



DAVID

A HEART SHAPED BY GOD

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER GUIDE

by Leigh Robinson & Michael Philip

DAVID

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Prepared by
Leigh Robinson & Michael Philip

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SERIES OUTLINE

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PREFACE

David -- humble shepherd boy, courageous warrior, beloved king, gifted poet and musician, betrayed father, sinful adulterer, and faithful friend. Next to the story of Jesus, the story of David is the greatest and most influential story in the Bible. Sixty-two chapters in the Old Testament are devoted to his biography, and he is mentioned no less than fifty-nine times in the New Testament.

Christians all over the world love the story of David. Young children gleefully sing, "Only a boy named David . . ." (with the actions, of course!), and believers of all ages learn from his life and derive daily comfort and encouragement from his psalms.

Why do we love David's story so much? Why do we identify with this man who lived in a world so vastly different from our own? I believe that we do so for two reasons. The first being David's godliness. Twice in Scripture he is referred to as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). His passion for God stands out in many of his actions and in the words of his psalms. We want to love God as he did. We want to be women and men after God's own heart.

The second reason why we love the story of David is because it does not seek to conceal David's humanness -- his earthiness. David had a heart for God, but he also had feet of clay. He was one of God's greatest men, but, like us, he was anything but perfect. He frequently blew it. At times, he blew it royally! As saved sinners who often mess up, we identify with David and are given hope by the fact that despite his failings God did not cast David aside but continued to work in him and use him.

In this brief series on the life of David, we will look at some of the ways God worked to shape David's heart to make it like his own. This will help us identify how God is at work in our own lives, shaping our hearts to be more like his.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leigh Robinson". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Leigh" written in a larger, more prominent style than the last name "Robinson".

THE T.E.A.M.S. APPROACH

Each study follows this simple five step approach which is designed to take the truth of God's word and move it from our heads to our hearts to our hands.

T - TRUTH

As we read, share and discuss God's word, what is the truth he wants us to know, understand and obey?

E - EQUIPPING

Once we have discovered the truth from God's word we need to massage it into our lives so that it becomes understandable and usable.

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Having come to understand the truth and how it applies to life, it leaves us asking how we stack up. How does the reality of your life and thoughts and actions compare with the truth you've discovered? We need to ask each other the hard questions to graciously encourage us to live more fully for Christ.

M - MISSION

We've now moved the truth of God's word from the pages of Scripture to our heads and to our hearts. This section considers how we can move it to our hands. How can we put the truth into action as we engage with the lost world.

S - SUPPLICATION

Each study closes with us engaging with God to express our dependence on him to enable us to live in the light of his truth.



1 Samuel 16:1-13

SHAPED BY CALLING - David and Samuel

T - TRUTH

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Introduction: Next to the story of Jesus, the story of David is perhaps the greatest, most influential story in the bible. Over 62 chapters in the Old Testament are devoted to his biography, 73 Psalms are widely attributed to him, and the New Testament mentions him 59 times!

There are probably two main reasons why his story is so well loved and celebrated. Firstly because of his godliness. Twice the scriptures refer to him as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). And secondly he is loved because of his earthiness and humanness. As saved sinners struggling to live holy lives, we can identify with David in the fact that despite his failings, God did not cast him aside. David kept coming back to God in dependence, repentance and worship, and God continued to work in him and use him.

"The LORD said to Samuel, 'How Long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as Kind over Israel?'" (v1a)

Question: Why had God rejected Saul and why was Samuel mourning for him?

Read 1 Samuel 8:7-9; 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 1 Samuel 15:22-23)

Saul was a symbol of Israel's rejection of God as their king. Saul had become corrupt and had blatantly disobeyed God. Samuel was mourning Saul's failure and rejection of God and the repercussions on God's people.

Question Why was Samuel fearful of Saul's reaction? What does his fear of Saul over God reveal about him?

Samuel was rightly fearful that Saul would be jealous and want to prevent him from anointing another King. Samuel seems to have fixed his eyes on Saul rather than the LORD.

Question Why did the elders of Bethlehem tremble when they met Samuel?

They were afraid that they had displeased God and that Samuel was coming as God's agent for judgement (as he had with King Agag at Gilgal in 1 Samuel 15:33).

