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# MAN AFTER GOD

26 practical lessons from the life of David By Jeff S. Smith



## *Introduction*

THE HOLY SPIRIT describes King David of Israel as a singular man after God's own heart. Indeed, his biography is seasoned with acts of courage, faith and trust, but his character is likewise marred by the kinds of sins that every man falls into—lust, greed, violence, presumptuous. What made David a man after God was his resilience and determination to excel.

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19. What did David do that irritated Michal (Second Samuel 6:12-16, 20)? How would you characterize her response? Was she at all justified (First Corinthians 7:1-4)? What can a man do today to make his wife jealous?

20. Describe the force of divine silence in establishing Bible authority (see also Hebrews 7:11-14 and Acts 15:24)?

21. Why don't we look away when we see a scantily clad Bathsheba on television, in a movie, or at work, school or the mall (Second Peter 2:14)?

22. Think about what David has endured in the aftermath of his own public disgrace. How had that event changed him (Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 3:12-17)? At what point does forbearance turn into tolerance?

23. How do worldly people judge manliness today? What manly things did Jesus do?

24. How would you translate the phrase, "David's heart condemned him" after he numbered the people" (24:10; Acts 2:36, 24:16; Romans 2:15)?

25. How had David failed Adonijah (First Kings 1:5-10)? What similarities exist in the families of Eli (First Samuel 3:11-14) and Samuel (8:1-5)?

## LESSON ONE

### Introduction

Seven days and a stubborn heart prevented King Saul from being a man after God's own heart.

According to First Samuel 13, the king grew weary and worried by waiting for Samuel to appear and lend encouragement to the people. Taking matters into his own hands, Saul the Benjamite collected the offerings and sacrificed them as if he had the authority to do so. He did not since that priestly role belonged only to the sons of Levi and when he finished his transgression, immediately Samuel arrived and asked, "What have you done?"

Saul blamed the people for his own cowardice and compromise and even accused Samuel of driving him into the arms of situation ethics by tarrying so long. "Therefore I felt compelled," Saul summarizes. Isn't it sad how feelings can be so misleading—how emotions like fear, selfishness and sloth can interrupt obedience and interfere with divine fellowship?

Samuel labeled Saul's compromise as foolish disobedience and warned him that he would lose his crown because of the deep-seated attitude of rebellion that this one episode epitomized. "The Lord has sought for himself a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you" (First Samuel 13:14).

As much as the expression "Man after God's own heart" sounds purely emotional and feelings-based, it becomes clear from Samuel's denunciation of Saul that such a status is just as much determined by an attitude of obedience to God's will. Feelings can be deceptive—witness Saul who *felt* compelled to sin. Sincere obedience to the divine command, however, can be measured and tested (Second Corinthians 13:5), so that the worshiper can know he is following after God's own heart (Second Corinthians 5:9-11, First John 4:13).

It was David the giant-slayer who filled those shoes and was indeed later judged to be such a man. "And when He had removed [Saul], He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will'" (Acts 13:22). Some would respond doubtfully by noting David's infamous sins, and while we wish he had not committed them, we take solace in the knowledge that even imperfect, penitent sinners can live and die "after God's own heart."

## LESSON TWENTY-SIX

### Second Review

1. King Saul reigned over Israel before the arrival of young David. Why did Israel want a king so desperately (First Samuel 8:1-9)? Why did Samuel and Jehovah oppose them (First Samuel 8:10-22)?

2. How did Saul respond to Samuel's invitation to be king (First Samuel 9:17-21, 10:6-11, 17-27)?

3. What singular act characterized Saul's early reign (First Samuel 11)?

4. What changed Saul (First Samuel 13)?

5. How might one find himself in similar circumstances and attempt to justify the same sort of action?

6. The heart is the literary seat of emotions, but what else is now involved in being a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:21-22)? Why are feelings an unreliable standard?

14. How did Saul's paranoia about David become self-fulfilling at the cave of Adullam (First Samuel 22:1-5)? What is likely to happen today if we assume that someone is going to be nasty or uncooperative and we approach them as if they already are (Proverbs 15:1-2, 18:13)?

15. Why would a man refuse his helpmeet's counsel (Proverbs 12:15, 16:18)? How does one become a "daughter of Sarah" (First Peter 3:1-7)?

16. What is wrong with finding fascination and joy in the downfall of celebrated or powerful people? How did David respond to Saul's death (Second Samuel 1:1-27). What is God's warning about reveling in your enemy's demise (Proverbs 24:17-18, Romans 12:17-21)?

17. What does the King James translation of Paul's words mean in First Corinthians 16:13—"quit ye like men." How do you reconcile the Christian virtue of meekness with the call to be strong and to contend for the faith?

18. Why did God strike Uzzah (Second Samuel 6:1-7)? Why didn't Uzzah's good intentions and pious work mitigate against such punishment (cf. Leviticus 10:1-3)?

## LESSON TWO

### Finding Such a Man

1. After being relieved of his command during the Korean conflict, General Douglas MacArthur quoted a song that had been popular among British soldiers in the first World War: “Old soldiers never die; they only fade away.” When did David get old (First Kings 1:1)?

2. How had David failed Adonijah (First Kings 1:5-10)? What similarities exist in the families of Eli (First Samuel 3:11-14) and Samuel (8:1-5)?

3. A man after God takes the lead in the home. What is the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21, Proverbs 22:6, 15)?

4. Who is better—the father who shows his children no emotion and no mercy or the father who spoils, bails out his children and prevents them ever feeling the sting of their bad choices? Is there something still better?

5. What charge did dying David give his heir, Solomon (First Kings 2:1-4)? Explain.

6. What was remarkable about the death of David that was true of no other death before or since (First Kings 2:10-12)?

7. What was David’s legacy? Should modern men be concerned about an earthly legacy (First Timothy 6:17-19)? Explain.

King Saul just was not a man after God’s own heart, but the Lord had warned Israel what kings were capable of doing (First Samuel 8). It should have come as little surprise that Saul abused his authority and entered into sin.

It was Samuel, however, that had ordained Saul and then found him pretending to be a priest. Saul explained, “I feared the people and obeyed their voice” but Samuel does not seem to have been convinced. He announced that God had rejected him on the throne and would tear the kingdom from him. As Samuel “turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore” (First Samuel 15:27). Samuel the wonderful prophet and priest told Saul that God would give the crown “to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you” (28).

Saul’s repentance seems insincere and his chief fear seems to be humiliation in front of his subjects, so he begs Samuel to accompany him to worship his God. Samuel complies and then also sees to the execution of King Agag, which Saul did not have the heart to accomplish. Scripture says that Samuel never went to see the king again until the day of his death. “Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel” (35).

Here is the sorrow that God and man experience when they are let down by someone in which they placed confidence. Here is the opposite of a life that is after God’s own heart. God places confidence in the father, the elder, the deacon, the preacher, the class teacher. When we let down family, congregation and Creator, we must seem like pitiful King Saul—tall, powerful and disappointing. Let us count the ways we must not disappoint! Adultery, flirtation, irreverence, irresponsibility, unpreparedness, sloth, dishonesty. Too many people are counting on us to be men after God’s heart. Our wives, our children, the churches, even our neighbors and the lost. How we can afford to lend our hearts to the tempter even for a moment of pleasurable indulgence when the stakes are this high?

John Mark let Paul down and that disappointment led to sharp contention elsewhere (Acts 15:37-40). We just can’t go about convincing ourselves that we can do the wrong thing and that there will be no consequences. As you contemplate indulgence, see the eyes of your child or your wife or a dear church member and imagine the eyes of God as he beholds your choice. Can you live with that?

## LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

### David's Valedictory

1. The choice of David and his designation as “a man after God’s own heart” seem designed to contrast his character with Israel’s first monarch, the stately King Saul. Another potential successor to the throne, however, existed in Saul’s own household. What do we learn about Jonathan’s character in the battle with the Philistines at the pass of Michmash (First Samuel 13:23-14:23)?

2. Explain Saul’s rash vow, its self-centeredness and disastrous results (First Samuel 14:24-52).

3. Think! How can our pride endanger the people around us—our children, parents, spouses, employers, employees, neighbors, etc. (Proverbs 16:18)?

4. Discuss whether it is right to make vows today (Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12, Second Corinthians 1:23). When, if ever, is it right to break a vow (Acts 23:14)?

5. Saul was sent to conquer the Amalekites (First Samuel 15:1-9) How did he assess his performance (10-13)? Where had he fallen short (14-15)? What are the lessons to be learned here?

