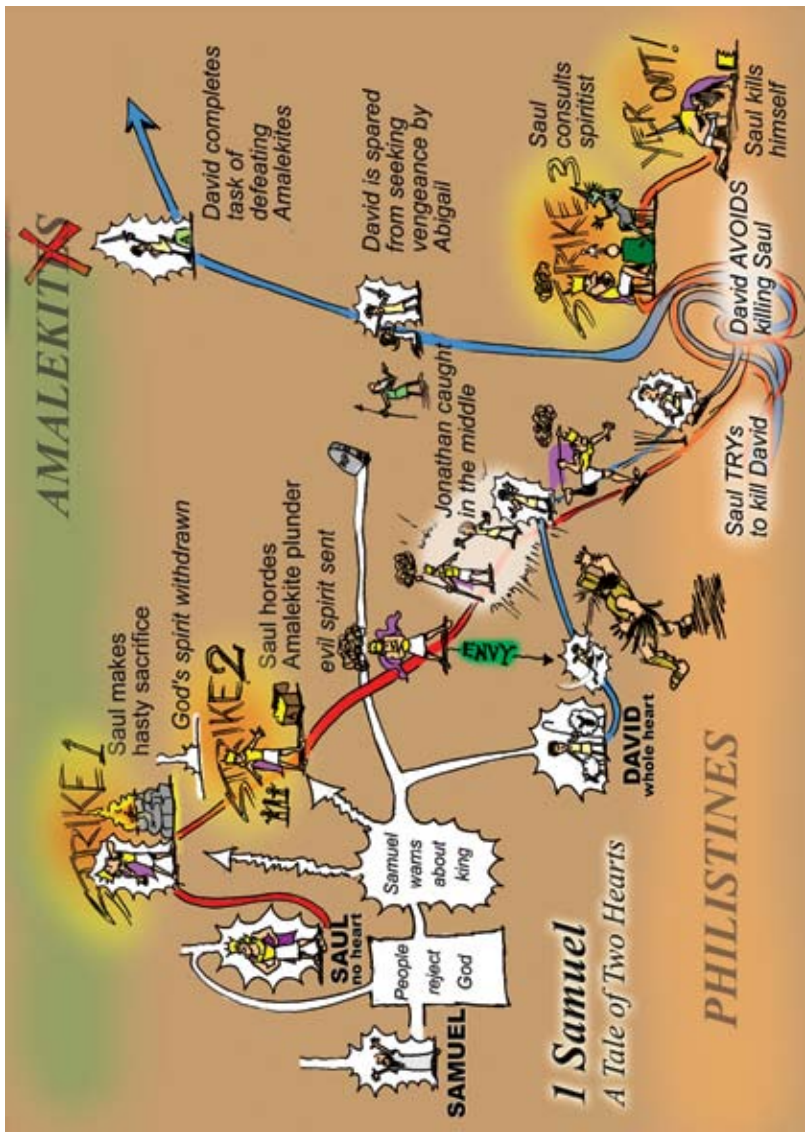


# 1 Samuel



Monday: 1 Samuel 13-17

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 18-22

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 23-27

Thursday: 1 Samuel 28-2 Samuel 2

Friday: 2 Samuel 3-6

# Introduction

## 1 Samuel: A Tale of Two Hearts

This week we will be spending most of our time in the book of 1 Samuel. It is interesting to note that when 1 and 2 Samuel were originally written they were one book. The scroll was so big that it was decided by those who had to lug it around all the time to divide it into two separate scrolls.

1 Samuel can be broken into two major parts. Last week we looked at the first part.

### Part 1: Samuel

Samuel was the last of his kind. He was the final Judge and served as a prophet of God. He was the baton-passer who helped to transition the nation of Israel from the era of theocracy in which the Law of God ruled the people, into the era of the monarchy in which a human king ruled the people.

As you look at the chart you will see that Samuel served a key role in the anointing of the two major characters in this story. He first anointed Saul as king, then, seeing that Saul was headed in the wrong direction, quickly anointed the little shepherd boy to be the true king of Israel.