Question When Jesse brings his sons before Samuel, what do Samuels assumptions reveal about the way he was trying to identify God's anointed?

Samuel was immediately impressed by the outward appearances. He was prone to judge in the wrong ways..

Question: How was Samuel's judgement different to God's?

God tells him not to consider his appearance or his height (unlike when Saul was chosen), since God does not look at the outward appearance but rather at the heart. While David was clearly good-looking, that was not the basis of God's choosing him.

Question: By contrast, what does God mean when he says that he looks at the heart?

The heart represents the thoughts, motives, desires and feelings of a person.
The heart represents the true character of a person.

Question: What was it specifically that God saw in David?

He saw SPIRITUALITY: David had a heart fully committed to him, he was a man after his own heart (1 Sam 13:14). David's heart was set on God in worship. David was zealous for the glory of God.

He saw HUMILITY: David was called from tending sheep, and even after being anointed, he went back to tending sheep.

He saw INTEGRITY: *"He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them."* (Psalm 78:71-72). *"Integrity is what you are when nobody is looking"* - Chuck Swindoll

Question: By contrast, what does the story reveal about the way Jesse saw David?

Jesse didn't even invite David to the meeting. Obviously overlooked him entirely. He is derisively referred to as "the youngest" - wording which carried undertones of insignificance and condescension. He was happy to just leave him tending sheep.

Question: What was the consequence of God choosing and anointing David?

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power (v13). David's life was characterised by the presence and power of God.

E - EQUIPPING

Question: How are we, like Samuel, prone to judge by outward appearance?

We are impressed by appearance, by talent, by personality, by experience, by education, by a person's CV, clothing among other things.

Question: How does this impact the way we try to present ourselves to others?

We can strive to check all the external boxes of what we think other people will be impressed by while trying to hide or cover up the things they will be unimpressed with.

Question: What is the visible evidence of being a man or woman "after God's own heart"?

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Question: **When God looks at your heart, what does he see?**

Think in terms of your thoughts, desires motives and feelings. When God looks into your heart, does he find spirituality, humility and integrity? Does he see a heart set on him?

Read: *"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

Psalms 139:23

Question: **What is the benefit of laying your heart open before God's scrutiny?**

The reward is like David, to be anointed with God's power and presence in your life so that he will "lead you in the way everlasting".

M - MISSION

Question: **What can you do this week to spend less energy cultivating your outward appearances (how people might perceive you), and more energy on cultivating your heart?**

Question: **Who can you engage with this week with a new attitude that tries to look beyond their external appearances?**

S - SUPPLICATION

Prayer: **Spend some time in repentance and prayer - perhaps using Psalm 139 to guide you.**



1 Samuel 17

SHAPED BY JEALOUSY - David and Goliath

T - TRUTH

Read: 1 Samuel 17

Introduction: The story of David and Goliath is so familiar to most of us that it has lost some of its impact. We know how the story ends - so there are no surprises. But what was the secret of David's success against Goliath and what can we learn from this?

Question: Read Goliath's words to the army of Israel (v 8-11). How does he refer to them and taunt them?

Calls them Saul's servants (as opposed to David's view of them being the "armies of the living God" (v26)). Goliath defies them (jeers and mocks them).

Question: What impression does the response of Saul and the Israelites give?

They were terrified and dismayed. Saul was impotent to lead them. Although he was a head taller than most (9:6) and should himself have taken on Goliath. The fact that this had carried on twice a day for 40 days shows how powerless they were. Saul had devised an incentive plan in the hope that one of his troops would be courageous enough to take on Goliath - even offering his own daughter's hand in marriage!

Question: Why specifically was Saul so powerless?

Because of his disobedience to God, he had forfeited his anointing and the Spirit of God had departed from him (16:14).

Question: When David enters the story, what is it that motivated him to want to put a stop to Goliath's taunting?

David's immediate response is one of jealousy for the honour of God. He wants to remove the disgrace of Israel and is angry that Goliath is defying the armies of the living God (v26). When he comes against Goliath, he does so "in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied" (v45). And he is determined that the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel (v46).

Question: In contrast to Saul, where does David's courage come from?

