatry?
- 30. What difference does it make whether Saul really believed that he had carried out the Lord's instructions?
- 31. Why were the Israelites hesitant to totally destroy their enemy as God told them to?

32. What was good or bad about the fact that Samuel grieved over the fall of Saul?
33. Why was it important for Samuel to finish the job that Saul didn't finish by killing Agag?

Apply It

- * 34. How can you place a higher value on obedience than on appearances or practical considerations in your life?
35. How can you avoid rationalizing the next time you are "caught in the act" of something you know you shouldn't do?

Samuel Anoints David - 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Topics: Appearance, Assumptions, Beauty, Children, Comparisons, Discernment, Family, God's Will, Heart, Invitation, Obedience, Prejudice, Rejection, Sacrifice, Surprises, Youth

Open It

- * 1. What physical characteristics tend to attract public attention and inspire respect among the people you know?
- 2. Why do children tend to be left out of the most solemn religious observances?
- 3. In what way might being singled out for an honor make your life more complicated?

Explore It

- 4. What was Samuel doing when the Lord called him to anoint the next king? (16:1)
- 5. Why was Samuel afraid to carry out the Lord's instructions? (16:2)
- 6. What provision did God make to give the appearance of normality to Samuel's journey? (16:2-3)
- * 7. What did God promise to do when Samuel arrived at Jesse's house? (16:3)
- 8. How did the elders of Bethlehem feel about Samuel's arrival in their town? (16:4)
- 9. What did Samuel command the people of Bethlehem to do? (16:5)
- * 10. Why did Samuel think that Eliab might be the son God had chosen? (16:6)
- * 11. What mattered to God in choosing the next king for Israel? (16:7)
- 12. What answer did Samuel give as each son in turn came before him? (16:8-10)
- 13. Why did Samuel ask Jesse if he had any other sons? (16:11)
- 14. When he learned of the existence of another son, what did Samuel command? (16:11)
- 15. How is David described in his meeting with Samuel? (16:12)
- 16. What did God say to Samuel regarding David? (16:12)
- 17. What was the result of the anointing of David by Samuel? (16:13)

Get It

- * 18. Why was Samuel reviewing the sons of Jesse one by one?
- * 19. What qualities should we look for in our leaders, particularly in the church?
- 20. Why was it important for Samuel to anoint David, although he was too young to assume the kingship at that time?
- 21. Why might the people of Bethlehem have been afraid to have Samuel there?
- 22. What commands of God should we be prepared to obey even if they arouse the authorities against us?

Apply It

- * 23. Toward what individual in your life could you resolve to look at the heart rather than outward appearances?
- 24. In what concrete way could you include children in your worship at home or at church this week?

David in Saul's Service - 1 Samuel 16:14-23

Topics: Accomplishments, Advice, Appearance, Consequences, Depression, Emotions, Evil, Gifts, Ministry, Serving, Suffering, War, Youth

Open It

- * 1. What work of art (song, picture, book, movie, etc.) is sure to put you in a better mood when you're feeling low?
- 2. What associations do you have with the harp as an instrument?

Explore It

- * 3. What were two unfortunate characteristics of Saul's spiritual life after his disobedience? (16:14)
- 4. How did Saul's attendants explain his moods to him? (16:15)
- * 5. What solution did Saul's servants propose for his periods of suffering? (16:16)
- 6. How did Saul locate a musician to play for him? (16:18)
- 7. How did Saul's servant describe David? (16:18)
- 8. What message did Saul send to Jesse? (16:19)
- 9. How did Jesse respond to the king's request to send his youngest son? (16:20)
- 10. How did Saul respond to David when David joined Saul's court? (16:21)
- 11. What further message did Saul send to Jesse after David's arrival? (16:22)
- * 12. What relationship developed between Saul and David? (16:23)

Get It

- 13. How do you imagine you would feel if, like Saul, you were first chosen by God and then rejected by God?
- 14. Why did Saul have trouble with depression?
- 15. Why were Saul's attendants eager to find a solution to his moodiness?
- * 16. What was good or bad about the way Saul relied on David's music to help him get out of his sour moods?
- 17. What else do you think Saul could have done about his moodiness?
- 18. Which of David's characteristics discussed in this passage reflect well on his upbringing and his own discipline and accomplishment?
- * 19. What was the highest praise of David given by the servant of Saul?

Apply It

- * 20. What step could you take this week to help assure that you do not become like Saul, from whom the Spirit of the Lord departed?
- 21. Using the example of the young David, how could you encourage a young person to develop into the person God wants him or her to be?

David and Goliath - 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Topics: Alone, Arguments, Armor, Assurance, Attitude, Challenge, Courage, Criticism, Determination, Enemies, Faith, Family, Fear, Glory, Heroes, Humiliation, Insults, Intimidation, Limitations, Name, Persistence, Power, Preparation, Protection, Revenge, Rewards, Risk, Self-Esteem, Strength, Success, Trust, Victory, War, Words, Youth, Zeal

Open It

1. What is your image of a totally intimidating person?
- * 2. When will people root for the underdog, even when there is little or no chance of victory?

