

09 - 1 Samuel

1:1 - 31-13

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO 1 & 2 SAMUEL

The book of Judges ends with the words, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." The books of Samuel describe the transition of Israel from a loose confederation of tribes into a monarchy. Samuel himself was the bridge. He personally opposed the monarchy, for he saw the people's desire for a king as a rejection of God's rule. But he was the king-maker, the man who anointed both Saul who failed, and David who became the model for all the kings who followed him.

God himself raises up shepherds for his people. The key verse is 1Sa 2:30: "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained." Who, then, is the leader who can serve God and God's people? 1 Samuel deals with this question with two contrasts: Eli's sons, heirs to the priesthood, were corrupt; Samuel, who obeyed God's word from his youth, replaced them. Then the writer contrasts Saul and David. David is called a man after God's own heart. 1 Samuel is about his training in the wilderness. 2 Samuel is about his life as the shepherd king who founded the monarchy. His kingdom fulfilled prophecy by expanding the borders of Israel to include the land God promised Abraham; it became a symbol of the messianic kingdom of Christ, the descendant of David who would come to restore all things. Thus, God prepared his people to put their hope in the kingdom of God.

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel 1:1-20

Key Verse: 1:20

1. Elkanah's family (1-8)

The period of the Judges was a time of spiritual famine. Elkanah's family reflects the darkness of the times, as well as the flickering light of faith still burning in the hearts of a few faithful men and women. Elkanah had two wives. Peninnah had children but Hannah was barren. Elkanah loved Hannah and tried to comfort her. His house was full of jealousy and rivalry. But in spite of human problems and a generally low level of spiritual life in the land, this family did their best to worship God according to his law.

2. Hannah's prayer (9-20)

Perhaps if Hannah had had no problem, she might not have prayed so sincerely. But her misery drove her to come in bitterness of soul to weep and pray to the Lord. She made a vow to God. No one in those days prayed fervently, so Eli the priest thought she was drunk. When she explained,

he blessed her, confirming her vow. His blessing planted faith in her heart. In time, God gave her a son.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for a faithful remnant of your people who seek you even in the darkest of times.

One Word: Her face was no longer downcast

HANNAH KEEPS HER PROMISE

1 Samuel 1:21-28

Key Verse: 1:27,28

1. Keep your word (21-23)

Hannah did not go up for the annual sacrifice; she stayed home with her new baby. Her husband reminded her of her vow. She must have struggled a lot, but she made a decision to keep her promise to God. She would take her son to the temple in Shiloh and leave him there to serve God all his life.

2. Hannah gives Samuel to the Lord (24-28)

Samuel was a very young boy when his parents took him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. They might have found many excuses not to leave him there: Eli was an old man; he had not raised his own sons very well; Samuel was too young--he might get homesick. But they made no excuses. After offering a sacrifice to the Lord, Hannah told Eli that the Lord had answered her prayer and given her a son. Now she was giving him to the Lord for his whole life. She knew that the living God had answered her prayer. Hannah feared God and kept her promise.

Prayer: Lord, grant mothers of prayer like Hannah for our times.

One Word: Given to the Lord--for keeps

HANNAH'S SONG

1 Samuel 2:1-11

Key Verse: 2:1

1. My heart rejoices in the Lord (1-5)

Hannah's bitterest and most painful problem became the wellspring of her greatest joy. She had been childless, and full of despair and fatalism. To make matters worse, her rival continually tormented her. But she took her problem to the Lord. She tasted his mercy and kindness and love. Her heart rejoiced--not just in her son, but in the Lord who heard her prayer and who

understood her situation and gave her victory over her enemy. Our problems are opportunities to meet and know God.

2. The Lord brings death and makes alive (6-11)

Hannah learned about the Creator God. He exalts the humble and humbles the proud. He has life and death in his hand. He is the almighty God who guards the feet of his saints and silences the wicked. He is the almighty God of resurrection power. Hannah learned to rejoice in God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to rejoice in you with my whole heart, and help me to write a song of praise.