Firstly, last week we read that when he was anointed, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David (16:13). Secondly, David found courage in God by recognising that God has rescued him in the past, this gave him faith that he will do it again (v37).

He is confident that the LORD would deliver Goliath into his hands (v46).

Question: **How did David deal with the opposition and belittling of his brother? (v28-29)**
He managed to control his temper, he turned away, and he continued pursuing the issue of Goliath.

Question: **What does the simplicity of David's approach to fighting Goliath reveal?**
He behaved with integrity and authenticity - didn't try to be something he was not. He faced Goliath trusting in God and the gifts God had given him.

E - EQUIPPING

Question: **What motivates you?**
This story highlights how David was motivated by a deep jealousy for the honour and glory of God. He was not moved by Saul's incentive scheme. Are you primarily motivated by incentives like recognition, position, wealth or personal fulfilment?

Question: **What role does jealousy for the glory and renown of God play in your life?**

Question: **How do you respond to a world which is increasingly defiant towards God?**
Are you impotent and dismayed and terrified like Saul and the Israelite army, or are you provoked to action?

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

David found courage in the midst of opposition from his experience of God's faithfulness in the past. Saul had initially looked at David and thought there was no way he could go against Goliath as being only a boy (v35), but when he heard David's testimony and realised that God was with him, he then told David, *"Go, and the LORD be with you"* (v37). He was confident that God was able to bring David success. There is something very sad about this - Saul still knew God, and knew that God's presence with the young David would make all the difference, he still knew the right words to say, but he himself was not experiencing the reality of God's presence.

Question: **How might this be true of you?**

Question: **If this is true of you, how can you know again the confidence and faith of David (that God can use you)?**

Saul lost his anointing and the presence of God because of his disobedience to God. If you are a believer and find yourself in a similar place spiritually, then you can return to God in repentance - confessing the sin that may have led to your spiritual barrenness and impotence. God still wants to use you for his glory and your good.

M - MISSION

Question: What can you practically change in your behaviour and attitudes this week to become more jealous for the glory of God? To be more offended by things that defy God?

- Maybe being aware of your silence when Jesus is belittled and defied in your presence (either in person or in the media you take in).
- Maybe speaking out (wisely) when God is defied.
- Maybe sharing a word of testimony of God's faithfulness to you in the past.

Question: Is there a Goliath in your own life that has left you petrified and impotent? Things like safety, financial security, the future, work security, fear of loss.

Question: How might having a God-dominated vision rather than a Goliath-dominated vision awaken you to action?

Question: David wasn't suddenly provoked into action out of jealousy for God when he saw Goliath. His God-dominated vision had been cultivated so that in this moment of crisis he was prepared. What can you start doing to cultivate a God-dominated vision in your own life.

A lifestyle of discipleship centred on Christ - of personal devotion, corporate worship, significant community and sacrificial service leading to redemptive influence.

S - SUPPLICATION

Prayer: Spend some time in personal prayer repenting of times when you may have been more like Saul than David - knowing the lingo, but not knowing and relying on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. Confess your lack of jealousy for the glory and renown of the living God. Confess where your motives for serving God might be for the trappings rather than the glory of God.

Prayer for one another. Pray that in your lives and witness you will be able to echo the words of David in Psalm 108:1-6.

Jesus said that, *"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* (Luke 11:13).

Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit in power, so that you will be jealous for his glory in your own life and in the world.



1 Samuel 18-20

SHAPED BY FRIENDSHIP - David and Jonathan

T - TRUTH

Question: What are the friendships that have helped to shape your life?

Introduction: In the same way that each of us can point to friendships that have shaped us (both positively and negatively), the life of David was significantly shaped by his friendship with Jonathan. The name Jonathan literally means “Jehovah’s Gift” and Jonathan was definitely God’s gift to David during a very critical time in his life.

Question: 1 Samuel 18 - 20

From these chapters, what were some of the challenging circumstances of the friendship between David & Jonathan? (Circumstances that almost made their friendship unlikely?)