Explore It

3. What was the placement of the Philistine and Israelite armies at the beginning of the story? (17:3)
4. What were the superhuman characteristics of Goliath? (17:4-7)
5. What was Goliath's challenge to the Israelites? (17:8-9)
6. How did Saul's army react to the challenge? (17:11)
7. What was David's position among Jesse's sons? (17:13-15)
8. How long had Goliath been coming forward with his daily challenge? (17:16)
9. How did David happen to be going to the front lines? (17:17-20)
10. What was happening just as David arrived where the army was camped? (17:20-23)
11. What reward had the king promised to the man who would kill Goliath? (17:25)
- * 12. In David's view, why should the Israelites not have been intimidated by Goliath? (17:26)
13. What was Eliab's reaction when he found David asking about the reward? (17:28)
14. How did David come to meet with Saul? (17:31)
- * 15. How confident was young David when he met the king? (17:32)
16. Why was Saul skeptical about David's ability to defeat Goliath? (17:33)
17. What experiences helped David to believe that God would deliver him? (17:34-37)
18. What happened when David tried on Saul's armor? (17:38-39)
19. How did David end up arming himself for the confrontation with Goliath? (17:40)
20. How did Goliath react when he saw David approaching? (17:42-44)
- * 21. What was David's answer to the Philistine champion's taunts? (17:45-47)
22. What was David's weapon of choice? (17:48-49)
23. What action did David take after he had felled the giant? (17:51)
24. How did the Philistines react to the defeat of their hero? (17:51-52)
25. How did the Israelite army follow up David's victory? (17:52-54)

Get It

26. What part do words and posturing play in intimidation?
27. Why was the Israelite army paralyzed at the Valley of Elah?
28. Why was it so surprising that David took an interest in confronting the giant Goliath?
29. What circumstances can make a group of people lose heart?
30. In what sense is there a fine line between bravery and stupidity?
- * 31. What viewpoint on spiritual warfare can give courage to the seemingly helpless?
- * 32. In the story of David and Goliath, what "weapons" were the most powerful?

Apply It

33. How can you move from cowering to courage the next time you find yourself the underdog?
- * 34. In what concrete way can you confront a "giant" problem or trouble with faith?

Saul's Jealousy of David - 1 Samuel 18:1-30

Topics: Abandon, Achievements, Affections, Anger, Approval, Bitterness, Celebration, Comparisons, Conflict, Covenant, Danger, Dishonesty, Effectiveness, Enemies, Envy, Family, Fear, Friendship, Generosity, Gifts, Humility, Hypocrisy, Isolation, Jealousy, Marriage, Motives, Popularity, Rejection, Relationships, Reputation, Resentment, Rewards, Success

Open It

1. What were some of the characteristics of your "best friend" relationships as a child?
- * 2. How would you describe your feelings about someone you know for whom everything seems to go right?

Explore It

3. How does this passage describe the bond between David and Jonathan? (18:1)
4. How did Jonathan cement the covenant between David and himself? (18:4)
- * 5. How did the officers and people of Israel respond to David's successes and promotions? (18:5)
6. What refrain was heard in the streets when Saul and David returned from the battle in which Goliath was slain? (18:7)
- * 7. How did Saul feel about David's popularity? (18:8-9)
8. When did Saul make his first attempt on David's life? (18:10-11)
9. Why was Saul afraid of David? (18:12)
10. How did David fare when Saul sent him out to lead the war campaigns? (18:14)
11. What was Saul's reaction to David's successes? (18:15)
12. How did "all Israel" feel about David the general? (18:16)
13. What was Saul really hoping for when he offered his daughter in marriage to David in exchange for feats of bravery in battle? (18:17)
14. What was David's attitude about the rewards and honors offered him by King Saul? (18:18)
15. How was David persuaded to pursue the "price" of Saul's second daughter? (18:21-25)
- * 16. What two facts galled Saul most about David? (18:28)
17. What was Saul's attitude toward David from his marriage onward? (18:29)

Get It

18. What traits might have made Jonathan and David feel as if they were "one spirit"?
19. Why might David have been lauded as more of a hero than Saul from the time of his very first exploit?
20. Why did Saul bestow honors on David even though he resented him?
- * 21. Why might we just wish for something bad to happen to a rival rather than choosing actually to harm him or her ourselves?
22. How did David express humility and deference to King Saul?
- * 23. Why was Saul afraid of David even though Saul was king?
24. What conclusion do you think Saul drew from the fact that his son and his daughter both loved David?
25. What were some evidences that "the Lord was with David"?

Apply It

- * 26. What concrete step could you take to counteract bitterness the next time you find yourself wishing harm on someone near you who is prospering?
27. What token of lasting friendship could you offer a friend this week?

Saul Tries to Kill David - 1 Samuel 19:1-24

Topics: Advice, Change, Conversation, Danger, Deceit, Emotions, Escape, Evil, Excuses, Friendship, Help, Hiding, Influence, Injustice, Instructions, Loyalty, Mediator, Murder, Persecution, Promises, Prophecy, Reconciliation, Resentment, Running, Trust, Wives

Open It

- * 1. What is one of your favorite stories of escape (true or fictional)?
- 2. What is challenging about giving advice to someone older than yourself?