## Part 2: A Tale of Two Hearts

### Saul

Although Saul's story seemed to start out well, showing Saul in humility before the Lord, his heart quickly filled with himself and his reign began to unravel. Saul had three major "strikes" when he was up to bat as king. First, he performed a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel, demonstrating his own sense of impatience and self-importance. Second, when he was instructed to destroy everything of the Amalekites, he did not obey God and kept the choice things for himself. Third, in a pitiful act of desperation, he entered into the realm of the occult and consulted a spiritual medium to contact the dead for instruction. One...two...three strikes and yer out!

### David

David, on the other hand, began in a lowly position in life and was exalted by God to a position of authority. While this type of elevation corrupted Saul, David's positional transformation had no effect on his heart. From the beginning David's heart was simple and focused on God. What made David great was that he never lost his focus on God, regardless of his circumstances. If he was in distress, he praised God. If he was at the top of the world, he praised God.

The key to these stories is found in 1 Samuel 16:7,

*"But the LORD said to Samuel, "...The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

## Monday: A Heart Condition

1 Samuel 15, 1 Samuel 17

In chapter 15...

What did God instruct Saul to do? (v. 3)

What did Saul do? (v. 9)

What was Saul's self-perception after the battle?  
(v. 12)

How did the Lord feel about Saul? (v. 11)

How did Saul react when he was accused of  
disobeying? (vv. 20-21)

In chapter 17...

What challenge was facing the Israelites?

What was David's self-perception? (vv. 33-37)

What was David's perspective on his battle with  
Goliath? (vv. 45-47)

## Food for thought:

As with all good stories, the early scenes set the stage for what is to come. In these two chapters we get to peek into the heart of the two main characters in this drama. On the one hand we see Saul, the current king of Israel. On the other hand we see David; a simple shepherd boy who will one day be king. By placing these two stories side by side we can see how the trajectories of each man's journey has been set.

The heart of the matter is just that...the heart. Later on, David would write the words of Psalm 42:1, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."* In these two stories we see that what was in the heart of each man is what overflowed and set their destinies.

In chapter 15 we see that Saul's heart was filled with himself. Previously, back in chapter 13, we saw that Saul had a hard time following directions. In that chapter he became impatient with Samuel and made the sacrifice for the battle by himself, thus violating God's Law. In this chapter we see Saul thinking that he didn't have to obey God's instructions exactly. God had told him to completely wipe out the Amalekites (cleaning up after Joshua's unfinished business). Instead, Saul saved the really good stuff.

Saul made two fatal mistakes:

- 1. He did a right thing for the wrong reasons.**

Saul claimed that he saved the best of the booty so that he could sacrifice it to God. That sounds really spiritual. After all, didn't God demand that the Israelites bring the first fruits of everything to God? Wasn't it noble of Saul to think about God in that way? No. It wasn't. It was disobedient.

Many times we can do things that seem really “good,” but the reasons we are doing them are very distorted. If we do “good” things so that others will notice and recognize how spiritual or holy we are, then we have just made that good thing into a sinful thing. Samuel summarized very well how God feels about this in vv. 22 when he said, “to obey is better than sacrifice.”

- 2. He shifted blame when he was caught.** Saul got caught in our society’s favorite pastime: the Blame Game. Truly, the passing of the buck is one of the most fundamental elements of the sinful human nature. It is the first effect that disobedience had on human nature. When Adam was accused of eating the forbidden fruit, the first thing he did was point a big, fat finger at “the woman you gave me.” Not only was he blaming Eve, he was blaming God for giving the temptress to him!

Isn’t that the logic we use all the time? “If you hadn’t invited me out to dinner, I would have never ordered that gigantic dessert and eaten it all myself.” “If you hadn’t sold me the gun, I would have never shot that guy.” “It’s your fault I burned myself; you didn’t tell me the coffee was hot!”

It is one thing to commit a sin. It is a far worse offense to deny the sin and try to shift the blame. Had Saul simply humbled himself, admitted that he had messed up, and asked God to forgive him, then perhaps things would have been different. Notice that at the end of the chapter he does try to repent. God did not believe him, however, because Saul was not

sorry that he had disobeyed. He was sorry that he was going to lose the throne. There is a big difference.