- Jonathan was the rightful heir to the throne after Saul, and yet was not threatened by befriending David
- David was immensely popular with the people, yet Jonathan wasn’t threatened or jealous of him.
- Jonathan’s father Saul, was enraged with jealousy, anger and hatred towards David (he tried to kill him six times). Yet despite this, David’s friendship with Jonathan flourished.
- David married Jonathan’s sister, Michal. Their close friendship wasn’t an enemy of a good marriage (and vice versa).
- Through everything, Jonathan remained loyal to his father Saul - even to the point of dying with him in battle. (1 Sam 31) Similarly, David never sought to disrupt the relationship between Jonathan and Saul. Both men acted honourably towards Saul.

Question: What were some of the characteristics of true friendship demonstrated in the friendship between David and Jonathan?

- They were easily compatible (18:1 - Jonathan became as one spirit with David). This despite the challenging circumstances. David and Jonathan were very similar characters. Both were accomplished and skilled warriors. David had killed his tens of thousands, and Jonathan had valiantly fought against the Philistines with faith in God (see 1 Samuel 14).
- They were loyal to each other (19:1-7). Jonathan spoke well of David to his father.
- They helped each other (20:24) - Jonathan attitude to David was “Whatever you want me to do I will do for you”. Friends also ask for help.

- They sacrificed for each other. (20:30-34). Jonathan's attempt to help David landed him in trouble and nearly cost him his life.
- They freely expressed their love for one another (20:41).
- They encouraged one another in God (see 23:15-18). Jonathan helped David to find strength in God.

E - EQUIPPING

Question: Consider Saul's attitude towards David compared to Jonathan's attitude towards him. How are they different?

Saul was motivated by jealousy and anger and bitter resentment. Jonathan by humility, love and self-sacrifice. Jonathan exhibited such godly character in that he was never jealous of David. He recognised David would become king over Israel and was content to be second to him - effectively giving up what could have been his rightful claim to the throne.

Question: How does jealousy destroy friendships?

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Question: Do you have friendships where you wish the best for your friends (even at cost to yourself), or are you jealous of their success?

Question: Are you more like Saul (filled with bitter jealousy towards David) or like Jonathan (filled with humble loyalty)?

Question: We would all love to have a friendship like that between David and Jonathan. But how do you find friendship like that?

The reality is that friendships like this are hard to find. You can't try to find a friend like this who will be loyal and self-sacrificing to meet your needs. But what you can do is BE a friend like this. In this story, Jonathan recognised he had much in common with David and he took the initiative by being a friend to David, David reciprocated, and their friendship grew.

M - MISSION

Question: Has God put someone in your life that you can BE a friend to that could result in a deep and lasting friendship?

Question: Is there someone you can encourage and help to "find strength in God"?

S - SUPPLICATION

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24)

Often we measure our worth by how many friends we have (even social media) rather than through the depth and quality of our friendships. Pray that God will help us to BE friends like Jonathan who loved David "as himself".

Give thanks to God that we have a friend who surpasses Jonathan. Jesus himself calls us his friends!

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other." John 15:13-17



1 Samuel 21-24, 26

SHAPED BY CHOICES - David and Saul

T - TRUTH

Introduction: From the time David was anointed by Samuel to the time he would ultimately become king of Judah was probably about 15 years. He only became king of Israel another 7 years after that. This long period of waiting and preparation was used by God to shape and test David and form his character so that he would truly be a king with his heart set on God. Sometimes our tendency is to read bible stories and gloss over these long periods of testing. We are inspired by characters like Joseph and Moses and David and even the apostle Paul. We wish to be like them - but we too easily skip over the long periods in their lives where their faith was tested and strengthened through many hardships and through the choices they made during those times.

Question: What promises has God made to you in the past that you are still waiting on?

Context In the story of David and Goliath, Saul had promised riches for the person who would slay Goliath - together with tax exemption for their family. Yet from chapter 19 onwards we repeatedly read the words "David fled". We are even told that he was joined by his family who were clearly also fleeing for their lives (22:1), and that his wife, Michal (Saul's daughter promised to him if he killed Goliath) was given to be the wife of another man (25:44).

To get a full flavour of the turmoil in David's life due to Saul's jealous pursuit you really need to read 1 Samuel 21-26. But for the purpose of this study we will just focus on a few passages.