One Word: Rejoice in the Lord

THOSE WHO HONOR ME I WILL HONOR

1 Samuel 2:12-36

Key Verse: 2:30b

1. Eli's wicked sons and Samuel (12-26)

Eli's sons were priests, but they acted like unbelievers. They used their office to satisfy their personal greed and their flesh desires. They showed utter disregard for the Lord (2:12-17;22-25). By contrast, Samuel was growing up in the presence of the Lord (18-21,26). Eli rebuked his sons, but they did not listen. Why? He honored his sons more than he honored God (29b).

2. I will raise up a faithful priest (27-36)

A man of God visited Eli with a message from God. God had promised Eli's forefathers that his descendants would minister before the Lord forever. But God's promises must be claimed by obedient faith from generation to generation. Eli and his sons had forfeited the privilege of serving as priests. God would raise up for himself a faithful priest. Samuel partially fulfilled this; but Jesus our great high priest is the faithful priest God promised.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to honor you by giving you first place in my heart.

One Word: Those who honor me I will honor

THE LORD CALLS SAMUEL

1 Samuel 3:1-21

Key Verse: 3:10

1. The word of the Lord was rare (1-9)

People lived in darkness and in spiritual ignorance because there was no word of God and no vision from God. The lamp of God flickered, but it had not gone out--there was a faithful mother who prayed. Samuel lived by his mother's faith. Then God called him. At first, he thought Eli was calling, but the old priest finally realized that God was calling the boy. When God called again, Samuel said, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

2. Speak, for your servant is listening (10-21)

God told Samuel about the impending judgment on the house of Eli. How could a little boy tell such news to the old man he loved and respected? But Eli taught Samuel that a prophet's responsibility is to speak the whole truth of God. So Samuel told him everything. Samuel feared God and honored his word, so God entrusted his word to Samuel, and the word of God through Samuel came to all Israel.

Prayer: Lord, give me faith and courage to speak and teach your word without fear.

One Word: Speak, for your servant listens

THE GLORY DEPARTS FROM ISRAEL

1 Samuel 4:1-22

Key Verse: 4:22

1. The Philistines capture the ark (1-11)

The war with Philistia was going against Israel. After one bitter defeat, the elders of Israel decided to bring the ark of the Lord to the battle. They did not pray or seek God's help. They made the ark an object of superstition. When the Philistines first heard that the ark had been brought into the camp of Israel, they were terrified. They had heard of how the God of Israel had struck Egypt. But they decided to do their best and fight Israel with all their strength. They did and they won. Courage and spirit defeat superstition.

2. The glory has departed from Israel (12-22)

The ark was captured; the two sons of Eli were killed. When a messenger bearing these tidings told Eli, he fell over backward and died. His daughter-in-law gave birth to a son. This baby boy could have represented new hope, but she despaired--and named him, "The glory has departed from Israel." God has no glory if his people have no faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by faith, not by superstition. Let not your glory depart from us.

One Word: Have faith--not superstition

THE ARK OF GOD IN PHILISTINE HANDS

1 Samuel 5:1-12

Key Verse: 5:3

1. Dagon falls on his face (1-5)

When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant of God they were jubilant. They carried it to the temple of Dagon their god. They thought they had conquered God, and could make him serve them. They treated the ark like an idol. They thought the God of Israel would bring them good luck. But God showed them that he does not compromise with idol worship. Dagon fell on his face and broke.

2. God's hand was heavy on the Philistines(6-12)

When God comes among sinful, unrepentant people he brings curse, not blessing. He afflicted the people of Ashdod with large tumors, some malignant, on their necks and backs and noses. So they decided to send the ark to Gath. When the Gathites suffered in the same way, they sent it to Ekron. The men of Ekron panicked and said, "Let's send it home to Israel." God cannot be used like a good luck piece.

Prayer: Lord, purge my heart of superstition and compromise.

One Word: The living God hates idols

THE ARK IS RETURNED

1 Samuel 6:1-21

Key Verse: 6:12

1. Pay honor to Israel's God (1-6)

Sickness, death and panic broke out wherever the Philistines put the ark of God. They were afraid to destroy it, so they decided to send it back. But how? There were some pagan priests who knew history. They knew how God had dealt with the Egyptians who oppressed Israel. They advised the Philistines to send a guilt offering with the ark and pay honor to Israel's God. They knew more about God than did the corrupt leaders of Israel.

