



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1 Samuel

Lesson 10: 1 Samuel 17-20

David's bravery and faith in the battle against Goliath saved the Israelites from the Philistines. His faith and bravery attracted the attentions of both King Saul and Jonathan. As you read through this lesson, notice the differences between Saul and Jonathan's reaction to David's newfound fame.

Read 1 Samuel 17:55-58

Read 1 Samuel 16:21-23

You may question why Saul asked about David's father, almost as if he didn't know who David was. According to 1 Samuel 16, Saul already knew and loved David before the encounter with the Philistines. David had been going back and forth between caring for his father's sheep and playing his lyre to settle Saul's spirit. The Bible is silent as to how long David did this. He may have served Saul for months or even years before he fought Goliath. By the time Saul witnessed David's bravery in the Valley of Elah, he knew who David was, but he may have forgotten the details concerning David's lineage.

What tribe was David from? (see 1 Samuel 17:12 and Matthew 1:2-6 for help.)

Why might this information have concerned Saul, especially since he knew that God had rejected him as king (see Genesis 49:10)?

When Jacob died, he blessed his sons and prophesied that Judah's descendants would become

rulers over their brethren. Saul, a Benjamite, had much to fear from a rising star from the tribe of Judah.

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-5

Compare David's battle with Goliath to Jonathan's actions in 1 Samuel 14:1-15. What characteristics did Jonathan and David share?

Jonathan, who was probably several years older than David, admired the boy's faith and spiritual focus in battle. David fought for God, not for his own glory. When Jonathan attacked the Philistine garrison in 1 Samuel 14, he also relied on God's guidance and strength to deliver a miraculous victory. Both shared a strong, battle-tested, faith in God and relied on Him for victory.

What did Jonathan give David?

Jonathan's gift obviously signified a covenant of friendship, but it may have meant more. Jonathan gave David his princely garments, his prized sword, and his armor; all symbols of Jonathan's royal status. By giving David these gifts, Jonathan intended to show his approval of David as successor to the throne.

Why would Jonathan do this, especially since, as the king's eldest son, he was the most obvious successor to the throne? Jonathan was probably aware that God had denied Saul dynastic rule as punishment for his disobedience. He recognized that David's faith



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and bravery stirred the hearts of the Israelites, making him a good candidate to lead a nation that, until Saul, had only ever been led by inspirational heroes (Tsumura 473). Jonathan’s willingness to defer to David as the potential king displays his humble character. As the “crown prince,” he had the most to lose from David becoming king. Rather than being jealous of the new national hero, Jonathan befriended and supported him instead.

Has jealousy ever prevented you from befriending someone?

How did/could you work through that?

1 Samuel 18:5 is a summary statement that provides an overview of the months, or even years, following that battle in the Valley of Elah. As a result of David’s success, Saul made him a permanent member of his court and appointed him commander over a thousand men, a position Jonathan also held. The whole nation, including Saul’s own officials, saw that this was a wise decision. David’s good nature was evident to all.

What characteristics do you want to be noticed for?

What actions would cause people to see you in this light?

Read 1 Samuel 18:6-9

Compare Saul’s reaction to David’s success to Jonathan’s reaction in v. 1-4.

After the summary statement in 18:5, the story shifts back in time to the days directly following David’s battle with Goliath. In Israel, women were known to celebrate victories with singing, dancing and instruments (see Exodus 15:20). When the women gave most of the credit to David for the victory over the Philistines, Saul became enraged. The people-pleaser Saul was no longer the sole object of his subjects’ admiration.

Hearing the nation praise David more reminded Saul of Samuel’s warning that someone greater would replace him (1 Samuel 13:14). David had boldly proclaimed his faith to Saul before the battle. When David won, and God’s favor with the boy became evident, Saul no doubt feared that David was the man of whom Samuel had spoken.

Read 1 Samuel 18:10-16

After jealousy and anger arose in Saul, the tormenting spirit rushed on him again. This is how Satan attacks us. He exploits our weak, sinful thoughts to gain a foothold in our minds.

Read Ephesians 4:26-27. How can unchecked anger lead to sin?

The evil spirit caused Saul to rant like a madman. David attempted to relieve Saul’s distress, just as he had done many times before. Saul could not control his rage and attacked David, twice. David was able to



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excuse Saul’s behavior and continued to faithfully serve his king, even after the attempt on his life.

What did Saul do as a result of his attack on David?

Why did David prosper?

Note the repeated phrase throughout this passage that explains both David’s success and Saul’s fear of him; the Lord was with David. God was responsible for leading and guiding the young man in all his endeavors. David listened, waited on, and trusted God to provide him with what he needed to succeed. Saul, who once experienced the honor of possessing the Spirit of God, knew the magnitude of the power that supported David. However, Saul did not recognize the privilege of that power until it was too late. It was lost to him now, and instead of repenting and accepting God’s punishment, he attempted to rid himself of the man who now enjoyed the favor he once had.

Why didn’t Saul simply execute David? See 1 Samuel 18:16.

As king, Saul could have had David executed. However, a cowardly act like that would not have gone over well with the people of Israel. They loved and respected David. Saul, a known people-pleaser, was not willing at this point to lose the favor of the people by killing their champion.

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30

Why did David refuse to marry Merab?

How was David convinced to marry Michal?