When the young shepherd boy steps into the picture we see a very different situation. In chapter 17 we read one of the most famous stories of all time. A young teenage shepherd, armed only with a slingshot, brings down the best fighting machine that the Philistines had to offer.

Why was David able to defeat this giant? What made David different than Saul?

- 1. He had proper humility.** Humility is a very misunderstood word. When you read David's words in vv.24-37 it appears that he is a cocky little guy. "I killed the bear, and I killed the lion. Look how great I am!" But wait a minute. Is that really what he said? Yes, David did say, "*I killed the lion and the bear,*" but he finished by saying, "*the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.*" Humility is not saying that you can't do anything. Humility is being bold enough to speak truthfully about the gifts that God has given you, giving credit to Him, and not being afraid to use them.
- 2. He knew the source of his strength.** The key to David's success was his authentic proclamation, "I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty!" The key to a successful life in the Kingdom of God is to always remember that your heart is a conduit for God's work to be done. As soon as you think you have the strength and ability to do what

you think is right, then you will become like Saul and get hardening of the spiritual arteries, a blockage, and have a spiritual cardiac arrest. We must always have David's attitude and remember that the battle is God's. If God has truly asked you to do something, then you need to do it, keep your heart open, and let God do His mighty work through you.

Throughout the rest of this week we will see that David's heart continues to grow for God and Saul's heart continues to shrivel. As you read through the daily readings, keep a mental (or even an actual) comparison chart between Saul and David. Ask yourself, "what made David a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)?"

## Tuesday: Friendship or Fear?

1 Samuel 18:1-16, 1 Samuel 20

How did Jonathan feel about David? (18:1-4; 20:17)

How did Saul feel about David? (18:8-9, 12; 20:30-31)

How did Jonathan feel about his father's attitude toward David (20:34)

## Food for thought:

Imagine that you are the CEO of a company. You enjoy the power and the perks of being at the top. Then along comes a young recruit who is rising quickly up the ranks of the company. You start hearing his name mentioned quite often at the water cooler. More than one of the V.P.'s has mentioned his name in their reports. The scuttlebutt is that some of the board of directors have actually taken this young man to lunch and have used the phrase "a shooting star," and "heir apparent." How do you feel? What is your attitude toward this person? Is he a threat that must be eliminated, or is he possibly the best man for the job, even if it costs you yours?

That is similar to the position Saul was in. Saul was king. He was supposed to get all the praise and honor from the people. How dare this ruddy little shepherd boy steal his thunder? It makes sense to us why Saul would be so upset with David. Saul was an arrogant guy who loved power, thought he was above the Law, and wasn't about to let anyone take anything from him.

The truly surprising element of this story is Jonathan. If anyone should have been threatened by David it should have been Jonathan. Saul was an old guy. There was plenty of room for Saul to be king, and then to let David be king after he was gone. If anyone was getting bumped from the throne of Israel by David it was Jonathan, because he was the rightful heir to Saul's throne. With David on the throne, Jonathan would be out. In most cultures Jonathan would have been in danger of being killed by the usurping king. Yet, in light of this serious threat, Jonathan loved David with all his heart. Once again, by observing the heart of Jonathan, we have a contrast to the heart of Saul.

Here are some observations about the friendship between Jonathan and David that may help us understand what true friendship should look like in the kingdom of God:

- 1. It wasn't natural.** As we have already mentioned, Jonathan and David, by all natural standards, should have hated each other. Many times we think that our friendships have to sneak up on us and come from our natural surroundings. The truth is that sometimes the richest friendships come from "the other side of the tracks." When this happens, we know that the friendship is rooted in the love of God and not our natural tendencies.
- 2. It required a "Kingdom Perspective."** The greatest killer of friendships is the beast of envy. Too many times we evaluate someone by "how they make me look." If I hang out with that person, will their pretty smile make me look plain? Will her skinny waist make me look fat? Will his outgoing personality make me look boring? Will his ability to communicate draw others to him instead of me? Jonathan could have easily fallen into this trap. Instead, Jonathan took a "Kingdom perspective." The attitude that we should take when we approach people is, "this is GOD'S Kingdom, we are all parts of HIS body, HE will use whomever HE chooses for HIS purpose. We are all equal and there is no competition." When we can die to the competition between us, and learn to value the good in each person, then we will be able to experience friendship that is deep and rich.