Explore It

- 3. What order did Saul give to all his attendants, including his son Jonathan? (19:1)
- 4. Why did Jonathan warn David of Saul's designs on his life and attempt to intervene on his behalf? (19:1-2)
- * 5. What were some of Jonathan's reasons that Saul should not harm David? (19:4-5)
- 6. What did Saul promise Jonathan concerning David? (19:6)
- 7. What did David do after the threat to his life had passed? (19:7-8)
- * 8. What incident occurred inside Saul's house? (19:9-10)
- 9. What plan did Saul set in motion when he was unable to kill David with his spear? (19:11)
- 10. How did Michal, David's wife, aid in his escape? (19:11-14)
- 11. What justification did Michal offer when Saul confronted her about helping David? (19:17)
- 12. Where did David go when he fled from the king? (19:18)
- 13. What did Saul do when he found out where David was staying? (19:20)
- * 14. What happened to each delegation that Saul sent to capture David? (19:20-21)
- 15. What happened when Saul himself went after David? (19:23-24)
- 16. What saying was passed down in Israel concerning this incident? (19:24)

Get It

- 17. How did Jonathan prove the depth of his affection for David?
- * 18. Why did Saul want to murder a man who did him no wrong?
- 19. How did God protect David when Jonathan and Michal were no longer able to do so?
- * 20. Why might someone hate a person who has done nothing but good for him or her?
- 21. How does it feel when two people you are close to are at odds with one another?
- * 22. What is the likely outcome when we allow irrational anger or hatred to dictate our actions?
- 23. In what current circumstance might God be calling you to be a peacemaker?
- 24. In what circumstance might your loyalty to God prove costly in the near future?

Apply It

- * 25. In what way can you be a peacemaker for someone else?
- 26. What can you do to prepare for the next time your loyalty to God is tested?

David and Jonathan - 1 Samuel 20:1-42

Topics: Accountability, Anger, Answers, Assurance, Caring, Character, Children, Commitment, Confidence, Conversation, Danger, Devotion, Emotions, Escape, Evidence, Excuses, Family, Feelings, Follow-Through, Friendship, Grief, Guidance, Hatred, Hiding, Honor, Instructions, Intentions, Jealousy, Mourning, Murder, Parents, Persecution, Questions, Relationships, Risk, Running, Separation, Shame, Sincerity, Swearing, Trust, Vows, Waiting

Open It

- * 1. In what way do you agree or disagree with the conventional wisdom that “when the going gets tough, you find out who your real friends are”?
- 2. What is particularly tragic about a love story “across enemy lines”?

Explore It

- 3. What was the difference between David’s and Jonathan’s perceptions of Saul’s behavior? (20:1-2)
- 4. What was David’s theory about why Saul might not have included Jonathan in his plans as he usually did? (20:3)
- 5. What situation did David and Jonathan set up to test Saul’s intentions toward David? (20:5-7)
- * 6. What promise did Jonathan make to David before God? (20:12-13)
- * 7. What promise did Jonathan ask David to make to him? (20:14-15)
- 8. What emotion prevailed in the relationship between David and Jonathan? (20:17)
- 9. How did Jonathan plan to signal David to let him know whether or not he was in danger? (20:19-22)
- 10. How did Saul react when David’s place was empty on the first day of the feast? (20:26)
- 11. How did Jonathan answer when Saul questioned him about David’s absence on the second day of the feast? (20:28-29)
- 12. What was Saul’s immediate emotional reaction when he heard the agreed-upon answer as to David’s whereabouts? (20:30)
- 13. What accusation did Saul make against his son Jonathan? (20:30)
- 14. Why did Saul believe it was contrary to Jonathan’s interests to support David? (20:31)
- 15. What did Saul do when Jonathan continued to question the justice of the death sentence against David? (20:33)
- 16. What emotions did Jonathan feel after arguing with his father? (20:34)
- 17. Which signal did Jonathan execute for David the next day? (20:35-38)
- 18. Why did David bow down to Jonathan when they met alone in the field? (20:41)
- * 19. Why did Jonathan and David weep in their last meeting together? (20:41-42)
- 20. What did Jonathan remind David of before they parted company? (20:42)

Get It

- 21. What moral or legal justification did Saul have for trying to kill David?
- 22. How do you think Jonathan felt about being caught between his father and his friend?
- * 23. What does it say about Jonathan that he chose to remain loyal to David, even to the point of working against his own father’s commands?
- 24. What did Jonathan show that he knew by faith about the future when he secured David’s promise to be kind to his descendants?
- 25. Why did David and Jonathan confer in a field with no one else around?
- * 26. What is good or bad about forming loyalties that can surpass loyalty to family?
- 27. If your own self-interest were to conflict with the obvious will of God, which would you choose to promote?

Apply It

- * 28. How can you resolve to strengthen your commitment to God so that it could withstand even the agendas of your closest family or friends?
- 29. For what strong friendship bond can you thank God and your friend this week?

David at Nob - 1 Samuel 21:1-9

Topics: Alone, Assurance, Conversation, Dishonesty, Escape, Fear, Help, Holiness, Hospitality, Isolation, Life-Style, Needs, Preparation, Purity, Questions, Resources, Rules, Status

Open It

- * 1. Whom do you know who is able to “think fast on his or her feet” and come up with plausible answers in difficult situations?
- 2. What is the most difficult aspect of spur-of-the-moment guests?
- 3. How do you imagine it might feel to aid a fugitive?