Saul concocted a plan to have David killed by the Philistines so that he was not directly responsible for David’s death. He “kindly” waved the expected bride-price for Michal and asked David to kill 100 Philistines instead. David was to provide proof of death by bringing the foreskins of the men he killed. While this sounds barbaric, it was common for body parts to be used as “proof of death” during David’s time.

Saul’s plan backfired. David happily agreed to this arrangement and in true David fashion, killed twice as many Philistines as required, perhaps in order to gain more favor with his future father-in-law. Not only did David survive the ordeal, his actions affirmed his status as hero of Israel. Also, by marrying Michal, David became the king’s son-in-law, strengthening his legitimacy as a successor to the throne of Israel (Tsumura 488). God used Saul’s bad intentions to bring about good for His faithful servant David.

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-7

After two passive attempts to kill David, Saul turned to his servants and his son to carry out his wishes. Unfortunately for Saul, Jonathan loved David and desired to save the life of his friend and the reputation of his father.



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How did Jonathan attempt to resolve the conflict between David and Saul?

What reasoning did Jonathan use to convince Saul to leave David alone? Where have we heard reasoning like this before (see 1 Samuel 14:45).

Did Saul and David reconcile?

Using Jonathan as a model, how can we help to bring reconciliation to feuding brethren?

What does David's willingness to trust Saul say about David?

Read 1 Samuel 19:8-17

After another overwhelming victory over the Philistines, Saul's hatred towards David returned. Again, Saul's jealous feelings provided an opportunity for the evil spirit to overcome him. As a result, Saul tried to kill David again. Unwilling to risk his life any longer, David ran away and asked his bride Michal to help him escape.

How did Michal help David?

How did she defend her actions to Saul?

Michal used an idol as a stand-in for David when Saul's servants came looking for him. The idol that Michal used may have been a statue of an ancestor. It is doubtful that David would have allowed an image of a false god in his own household. When her deception was discovered, Michal deceived the king again by saying that David threatened her life if she refused to help him escape. Although she loved David, Michal was unwilling to lose favor with her father over the matter.

Read 1 Samuel 19:18-24

How does the Spirit of God intervene to save David from capture by Saul's messengers and Saul himself?

Compare what happened to Saul in 1 Samuel 10:10-11 with what happened in 19:23-24.

After he was anointed by Samuel, Saul prophesied as a sign of the presence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit continued to be with him until he rejected God's word. In his pursuit of David, the Spirit of God only came upon Saul to prevent him from harming God's newly selected king. Once David's escape was secured, the Spirit abandoned Saul again. The inspired writer draws our attention to the irony of this situation by repeating the proverb "Is Saul also among the prophets?" In 1 Samuel 10, the proverb seemed to be positive, reflecting amazement at God's Spirit empowering the soon-to-be king. In 1 Samuel 19, however, the writer repeats the proverb to draw



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attention to the frightening change in Saul's relationship with God. The Spirit no longer empowered Saul as a sign of favor; it empowered Saul as a sign of disfavor with Saul's intentions.

Read 1 Samuel 20:1-23

What did Jonathan ask David to do in v. 14-15?

Jonathan and David's vows to each other reveal their unwavering trust in God. Consider this. During this time in history, new kings often killed members of the royal family in order to eliminate any potential competing claims to the throne. Yet, David, because of his love for Jonathan and trust in God's promise, willingly pledged to preserve the lives of Jonathan and his descendants. Meanwhile, Jonathan, who was heir apparent to the throne, relinquished his claim in deference to David's selection. He willingly gave up a kingdom because he knew that God had chosen his friend to rule. Jonathan wanted to see the Lord's plan put into action, even if that meant the loss of the monarchy, or even his own life. What a contrast between Jonathan and Saul!

Read Numbers 28:11-15

What was to be done at the new moon festival?

The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle, so a new moon corresponded with a new month. Since a sacrifice was required, those in attendance had to be ritually clean.

Read 1 Samuel 20:24-34

How did Jonathan come to understand Saul's intentions towards David?

What wrongs did Saul commit against Jonathan?

Saul was angered so much by Jonathan's loyalty to David that he insulted him. Saul then tried to play on Jonathan's aspirations, saying that David had to die for Jonathan to be the uncontested king. When Jonathan's commitment to David remained intact, Saul tried to kill Jonathan in a manner similar to the way he had tried to kill David. Saul's mind was so distorted that he almost killed the heir he was supposedly trying to protect. Anger and jealousy rarely cause one to act in a logical manner.

Read 1 Samuel 20:35-42

Jonathan tried to preserve David's safety by using the sign of the arrows, but David revealed his hiding place so that he could mourn with his friend. David and Jonathan realized that they must part company, so they renewed their covenant; one established not between two men, but between each man and God.

Throughout these chapters we see the bond grow stronger and stronger between Jonathan and David as the love Saul once had for David turns into hate. While it is easy to find examples of Saul's brand of jealousy and trickery in today's world, it is much harder to find true brotherly love that matches the bond between David and Jonathan. This type of love is summed up in 20:17.



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What are some characteristics of a good friendship? Use the friendship of Jonathan and David and any other scriptures to support your answer.

What does it say to you that someone like Saul had a son like Jonathan?

Character Study: Consider these questions as you work on your character study. How is David described in this passage? How is Saul described? What does Saul's relationship with Jonathan tell you about Saul? What does David's relationship with Jonathan tell you about David?