6. What was wrong with Saul’s repentance (15:16-35; see also Second Corinthians 7:10-11)?

Men after God die.

David did.

We might prefer to remember David as the giant-slayer, but that event happened early in his life—a life that would include many more courageous exploits and quite a few wrong turns as well. And then, for the reader, all of a sudden, “David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm” (First Kings 1:1).

The matter of David’s legacy instantly came into view as his son, Adonijah, began jockeying behind the throne, as did the famous Bathsheba, mother of Solomon. Adonijah’s ambition was unchecked and unsympathetic to his brother, in part because “his father had not rebuked him at any time” (1:6). King David, however, made a wiser choice when he passed his crown to Solomon instead.

“Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn’” (First Kings 2:1-3).

Then “David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David” (First Kings 2:10).

Death is the way of all the earth, even the mightiest men after God. Death is the great equalizer. Rich or poor, saint or sinner, black or white, smart or stupid—all men die even as the animals and plants perish.

What, then, is his legacy, when the man after God reclines upon his death bed, receives his loved ones for the last time and then sleeps in the silent city of the dead?

His legacy rests not in his accomplishments or his acquisitions, but in the degree of his character that he imparts to a succeeding generation. David laid a solid foundation on which Solomon at least could become a man after God, a seeker and explainer of wisdom. “Be strong ... prove yourself a man ... keep the charge of the Lord ... to walk in his ways.”

The man after God never quits and he never surrenders to the devil. When he falls short, he falls further—upon his knees in humble, penitent prayer, and then he rises again to stand fast in his renewed conviction and dedication. He knows to “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (First Corinthians 16:13). He honors his weaker vessel, nourishes every arrow in his quiver, and holds himself with integrity and confidence. David was truly a man after God.

1. Did God set David up to sin (Second Samuel 24:1-9; First Chronicles 21:1)? What did God do?

2. Give some Bible examples and modern examples of things that God permits, but does not sanction.

3. The Bible suggests that God tests his people, but that he does not tempt them (James 1:12-18). What, pray tell, is the difference? What is the point—why not just make Earth into another sin-free Heaven (First Peter 1:6-9, Second Peter 1:5-11)?

4. How would you explain the phrase, “David’s heart condemned him” after he numbered the people” (24:10; Acts 2:36, 24:16; Romans 2:15)?

5. Why did David choose the punishment he did (Second Samuel 24:11-14)? What does this show about his character? How did God respond (15-17)?

6. What attitudes are factored into personal accountability (Second Corinthians 7:10-11, Acts 8:22-24)? Why are they so rare?

7. What does David teach about worship and recompense at Araunah’s threshing floor (Second Samuel 24:18-25, Mark 8:34-38)?

## LESSON THREE

### What Does It Take To Be A Man?

What does it take to be a man? Songwriter Tom Scholz asked that question in the autumn of 1986 and answered it in four melodic verses, but representatives of the male half of humanity have been pondering that question far longer.

When God sent Samuel to Bethlehem, he was not looking for just any man, nor even a man by the standards people use to define maturity, masculinity or machismo. Samuel was looking for the man that God wanted to ordain to be King Saul’s successor. He knew to visit the house of a man named Jesse, but there he found a number of men who seemed to fit the bill.

Seven sons of Jesse passed before Samuel, beginning with Eliab, whom Samuel figured at first was God’s choice. “‘Surely, the Lord’s anointed is before him!’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (First Samuel 16:6).

It was the youngest of eight sons, David, ruddy, with bright eyes, and good looking, who proved to be God’s choice (11-13). Not the oldest or the biggest or the most experienced, but the one with a heart after God’s own.

What does it take to be a man? If we permit society and culture to do our defining for us, we will look for a muscular physique, a prominent chin and an unemotional spirit. But what does it take to be a man after God’s own heart, considering he looks past the flesh to examine the spirit?

In part, songwriter Scholz answered,

The will to give and not receive  
The strength to say what you believe  
The heart to feel what others feel inside  
To see what they can see.

Israel never had a better king than Samuel’s eighth choice for the job. The man who yearns after God’s heart is not always the mightiest and is rarely the most stoic. Instead, he is the one who knows that the message of love that overwhelms the New Testament applies to him equally as it does the woman. He is a man of principles and faithful courage, whose strength is actually enhanced because he possesses genuine compassion for others.

1. First Samuel chapter 16 opens with Samuel mourning Saul. There is only one problem—Saul was still alive at this point. Why was Samuel mourning for a living person (15:34-16:1)?

2. How did these men become disappointments, if only temporarily?

- a) Moses (Numbers 20:10-13):
- b) Peter (Luke 22:54-62):
- c) John Mark (Acts 13:13, 15:36-38):
- d) Demas (Second Timothy 4:10):

3. Why was Samuel sent to Bethlehem? What was his cover (16:2-5)?

4. Why did Samuel assume Eliab was God's choice (16:6-7)?

5. What is the real danger in judging by appearances (John 7:24, Matthew 7:15-20, 23:27-28; James 2:8-9)? How does God choose (First Chronicles 28:9, Hebrews 4:11-13)?

6. Of the eight sons, which was God's choice (16:8-12)? How did he look?

7. What does it take to be a man (16:13, Acts 6:3, Matthew 5:3)?

## LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

### You Can't Always Get What You Want

One of the final episodes in the long life of David is really very confounding.

It appears that God moved David to take a census of the people, but then punished him simply for obeying (Second Samuel 24:1, 10). The parallel passage in First Chronicles, however, indicates that God only permitted David to do what the devil inspired through the king's pride (21:1).

Loyal Joab tried to dissuade David from taking the count, perhaps sensing that David's military pride was at play or that increased taxation and slavery would follow, but David insisted. "And there were in Israel 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000 men."

Like many men—even the ones who are after God—David quickly realized that getting what he wanted did not please him after all. "And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly'" (Second Samuel 24:10).

God gave David the choice among three punishments; he opted for three days of plague, which the Lord mercifully shortened (14-16). He proved his manhood even more when he pleaded with God not to punish the people for his mistake (17). Acting upon his seer's counsel, David purchased a threshing floor and sacrificial animals in order to appease his God. Although their owner offered them at no charge, the king insisted on paying. "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing" (24).

David learned and taught some vital lessons in the waning moments of his reign and life.

There will always be tempting things that are not withheld from us, but which are sinful just the same. The ill-gotten money might be there for the taking and the young woman might throw herself at you, but it is only the devil who will encourage such iniquity (Second Corinthians 2:10-11).

David teaches us personal responsibility, hoping to spare his people any punishment for a sin he wantonly committed, probably because of pride and a determination to show his self-sufficiency. We ought to be sorely ashamed when our children, wife, company or the church suffer embarrassment or decline because of our shortcoming (First Peter 4:15-16).

David teaches us about sacrifice, being unwilling to worship for free. Would that all men might learn to infuse their worship with an attitude of sacrifice and with action to match (Second Corinthians 8:3). Then there would be more men after God.

## LESSON FOUR

### The Spirit of the Lord

1. Are these people believers in God—the one who sees God as an impersonal, yet good force or the one who views God as a senile, grandfatherly type, whose mood changes as quickly as the weather?

2. How do you see God?

3. How did David understand God (Second Samuel 22:1-4)?

4. David, the man after God's heart, was a devoted worshiper and yet many men today resist worship because they think it unmanly. What "manly" qualities are required then to be a worshiper (Mark 15:43, First Peter 3:14, First Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 6:19-20)?

5. What's wrong with deciding to put off worship until later in life, when it's a bit more acceptable and many bad habits have simply waned because of old age (James 4:13-17)?

6. How do worldly people judge manliness today? What manly things did Jesus do?

7. David's song tells of a warrior standing upon a solid rock (Second Samuel 22:29-51). How is that similar to the modern disciple (Matthew 16:13-16, 7:13-27, First Corinthians 10:1-3, Ephesians 6:10-18, Second Timothy 2:3)?

One may hear an awful lot of talk about the Spirit of the Lord these days in religious discussions. Some who claim they have it urge others to "git it." Is the presence of God's spirit merely subjective and emotional or is there something objective and controllable about it all?

Once God had decided to replace Saul on Israel's throne with David, Samuel ceremonially anointed the young shepherd with oil in the midst of his brothers as "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David" (First Samuel 16:13). It was at this very time "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him" (14).

It is not difficult to identify the "Spirit of the Lord" with one person of the triune Godhead, the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5, for instance Peter accused Ananias and Sapphira of lying to the Holy Spirit about their gift, thus attempting to deceive God and test the Spirit of the Lord. Clearly, the three terms are used interchangeably of the same person, God the Holy Spirit of the Lord, if you will.