2. Two lowing cows (7-21)

The Philistine diviners wanted to know for sure that what had happened was God's doing, not just an accident. When the lowing cows defied their natural feelings and pulled the cart with the ark on it straight to Beth Shemesh in Israel, the Philistines knew that what had happened to them was from the hand of God. Some Israelites who did not respect the ark of the Lord died because of their curiosity.

Prayer: Lord, help me to honor you with awesome respect.

One Word: Even cows know their master

EBENEZER

1 Samuel 7:1-17

Key Verse: 7:12

1. The people repent (1-6)

After the Philistine victory and God's judgment on those who had treated the ark with disrespect, the people began to realize the depth of their sin. Samuel told them that the only way out from under the oppression of the Philistines was to repent. Repentance means putting away all idols and turning to the Lord with all one's heart (3). It took 20 years of Bible study and suffering, but, finally, one day they assembled at Mizpah and repented. Samuel prayed for them.

2. Thus far has the Lord helped us (7-17)

While they were fasting and praying, the Philistines assembled to attack. The Lord routed the enemy and delivered Israel. After this they had peace, and Samuel was their leader. He put up the Ebenezer stone to remind them of God's faithfulness to answer prayer, and of his grace.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us that real security is found only in the help you are so ready to give when we repent.

One Word: God has helped us thus far

GIVE US A KING

1 Samuel 8:1-22

Key Verse: 8:6

1. The people ask for a king (1-5)

During the period of the judges, everyone did what was right in his own eyes, and the land was full of idolatry and lawlessness. Samuel had filled the leadership void, but Samuel was getting old and his sons were corrupt. The elders of Israel asked him to appoint a king to lead them. They wanted to be like the other nations.

2. Samuel prays about it (6-22)

Samuel saw their request as a rejection of himself--and a rejection of God, for God was their king. They did not have to be like the other nations, for they were God's people. God himself was

their defense. So Samuel prayed. God told Samuel that he was right; their request came from wrong motives. But if, after being made aware of all the dangers of a monarchy, they still wanted a king, he was to grant their request. God himself planned to establish a kingdom--for his own reasons (Dt 17:14-20).

Prayer: Lord, when I feel that I am right, and others seem wrong, help me to pray.

One Word: In times of change, pray

SAUL

1 Samuel 9:1-27

Key Verse: 9:16

1. Looking for lost donkeys (1-14)

Saul looked like a leader. He was tall and handsome, an impressive young man, without equal in Israel. He was family-centered, and had a strong sense of responsibility; it was his search for his father's lost donkeys that took him to Samuel the prophet.

2. My people's cry has reached me (15-27)

God's hand was in this event. His shepherd's heart was moved by the suffering of his people, and he gave them a shepherd. He chose Saul to be their leader and deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. God led Saul to Samuel so that Samuel might anoint him king. Saul was leadership material. He was humanly humble (21), and he was able. But every man must be tested. The leader of God's people must not only have ability; he must be spiritually humble enough to receive God's training.

Prayer: Lord, only you can raise up leaders. Grant able and humble men and women who can be shepherds and Bible teachers.

One Word: God hears his people's cry

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

1 Samuel 10:1-27

Key Verse: 10:6

1. God changes Saul's heart (1-16)

Samuel anointed Saul leader over God's people. He told him in detail about some events that would occur on the way home--signs which would confirm God's calling. Most importantly, God's Spirit would come upon him in power and change him into a different person. The leader

of God's people needs more than human ability. He needs God's Spirit; he needs spiritual power and discernment. As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed his heart.

2. Samuel assembles the people in Mizpah (17-27)

Samuel was not happy about the people's insistence on a king, but he was pleased with Saul. Saul was humanly very humble. When he was brought out of his hiding place and introduced to the people, they shouted, "Long live the king!" He looked like a king. Samuel taught him about kingship through one-to-one Bible study (Dt 17).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for raising up leaders and equipping them with your word and Spirit to serve your people.

One Word: God changed Saul's heart

SAUL'S KINGSHIP CONFIRMED

1 Samuel 11:1-15

Key Verse: 11:15

1. Tragedy in Jabesh Gilead (1-5)

Saul did not act like a king. He still plowed his father's oxen. Then something happened. The Ammonites besieged Jabesh. The men of Jabesh were powerless to defend themselves against the militant and sadistic Ammonites. They could only surrender--but the terms of surrender were terrible. As a last resort, they sent messengers throughout Israel asking for help.