**3. It involved commitment.** We all know that the key to success in marriage is commitment. When emotions come and go, it is the covenant between a man and a woman that keeps the relationship together. That is a no-brainer in marriage, but have we ever applied that principle to friendship? Jonathan and David made a covenant with each other to be friends to the end. That sounds strange to our ears. The tendency in our culture is to be “fair-weather” friends. We love to hang around you when you are fun and happy, and, more importantly, when we can get something out of you, but as soon as you start getting depressed, or tragedy strikes your life, or you start getting a little freaky, then we are out of here. That is not biblical friendship. Biblical friendship is the core of community. Biblical friendship should be built upon a mutual commitment to be united in the love of Christ and to work together for the common good of the community.

Meditate on these verses regarding friendship:

Proverbs 18:24

Proverbs 27:10

John 15:14-15

How good of a friend are you today? Are you using friendships to get something out of the other person, or are you committed to a friend for that person's own good?

## Wednesday: Sweet Revenge?

Today we look at three stories. Read the following passages and summarize the story.

1 Samuel 24:1-6

1 Samuel 25:32-34

1 Samuel 26:9-11

In each of these stories, what could David have done that most people would have considered justified? Why?

Why does David not do it?

Read the following verses. What do they say about this topic?

Deuteronomy 32:35

Romans 12:19



## Food for thought:

When someone cuts you off in traffic, what do you want to do? When you get passed over for a job that you worked hard to get and for which you were perfectly qualified, how do you feel? When someone hurts your child, what do you want to do?

Do you know why many movies are popular? They are popular because the bad guy gets it in the end. We love to see justice served. In the late 80's Tom Selleck starred in a movie called An Innocent Man. A couple of crooked cops busted into his house by mistake, thinking that it was a drug house. They shot and wounded him in the process. Rather than admitting their mistake, they planted drugs in his house and arrested him. He was convicted and did hard time in prison. It was difficult to watch this movie because he did not deserve the terrible things that happened to him in prison. When he was released he found those crooked cops and "set the record straight" on their heads.

The crowd cheered with every blow he railed on the heads of those wicked men. Why? Because, in our natural selves, we demand vengeance! We can't stand injustice. This fact makes today's lesson a very difficult pill to swallow. Why would it have been wrong for David to kill Saul in the cave? Why would it have been wrong for David to teach Nabal a lesson? Why would it have been wrong for the spear to have been thrust through Saul's body? After all, hadn't David already been anointed as king? Wasn't it just a matter of time before he would take Saul's place anyway? Wouldn't killing Saul just speed up the process and help God out?

There are two reasons why it would have been wrong for David to have done these things and why it would be wrong for us to seek vengeance:

1. **Repaying evil for evil makes you evil.** Had David wreaked havoc on Nabal's estate, how would it have been any different from Nabal.
2. **It's a matter of control.** The motive behind vengeance is to make someone pay for what they have taken from us. We want the perpetrator to suffer so that we can regain control over the things that were taken away from us. Here's the problem. Nothing really belongs to us. We don't even belong to ourselves. Everything is God's. There is only one person in the universe that has the right to be upset with people who take things away... God. Why do we get upset when someone cuts us off in traffic? Because we believe that it is our space. Why are we upset when someone hurts our child? Because we think it is our child. Wrong. Our space, our children, our reputation, our money, all of it belongs to God. If God wants to pay someone back for doing something to His stuff that is in your care, then that is His prerogative. But, if He doesn't, then He doesn't have to.