The Spirit's presence with David indicated his selection as God's anointed and his presence today indicates only something higher—that one is part of God's elect and redeemed. The disciples of Christ are endowed with an earnest of the Spirit as evidence of their hope of eternal salvation (Second Corinthians 1:22, 5:5), and are reminded not to become "drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:19).

Is the Spirit's presence better felt than told, evidenced only by tales of an experience or a warm feeling in the breast and a faraway look in the eye? In fact, the apostle John binds the Spirit's presence to something as objective as obedience to the will of God. "Now he who keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us" (First John 3:24).

Remember that Saul was rejected because of disobedience, opening the door for another kind of man to reign in Jerusalem—a man after God's own heart.

Being a man after God is more than a feeling—it is active and personal and obedient (cf. First John 3:16-19).

1. What happened to David when Samuel anointed him with oil (First Samuel 16:13)? How did Samuel describe that process when he anointed Saul (10:1, 6-7, 9)?

2. There might be two parallel virtues in the anointing of the Spirit here—one containing prophetic ability, but another that simply indicates an improvement in perspective that accompanies the presence of God. What are some pieces of evidence of this (First John 2:18-27, 3:24, 4:12-21)?

3. How can the presence of God's influence also be judged very objectively (Matthew 7:15-20, Galatians 5:15-26)?

4. What happened at the same time that the Spirit came upon David (First Samuel 16:13-15)? What might approximate that distressing spirit today?

5. Of what is the Holy Spirit an earnest (Second Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5)? What if the ability to speak in tongues or prophesy does not follow?

6. Is the acceptance of the Holy Spirit a matter of divine compulsion or is human choice involved (Acts 7:51, Romans 8:1-11)? Explain.

## LESSON TWENTY-THREE

### David's Song

King David is known in some circles as the “sweet psalmist of Israel” and the twenty-second chapter of Second Samuel bears that out (see 23:1).

David's song occurs not only there, but also as the eighteenth entry in the Hebrew collection of lyrical poems, where it rests under the title, “A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.”

David did not comprehend his God as some distant, impersonal force, or as a senile grandfatherly type whose mood changed as quickly as the weather, but whose bark was worse than his bite. David comprehended God as his rock, fortress, deliverer, strength, shield, horn, stronghold and savior (Second Samuel 22:2-3). “I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised” (4).

David, the original man after God, was a worshiper. Sadly, it is becoming less common to find men today who are willing to be disciples and worshipers in that sense. Some mistakenly think that faith is only for women and little children. Others fully anticipate becoming faithful again when they are old and all the wild oats are sown and harvested. Many men simply think that faith is not manly, defining manhood by the number of beers imbibed, swears uttered, women ravished and rules disdained. David defined it by righteousness and cleanness of hands (21).

And yet who could argue against the manliness of Jesus who endured 40 days of hunger only to go to the cross and endure far worse in just six hours? This same Jesus cleansed his father's temple with a whip made of cords and a rebuke made of steel. His claims of meekness do not equate to weakness, but absolute strength under absolute control.

Few attach fear to manhood and yet David freely admits, “The floods of ungodliness made me afraid ... the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God” (6-7). David becomes even more of a man because he is man enough to admit his fear, to seek consolation and guidance from above and to follow the Lord wherever it took him.

This is especially true of a man in a leadership position, whether it be in the home, the church, the government, the team or the work place. David looked to God, as would his son, Solomon, for guidance in leading others (44-46). A man after God is a disciple and a worshiper. As a leader, he is first a follower of the Lord and only then a reflector of his wisdom and steward of his grace.

1. Nathan utters something prophetically in his rebuke of David that often holds true in many people's lives (Second Samuel 12:10). Explain.

2. Nathan's prophecy extends beyond the child of David's adultery to others in his confused household. What was the relationship of Absalom, Tamar and Amnon (13:1-4)?

3. How did Amnon feel about Tamar after he disgraced her (13:5-20)? What did David do about (13:21)?

4. What did Absalom do about it (13:22-29)? How did the king's servants break the news to him (13:30-33)? What keeps him from Absalom (13:34-39)?

5. Think about what David has endured in the aftermath of his own public disgrace. How had that event changed him (Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 3:12-17)? At what point does forbearance turn into tolerance?

6. How did Absalom steal the hearts of Israel (Second Samuel 15:1-12)?

7. Why did David's reaction to Absalom's death surprise Joab (18:1-33; First Thessalonians 2:11, Colossians 3:21, Second Corinthians 12:14)?

## LESSON FIVE

### Ministering

For some reason, we tend to reserve the term "minister" for people who are involved in paid, full-time religious work.

We question why many foreign nations have ministers of defense and prime ministers, not understanding that ministering is simply service and is often not the exclusive domain of men appointed within the church.

David, the man after God's own heart, was such a minister early in his life. David lived long before the establishment of the church and actually ministered to the very man whom God had rejected. It was that divine rejection that seems to have led to King Saul's distressed spirit and that apparent state of depression that caused him to call for comfort.

One of his servants suggested that he employ David to play the harp for him whenever he descended into one of these moods and so the loyal subject did as commanded. He found favor in Saul's sight. "And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him" (First Samuel 16:23). Little did Saul know how distressing David would become to him later on, but for now, his skillful harping is a meaningful service, or ministry, to the troubled man on the throne.

Surely the obvious candidates in the New Testament are identified as ministers—Paul, Timothy, Epaphras and a few others. They ministered in the preaching of the gospel, but in the simplest sense of the word—service—ministry is applied to many others.

Before a man leaves the ministering to the ministers, he might need to read again the sheep and goat illustration of judgment Day. Condemnation awaits those goats—men and women—who by refusing to share and serve one another neglected to minister to Christ (Matthew 25:44). That's the word Jesus uses—minister—and it is universally applied.

Onesimus was the kind of minister who may not stand in the pulpit, but who does important service to his fellow man (Philemon 13). That labor of love is a ministry to the saints, and every believer is blessed who participates (Hebrews 6:10).

Peter writes, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (First Peter 4:10). A man after God has fervent and active love for others and ministers without grumbling.

1. What is the very simple definition of “minister”? What are its two specialized meanings today (Romans 13:1-7, First Timothy 4:1-16)?

2. Who were the ministers in these passages? How did they minister?

- Matthew 25:31-46:
- Romans 15:22-29:
- Philemon 10-13:
- Hebrews 1:13-14:
- Hebrews 8:1-5:

3. What is one unfortunate effect of designating only certain members of the church as its ministers (Ephesians 4:11-16)?

4. How did David minister to King Saul (First Samuel 16:14-23)? Explain.

5. How might one minister in a similar fashion today (First Peter 4:10-11)?

6. What are some practical ways whole families might minister together (First Corinthians 16:15)?

7. What should we learn from Jesus as he washes his apostles’ feet (John 13:1-20)?

## LESSON TWENTY-TWO

### My Son, My Son, My Son, My Son

The tentacles of sin are often just as deadly and deplorable as the appendages of the sea creatures that bear them literally.

When Nathan rebuked David’s iniquity against Uriah, he added, “Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house” (Second Samuel 12:10). That sin and the immoral expansion of David’s family through multiple wives and mistresses, led to a rift among his offspring and sufficient resentment to provoke a revolt.

Absalom, David’s son by Maacah, a princess of Geshur, had taken it upon himself to avenge the rape of his sister, Tamar, whom David did too little to vindicate. Absalom killed the perpetrator, his own half-brother, Amnon, and was exiled as punishment, where he nourished his resentment until his restoration to his father. “Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate .... Moreover Absalom would say, ‘Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.’ And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (Second Samuel 15:2-6).

David was forced to flee from his son, who was so determined to succeed his father on Israel’s throne that he was unwilling to wait for him to die. David, however, eventually mustered a force to retake his kingdom, cautioning its commanders to “deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom” (18:5). Joab was not one to deal gently with anybody and took the opportunity to thrust three spears through Absalom’s heart while he dangled from a terebinth tree (18:15). “Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: ‘O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son’” (18:33)!

This unexpected compassion confounded men like Joab and his ilk, whose designs on victory left little room for emotion and mercy. A man after God is strong and courageous and determined, yet sensitive enough to forgive and regret. A man after God exhorts, comforts and charges, and regrets his imperfections with anguish (First Thessalonians 2:11, Colossians 3:21). His sense of success and accomplishment is bound up in the affairs of his offspring so that he invests much hope and emotion in their godliness and loyalty (Second Corinthians 12:14). A man after God is never too busy or too macho or too cold or too selfish to open his heart to his sons and daughters.