Explore It

- 4. What was David’s first stop as he fled from King Saul? (21:1)
- 5. What questions did Ahimelech the priest ask of David? (21:1)
- * 6. How did David explain the fact that he was alone? (21:2)
- * 7. For what provision did David ask Ahimelech? (21:3)
- 8. Because he had only consecrated bread, what condition did Ahimelech have to put on the gift? (21:4)
- * 9. How did David’s answer reassure Ahimelech and embellish his tale of a secret mission? (21:5)
- 10. Why was there consecrated bread on the premises that was not on the altar? (21:6)
- 11. Who happened to be at Nob on the same day David visited there? (21:7)
- 12. For what further provision did David ask Ahimelech? (21:8)
- 13. What famous sword was the only sword in the priest’s possession? (21:9)

Get It

- 14. Why would the priests have special concerns about purity and obedience to the law?
- * 15. How might the story have turned out differently if David had told the priest that he was fleeing from Saul?
- 16. For what reasons might Goliath’s sword have been kept in the place of worship?
- 17. What was it about David that probably prompted Ahimelech to fulfill his requests?
- 18. What sort of person would you be inclined to help, even if he or she were in trouble with the authorities?
- * 19. What was good or bad about the fact that David misled the priest?

Apply It

- * 20. How could you cultivate an attitude that would enable you to maintain your composure even if you were persecuted and pursued?
- 21. What steps could you take to become better prepared to be hospitable to unexpected guests?

David at Gath - 1 Samuel 21:10-22:23

Topics: Accusation, Achievements, Advice, Alone, Anger, Assumptions, Authority, Children, Conscience, Danger, Death, Deceit, Disobedience, Enemies, Escape, Family, Guidance, Hatred, Injustice, Instructions, Intimidation, Knowledge, Murder, Opposition, Parents, Partnerships, Protection, Punishment, Revenge, Self-Centeredness

Open It

- * 1. How does it feel to be caught between two former friends who have become enemies?
- 2. In what situations might someone's reputation for bravery actually put him or her in jeopardy?

Explore It

- 3. Where did David seek safety as he fled from King Saul? (21:10)
- 4. What popular saying about David was known among the people of Gath? (21:11)
- 5. Why was David afraid when he realized that his reputation had preceded him? (21:12)
- 6. How did David employ his cleverness to avoid harm at the hands of Achish, king of Gath? (21:13-15)
- 7. What sorts of people gathered around David at the cave of Adullam? (22:2)
- 8. What provision did David make for his parents' safety while he was a fugitive? (22:3-4)
- 9. What made David decide to leave Adullam and go to the forest of Hereth? (22:5)
- 10. With what reasoning did Saul appeal to his officials to support him rather than David? (22:7-8)
- 11. What piece of information did Saul especially resent that his officials had withheld? (22:8)
- 12. Which of Saul's officials took advantage of the opportunity to ingratiate himself by exposing someone who had aided David? (22:9-10)
- 13. What did Saul do when he learned that David had visited the priests at Nob? (22:11)
- * 14. What accusation did Saul make against the priests at Nob? (22:13)
- * 15. On what grounds did Ahimelech maintain that he was innocent of aiding rebellion against Saul? (22:14)
- * 16. Why, according to Ahimelech, did he not suspect that David was at odds with Saul? (22:15)
- 17. Despite the priest's protests, what verdict did Saul arrive at and what sentence did he pronounce? (22:17)
- 18. Who was the only one willing to strike down the priests of the Lord? (22:18-19)
- 19. Where did Abiathar, the only son to escape, seek refuge? (22:20)
- 20. How did David respond to the news that Saul had killed the priests? (22:22)
- 21. What dubious distinction did David and Abiathar have in common? (22:23)

Get It

- * 22. Why did David find himself in a dangerous situation in the very place he had sought refuge from Saul?
- 23. Why was David's ruse (pretending to be insane) effective in getting Achish to dismiss him as a threat?
- 24. What sorts of people tend to gather around someone who has become a very visible enemy of the state?
- 25. How did David's concern for his parents' safety reflect obedience for the Word of God?
- 26. Why isn't the ability to hand out favors (such as prime land and powerful government positions) a secure way for a ruler to gain the loyalty of his or her subjects?
- 27. What are some of the motives of a "snitch" or "tattletale"?
- * 28. Do you think loyalty is more or less important than the discernment of right and wrong? Why?
- 29. What qualities might cause one person to commit a vicious act from which others have shied away?

Apply It

- * 30. What loyalty in your life should be examined to be sure that obedience to God's Word takes precedence?
- 31. How could you offer protection this week to someone who has been subjected to persecution or teasing?

David Saves Keilah - 1 Samuel 23:1-6

Topics: Answers, Arguments, Assurance, Courage, Decisions, Enemies, Fear, Goals, God's Will, Guidance, Help, Instructions, Mission, Neighbor, Obedience, Peer Pressure, Plans, Prayer, Questions, Risk, Success, Victory, War

Open It

1. What are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate “rescuing”?
- * 2. What method or methods do you use to make decisions in your life?