Who are you mad at today? With whom do you have a serious bone to pick? How much energy are you spending on this issue? If you do "get back" at that person, will it really make things better? Will hurting that person's reputation really restore yours? Will chopping that guys head off really bring back your child? Let it go. God knows the situation. He will settle the real score, in His time. Take all that energy and focus it on deepening your relationship

with God. Let His Spirit fill you up and wash out all that bitterness and vengeful feeling. When you start letting go of this and letting God fill you up, then you will begin to realize what Jesus meant when He instructed His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. We can be like David and say, *“Far be it from me to hurt God’s anointed. It is God’s Kingdom, and when He wants me to take the throne, then I will, but I will never force my own hand.”*

## Thursday: Who You Gonna Call?

1 Samuel 28:4-20

How did Saul respond to the sight of the enemy?  
(v. 5)

How did God respond to Saul? (v. 6)

Where did Saul look for guidance? What was the problem with this? (vv. 7-20)

1 Samuel 30

What did David discover had happened when he returned to his home in Ziklag? How did he feel about it? (vv. 1-6)

Had this happened to you, what would have been your natural response?

What did David do before he pursued any response to this situation? (vv. 7-8)

What attitude did David have toward the plunder he acquired from the battle? What did he do with it? (vv. 21-31)

## Food for thought:

When life throws difficult circumstances your way, where do you turn for wisdom and direction? Hopefully, as a follower of Jesus, your automatic answer to that question would be that you turn to God in prayer. You reach out to God for help. That's good, but there is a second and deeper question. In what spirit do you reach out to God? Do you have in your mind what you want God to do, so, in approaching Him, you lay out a list of demands and say, "OK, God, this situation stinks and here's what I think you should do about it." Unfortunately, too many times we slip into that mode. We probably do not consciously think in such brash terms, but deep down we really do have an agenda that we want God to follow.

In today's readings we see this point illustrated in yet another heart contrast between Saul and David. Saul was faced with an oppressive enemy. He became afraid and cried out to God. You can read between the lines that he was crying out to God to deliver him from this enemy. But what did God do? How did He respond? God responded with silence. God did not give the answer that Saul had expected or desired. Up to this point Saul has done nothing wrong. Actually, he has done things right. He approached God with his request. Where he went wrong and exposed the true nature of his heart is what he did with God's response. Saul rejected God's response. He said, "I do not accept that response, so I am going to find another means of getting what I want." Saul's desire to see his own will be done was so strong that it led him to violate not only God's Laws, but his own laws as well. Saul had expelled the spiritual mediums out of the country. Now, he was consulting one

himself. This was the final straw for Saul and his own inquiry into the realm of the paranormal prophesied his own imminent doom.

David, on the other hand, exposed a very different attitude. Imagine the feeling in David's heart when he mounted the final rise and saw the smoldering ashes of what was once his home. In that moment a thousand thoughts of terror must have been racing through his mind. Where are my wives? Where are my children? Will I see their burned bodies impaled on a pike? Will the raiders return for more? Who did this? Why did this happen? Where was God when this happened?

For the typical warrior-type person, the first gut response to this travesty and heinous violation would have been to find out who had done this, hunt them down, and pay back blow for blow the violence they had perpetrated on your people. But not David. What was the first thing he did? He said, "Where's the priest? I need to consult with God. Lord," he asked, "should I pursue the perpetrators, or is there something I am missing in this situation?" What is amazing about this is that the godly response to this event seems like it was so evident; he needed to go rescue his family. Yet, even in a situation that seemed like a no-brainer, David stopped and asked first.

Here is the heart of David. David saw himself as a servant of God. This village, and even his family, did not belong to him. Everything belonged to God and everything that was done needed to be done as a result of God's direction and for His glory.

This point is further illustrated in the second part of the story. After David gets permission to pursue the perpetrators, and after he acquires all the plunder

from their villages (which, in those days, was his rightful compensation for a victorious battle), look what he does with it. Does he say, “Now I have been repaid for what was taken from me? This is mine and is my just reward?” No. He says, “Hey everybody, look at the bounty that God has provided for us. Here, take some.”

Here are a couple of quick observations about David’s heart. It would do us well to pattern our heart after this.

1. David’s heart was focused on God, not himself.
2. David’s concern was for his nation, his community, not himself.
3. David’s heart was a generous, giving, other-oriented heart.