1. What can accompany contentment (Zephaniah 1:12)? Define your answer.
2. In this state, does one tend to progress, regress or digress?
3. What hints at David's complacency (Second Samuel 11:1)?
4. What is David's first real mistake (11:2-5; cf. Matthew 5:27-30)?
5. Why don't we look away when he see a scantily clad person on television, in a movie, or at work, school or the shopping mall (Second Peter 2:14)?
6. Which is the sin—fornication or an illegitimate pregnancy (First Thessalonians 4:1-8)?
7. What was David's next mistake—really a whole series of them (Second Samuel 11:6-13)? Who foiled his plan? How?
8. Explain whether David was guilty of murder (11:14-27).
9. What strategy did Nathan use to convict David (12:1-12) How did he respond (12:13-25)? Why did God punish him anyway?

## LESSON SIX

### Taking A Stand

Without a doubt, it is the defining moment of the life of David. While yet a teenager, his three oldest brothers had followed King Saul into battle with the Philistines. Only there was no battle. Yet.

For forty days, the Philistines' champion, a giant called Goliath, taunted the Hebrews and blasphemed their God. David sometimes visited his brothers to bring them supplies and to return news of the war to his father, but on this momentous trip, he hears for himself what the giant has to say. David's youthful enthusiasm and naivete are on display as he questions his brothers as to why no one has responded to Goliath's challenge. The reason is clear—"And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid" (First Samuel 17:24). After all, Goliath was over nine feet tall and his armor alone weighed 150 pounds.

David's youthful curiosity leads him to learn that King Saul has promised great things for the courageous man who would respond to Goliath, but Eliab, David's oldest brother, becomes indignant at the sight of the ruddy youth bouncing around the camp. Perhaps Eliab is not a little ashamed in his brother's presence; he accuses, "Why did you come down here .... I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle" (28-30).

Surely, teenage boys and young men often struggle with a strange strand of pride and even a lack of respect for their elders. Sometimes their enthusiasm mixes with inexperience and produces an explosion of regret. Sometimes, however, the blind courage of the young puts to shame the slothful cowardice of the old (see Job 32:4-10). So it is around King Saul's embattled camp.

Timothy was warned by the apostle Paul not to let anyone despise his youth as Eliab despised David's (First Timothy 4:12). Truly, the young must learn respect and patience with their elders (First Peter 5:5), but never to such an extreme that they refrain from serving God in the process. Young men should prove to be an example "in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (First Timothy 4:12) so that no one has any genuine reason to despise their ministering.

There are moments that call for the young to take a stand—to recognize a cause worth standing for (First Samuel 17:29-30) and to stand for it like a man (First Corinthians 16:13). Men after God's own heart sometimes get there at a very young age and thank God for them.

1. What nation gathered to battle the Israelites in the Valley of Elah (First Samuel 17:1-3)? From whom did they descend (Genesis 10:6-14)?

2. What did the Philistines' champion propose (First Samuel 17:4-11)? Why didn't anybody from Israel accept?

3. Israel's reaction to Goliath conjures up memories of an earlier generation who encountered giants when they spied out Canaan. How did the spies characterize themselves and their prospects for victory when compared to the entrenched enemy (Numbers 13:21-33)?

4. What effect did their pessimistic report have on the nation (14:1-4)? What was the solution proposed by Joshua and Caleb?

5. List three figurative "giants" that believers might have to face today:

- a.
- b.
- c.

6. Why wasn't David a soldier (First Samuel 17:12-18)?

7. Of what did Eliab accuse him (19-30)? Why?

## LESSON TWENTY-ONE

### Beauty Beheld

David was comfortable and content and successful.

Sounds good, but there is at least one problem that usually accompanies this kind of contentment—complacency. One's hunger is satisfied and his drive seems concluded so that he abandons the offensive, lets down his guard and settles back. Back—often into decline, whether material or spiritual. A man after God's own heart possesses material contentment, but spiritual hunger, and he is loyal to his promises along the way, especially those to God and his family.

David, despite being the original man after God, stumbled badly one spring. He extended his wintry, royal hibernation, sending out Joab and the army to battle the Ammonites and to besiege Rabbah. "But David remained at Jerusalem" (Second Samuel 11:1).

One sleepless evening, David arose from bed and took a walk upon his rooftop. His eyes happened upon a beautiful woman bathing across the way and David did—sadly—what most men would do. His eyes lingered so that the inspired historian suggests he beheld her with them. David could have had any unattached woman in the realm—the truth is he just about did. This bathing beauty, however, was attached to the valiant Uriah the Hittite. David, learning this, was undeterred in his lust. "Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her ... and she returned to her house" (4).

The sinful deed was done, but its exposure awaited, for Bathsheba conceived a child in the king's house while her husband was away. David tried to cover up his sin by making Uriah think the baby was his, but when that failed, he simply had the innocent soldier executed in the line of battle. David then wed the pregnant widow to complete the coverup.

His friend, Nathan the prophet, had other ideas, though, and launched a scathing, surreptitious rebuke of the king, finally crying out, "Thou art the man" (12:7, KJV)! David repented in tears, but so much of the damage was irreparable. His conscience was stained and his faithfulness and reputation were both very much in doubt.

Why? Spiritual complacency permitted him to relax, let down his guard and operate on the false assumption that he could handle the temptation, conceal the iniquity and indulge himself without consequence. Wrong!

The man after God has to understand "that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (Second Timothy 2:22).

1. What was David's reasoning about building a temple (Second Samuel 7:1-3)? What, if anything, seems noble about David's plan?

2. What did Nathan initially advise? Why is this strange?

3. What is the risk in making presumptions about God's will or the work of the church? How can we avoid making bad presumptions (Second Peter 2:10, Ephesians 5:8-17)?

4. Give some examples of presumptuous sins (Psalm 19:13).

5. Why didn't God feel the need for a fancy house (Second Samuel 7:4-11, Acts 17:24-25)? David probably couldn't have anticipated this response, but now we should. Especially when it comes to construction, how might this event be reflected in our thinking and planning (Ephesians 3:10)?

6. Describe the force of divine silence in establishing Bible authority (see also Hebrews 7:11-14 and Acts 15:24)?

7. What might have Peter done at Christ's transfiguration if he wanted to follow in David's presumptuous example (Matthew 17:1-5)?

## LESSON SEVEN

### The Battle is the Lord's

David burned with indignation and informed idle King Saul that he would do what no one else in Israel was willing even to attempt—fighting the foul-mouthed giant (First Samuel 17:31-32).

In spite of the king's short-lived dissuasion, David convinced the king to let him fight, confident that deliverance from a giant was no more difficult for God's servant to obtain than from a lion or bear (33-37).

Statuesque Saul tried to clothe David in the royal armor, but it was far too roomy for a teenage shepherd. The task at hand fit David perfectly, however, as he slung aside the coat of mail and picked up five smooth stones and a slingshot (38-40). Goliath thought even less of David's chances at victory than Saul; "he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking." (42). "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" he asked, promising to give the shepherd's flesh to the birds and beasts when the battle concluded.

What could David say? He was too young, too inexperienced, poorly armored and poorly armed. Or so it seemed. "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, who you have defied" (45). David was confident of victory "for the battle is the Lord's" and the young shepherd figured to persuade a doubtful Israel of that which they had forgotten (47).

David ran, not away from Goliath, but toward him, pulled out a single stone and slung it at the giant's forehead, where it sank into his skull, felling the monster, whom David then struck, killed and beheaded (48-51). The arrogance of the Philistines melted and the courage of Israel soared (51-54).

The man who seeks to live after God's own heart faces many giants during the course of his life. Whether they are bullies on the playground, the occasionally severe tests of faith or the extraordinary challenges of life, we are dealing with very powerful foes. For some the size of the enemy provides an excuse for failure, but for David, it was simply an opportunity to fight the good fight. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

## LESSON TWENTY

# A House For The Lord

1. What “cause” did David reference in First Samuel 17:29? Can you think of times when you were incensed at the sound of God’s name or honor being mocked or questioned (Matthew 12:22-32)? Relate them.

2. On what basis did Saul initially refuse David’s offer to fight (17:31-33)? What did God say to Jeremiah when he offered the same excuse (1:4-8)? What did Paul warn Timothy the evangelist (First Timothy 4:12)?