Explore It

3. What news did David get about Keilah? (23:1)
- * 4. What was David's first response to the news that an Israelite town was being attacked by an enemy? (23:2)
5. How did the Lord answer David's specific request for guidance? (23:2)
- * 6. Why were David's men hesitant to follow him into battle? (23:3)
- * 7. How did God reassure David when he came the second time for guidance? (23:4)
8. What were the results of David's attack on the Philistines? (23:5)
9. By what method was David seeking God's guidance? (23:6)
10. How did the ephod come to be in David's possession? (23:6)

Get It

11. How did David show his leadership qualities by considering an attack when he heard the news about Keilah?
12. How did David show humility by the order in which he proceeded with his plans?
- * 13. What was good about the way David made his decisions?
14. Why were David's men afraid to go attack the Philistines?
15. What is your first reaction when you hear about someone in close proximity to you who is in trouble?
16. What would be difficult or easy about believing that God would deliver a city with a ragtag band of misfits?
17. As a leader, how is it effective or ineffective to minimize the fears of your supporters?
18. How did the lone remaining priest benefit David and his followers when he sought their protection?
- * 19. Why is it important to seek God's guidance before embarking even on an errand of mercy?

Apply It

- * 20. What instinct to rescue should you check with the Lord this week before you act?
21. What verse of Scripture could you memorize to remind yourself that you succeed by God's strength rather than your own?

Saul Pursues David - 1 Samuel 23:7-29

Topics: Affirmation, Answers, Covenant, Decisions, Discernment, Encouragement, Enemies, Escape, Fellowship, Friendship, Guidance, Hiding, Humility, Hypocrisy, Loyalty, Moving, Murder, Persistence, Protection, Representatives, Salvation, Separation, Timing

Open It

- * 1. What is the most exciting chase scene you've seen or read about recently?
- 2. What associations do you have with the term betrayer?

Explore It

- 3. What was Saul's thought when he learned that David was at Keilah? (23:7)
- * 4. What action did Saul take immediately upon learning of David's whereabouts at Keilah? (23:8)
- 5. What action did David take when he learned that Saul was coming after him? (23:9)
- 6. What were David's two questions to God using the ephod, and how were they answered? (23:10-12)
- 7. What strategy did David use to escape Saul? (23:13)
- 8. Why was Saul unable to catch David? (23:14)
- 9. Where was David when he learned that Saul planned not only to capture him but also to kill him? (23:15)
- * 10. What was accomplished when David and Jonathan met in secret? (23:16)
- 11. What did Jonathan predict about David's future? (23:17)
- * 12. What did the two friends, Jonathan and David, do before they parted ways? (23:18)
- 13. What group of people offered to turn David over to Saul? (23:19-20)
- 14. What did Saul ask the Ziphites to do for him? (23:21-23)
- 15. In what desert area was Saul catching up to David and his men? (23:24-25)
- 16. What unforeseen circumstance rescued David when Saul was about to catch him? (23:27-29)

Get It

- 17. How would you compare the way Saul and David arrived at their respective decisions about what to do next?
- 18. What might have motivated the people of Keilah to surrender David and his men to Saul?
- 19. In what circumstance have you known repeated supernatural preservation from harm?
- 20. Why do you think Saul continued to try to kill David, although he knew David was God's anointed?
- * 21. What are some of the ways that Christians can help one another "find strength in God"?
- * 22. Who are some of the friends you can encourage?
- 23. How important was the cooperation of the people of Ziph to Saul's "search and destroy" operation?

Apply It

- * 24. What friend or acquaintance can you help to find strength in God this coming week?
- 25. For what act of deliverance should you make a point of thanking God publicly?

David Spares Saul's Life - 1 Samuel 24:1-22

Topics: Authority, Character, Choices, Compassion, Confession, Conscience, Courage, Emotions, Enemies, Escape, Evidence, Evil, Grace, Humility, Impulsiveness, Integrity, Judgment, Mercy, Rebellion, Respect, Righteousness, Temptation

Open It

1. What does the saying “Actions speak louder than words” mean to you?
- * 2. How does it feel when you find a rival or enemy suddenly and unexpectedly at your mercy?
3. What is good or bad about a face-to-face meeting between feuding parties?

Explore It

4. What activity did Saul resume as soon as the Philistine threat abated? (24:1-2)
5. How did Saul come to be alone for a short time? (24:3)
- * 6. What did David's men tell him when they discovered Saul alone in the cave? (24:4)
- * 7. What action did David take while Saul was unaware? (24:5)
8. Why did David have second thoughts about what he had just done? (24:6)
9. How did Saul learn that David had just had him at his mercy? (24:8)
10. What arguments did David give to prove that he was not conspiring against the king? (24:9-11)
11. In what context did David invoke the name of the Lord? (24:12)
- * 12. For David, what was the authoritative proof that he was not an evil man? (24:13)
13. Besides judging between him and Saul, what did David ask of God? (24:15)
14. What emotion overcame Saul when he heard David's voice? (24:16)
15. What confession did Saul make regarding his own behavior? (24:17)
16. Why did Saul ask God to reward David? (24:18-19)
17. What did Saul admit that he knew about the future? (24:20)
18. What did Saul ask David to swear he would do when he became king? (24:21)
19. On what terms did Saul and David part after their meeting in the cave? (24:22)

Get It

- * 20. How do you think Saul would have behaved toward David if their situations had been reversed?
21. What was the single most important reason David had for not harming Saul?
- * 22. When does restraint speak more loudly than action?
23. In what way does God expect us to honor a position even when the person filling it is unrighteous?
24. In what ways might God vindicate someone who does not use force to vindicate himself or herself?
25. Why did David and Saul go their separate ways after Saul learned that his life had been spared?
26. Why did Saul not make any promises to David after David swore to preserve Saul's descendants when he became king?