2. Saul burns with anger (6-15)

Israel was a loose confederation of tribes; they didn't know how to help each other. When the people of Israel heard about Jabesh, they wept in helpless rage. But when Saul heard, he burned with anger; the Spirit of God came on him. His family-centered life ended. He summoned Israel in a dramatic way to follow him to battle; the terror of the Lord fell on them all and they gathered as one man, fought and completely defeated the Ammonites.

Prayer: Lord, give us burning anger at unrighteousness and evil.

One Word: A man filled with God's Spirit

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

1 Samuel 12:1-25

Key Verse: 12:23

1. Both you and your king must obey God (1-15)

From Samuel's point of view, it was a sin for the people to ask for a king. But in the real world of war and politics, it was inevitable. God also had a plan for the kingdom. He even provided rules for kings in Deuteronomy 17. To Samuel, however, it was a rejection of the kingship of God. He reminded them of how God their king had provided shepherds for them in every time of need. Then he warned them that they and their king must follow the ways of the Lord as top priority.

2. I will not fail to pray for you (16-25)

God sent a severe and unseasonable thunder storm to reinforce Samuel's words, and the people were terrified. They asked Samuel to pray for them. Samuel was God's servant and their shepherd. Even though they had rejected his leadership he could not abandon them. His commitment was to God; he must teach them the Bible and pray for them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to pray for your people and teach the Bible as long as I live.

One Word: Pray for God's people

SAUL DISOBEYS GOD

1 Samuel 13:1-15

Key Verse: 13:13,14

1. The Philistine threat (1-7)

Saul was king. He faced insurmountable odds, for the Philistine oppressors had the latest state-of-the-art military equipment and their army was as numerous as the sands of the sea. Saul was a man of great human ability; he had God's help and the support of all the people. He seemed to be humble, but this crisis revealed the human pride which led to his downfall. Saul's son, Jonathan, attacked a Philistine outpost, and the powerful Philistines assembled to fight Israel. The Israelites trembled in fear and Saul's untrained, ill-equipped army began to fall apart.

2. Saul's impatience (8-15)

Time was of the essence. Saul thought he had to attack or his army would run away. Samuel had told him to wait, but Saul couldn't wait. He offered the before-the-battle sacrifice himself. His impatience came from pride, and a lack of respect for the Lord's servant. Impatience is unbelief. God must look further for a man after his own heart.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to wait on you.

One Word: Trust God and wait on his time

JONATHAN'S FAITH

1 Samuel 13:16-14:23

Key Verse: 14:6b

1. "Nothing can hinder the Lord..." (13:16-14:14)

Saul had about 600 men, and they didn't even have swords and spears, for the Philistines didn't allow blacksmiths in Israel. The Philistines were as numerous as the sand of the sea. The situation looked hopeless. But Jonathan believed that the Lord could save his people, whether by many or few. He didn't know what to do, but he decided to go and see. He sought God's leading. Then by faith, he and his armor bearer launched a two-man, uphill attack on a Philistine outpost--and God was with them.

2. The Lord rescues Israel (14:15-23)

God blessed the faith of one man. When Jonathan attacked and defeated the Philistines, they became confused and began to fight each other. Saul saw his enemies in panic, attacked and completely routed them. The Lord rescued Israel through the faith of Jonathan and an armor bearer who shared his faith.

Prayer: Lord, I believe that nothing can hinder you from saving. Give me faith to challenge the stronghold of Satan in America. Make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

One Word: One man of faith is enough

SAUL'S FOOLISH OATH

1 Samuel 14:24-52

Key Verse: 14:45

1. Saul's oath (24-30)

Saul needed to humble himself before God and repent, but he didn't. Instead, he made a foolish oath that revealed his pride and self-centeredness. He made a vow which forbade his soldiers to eat until he had revenge on his enemies. He was not fighting for the Lord's honor or for his people. The stage was set for tragedy when Jonathan, in ignorance, tasted a little honey. When he was told of his father's oath, he saw his father's lack of wisdom. Hungry men can't fight.