Read: 1 Samuel 21: 1-9

Question: On the run, David goes to the priest at Nob wanting bread and a weapon. What do you notice about David's words and actions in this exchange?
He lied to the priest.

Question: How does his lying make you feel?

Question: What is significant about the bread and the weapon that he was given?
The bread was "shewbread" - bread which had been offered to God. And the sword was Goliath's sword which he has used to slay Goliath. Both the bread and the sword would have reminded him of God's presence and faithfulness. In the midst of his turmoil and fleeing and even his lying, God was gently reminding him of his presence and faithfulness.

READ: 1 Samuel 23:15-18

Question: In the context of David's wilderness experience, how would Jonathan's words have given him immense encouragement?

Jonathan encouraged David in his faith in God and reminded him of God's promises giving him renewed hope to wait on God.

READ: 1 Samuel 24:1-8
1 Samuel 24:17-22
1 Samuel 26: 7-12
1 Samuel 26:22-25

Question: All the characters in the story (David's men, David, and Saul) concede that the LORD had handed Saul over to David. Yet David made the choice not to act on it. How might God have been testing David in these two incidents?

Question: How might Saul's words to David have been an encouragement to him and confirmation that he'd made the right decision?

E - EQUIPPING

David was faced with choices which, from outward appearances, seemed pragmatic and even evidence of God's provision, and yet he refused to take matters into his own hands.

Question: What does David's decision not to take Saul's life on both of these occasions reveal about his faith in God?

David refused to take matters into his own hands - despite the apparent pragmatism of doing so. David trusted that Saul's life was in the hands of the LORD (26:10).

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Like David, we don't choose wilderness experiences, they are often thrust on us (through bereavement, retrenchment, sickness, loss etc). Yet often God uses those experiences to shape us and strengthen our faith.

Question: How has God encouraged, strengthen and shaped you through wilderness experiences?

Question: Have you been faced with seemingly God-given opportunities to get yourself out of a wilderness experience?
How did you respond?
Did you take matters into your own hands or wait and trust God?

M - MISSION

Question What wilderness experiences are you or members of your group facing?
Are there choices you need to make that might not be pragmatic, but that might show greater dependence and trust in God?

Question Similar to last week, are there people in your group or other friends who might be going through a wilderness experience that you could encourage? (like Jonathan did for David).

S - SUPPLICATION

If there are people in your group who are facing significant periods of crisis or “wilderness experiences”, spend some time in prayer to encourage them and strengthen them in their faith in God - particularly for strength and faith to choose to act in ways that demonstrate trust in God.

Psalm 34 was written by David either during or reflecting on this time in the wilderness. Use it as a basis for prayer - trusting God to help each of you in times of affliction.



T - TRUTH

Introduction Can you think of an example of someone who started out the Christian life really well, and then somehow went off the tracks?

It is unfortunately quite common for people to shipwreck their faith through some moment of unguardedness, some overwhelming temptation, the permissiveness of some bad habit or some rash decision. It is especially sobering to know that each of us is at risk. In this passage, David almost has one of these derailing failures - but for God's intervention through Abigail.

Read: 1 Samuel 25

Question: Why was David's initial request to Nabal reasonable?

His message was honouring and respectful. He approached him during a festive time - when Nabal could afford to be generous and kind. The testimony of David and of Nabals servants was that David's men had been very good to them.

Question: How did Nabal live up to his name and his character by his response? What does the passage reveal about his character?

Nabal means "fool" (v25). He was known to be surly and mean in his dealings (v3). He hurled insults at David (v 14). He was such a wicked man that no one could even talk to him (v17)

Question: Why was David so angry? Were his actions justified?

David felt insulted and wanted to get even. While his anger was provoked and understandable, his actions were ungodly and impetuous. He had lost touch with God and forgotten about his anointing - wanting to take things into his own hands and avenge himself (v26).

Question: What does the passage reveal about Abigail's character?

She was intelligent and beautiful (v3). She was approachable (v 14-17). She was resourceful (v18). Courageous, loyal to her husband despite his foolishness. She was humble and intelligent in her dealings with David. She was full of wisdom and insight (v26-31). (Notice how she uses imagery that would have been particularly relevant to David v29). She was sent by God (v 32).

Question: What is the underlying motivation behind Abigail's intervention?