Apply It

27. How could you prepare yourself not to “finish off” your enemy should you get a chance?
28. What concrete action could you take to honor someone in authority this week?
- * 29. In what situation might it be wise to let your actions speak rather than your words?

David, Nabal, and Abigail - 1 Samuel 25:1-44

Topics: Approval, Death, Decisions, Drinking, Faults, Foolishness, Forgiveness, Gifts, Heart, Hospitality, Husbands, Ignorance, Initiative, Insults, Marriage, Protection, Remarriage, Respect, Revenge, Serving, Wisdom, Wives

Open It

1. How important is hospitality in your day-to-day life?
2. In what instances can foolishness actually be hazardous to your health?
- * 3. What good or bad connotations does the word vengeance have for you?

Explore It

4. What was the measure of Nabal's wealth? (25:2)
5. How did Nabal's character contrast with that of his wife? (25:3)
6. What favor did David ask of Nabal through his representatives? (25:6-8)
7. Why did David feel that Nabal should be willing to give him gifts? (25:7-8)
8. What answer did Nabal send back to David? (25:10-11)
9. What excuse did Nabal use for refusing to give provisions to David's men? (25:10)
- * 10. How did David react to the message from Nabal? (25:13)
11. Why did the servant seek out Abigail instead of confronting Nabal? (25:17)
- * 12. What action did Abigail take when she heard about Nabal's blunder? (25:18-19)
13. What had David resolved to do in response to Nabal's insult? (25:21-22)
14. What was Abigail's attitude when she went out to meet David? (25:23-24)
15. How did Abigail evaluate her husband's judgment? (25:25)
16. What did Abigail ask of David in return for the gifts she brought? (25:27-28)
17. Why, according to Abigail, would David be taking the moral high ground by sparing Nabal's household? (25:29-31)
- * 18. How did David view the fact that Abigail came out to meet him? (25:32-34)
19. On what terms did David and Abigail part? (25:35)
20. Why did Abigail wait until morning to tell Nabal what had happened? (25:36-37)
21. How did Nabal react to the news of his near destruction? (25:37-38)
22. What was David's response to Nabal's death? (25:39)
23. What invitation did David extend to Abigail after her husband's death? (25:40-41)

Get It

24. What were Abigail's virtues?
25. Why did Abigail take responsibility for the insult to David?
26. In what way did David see God's hand in sending Abigail?
27. What was Nabal's reputation?
28. What was David's reputation?
29. How does a person get a reputation among his or her peers?
- * 30. Why is or isn't it fair to assume that someone to whom we have done good should be willing to return the favor?
- * 31. In what way is it preferable to let God vindicate you rather than to avenge yourself of wrongs done to you?

Apply It

32. How could you appeal to a friend's highest spiritual instinct when encouraging him or her to do the right thing?
- * 33. In what way could you shoulder responsibility for something that is going wrong in your home or place of business and, by doing so, "redeem" the situation?

David Again Spares Saul's Life - 1 Samuel 26:1-25

Topics: Accusation, Assumptions, Blessing, Confession, Embarrassment, Enemies, Evidence, Foolishness, Giving Up, Mercy, Murder, Opportunities, Protection, Questions, Repentance, Sleep, Value, Vows

Open It

1. What are the duties of the bodyguards of famous and powerful people?
2. What are some of the duties you have that prevent you from doing what you really want to do?
- * 3. How does it feel to win an argument?

Explore It

4. How many troops did Saul take with him to hunt for David? (26:2)
5. How did David manage to avoid falling into the trap Saul set for him? (26:3-4)
6. Who was willing to go with David into Saul's camp alone at night? (26:6)
- * 7. Where did David and Abishai find Saul? (26:7)
- * 8. What did Abishai assume when he realized that Saul was sleeping and vulnerable? (26:8)
- * 9. Why did David prevent Abishai from killing Saul? (26:9)
10. What did David predict would become of Saul? (26:10)
11. What did David take with him before he left Saul's camp? (26:12)
12. How had the Lord intervened for David when he entered Saul's camp at night? (26:12)
13. When David was a safe distance away, what message did he have for Abner? (26:13-16)
14. How did Saul recognize David from a distance? (26:17)
15. What was David's complaint against Saul? (26:18-19)
16. By pursuing David, what precious right was Saul denying to David? (26:20)
17. How did Saul react to having his life spared a second time? (26:21)
18. What promise did Saul make to David after David penetrated his camp by night? (26:21)
19. On what terms did David and Saul part company? (26:25)

Get It

20. When David penetrated Saul's camp at night, what was his mission?
21. Why did David address Abner, Saul's commander, when he reached a safe distance?
22. Why was the life of a fugitive on the outskirts of Israel particularly bitter for David?
23. What was foolish about Saul's behavior toward David up to this time?
- * 24. What would be wise or foolish about sparing an enemy rather than finishing him off?
- * 25. Why isn't it wise to take every opportunity we are given for personal advancement and advantage?
26. How is it possible to make peace with one's enemies without entirely trusting them?
27. Why might the repentance of an enemy be of greater value than the defeat of that enemy?