2. The people save Jonathan (31-52)

Toward evening, the victorious but exhausted and hungry men pounced on the plunder and began eating raw meat, violating the law of Moses. Because of this, all of their strength and spirit left them and they could not finish the fight. When Saul investigated to find the cause, he found that Jonathan was guilty of violating his decree; Jonathan should die. But when the people

defended Jonathan, Saul capitulated. Perhaps it was right to spare Jonathan, but Saul showed that he lived before men, not before God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live humbly before you, and do your work in your way.

One Word: Serve God with a humble heart

THE LORD REJECTS SAUL AS KING

1 Samuel 15:1-35

Key Verse: 15:22b

1. God gives Saul a mission (1-9)

The Amalekites had taken advantage of God's people when they were most vulnerable (Dt 25:17-19). God called Saul to be his instrument of judgment to punish them. He wanted to test Saul and train him for leadership. Saul started well, but when the time came to carry out God's hard commands, he interpreted them in his own way; he listened to his soldiers and compromised.

2. To obey is better than sacrifice (10-35)

The Lord was grieved that he had made Saul king. While Samuel cried out all night to the Lord, Saul went to Carmel to erect a monument to himself. When Samuel confronted Saul (17,18), Saul was full of excuses. He did not repent. He said he wanted to offer a sacrifice to God. But God does not want such sacrifices; he wants obedience. Disobedience is rebellion and comes from arrogance (22,23).

Prayer: Lord, remove pride and rebelliousness from my heart and teach me to obey you absolutely.

One Word: To obey is better than sacrifice

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Key Verse: 16:7b

1. The Lord looks at the heart (1-13)

The Lord rejected Saul as king, and sought a man after his own heart. He sent Samuel to the home of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's eight sons king of Israel. Samuel was impressed by the handsome appearance of Eliab the oldest. But God does not look at the outer appearance; he

looks at the heart. He saw the heart of David the shepherd boy, Jesse's youngest son. When Samuel anointed David, the Spirit of God came on him in power.

2. David in Saul's service (14-23)

When the Spirit of God left Saul, an evil spirit came in to torment him. Saul's advisors recommended music therapy, and they told him about David, a brave man and a warrior who played the harp. He was handsome and spoke well, and the Lord was with him. He entered Saul's service and his music soothed Saul. Saul did not know about Samuel's anointing of David.

Prayer: Lord, let your Spirit fill me so that I can be free of the power of evil spirits, and serve you and others.

One Word: God looks at the heart

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17:1-58

Key Verse: 17:47

1. The Philistine (1-11)

Goliath was a man of awesome appearance (4-7). He came out of the Philistine camp to the DMZ twice a day and shouted an insulting challenge to the army of Israel (4,16,23). He invited anyone with guts to do it to come out and fight him in a battle that would decide the outcome of the war. Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified (11), and no one dared accept his challenge.

2. The shepherd boy (12-58)

Jesse's older sons had followed Saul to war while his youngest son David tended his father's sheep. When David came to Saul's camp with homemade bread for his brothers, he heard Goliath's challenge. He was amazed that everyone fled in fear, and no one did anything when this godless Philistine insulted the living God. In spite of his brother's rebuke, David volunteered to fight. He trusted God who had delivered him from the paw of the lion. He refused Saul's armor and took his sling and 5 stones. God was with him; the giant fell, and the victory was Israel's.

Prayer: Lord, help me to honor your name and fight giants by faith.

One Word: The battle is the Lord's

THE MAN WHOM EVERYONE LOVED

1 Samuel 18:1-30

Key Verse: 18:12

1. David's popularity; Saul's jealousy (1-19)

David was a man after God's own heart, and everyone loved him--with one exception. When King Saul heard the women singing David's praise, the demon of jealousy came into his heart. From that time to the end of his life he hated and feared David. David's love for God overflowed into those around him. Jonathan's love for David is the classic example of a friendship that enriches the lives of strong men. Israel and Judah loved David because he was their shepherd. Saul's daughter Michal also loved David.

2. Saul plots to kill David (20-30)

The Spirit of the Lord left Saul. When he became jealous of David, an evil spirit entered him. He hurled a spear at David, but missed. Then, he plotted to trap David with a promise of marriage to Michal. The bride price was 100 Philistine foreskins. Saul thought that the Philistines would kill David. But David killed 200 Philistines and brought the full price to Saul.