3. What did David offer as his qualifications (First Samuel 17:34-37)?

4. What weapons did David choose instead of Saul’s armor (17:38-40)? Is David armed sufficiently?

5. Goliath thought Israel wanted to play fetch with him and that David was just the stick (41-44). What is Goliath’s fatal problem? How did Peter and the apostles display a similar problem (Matthew 26:31-35)?

6. Why is overconfidence so dangerous (First Corinthians 10:12, Second Corinthians 12:7-10)?

7. How did David beat his giant (First Samuel 17:45-54)? How will we beat ours (First John 5:4-5)? What’s wrong with cowardice (Proverbs 24:10)?

Saul is dead. Michal is subdued. The ark of the covenant is back where it belongs. Even the parade is over.

“Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, ‘See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains’” (Second Samuel 7:1-2).

David’s honorable assumption was that God needed a grand house in which to reside—to give him proper glory and perhaps duly impress others with his unmistakable majesty. Isn’t that why millionaires live in mansions?

With Nathan’s blessing, David set his mind to work, but then his prophet-friend had an epiphany. Literally. God interrupted his sleep and told him to ask David, “Would you build me a house for me to dwell in .... Have I ever spoken a word to anyone ... saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar’” (5-7)?

David might have responded, “Well, Lord, I just assumed ...” And there is the problem, of course. Assumptions. Presumptions. Honorable intentions. God says, “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them” (10). When it came to houses, God’s concern was with establishing David’s, for through it would come the Christ (12-29).

Many today make the well-intentioned error of David—presuming some project or mission, ostensibly in the name of God, yet without his authority. That authority cannot come from popes elected by men or through synods meeting in ecclesiastical robes. It can only come from Christ, the one Lawgiver for the church, and through the New Testament Scriptures, the revelation of his will and authority (James 4:12, Matthew 28:18-20, First Peter 4:11).

The apostle Peter just might have learned a lesson from David’s stalled construction project. When he beheld the transfigured Christ, he suggested commemorating the event with the building of three tabernacles to honor equally Moses, Elijah and Jesus, whom he had seen together. Peter, however, prefaced his suggestion with three humble words—“if you wish.”

And the Lord did not wish. A “voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him’” (Matthew 17:5). The temple that replaced the temple that replaced the one that David’s son eventually built was itself about to be toppled. The church age would dawn with no need for tabernacles or authority in the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17-20, Ephesians 2:14-16).

A man after God’s own heart learns to restrain his presumptions about what God should like and accept, in order to give to God what he has said he approves (Ephesians 5:10).

1. What had David done to earn Michal's affections—or at least her hand in marriage from her father, King Saul (First Samuel 14:49, 18:20, 27)?

2. Where were Michal's loyalties as her father tried to murder her husband (First Samuel 19:11-17)? Where should they have been? Make an application to modern marriage and the headship transition from parent to husband (Genesis 2:18-25, Colossians 3:18-19).

3. Why might Michal have not been happy to be reunited with her husband after her father was dead (First Samuel 25:39-44, Second Samuel 3:12-16)?

4. What did David do that irritated Michal (Second Samuel 6:12-16, 20)? How would you characterize her response? Was she at all justified (First Corinthians 7:1-4, Second Corinthians 12:21)?

5. What was David's response to her complaint (6:21-23)?

6. What can a man do today to make his wife jealous?

## LESSON EIGHT

### Jealous of Me?

The bloom was hardly off the rose of David's triumph over Goliath when King Saul began to hear a song he didn't much like.

David had befriended Saul's son Jonathan and was serving in the king's employ; "So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely" (First Samuel 18:5). Yet when David returned from a Philistine slaughter, the women met him in the streets, dancing and singing a sprightly tune: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands" (7).

Instantly, Saul ceased to be the grateful king who took off his armor when taunted by Goliath, only to find that David would pick it up. "Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him" (8). Of course it displeased him. Saul was a coward, as intent upon keeping power as a 13-term congressman. "So Saul eyed David from that day forward" (9).

Saul's royal jealousy also brought back his distressing spirit, which seems like it was his very own self-inflicted thorn in the flesh. This is when Saul began plotting to kill his perceived rival, although David just continued playing music to soothe him (10-11). Attempted murder and demotion did nothing to slow David's popularity or Saul's jealous paranoia. He behaved wisely and ascended in the estimation of the Israelites and Saul hated him for it.

Jealousy is a terrible character trait that claims us all at one time or another. Not envy necessarily, but jealousy—the heated yearning to protect one's position or possession. It is not hard to transfer Saul's jealous paranoia into the workplace, schoolhouse or playground. Jealous boyfriends, shortstops and supervisors are all out to protect their position and a stray compliment or triumph like David's is all it takes to light the embers of jealousy.

Jealousy is one of those works of the flesh that the sufferer must recognize and treat (Galatians 5:19-21). It's awfully hard for me—as the object of another's jealousy—to put him at ease without damaging my own prospects. So instead of looking for jealous people to cure, a better starting place is at home. Am I behaving in such a way that I am contributing to another's jealous sin? Separately, am I actually jealous myself?

Jehovah is a jealous God, neither willing nor obligated to share our worship with false gods. Husbands and wives may not share each other's affections with any other as well. Beyond that, willingness to yield and share are the best cures for jealousies (First Timothy 6:18, James 3:17).

1. David's experience is not unlike that of another David in the twentieth century. Dwight David Eisenhower was a popular general, courted by both major political parties to run for president after World War II, who went on to serve two terms in the White House. Successful conquerors tend to excite the populace and give them a sense of security and hope. What had David the shepherd done to this end (First Samuel 18:1-7)?

2. Surely Saul was pleased with dead Philistines; what is it that displeased him about the whole affair (8-9)?

3. What is the difference between envy and jealousy (Proverbs 3:31, 6:32-35)? Which is the basis of the spirit that so distressed Saul (First Samuel 18:10-11; cf. Proverbs 27:3-4)?

4. Over what things are people jealous today? When is jealousy ever justified (First Corinthians 7:2-4, Second Corinthians 11:2)? What provokes jealousy?

5. Who is the most famous jealous character in the Bible (Exodus 20:5, 34:14; Matthew 6:24)? How is that justifiable (James 4:1-5)?

6. What cures jealousy?

## LESSON NINETEEN

### If Michal Ain't Happy

Michal is not a common name anymore for women, but one interesting Bible character bore that name and a whole lot else as well.

Michal was the younger daughter of King Saul and the prize that David won for killing Goliath and bringing back 200 more Philistine foreskins (First Samuel 14:49, 18:20, 27). If ever a young wedded couple had in-law problems, however, this was it. Michal's dear old dad grew jealous over the affections showered upon David and began to seek his son-in-law's execution.

Michal, loyal wife that she was, schemed his escape, outwitted Saul's servants and even assuaged her father's wrath a bit afterward (19:11-17).

When David was made an exile from Israel, however, Michal was wed to a man named Palti, even as David was beginning to acquire a harem of his own (25:39-44). Sounds like trouble in paradise.

Things only got stranger after Saul was killed and David began his ascent to Israel's throne. While negotiating a truce with Abner, David demanded the return of his estranged wife. "And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish" (Second Samuel 3:15).

The effect of all of this polygamy and unexpected reconciliation was that Michal's love for her husband greatly cooled. It's hard to blame her, although many commentators do, when she responds with righteous indignation at the sight of her husband leaping and whirling before the Lord with all his might in perhaps nothing more than a linen ephod (Second Samuel 6:12-19).

"How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" she complained (6:20).

Perhaps if David did not already have many other women in his chamber and thousands more singing his praises, Michal might have been more understanding. Even his response speaks little of his comprehension of her concerns: "And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor" (22).

Not what the wife wanted to hear. A man after God should never make his wife feel jealous because he seems to be inviting the attention of other women with his attire or behavior. Flirtatiousness in the neighborhood, workplace or over the Internet is akin to taking fire to one's bosom (Proverbs 6:20-29). You will get burned—by lust, adultery or just the distrust and cooling affection of your own wife. And it isn't worth the sin.

1. Why wasn't the ark in its expected place (First Samuel 4:1-22)? Why didn't the Philistines keep it (5:1-6:9)? How did the ark get to Kiriath-jearim (6:10-7:2)?

2. This cart, however, is the point of contention. How was the ark to be transported ordinarily (Exodus 25:14, Numbers 4:15)? Why would a cart seem to be preferable and acceptable?

3. Look around at the work of the church. Can you think of some ways in which its work could be done more efficiently, but less scripturally?