The next time you are faced with a difficult situation, do a heart check. Are you approaching God with an agenda? If He doesn’t fulfill the expectations of your agenda, are you going to “take your ball and go home.” In that moment, remember David. Remember that this situation, as bad as it may seem, is actually within the boundaries of God’s control. He has the agenda, not you. Come to Him with a receiving heart, ready to hear His plan, and then to obey no matter what it cost.

## Friday: A Focused Heart

2 Samuel 3:30-32

Who was Abner?

Why did Joab murder him?

How did David respond to the death of Abner?  
Why?

2 Samuel 4

Who was Ish-Bosheth?

How did David respond to his death? Why?

2 Samuel 5:12

How did David perceive the purpose of his role as king?

2 Samuel 6:21-22

How did David behave when he was leading the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem?

How did his wife, Michal, feel about his behavior?

How did David feel about his behavior?

## Food for thought:

I was recently reading about the formation of the United States of America. One of the big debates the newly formed Senate had, believe it or not, was how to address their new leader, George Washington. Should it be “His Excellency” or “Your High and Mightiness.” We, in our day, tend to forget how very British the colonists still were at that time. They were used to a Monarch who was perceived as having received his position by the will of God and was to be treated as higher and of a different nature than the common man. But, through the influence of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and others, the Senate was reconnected to the ideals of a government by the people and for the people. The President was simply a common man that had been elected to provide leadership for the democratic government, and thus should be addressed as simply, “Mr. President.”

When we look into the heart of David, we realize that it was this same kind of an attitude that was part of the reason that he was considered a man after God’s own heart. As you read through today’s chapters, you could see these attitudes in the way that David perceived his rivals and his own position.

His attitudes seem foreign to us as we sit and watch the political world (at every level from church office to the UN) engaged in a climb to power and a jockeying for position. David’s success was due to his understanding that he did not have any power. The throne did not belong to him, it was God’s. He was simply the human vehicle through which God could lead His people. In a sense, David would have preferred to have been addressed as “Mr. King”

As we conclude this week of study in which we have

examined the heart of a hero, here are some further observations as to why David was a man after God's own heart:

- 1. He didn't take matters into his own hands.** When the nation was divided and his "brothers" were trying to usurp the authority that he knew God had given to him, David never retaliated. He didn't take Saul's life in the past, and in these stories he did not take the life of Abner or Ish-bosheth. He always waited upon God's timing to bring things in to place. If they happened, they happened, if they did not, then, hey, there's always shepherding!
- 2. He truly loved his rivals.** Not only did he not retaliate against his rivals, he actually embraced his rivals and loved them. How many times do we look at the "competition" and love them? The only reason we feel competition with people is because we are trying to hold onto something for ourselves. When we let go of power, prestige, position, and perks, then we can truly love and embrace those who would otherwise be pitted against us.
- 3. He maintained proper perspective.** David knew that being a king was not about him. Being a king was about being a servant and a protector of the people. This lesson would do us well to hold onto in the church. The world wants to tell us that being a leader is an achievement to seek out. It is the top of the heap. It is a place, that once achieved, demands the respect and service of others. Not so in God's Kingdom. The path to greatness and the road to leadership is a downward

climb into the ranks of the common slave. A leader is a servant. A shepherd of a church needs to have a towel around the waist and be ready to wash the proverbial feet of all who enter that space. David knew that by being “on top” he was stuck in the mud, being the foundation upon which the community could be built.

- 4. He stayed real.** At heart, David was a simple shepherd boy who loved to worship God through music. When he led the ark into Jerusalem, he didn't put on the pomp and piety of a “holy man” or a “regal king.” He got real and worshipped God the way he had probably always done out there in the open pastures with no one to see but the sheep. He danced wild and free knowing that, in spite of the throng of thousands lining the streets of Jerusalem, he was dancing for an audience of only One. This attitude cost him his reputation and good standing with his wife. Sometimes authenticity at this level can be misunderstood, and it may lead to tension, but, if it is real, and done in the right motive, it is worth the risk.