Prayer: Lord, give me your Spirit so that I may love and not hate; protect my heart from the demon of jealousy.

One Word: A man who loved God

DAVID MAKES GOOD HIS ESCAPE

1 Samuel 19:1-24

Key Verse: 19:5

1. Jonathan intercedes for David (1-7)

Because of his jealousy, King Saul gave orders to all his attendants and to his son to kill David. Jonathan risked his father's anger and warned David, then he reminded Saul of David's faithful service to his king and nation. Saul listened and vowed that David would not be put to death; David again served Saul as before--but not for long. Saul's demon again rose up.

2. God protects David (8-24)

This time, David escaped from his home with the help of Michal, but when Saul rebuked his daughter, she was not clear about whose side she was on. She was different from her brother Jonathan--God was in his friendship with David. Her human love was not strong enough to make her faithful. David fled to Samuel, God's servant. When Saul sent men to capture him, God protected him in a strange way. Those who came--including Saul himself--were overpowered by the Spirit of God and prophesied.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love you and do your work with my whole heart, trusting you to protect me.

One Word: God protects his servants

DAVID AND JONATHAN

1 Samuel 20:1-42

Key Verse: 20:42

1. Jonathan's love for David (1-17)

Jonathan and David were real friends. Their love was pure, for it was based on their love for God. These days, such friendship is rare--for men without God can't respect or trust one another. In godless relationships selfish people use each other. So people are lonely. Jonathan was the crown prince, but he knew that not he but David would be the next king. He loved David more than he loved the crown. They made a covenant--and they both kept it.

2. David wept the most (18-42)

Jonathan could not believe that his father plotted David's death, so he proposed a test. If Saul were planning to kill David, David's absence from the feast would thwart any such plan, and spark Saul's anger. And that is what happened. When Saul learned that David was absent, he became so angry that he almost killed Jonathan. Jonathan left the feast in anger and went out to warn David. David must leave. They parted with tears, but their bond of friendship was never broken. David wept the most.

Prayer: Lord, give us true friendships based on the love of God.

One Word: Real friends love God first

DAVID BECOMES A FUGITIVE

1 Samuel 21:1-15

Key Verse: 21:9

1. Why are you alone? (1-9)

David, the man after God's own heart, the anointed king, became a man without a country. Saul's jealousy knew no bounds and he was determined to kill David. So David fled. Ahimelech the priest of Nob trembled when he saw him, for he knew that something was wrong. But he helped David anyway. He gave him bread which only priests should eat, and a sword. For his own protection, David did not tell the priest what had happened. But this event cost Ahimelech his life.

2. David feigns madness (10-15)

David had no place to go, so he went to Achish king of Gath. But his fame went before him, and he was in trouble. He put on a show, acting like a madman. He convinced the Philistines that he was insane, and they threw him out. God used the wilderness life to humble David, and to teach him to depend on God alone. Saul had no training; he stumbled over his own pride and failed. God disciplines those he loves.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your loving discipline. Help me to trust your love and depend on you alone.

One Word: Rejected by men; alone with God

SHEPHERD OF OUTCASTS

1 Samuel 22:1-23

Key Verse: 22:2

1. A motley flock of sheep (1-5)

David was a fugitive, fleeing from King Saul, but he was still a shepherd. All those in trouble and distress came to him, and he became their shepherd. He sent his own family into exile in Moab, and took care of the outcast, homeless people who had come to him. These men became the nucleus of a strong army.

2. A false shepherd (6-23)

Saul the king should have been the shepherd of his people, but he was full of an evil spirit of jealousy. He didn't care about God or man--he only wanted to kill David. When he rebuked his officials for not cooperating, a foreigner, Doeg the Edomite, told him that Ahimelech the priest who lived in Nob had helped David. Ahimelech pointed out David's loyalty to Saul. None of the king's men would carry out his order to execute the priests, so the king ordered Doeg to do it. Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, escaped and joined David.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing me that titles and authority don't make shepherds. Raise up real shepherds like David for the young people of this land.