4. Why did God strike Uzzah (Second Samuel 6:1-7)? Why didn't Uzzah's good intentions and pious work mitigate against such punishment (cf. Leviticus 10:1-3)?

5. Aaron and his family were not permitted to lament publicly the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, but David's emotions are no secret. How did the king respond to the death of Uzzah (Second Samuel 6:8-11)? What makes people angry with God today?

6. There are few New Testament parallels to this event, but two stand out. Why did God strike Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)? Why did God strike Herod (Acts 12:20-24)?

## LESSON NINE

### Humble and Harmless

King Saul was jealous of David and hated the young man who had protected him by killing Goliath, the Philistine giant. Saul despised David specifically because the young shepherd, musician and warrior had become a living legend in Israel even as Saul's celebrity was in decline.

Then the king came up with an ingenious way of getting rid of his rival—marry David off to his daughter! “So Saul said, ‘I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him’” (First Samuel 18:21). It was not that Saul expected Michal to become another Delilah, but that the king planned to demand an unusual dowry for the princess's hand.

David resisted the invitation to marry the king's daughter, arguing that he was but a poor and lightly esteemed man, not anticipating how great he was yet to become (23-24). That was Saul's opening: “The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies” (25). A bushel of corn might have been more appropriate; 100 Philistine foreskins is not the kind of dowry you can pick up at the corner market. David, young, humble and harmless, could not even recognize what mischief the king designed against him; he simply acquired the foreskins in the only manner imaginable, confounding Saul's manipulations and taking Michal's loving hand in marriage (26-30). The poor and lowly esteemed became the king's son-in-law and wiser than all of his father-in-law's servants.

David's humility and harmlessness were a partial result of his youthful naivete and inexperience. Still, as Christ was harmless (Hebrews 7:26) so Christian men are to be “blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). Naivete is nothing to emulate, for dovish harmlessness is nicely complemented by serpentine wisdom (Matthew 10:16). Therefore, “be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil” (Romans 16:19). Physical might, experience and acknowledgment of evil in the world should never combine to make the man of God a sinister force, in whom no one feels comfortable placing trust.

1. At least one part of the king's ransom for killing Goliath had not yet been paid (First Samuel 17:25). What part is finally considered after Saul begins to hate the conqueror (18:19)? Why doesn't this wedding come off?

2. David's humility is echoed in the complaints made about Jesus, who claimed to be the Christ. Why didn't the Jews find the Lord's humility as becoming as they found David's (18:16, Mark 6:1-6, Matthew 11:16-24)?

3. Paul suggests that few from three groups answer the call of God to come to Jesus (First Corinthians 1:26-30). List them and tell why.

4. Why was Michal then given to David as a wife (First Samuel 18:20-25)?

5. How did the following women become snares to their husbands?

- Eve:
- Job's wife:
- Jezebel:

6. How did David prove himself (18:26-30)?

7. In what was David "simple" (Hebrews 7:26, Matthew 10:16, Philippians 2:15, Romans 16:19)?

## LESSON EIGHTEEN

### Mad At God

With King Saul out of the way, the time was ripe for Israel to become a better nation.

Jerusalem, the city of David, was to be its military, political and spiritual capital, and as such, it was necessary for the new king to transport the ark of the covenant out of Kirjath Jearim and into its midst after a 20-year exile.

Although the Law of Moses prescribed its transport via poles, rings and carriers (Exodus 25:14, Numbers 4:15), the sons of Abinadab devised a more efficient vehicle—a brand new oxcart piloted by Uzzah and Ahio (Second Samuel 6:1-5).

The journey was cause for a parade and David and all Israel danced and performed musical numbers before the Lord until the oxen stumbled and Uzzah instinctively put out his hand to catch the ark as it toppled. "Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (7).

Jehovah's decisive response to Uzzah's careless but well-intentioned irreverence greatly disturbed David so that he "became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah" (8).

David refused to move the ark another inch and so it remained in the house of Obed-Edom, which was greatly blessed during the three months it rested there. Finally, David consented to resume the transition and the ark was properly carried into Jerusalem (12-13).

David had no right to be angry with God, any more than Aaron should have been outraged when his sons, Nadab and Abihu, were killed for offering strange fire (Leviticus 10:1-3), or when the kin of Ananias and Sapphira discovered that the couple had been executed for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11).

Those who approach God must do so reverently, giving him glory through their subjection and obedience, for he is the author eternal salvation to those who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9). God does not leave us ignorant of his expectations so that when he chastens us for falling short, we should be thankful rather than resentful (Hebrews 12:1-11).

People today still get mad at God. They suffer some indignity or disappointment—often of their own making—and then proceed to blame the Lord and sling invective at him. Notice that while David was angry and pouting, he was pushing God, his mercy and great blessing away from himself (cf. Matthew 5:3-4).

The Bible promises that God will draw near to us if we draw near to him (James 4:8), but one cannot do that if he is harboring misdirected bitterness against a loving God who has eternity in mind when he permits us to be tried and punished. There is never any good reason to be angry at God.

1. Who was made king of Israel after Saul died (Second Samuel 2:1-11)? Where did David reign? What was the result of this conflict (12-17)?

2. What were the names of the king's closest advisers (2:18-32)? What caused Ishbosheth's adviser to switch to David (3:1-25)? How did Joab welcome Abner to David's cabinet (3:26-30).

3. How did David describe Abner after his death (3:31-39)? What did David gain by mourning Abner rather than dancing on his grave?

4. What event led directly to David's choice even by Israel (4:1-5:5)?

5. How did the Jebusites challenge Goliath's slayer (5:6-10)?

6. What does the King James translation of Paul's words mean in First Corinthians 16:13—"quit ye like men"?

7. What is this world's image of a virile man (First John 2:15-17)? How well does a man of God measure up to this image (3:10-13, First Peter 2:9-10)?

8. How do you reconcile the Christian virtue of meekness with the call to be strong and to contend for the faith?

## LESSON TEN

### A Friend Indeed

David's best friend was a man named Jonathan. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, the man who desperately and jealously wanted David to die. When your best friend's dad is constantly throwing spears at your head, well, that can be hard on a friendship.

"Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David. So Jonathan told David" (First Samuel 19:1-2). Jonathan tried to change his father's murderous mind by reminding him of David's bravery against the Philistines, but the king was mad with rage and would only be consoled very briefly (19:4-10). Although he risked alienating his own father, Jonathan continued to protect his friend, for "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (18:1). As Saul became aware of his son's treason, he grew angrier, eventually casting a spear at Jonathan, whom he called the "son of a perverse, rebellious woman" (20:30)! Jonathan, however, would not relent, hiding his friend from Saul's rampage (23:14-18).

Does a man after God's own heart need such friends? How can the disciple inspire that kind of loyalty—the kind that takes risks and even puts justice ahead of a wrongheaded relative?

The answer is in Proverbs 18:24: "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." To inspire that kind of friendly loyalty, one must first be willing to extend it. It is a golden rule, after all, that one should do unto others as he would have done unto him. Friendship, loyalty, sacrifice and the right thing will not begin with someone else—they must begin with me, for I am the only one over which I have any control.

That friend who sticks closer than a brother "loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17) and will even faithfully wound his comrade when reproof is required (Proverbs 27:6). A friend will tell you what you need to hear, even when it isn't what you want to hear. "As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).

A man after God is a friend indeed and, therefore, has friends in times of need.

1. What is it that bound Jonathan so tightly to David (First Samuel 18:1-4)? Why are men often afraid to be so open with their feelings of friendship?

2. Why might it have been logical for Jonathan to take Saul's side against David (First Samuel 19:1-3, 20:30-31)? How do you resolve the difficulty of being obedient to your parents when they are in the wrong or are abusing their authority (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-4)?

3. There is a point at which young people begin to prefer the counsel and company of their peers to that of their parents. Why is this? What dangers and opportunities does this custom present (Matthew 15:14, Proverbs 1:10-18)?

4. What was Jonathan's logic in trying to persuade his father not to fear David (First Samuel 19:4-10)? What mark of good friendship did Jonathan show to his father (Proverbs 27:6, 9; Proverbs 27:17)?

5. What is the first step in gaining a friend (Proverbs 18:24)? What is also helpful (Proverbs 19:6, Job 6:14)?

6. What would the Holy Spirit counsel us to remember in choosing friends (First Corinthians 15:33, Second Timothy 2:22)?

## LESSON SEVENTEEN

### Sounds Like A Challenge

With Saul comfortably dead, the way for David to ascend to Israel's throne seemed to be paved with ease.