Apply It

28. In what concrete way can you value the life of someone who aggravates or opposes you?
- * 29. What would it mean to let God vindicate you when you encounter a conflict this week at work or at home?

David Among the Philistines - 1 Samuel 27:1-12

Topics: Deceit, Escape, Family, Habits, Hospitality, Husbands, Loyalty, Obligation, Partnerships, Protection, Rejection, Relationships, Reliability, Reputation, Success, Trust, War, Wives

Open It

- * 1. How strong is the bond that comes from having a common enemy?
- 2. What sorts of attitudes or behavior in another person inspire you to trust him or her?

Explore It

- 3. Why did David feel it necessary to protect himself from Saul? (27:1)
- 4. What plan did David devise to escape from Saul once and for all? (27:1)
- * 5. Where did David and his men settle when they left Israel? (27:2-3)
- 6. What was Saul's response when he heard that David had left the country? (27:4)
- 7. What request did David make of Achish, king of Gath? (27:5)
- 8. What city was given to David as a gift by Achish? (27:6)
- 9. How long did David live in Philistine territory? (27:7)
- 10. How did David conduct his raids from Philistine territory? (27:8-9)
- 11. With what impression was Achish left concerning David's raids? (27:10)
- * 12. What was David's reason for killing all the people wherever he raided? (27:11)
- * 13. What was Achish's primary reason for trusting David? (27:12)

Get It

- 14. In what different ways did David ingratiate himself with the king of Gath?
- * 15. Why did David want to create the impression in Gath that he was raiding Israelite territory?
- 16. If fleeing and hiding cease to be options, how else might you protect yourself from a more powerful enemy?
- * 17. What is the place of strategy and cunning in the life of the believer?
- 18. To what extent should we avoid appearing to be a traitor?

Apply It

- * 19. How might you use your God-given intelligence to solve a dilemma facing you this week?
- 20. What could you keep in a prominent place to remind yourself that your loyalty to God transcends all others?

Saul and the Witch of Endor - 1 Samuel 28:1-25

Topics: Answers, Confusion, Consequences, Conversation, Darkness, Deceit, Despair, Disobedience, Enemies, Fasting, Fear, Frustration, Guidance, Guilt, Hopelessness, Hypocrisy, Judgment, Occult, Prophecy, Rationalizing, Rejection, Silence, Sin

Open It

1. Why are human beings often eager to know the future?
- * 2. What instance do you know of someone who exempts himself or herself from his or her own rules?

Explore It

- * 3. What was the status of mediums and spiritists in Israel in the days of Samuel and Saul? (28:3)
4. What new danger struck terror in the heart of Saul? (28:5)
5. What did God have to say to Saul in light of his predicament? (28:6)
- * 6. Where did Saul turn for guidance when he got no word from God? (28:7-8)
7. Why was the woman at Endor afraid to call up a spirit for her visitors? (28:9)
8. Whose spirit did Saul seek to consult? (28:11)
9. What did the spiritist know as soon as she saw Samuel? (28:12)
10. What did Saul ask of the spirit of Samuel when they faced one another at Endor? (28:15)
- * 11. What was Samuel's reply to Saul about his fortunes in the battle to come? (28:16-19)
12. In what condition was Saul after his encounter with Samuel? (28:20)
13. What did the spiritist and Saul's assistants do for Saul after Samuel left them? (28:21-25)

Get It

14. What did Saul reveal about himself when he chose to consult a medium?
15. What does this incident tell us about Saul?
- * 16. Why did Saul try to bend the rules for himself?
17. Why was Saul's deception suddenly apparent to the medium when she saw Samuel?
18. How was Samuel's message to Saul just like those he had given to Saul before?
- * 19. In what circumstances might you be tempted to make yourself the exception to your own rule?
20. What's wrong with consulting spiritists and mediums?
21. Why had God become Saul's "enemy"?
22. Why isn't it possible to sidestep God's laws and God's judgments?

Apply It

23. How can you begin to work toward balancing your desire to know the future with your respect for God and His laws?
- * 24. How can you remind yourself to check your own obedience before you impose a rule on someone else?

Achish Sends David Back to Ziklag - 1 Samuel 29:1-11

Topics: Citizenship, Confidence, Criticism, Enemies, Insecurity, Leadership, Loyalty, Motives, Obedience, Partnerships, Reliability, Reputation, Trust, War

Open It

- * 1. How strong does ethnic and family loyalty tend to be when one group feels attacked by another? Why?
- 2. If you were a military commander, what qualities would you look for in an ally?

Explore It

- 3. What forces were gathering for battle? (29:1)
- 4. Where did David and his men find themselves as the Philistines lined up against Israel? (29:2)
- * 5. What was the primary basis for the suspicions against David? (29:2-3)
- 6. On what basis did Achish defend David's presence in the fighting force? (29:3)
- 7. How did the Philistine commanders feel toward Achish? (29:4)
- * 8. What was the fear of the other commanders about David's presence at the front? (29:4-5)
- 9. How did Achish frame his first request that David return home? (29:6-7)
- 10. How did David respond to Achish's request that he leave the front? (29:8)
- * 11. What was Achish's final decision about David's involvement in the battle? (29:9-10)
- 12. Where did David and his men go? When? (29:11)

Get It

- * 13. Why didn't David's presence among their troops make sense to the Philistine generals?
- 14. What is good or bad about considering a person's recent behavior above his or her past history when evaluating that person's trustworthiness?
- 15. Why might David have objected when he was first asked to leave the Philistine army?
- 16. What is good or bad about taking the advice of the many over the few?
- * 17. How is it possible to see God's providence at work when we are rejected by others?