One Word: A shepherd heart makes a shepherd

DAVID FINDS STRENGTH IN GOD

1 Samuel 23:1-29 (Thur.) Sept. 12

Key Verse: 23:16

1. David inquires of the Lord (1-14)

When David heard that the city of Keilah was being harassed by the Philistines, he prayed about it. God told him to go and attack the Philistines and save the city, but his men were afraid. He prayed again and God assured him of victory, so he went and fought and won. He saved the city. Saul heard that David was at Keilah. David didn't put his trust in the people he had helped; he prayed, and God told him that the people of Keilah would betray him. So he left. People are quick to forget their benefactors and God's grace.

2. Jonathan helps him find strength in God (15-29)

Saul searched for David night and day, but God protected him. While he was in the desert of Ziph, Jonathan helped him find strength in God. He reminded David of God's promises. They made a covenant before the Lord. The Ziphites, however, betrayed David to Saul, and he was almost captured. God protected him, and he escaped.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for friends and shepherds who help me find strength in you. Help me to be such a shepherd and friend to others.

One Word: He strengthened him in the Lord

I WILL NOT TOUCH THE LORD'S ANOINTED

1 Samuel 24:1-22

Key Verse: 24:6

1. The Lord gives Saul into David's hands (1-7)

Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines and came after David with an army of 3000 men. He did not know that David and his men were hiding in the back of the cave when he went in to relieve himself. David might have thought that this was his God-given opportunity to get rid of his enemy. This was natural. But David didn't touch Saul; he restrained his men. He respected Saul's life because he feared and loved God who had anointed Saul king.

2. Saul knows that David will be king (8-22)

After being undetected when he cut off a corner of the king's robe, David called out to the king. Saul was moved by David's refusal to kill him when he had the opportunity. He wept, and confessed the truth he knew in his heart--David would be the next king, and God would establish his kingdom. The Lord honors those who honor him (2:30).

Prayer: Lord, teach me how to love and honor you by respecting your servants and your children.

One Word: God blesses those who honor him

DAVID AND ABIGAIL

1 Samuel 25:1-44

Key Verse: 25:33

1. Nabal's rudeness (1-13)

David and his band lived in the desert like outlaws, but they did not prey on the people; rather, they protected them from the Philistines. When all the shepherds gathered at festival time, David expected a goodwill gift from Nabal, a rich property owner. But Nabal insulted David; he saw him as a miserable outlaw (10). He sent David's men away empty-handed.

2. Abigail's gracefulness (14-44)

David was angry and put on his sword. But Abigail, the beautiful and intelligent wife of Nabal, came to meet him with abundant provisions. She believed God's promises. She respected David as God's servant; she recognized him as the man God had chosen to be the king. She reminded him that a man of God must not seek personal revenge. She helped David to see his life from God's point of view. He thanked her. Later, when Nabal died of a stroke, he married her.

Prayer: Lord, give me faith to see beyond human conditions to recognize your work.

One Word: Encourage God's servants

DAVID VALUES SAUL'S LIFE

1 Samuel 26:1-25

Key Verses: 23,24

1. Saul's search and destroy party (1-11)

When the Ziphites reported David's whereabouts to Saul, he set out with 3000 men to find and kill him. But David discovered his camp and, with Abishai, brother of General Joab, he crept to the place where Saul was sleeping. For the second time he had a chance to kill Saul. Abishai saw this as a God-given opportunity to destroy their enemy--but David didn't see it that way. He restrained Abishai. David would not be seduced by opportunity to act against his principles and violate his conscience. He would not touch the Lord's anointed.

2. "So may the Lord value my life." (12-25)

David took Saul's spear and water jar; he stood on a high hill and rebuked General Abner, Saul's commanding officer. Saul recognized David; he was moved by David's restraint, and promised not to harm him. David made it clear that it was for the Lord's sake that he had spared Saul. He

valued Saul's life because he was the Lord's anointed. David did not trust Saul, but he loved and feared God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the true respect for human life that is based on your love for all people.

One Word: Value those whom God loves

DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES

1 Samuel 27:1-12

Key Verse: 27:1

1. David leaves Israel (1-7)

David decided that he was safer with his Philistine enemies than in his own country, so he went to Achish king of Gath. Perhaps this decision came from human calculations. Achish had realized that Saul was more eager to kill David than to kill Philistines, so he welcomed David as a friend, a man with a common enemy, and gave him permission to live in Ziklag. David and his men took their families and lived there in Philistine territory for a year and four months.