Except that Saul's son, Esh-Baal, or Ishbosheth as he became known, also laid claim to the crown and began to reign over most of Israel while David gained power only in Hebron and over Judah (Second Samuel 2:1-11). A bloody conflict ensued, punctuated by the slaughter of both armies at Helkath Hazzurim, or Field of Swords, upon which the champions of both monarchs perished prior to an all-out battle won by the servants of David (12-17). Beyond the obvious conflict between Israel and Judah, and David and Ishbosheth, the king's generals were also pulling strings. Abner had crowned Saul's son in Mahanaim and Joab was a tireless defender of David's rights. Eventually, Abner became disillusioned with Ishbosheth and sought to defect to David, but for his trouble, all he received was Joab's jealous knife in his stomach (Second Samuel 3:1-39). "When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled" (4:1).

Ishbosheth was soon assassinated, clearing the way for David to take command of the entire nation of God (Second Samuel 4:2-5:5). He instantly set his sights on Jerusalem, but the Jebusites who inhabited the land were unimpressed. "You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you" (5:6). To David, who had slain a giant and outlasted a psychotic king, the chortles of the Jebusites simply sounded like a challenge.

It seems unlikely that the Jebusites seriously tried to defend themselves by placing the blind and lame at the front of the battle, but the outcome was little different nonetheless. "David took the stronghold of Zion ... and went on and became great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him" (Second Samuel 5:7-10).

A man after God's heart is up to a good challenge and life is certainly filled with them. It is a challenge to accept the label of peculiar just for being a disciple of Christ, or having one's masculinity doubted because he abstains from beer and skirt-chasing (First Peter 2:9-10, 4:1-5). It is a challenge to take the lead at home and bring up children in Christ's nurture and admonition when it is so easy to leave that to Mom or the Bible class teacher or no one in particular (Ephesians 6:1-4). It can be a challenge to remain meek, to restrain his might, to elevate his wife to a place of honor above his own (Ephesians 5:25-27). Yet he will because he is after God.

In the King James, we find that Paul wrote, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (First Corinthians 16:13). Oddly enough, the quit in that four-hundred year old rendering means the exact opposite—don't quit, but be always brave. Life is filled with challenges, but "If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

1. What was the ultimate cause of King Saul's downfall (First Samuel 31:1-6, Proverbs 16:18)?

2. Was Saul's suicide justified, or should he have waited to be killed by the Philistines? Was his armor-bearer's suicide justified? Think about another Bible character who died by his own hand—Samson. Did he do the right thing by toppling the temple upon himself and his enemies? Was Judas justified in hanging himself after betraying Jesus?

3. What was the effect upon Israel of Saul's defeat and death (First Samuel 31:7-13)? What effect might my sin, ignominy or apostasy have upon others—my family, the congregation, the cause itself (Galatians 2:13, First Peter 4:15)?

4. What is wrong with finding fascination and joy in the downfall of celebrated or powerful people? Think about O.J., Britney and the like. How did David respond to Saul's death (Second Samuel 1:1-27)?

5. What is God's warning about reveling in your enemy's demise (Proverbs 24:17-18)? What should be our overriding hope (Romans 12:17-21)?

6. What does David need to learn from this? What can we learn from Saul?

## LESSON ELEVEN

# Opportunity Knocks

When opportunity knocks, one must answer the door, right?

What if the opportunity perfectly suits your needs and protects your future, but imposes a heavy spiritual and conscientious toll?

Sometimes opportunity knocks and it's best *not* to answer.

David surely proved to be a man after God during the time when King Saul was after him and with a murderous glint in his eye. On at least a couple of occasions that we can read about, righteous David refused an opportunity to slay his pursuer, explaining that, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord" (First Samuel 24:6).

On that occasion, in order to relieve himself, Saul stumbled into the very cave where David was hiding. David's friends encouraged him to kill his enemy in that embarrassing moment, but he could not.

Earlier, with wife Michal's assistance, David fled the king and left behind an idol topped by goat's hair in his place (First Samuel 19:11-17). Not much later, he caught Saul sleeping within his camp, but only borrowed his spear and water jug in order to prove he was harmless (26:1-25). Saul's gratitude and regret proved short-lived, however. David pleaded, "And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the Lord, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation" (24).

Most men today would have sided with David's friends who encouraged him to take the quick and easy solution by killing Saul while he slept or passed water, but David was not that kind of man. Such opportunities rarely knock in modern times, but what of those that do? And what of those opportunities that are convenient and lucrative, but exact a spiritual or conscientious price?

While hard work is good for a man, choosing to work overmuch can cost him quantity time with his wife and children. "Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease" (Proverbs 23:4)! Opportunity might knock to make a new female friend at work or the club, but what might that cost your marriage; "Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned" (Proverbs 6:27)? Each day can present myriad opportunities to get ahead with little while lies, cheating just a little or taking a moral short-cut, but would a man after God do that? David wouldn't.

1. Why was King Saul trying to kill his loyal servant, David? Why hadn't David responded by answering the challenge as he answered Goliath (First Samuel 23:24-29)?

2. On what basis might David have been otherwise justified in seizing any opportunity to kill Saul (see 16:12-13, 22:11-19)?

3. How did David prove himself "more righteous" than Saul in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi (24:1-22)? Did David's men agree with this?

4. List three occasions when it would be better not to answer when opportunity knocks (Galatians 5:13, Hebrews 11:15).

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5. After this, Samuel died and Saul reverted to form. How did David again prove his loyalty and harmlessness (First Samuel 26:1-25)?

6. What is the problem with passing over opportunities to do good (Galatians 6:6-10, James 4:13-17)?

## LESSON SIXTEEN

# When The Mighty Have Fallen

King Saul's bloodthirsty pursuit of our hero ended at the hands of the Philistines who also killed David's best friend, Jonathan.

Actually, Saul received only a potentially mortal wound at their hands; concerned about appearances, he fell upon his own sword in completion of a stunning downfall from the throne of all Israel (First Samuel 31). David learned that the king and his son were dead from an Amalekite who claimed to have finished the job and offered the crown and bracelet as proof (Second Samuel 1:1-10). For his troubles, David had him executed (13-16).

This reaction hints at David's response to the death of his persecutor and best friend. Surely, David would mourn Jonathan, but why should he be troubled that his maniacal father is also dead? It was David's consistent, unbending integrity that rendered him such a man after God's heart and steadfastly through Saul's murderous pursuit, David has refused to lift a finger against him or to hope for anything but restoration. David is relieved that his flight is ended, but sad that Saul has died without restoration.

The poetic future king taught Israel the Song of the Bow from the mysterious Book of Jasher, which begins, "The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen" (Second Samuel 1:19)!

It is sadly natural to react to the downfall of mighty people with glee and mockery. Some spend all their time waiting for politicians, celebrities, philanthropists and judges to show their true colors and get a comeuppance. Is the man after God to be so devoted and dedicated to the downfall of others?

Wisdom warns, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath from him" (Proverbs 24:17-18). No, indeed, the man after God yearns instead for his enemy's repentance and restoration and friendship (Romans 12:17-21). And when the mighty fall as far as Hell, it is occasion for regret that his soul just would not be redeemed.

1. In what ways is finding a wife an example of God's favor upon a man (Proverbs 18:22, Genesis 2:18-25, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)? How does she help him?

2. There are exceptions to this proverb. Some men did fine without a wife and some men would have done better without their wives. List a few.

- NO WIFE:
- BAD WIFE:

3. The Proverbs explain why having a wife might not work out so well. Why is that (12:4, 14:1, 19:13, 21:9, 19)?

4. Is a man his wife's helpmeet as well?

5. If a wife is a helpmeet, David had all the help any man could ask for. He had many wives—too many in fact. How did Abigail begin to help David (First Samuel 25)?

6. Why would a man refuse his helpmeet's counsel (Proverbs 12:15, 16:18)?

7. Women can learn much about their roles from observing Abraham's wife, Sarah. How does one become a "daughter of Sarah" (First Peter 3:1-7)?

## LESSON TWELVE

### Situation Ethics

Saul's bloodthirsty pursuit of young David eventually drove the shepherd musician into a small priestly town called Nob, just north of Jerusalem and possibly on Mount Scopus.

Because of his intense hunger and desperation, David deceived Ahimelech the priest into thinking that he was acting in service of King Saul so that he might receive some provisions. "Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found," David pleaded (First Samuel 21:3).