Apply It

- * 18. How do you see God's hand at work in the decisions of the people above you in the chain of command?
- 19. How can you improve your judgment of the character of other people?

David Destroys the Amalekites - 1 Samuel 30:1-31

Topics: Abundance, Answers, Arguments, Benefits, Bitterness, Celebration, Children, Correction, Despair, Disagreements, Emotions, Enemies, Equality, Family, Generosity, Gifts, Greed, Guidance, Hardheartedness, Law, Leadership, Materialism, Mercy, Mourning, Perspective, Possessions, Rebellion, Selfishness, Success, Unity, Wealth, Wisdom, Wives

Open It

1. What qualities keep a leader in office even through hard times?
- * 2. What rules governing your life or work do you consider unfair?

Explore It

3. What did David and his men find when they returned to Ziklag, the city in Gath where they had been living? (30:1-3)
4. What was the reaction of David and his troops to the destruction of their city? (30:4)
5. What was David's personal loss in the Amalekite raid? (30:5)
6. What was the attitude of the troops toward David when they returned to find their families gone? (30:6)
7. How did David handle his own loss and the criticism of others? (30:6)
8. As a leader, what first step did David take with regard to his dilemma? (30:7-8)
9. What did the Lord reveal to David through Abiathar and the ephod? (30:8)
- * 10. Why did some of David's men stay behind at the Besor Ravine? (30:9-10)
11. What method did David use to locate the troops that had captured his family and subjects? (30:11-15)
12. What did David and his men find the Amalekites doing? (30:16)
13. What was the outcome of David's battle with the Amalekites? (30:17)
14. To what extent were the Israelites able to recover their families and property? (30:18-19)
15. How had the attitude of the fighters changed toward David after the battle? (30:20)
- * 16. What did some of David's men want to do about the two hundred troops who had not gone into battle? (30:22)
- * 17. What was David's perspective on the sharing of the spoils of war? (30:23-25)
18. To whom did David send presents from the plunder of the Amalekite raiders? (30:26-31)

Get It

19. What is or isn't fair about holding a leader responsible for the misfortunes that befall the group?
20. What is the best first step for a believer before beginning any enterprise?
- * 21. What were some positive leadership qualities exhibited by David on the occasion of the recovery of the plunder of Ziklag?
- * 22. Why is an extreme concern for fairness sometimes a camouflage for greed?
23. To what extent was God's word to David fulfilled in the course of this story?
24. What seems fair or unfair about David's decree regarding the division of spoils?
25. Why did David feel that to punish those who had to stay behind would not be honoring to God?
26. What might have prompted David to send some of his share of the plunder to friends in Israel?

Apply It

- * 27. The next time you find yourself obsessed with an issue of fairness, how can you check your heart for greed and uncharitable thoughts?
28. What reminders can you use to pray for your church and civil leaders this coming week?

Saul Takes His Life - 1 Samuel 31:1-13

Topics: Abandon, Armor, Courage, Death, Despair, Devotion, Disobedience, Enemies, Fasting, Giving Up, Honor, Idolatry, Initiative, Loyalty, Mourning, Murder, Obedience, Risk, Running, War, Zeal

Open It

1. When you or someone close to you has been grieving, what activities or ceremonies have been most meaningful?
- * 2. What's the most difficult thing about knowing someone who is terminally ill?
3. Why is the capture or killing of a king or general so significant in warfare?

Explore It

4. How was Israel faring against the Philistines at Mount Gilboa? (31:1)
- * 5. What happened to Saul and his sons in the fierce battle with the Philistines? (31:2-3)
- * 6. Why did Saul ask his armor-bearer to finish him off with his sword? (31:4)
- * 7. What did Saul do when his armor-bearer refused to kill him? (31:4)
8. How did the armor-bearer respond to Saul's death? (31:5)
9. What toll did this one battle take on Israel's leadership? (31:5-6)
10. What became of the Israelites in the towns Saul's army had been defending? (31:7)
11. What did the Philistines do when they discovered the bodies of Saul and his sons? (31:8-10)
12. What did the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead do in response to the Philistines' treatment of their leaders' bodies? (31:11-13)
13. What rituals were performed on the bodies of Saul and his sons? (31:13)

Get It

- * 14. In your opinion, what circumstances make Saul's desire to die quickly either understandable or cowardly?
15. Why do you think Saul's armor-bearer was unwilling to kill him?
16. Why was the honorable burial performed by the men of Jabesh Gilead important for Israel's morale?
17. Why is it important to honor the dead?
- * 18. What duties do we have toward those who are near death or terminally ill?
19. In what ways can having to deal with death or a terminal illness be a blessing in disguise?
20. In what circumstances might a speedy death be the best thing one can hope for?
21. In what way was the defeat and death of Saul not a surprise?

Apply It

22. What act of remembrance can help you with your grief for someone you have lost recently or someone of whom you've been reminded?
- * 23. What small action on your part could make life more worth living for someone whose prospects are bleak?