The repeated words in the passage reveal her concern to keep David from bloodshed and from avenging himself with his own hands (v26, 31 & 33). God used her to stop David from sinful failure.

E - EQUIPPING

It is interesting in this passage that the names of both Abigail and Nabal are very closely aligned to their character. Nabal meaning “Fool” and Abigail meaning “my fathers joy”. It is possible that these names were given to them later in life as people observed their character and conduct.

Question: How does our conduct relate to our character?

Our conduct always reflects our character - our behaviour (especially under stress) always reveals what is inside.

Question: If people were to give you a name in line with your character, what do you think it might be? What do you wish it would be?

Abigail's core motivation in pleading with David was to keep him from needless bloodshed and from avenging himself by his own hands. Her concern for David was that no wrongdoing be found in him as long as he lived (v28).

Question: What was the lesson for David in Abigail's intervention?

Reliance on God to fight his battles and faith that God would fulfil his promises (v30).

Question: The story ends with God dealing with Nabal, and with David finding a godly wife. What does this outcome teach regarding trusting God?

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Question: When have you found yourself in a position like David was in?

(When someone has offended you, doesn't give you what you want or what you think you deserve, or when your self-importance is insulted or questioned).

Question: How have you reacted?

Question: Do you still carry bitterness and resentment towards people like Nabal?

Question: Who do you most identify with in this story? (David, Nabal or Abigail). Why?

David's vengeful anger was very quickly halted by Abigail's intervention. He was pliable to God's shaping influence through her. He was even filled with thanks to God for being kept from needless sin and sent Abigail home “in peace” (v35).

Question: How open are you to the reproof and correction of the people God may put in your life to keep you from sin?

M - MISSION

Used by God in this story, Abigail is the real hero. Her beauty, inside and out, helped to shape David's life, keeping him from needless sin and bloodshed and from having his conscience stained and burdened by trying to avenge himself (v31). He was shaped to be a man who would fight the LORD's battles (v 28), not his own.

Question: Like Abigail, what practical intervention can you make to help keep someone from needless sin?

S - SUPPLICATION

As always, the lessons from the ways in which God shaped David's life are often cause for us to reflect, repent and cast ourselves in dependence on God.

- Like Nabal, consider ways in which you have been a fool, living as though God did not exist, uncaring of anyone's needs but your own and provoking others to needless anger.
- Like David, consider ways in which your anger has been aroused because your own identity has been insulted and you have wanted to respond with ungodly personal vengeance.
- Ask God to keep you from sin that can derail your Christian life and witness - especially through being open to the interventions of those who God might send into your life.
- Pray, even as Jesus taught, that God will *"lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*



T - TRUTH

Introduction Again in these passages we find David's time in the wilderness extended. God's anointing of David and his promises to him seem like a distant memory. In his weakness, loss of vision and disconnection with God, instead of genuinely enquiring of the LORD, David starts to make some pragmatic decisions to save his own skin. He said in his heart *"One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is escape..."* (1 Samuel 27:1). This starts a sequence of events which sees David slipping into one of the darkest periods in his life - a time of intense testing and despair which culminates in David's true character being revealed.

READ 1 Samuel 27:1-28:2; 1 Samuel 29:1-30:8

Question David made a series of bad decisions based on his hearts desire to want to escape from Saul. What were some of these bad decisions?

He sought refuge in Philistine territory (enemies of Israel). 1 Samuel 27:1-4

Became subservient to an Israelite king (1 Samuel 27:5)

He engaged in questionable raids of the land south of Israel (1 Samuel 27:8-9)

He lied about it to Achish (1 Samuel 27:10-12)

He agreed to go to war with the Philistines against Israel (1 Samuel 28:1-2)

Question Do you think David was right in making these decisions?

Question How did God intervene to keep David from having the blood of Saul and Jonathan on his hands? What does this teach about God?

The other Philistine kings don't trust that David will really fight for them against Israel and have him sent home (1 Samuel 29:3-7). Despite David's pragmatic escapism, God is still gracious in keeping him from further debilitating sin. God remains faithful in bringing about David's anointing as king by his own hands rather than by David's.

Question How do you imagine David and his men would have felt on returning to their home in Ziklag?