2. Survival among the Philistines (8-12)

Achish did not understand David at all. David was in a dilemma. He had left Israel, but he was not an enemy of Israel, nor of Saul. He and his men raided the Amalekites and other people who were the enemies of Israel, then he brought back the spoils to Achish, telling him that they were from this or that city of Judah. So Achish came to trust David. David was faithful to the Lord's people even when they rejected him.

Prayer: Lord, help me be faithful to you and to your people in any circumstance.

One Word: Survival by God's grace

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR

1 Samuel 28:1-25

Key Verse: 28:18

1. Saul's terror (1-11)

The Philistines mustered their forces for a great drive to destroy Israel. David was in trouble, but Saul was in more trouble. Saul was terrified when he saw the Philistine army assembling for the final showdown. His shepherd Samuel was dead; he tried to pray, but his unrepentant heart had cut him off from God. He knew that God's word forbids consulting a medium or a spiritist or any

such person, and he had driven them out of Israel. But now in his terror and desperation, he sought the help of a servant of the devil.

2. Because you did not obey the Lord (12-25)

The medium succeeded in bringing up the spirit of Samuel. But Samuel was angry. He rebuked Saul and predicted his defeat and death. And he told him that the Lord would give the kingdom to David. All of this tragedy came about because Saul did not obey the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey your word and not become like Saul.

One Word: Repent, pray and obey the Lord

DAVID SENT BACK FROM THE WAR

1 Samuel 29:1-11

Key Verse: 29:5

1. Achish's dispute about David (1-5)

When the Philistine kings marched out to fight Israel, David and his men were marching in the rear with Achish. The Philistine king had included him in the Philistine forces because he trusted him. Now David was on the spot! He had gotten himself into an impossible situation. He had allied himself with Achish and accepted his hospitality; but now he had to fight his own people.

2. Turn back and go in peace (6-11)

God intervened in a strange way. The Philistine rulers didn't trust David. They remembered how the women of Israel had sung about his exploits. So they overruled Achish. Achish was sorry to send David back, but he yielded to the wisdom of his allies and sent him back to Ziklag. Surely God's hand was in this.

Prayer: Lord, because of my human calculations, I get myself into situations that I can't get out of. Teach me not to panic, but to wait on you.

One Word: Don't panic; wait on God

DAVID FOUND STRENGTH IN THE LORD

1 Samuel 30:1-31

Key Verse: 30:6b

1. The Amalekite raid (1-6)

When David and his men returned home, they found that tragedy had struck. The Amalekites had attacked the helpless city, burned it and taken captive all the women, including David's wives. David and his men wept aloud until they had no more strength to weep. The men were so bitter that they even talked about stoning David. David found strength in the Lord.

2. Tragedy turned into glorious victory (7-31)

David did not rush after the enemy. He first asked the Lord what to do. Then, with clear direction from the Lord, he pursued the Amalekites. His men were exhausted, and it was impossible to find the enemy in that wild country. But God provided a guide; they surprised the Amalekites and recovered everything, plus other plunder. David distributed the plunder fairly and used it wisely.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to depend on you in prayer and turn times of distress into glorious victory.

One Word: Find strength in the Lord

SAUL'S DEATH

1 Samuel 31:1-13

Key Verse: 31:12a

1. Saul kills himself (1-10)

Just as the medium of Endor predicted, Saul and his sons died in defeat and disgrace in the battle with the Philistines. Saul was critically wounded, but alive. He begged his armor-bearer to kill him, but the armor-bearer feared God and could not. So Saul fell on his own sword and died. The Philistines put his armor in the temple of their god and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. They celebrated their victory over the God of Israel.

2. Some valiant men (11-13)

Saul had begun his reign with an heroic act. He had rescued the city of Jabesh Gilead from the sadistic Ammonite king Nahash (1Sa 11). The men of Jabesh Gilead did not forget this. They risked their lives to recover the bodies of Saul and his sons from shameful exposure by the Philistines, and gave them a decent burial. They mourned the death of Saul.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember your grace and your servant's gracious deeds.

One Word: Don't forget a gracious deed