A problem. There was no ordinary, or common, bread on hand at the time, but only consecrated, or showbread, set apart to be eaten in a holy place and only by the priests (Exodus 25:30, Leviticus 24:5-9). Ahimelech, however, suggested that he might bend the rules if only David's soldiers had abstained from women during their mission. With David's assurance, the bread was transferred and eaten and all was well.

Except that a spy for Saul soon reported the episode to the quite mad king, who convicted Ahimelech of conspiracy and slaughtered "eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod" before obliterating all of Nob as well (First Samuel 22:18-19).

This event might have faded into Old Testament history had it not reappeared when Jesus and his disciples were accused of violating the Sabbath day work prohibition by merely plucking grain heads to eat as they traveled between the fields. "But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath'" (Matthew 12:1-8). Jesus appealed to David's behavior, but did not go so far as to legalize it, instead announcing that it "was not lawful" (4). Jesus only wondered why they held him to a different standard, honoring David when the disciples had in fact violated no law, but only the customs of the lawyers. "And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

A man after God's heart is not imperfect and it is not honoring David to applaud his quick-thinking deception which led to so many deaths, nor is it appropriate to argue that hunger bends the law. Jesus knew the law better than the Pharisees who wrongly accused him of sin when there was none.

Today's men after God are frequently presented with opportunities to bend their convictions and suspend their morality, permitting situation ethics or momentary indulgence to take the reins of reasoning. Ahimelech and all of Nob can testify of what happens next. (See also Proverbs 6:30-31.)

1. Why was Ahimelech afraid as David came to visit (First Samuel 21:1)?

2. How would you characterize David's statement in the second verse? Why did David take such a step as this? Would Ahimelech have helped him if he knew the truth? List a few similar events in Bible history.

3. What does the New Testament say about lying in the following passages?

- John 8:44:
- Colossians 3:9:
- Revelation 21:27:
- Revelation 22:15:

4. On what legal basis did Ahimelech choose to feed David and his men (First Samuel 21:2-6, 22:9-10)? What law was violated (Leviticus 24:5-9)?

5. What did the disciples of Christ do that bore some similarity to this event (Matthew 12:1-8; cf. Deuteronomy 23:25)? What law did the Pharisees claim was broken (Exodus 20:8-11)? Whom does Jesus identify as lawbreakers?

6. Jesus punctuated his application of the text to the issue at hand with two comments—one found in Matthew 12:7 and the other in Mark 2:27. Describe those arguments. When is breaking a command of God justifiable?

7. What happened to Ahimelech because he helped David (First Samuel 22:6-23)? What can happen to others because we choose to lie?

## LESSON FIFTEEN

# Behind Every Great Man After God

The expression goes, "Behind every great man there is a woman."

Like the proverb that explains, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord," this uninspired axiom is likewise general in nature. History has known many great men, even Christians, who lived celibate lives. The apostle Paul leaps to mind (First Corinthians 7:7), as does our Lord Jesus Christ.

Generally, though, the support of an able and godly wife is invaluable to a man's spiritual progress in life. Men often react too hastily and speak or act in regrettable ways. Sometimes they are blind to emotion and given to satisfying their appetites without regard to the bill attached. Generally, women tend to be more attuned to such considerations, and their presence behind their men makes them better. The role of helpmeet is not a menial one, designed to denigrate and enslave. Rather it elevates the woman.

David, who admittedly collected far too many wives, came to know such a woman in Abigail—the helpmeet of a fool named Nabal when he met her. Nabal refused to assist fugitive David and even taunted him to the point that the shepherd cum king instructed his band of 400 to gird on their swords (First Samuel 25:2-13). Abigail heard of the crisis and moved to defuse it, preparing David his meals and imploring him not to do something he would live to regret. "And it shall come to pass," she said, "that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause or that my lord has avenged himself" (25:30-31).

David, like men today who are blessed with faithful, reasonable wives, acknowledged that she was correct and that her presence was an act of divine providence in simply keeping him from sin. Nabal died from shame upon learning of his wife's diplomacy and David took her as his own (36-43).

A man after God's heart will hear his wife especially when her suggestions contain a measure of emotion and restraint that is foreign to him. She will be a helpmeet if he will let her. He won't be a man after God otherwise.

1. What did David take away from Nob as a souvenir (First Samuel 21:1-9)? What would this gift make Ahimelech become in the eyes of Saul?

2. Why did David pretend to be crazy when he arrived in Gath? How well did his strategy work?

3. To what lengths can a person go to protect himself from harm? Although it is deception, could he play possum before a gunman, lie to a robber, mislead a foreign spy? On what basis would tactics like David's be justifiable? What about using mental reservation in the face of persecutors?

4. How did Saul's paranoia about David become self-fulfilling at the cave of Adullam (First Samuel 22:1-5)? What is likely to happen today if we assume that someone is going to be nasty or uncooperative and we approach them as if they already are (Proverbs 15:1-2, 18:13)?

5. How would you characterize Saul's attitude as he spoke to his servants at Gibeah (First Samuel 22:6-10)? What does self-pity sound like?

6. What was Ahimelech's defense (22:11-23)? Why is ignorance no good (Second Thessalonians 2:9-12, Revelation 22:15)?

## LESSON THIRTEEN

### First Review

1. King Saul reigned over Israel before the arrival of young David. Why did Israel want a king so desperately (First Samuel 8:1-9)? Why did Samuel and Jehovah oppose them (First Samuel 8:10-22)?

2. Discuss whether it is right to make vows today (Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12, Second Corinthians 1:23). When, if ever, is it right to break a vow (Acts 23:14)?

3. What does it take to be a man (First Samuel 16:13, Acts 6:3, Matthew 5:3)?

4. How can the presence of God's influence also be judged very objectively (Matthew 7:15-20, Galatians 5:15-26)?

5. What should we learn from Jesus as he washes his apostles' feet (John 13:1-20)? How might one minister in a similar fashion today (First Peter 4:10-11)?

6. What effect did the 10 spies' pessimistic report have on the nation (14:1-4)? What was the solution proposed by Joshua and Caleb?

7. How did David defeat his giant (First Samuel 17:45-54)? How will we defeat ours (First John 5:4-5)? What's wrong with cowardice (Proverbs 24:10)?

8. What cures jealousy like the kind Saul felt against David?

9. Paul suggests that few from three groups answer the call of God to come to Jesus (First Corinthians 1:26-30). List them and tell why.

10. There is a point at which young people begin to prefer the counsel and company of their peers to that of their parents. Why is this? What dangers and opportunities does this custom present (Matthew 15:14, Proverbs 1:10-18)? What would the Holy Spirit counsel us to remember in choosing friends (First Corinthians 15:33, Second Timothy 2:22)?

11. What is the problem with passing over opportunities to do good (Galatians 6:6-10, James 4:13-17)?

12. Jesus punctuated his application of David's eating the showbread to the disciples' plucking grain heads with two comments—one found in Matthew 12:7 and the other in Mark 2:27. Describe those arguments. When is breaking a command of God justifiable?

## LESSON FOURTEEN

### Sensible Leadership

Once David had enjoyed the hospitality of the priests at Nob, he set off again with Goliath's sword in hand as well (First Samuel 21:9).

When he arrived in Gath, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, his reputation preceded him. Goliath, after all, was the Philistine champion, and the citizenry could recite the provocative lyrics that so enflamed Saul—"Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands" (11).

David, fearing retribution at the hand of King Achish, schemed to pretend insanity to allay any fears or plans the king might have been harboring against him. "So he changed his behavior before them, feigned madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard" (13). Sounds rather convincing, and it was to the king who paid him no further notice as David moved further on to the cave of Adullam.

This is where Saul's petty paranoia and resentment toward David began to bear fruit in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Here, David received "everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented . . . So he became captain over them (22:2). As David increased, Saul continued to diminish, whining about how no one felt sorry for him and that even his son, Jonathan, loved David better (6-8). Doeg the Edomite took the guilt trip and revealed that he had seen the priests feed David (9-10). Soon Saul was wearing their blood on his tunic (11-23).

David had neither sought the crown nor succumbed to the provocation of the king throughout this ordeal. Still, the meeting at the cave of Adullam marked the turning point. While David had escaped assassination by feigning madness, Saul had merely sunk deeper into the real thing by spreading his murderous, vengeful rampage. David would return to his senses once the heat was off, but Saul never would see the light again.

The man after God "must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, . . . that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil" (Second Timothy 2:24-26). No one ever exhibited more patience than David when Saul was caught in the devil's snare. Replicating his leadership requires men "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).