Utter despair. Deep grief. Anger at David, perhaps anger at God. Vengeful and bitter. David may have felt abandoned by God, in fear of his life.

Question How does David respond?

"But David found strength in the LORD his God" (1 Samuel 30:6). In contrast to his men, David, who is at the end of his tether, turns to God to find strength.

E - EQUIPPING

Question: Why do you think David responded like this?

Having tried by his own hands to escape from Saul and avoid suffering and potentially to make himself a king of sorts, David now find himself with his family and possessions destroyed or stolen, his followers threatening to mutiny, and his very life in danger. God had brought him very low and shown him that his failure to trust in God to fulfil his promises and to instead try to be the captain of his own destiny would fail. In the depth of grief, David finally turns to God.

This is something he had learned from Jonathan (1 Samuel 23:15-17) - who had helped David find strength in God and to be reminded on God's promises.

Question Having found strength in God, what does David do? How do his actions show renewed trust in God?

David immediately "inquired of the LORD". His ensuing actions show faithfulness and obedience to God as well as great generosity and more kingly behaviour. He also exhibits an acknowledgement of the fact that their victories and plunder were given from God (1 Samuel 30:23)

A - ACCOUNTABILITY

Question: How do you identify with David is in desire to want to escape and take matters into your own hands?

Question: What experiences have you had where you have been brought low to the point of despair, like David at Ziklag?

Perhaps the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, financial loss, loss of health, loss of security etc.

Question: David's men responded with bitterness, David responded by finding strength in God. How is bitterness destructive?

Hebrews 13:15 *"See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many"*

Question: David found strength through remembering God's promises to him. What promises of God can you rightly claim to find encouragement and strength in the midst of suffering?

"It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever happens, to encourage themselves in God as their Lord and their God, assuring themselves that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble, and good out of evil, to all that love him and are called according to his purpose (ROM 8:28)" Matthew Henry

Question: Where do you see God's hand in shaping the events of these chapters?

M - MISSION

David's Ziklag moment wasn't just his own - it was accentuated by the fact that he bore the responsibility for a ragtag bunch of people who looked to him for leadership, provision and protection. In turning to God for strength he was empowered to continue shouldering the responsibility for these people.

Question: Who are you responsible for? Why is it critical for you to be in-touch with God so that you can lead them well?

Question: David turned to Abiathar the priest to help him inquire of God. Who can you turn to for counsel in your Ziklag moment?

S - SUPPLICATION

God often uses Ziklag experiences to bring a stubborn, straying child back into fellowship with himself. He uses the circumstances around us to back us into a tight corner and to get out attention. And there, with our backs to the wall we can respond in one of two ways, either in bitterness and anger, or in surrender and turning to God to find strength in him.

Spend time in prayer turning your heart to God. Perhaps, like David, you are at a Ziklag moment and need to stop running from God and instead turn to him in faith and trust and find strength in him.

Pray using these verses from Psalm 42. Encourage yourself to put your hope in God. Repent of all the other things you may have been putting your hope in.

"Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you"

Psalm 42:5-6



TRUTH & EQUIPPING

Introduction: While all of the passages we've looked up until now dealt with David in the often tumultuous times before becoming king, the story of David and Bathsheba comes well into David's rule as king over Israel. David was probably in his fifties. He had already served as king for over 20 years, proving himself as an exemplary leader, bringing unity, peace and prosperity to Israel. He was a man of God, a composer of Psalms, a valiant warrior and a gifted administrator. All of God's promises seem to have been fulfilled. His life was full of success and comfort.

When chronicling the history of Israel, the writer of Kings comments that, *"David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD's commands all the days of his life - except in the case of Uriah the Hittite"* (1 Kings 15:5).

Question: Is it surprising to you, that the one dark blot on David's record came in a time of such comfort and prosperity?

Read: Deuteronomy 17:14-17
2 Samuel 5:12-13
2 Samuel 11:1-5

Question: How do these verses shed light on some of the reasons behind David's sin with Bathsheba? How had David's heart been led astray?
Deuteronomy expressly forbid the king to take many wives, lest his heart be led astray. David, acknowledging God's hand in bringing him success as king, still went ahead and took many wives and concubines.

The passage records how, in the season when kings go off to war, David stayed home. While his men and all the Israelite army were off fighting in battle, he was lazily wondering around on the roof of the palace. The city is largely empty, his men and his counsellors are away, and his guard is down. There is an air of boredom about him.

Question How does this all create the perfect context for David's greatest failure?
Boredom, lack of accountability, relinquishment of responsibility. A sense of ease and entitlement, a heart set astray by many wives and concubines - all these things create fertile ground for temptation to take root. David had forgotten God.
"The human heart, unless it be occupied with some employment, leaves space

for the devil, who wriggles himself in and brings with him a whole host of evil thoughts, temptations and tribulations.” - Martin Luther

Read: 2 Samuel 11: 6-27
Proverbs 28:13

Question: **What are the consequences of David's sin?**
Why do the consequences keep snowballing?

The consequences of his initial sin of adultery were Pregnancy, deception, murder, which all resulted in his displeasing God. The more he tried to cover his sin, the more it spread. In the following chapters we read that his sin also brought consequences and judgement from God (even despite God's forgiveness). And it forever remains a blot on his record.

Question: **Of all these consequences, which do you suppose was most grievous?**

Read: Psalm 32: 3-4

For David, a man known for having a heart after God, the most grievous consequence of his multiplied sin was God's displeasure and silence and God's heavy hand of discipline.

David probably carried this sin for about a year. A year of suffering in silence and secrecy under the heavy hand of God's displeasure.

Question: **How is God's displeasure and heavy "hand of discipline" a sign of his redemptive love?**

Read: 2 Samuel 12:1-14

Question: **How does God take the initiative in bringing David to repentance?**
Sends Nathan to wisely confront him

Question: **From these verses, what is God's chief complaint against David?**
God is angry and grieved that despite all he had done for David and given him, that David had despised the word of the LORD and had despised the LORD himself.

Question: **How does David's confession echo God's accusation?**
David acknowledges first and foremost that he had sinned against the LORD. In Psalm 51 he says "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight".

Question: **What is the immediate result of David's confession? How is this different from David's response to the parable Nathan told?**

Question: **On what basis did God forgive David?**
Nathan immediately responds that the LORD has taken away his sin. Christ Jesus

was called the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

Question: Did God’s forgiveness remove the consequences of sin?

Question: From Psalm 51: 4, how did David respond to God’s judgement?

ACCOUNTABILITY & SUPPLICATION

Spend some time in personal reflection and prayer before God. Use some of these questions below to interrogate your heart. Ask God through his Spirit to shed light on areas where you may be at risk, or ways in which you have sinned against God and displeased him. Confess your sin to the LORD and know that his immediate response is one of compassion and forgiveness. Give thanks to God that he will not despise a broken and contrite heart.

Typically in our culture we glorify the thoughts of ease and comfort. We want to retire comfortably, we want lush holidays, we want beautiful homes with every convenience and cars that can drive themselves. In the life of David, ironically, his greatest successes came in times of great difficulty, but his greatest failure came after a long time of immense prosperity.

- Questions:
- Which phases in David’s life do you most identify with?
 - Are you successful? Comfortable? Bored?
 - Do you look back on distant experience of God’s closeness?
 - Are there things in your life which might be leading your heart astray?

The story of David’s life, a great king with a heart after God, teaches us that none of us is too good to fail horribly. If you are in a phase of ease and comfort, then consider how you can guard your heart.

In Psalm 32, 3-4, David records how when he kept silent and tried to hide from God, his bones wasted away and God’s hand of discipline was heavily upon him. And in Psalm 51, he records how he had lost the joy of his salvation.

- Questions:
- Are you in a place like this?
 - Have you sinned and chosen to hide from God?
 - Do you feel his heavy hand of discipline on you?

M - MISSION

In Psalm 51, after recounting his repentance and the mercy, forgiveness and restoration of God, David prays that he would then be able to teach transgressors God’s ways and turn sinners back to Him. God even redeemed David’s greatest failure to be a source of encouragement and shaping for him and every generation since.

Question: If God has forgiven you for much, who can you tell? How can God redeem your failures to be used as a testimony to his mercy?



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