

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: Waiting on God' 1 Samuel 23-24

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Church Family! I want to take the opportunity to welcome those of you that are guests. Thanks for trusting us with your Sunday. It is my prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We would like to connect with you. There are a couple of ways you can help us do that. One, feel free to text, anytime, the keyword TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant to the number 94-000. When you do, you'll be sent a link where you can share with us basic contact information. I will then look forward to following up with you this coming week. Or another way you can connect with us is by stopping by our information center located in the main lobby area under the banner "Hope is Here." We have a gift there for you to say thanks for joining us today. It is the highlight of my week to visit with those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled to have you with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in the middle of a teaching series right now called, "Life Lessons," We are studying through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. In recent messages, we've studied the story of David and Goliath, the deep friendship formed between Jonathan and David, the dangers that are associated with jealousy, the blessing of true friends, and we began David's life on the run.

Today we come to study two more chapters this morning, chapters 23 and 24, in a message I've entitled, "Waiting on God." So, I want to invite you to grab your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 23 as we look at David's life on the run.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: GPS

Do you remember life before GPS? How many of you remember using these? [\[Show folding road map\]](#) I can remember as a kid when we would go on family vacations my parents buying and looking at road maps and atlases like this one. They would chart out on the folding map the route we were going to take to get to our destination. We used to even add up all the miles that were on the map to see the total mileage for the trip. There were even a time or two when we would cross the state lines that we would have to go to the visitor center and pick up a state map for that particular state.

But now, Siri tells us every turn to make and charts out our course for us. She even alerts us when we get off track. Then she will re-calculate a new set of directions to get us back to where we need to go.

When it comes to receiving direction from The Lord, we would prefer the GPS version. God, just tell me what to do and where to go. But often He desires for us to consult the map, His Word, and determine our course from there.

Well, in 1 Samuel 23 and 24, we are going to see how The Lord leads David. He is going to have to consult the map to determine his actions. And we will also contrast that with king Saul. Saul makes up his own map and we are going to discover that when you do that, disaster is sure to follow.

BACKGROUND:

So, allow me to recap the story of these chapters this morning. We'll visit a few key verses along the way. But then I want to look at two life lessons we can take away and apply to our lives as we seek to learn how to wait on God.

David is on the run from king Saul who will stop at nothing to eliminate David. Chapter 23 opens with David learning about an attack on the city of Keilah [Ki-Lah]. The people there were harvesting crops, and the Philistines were coming to steal their goods. When David hears this, he wants to do something about it.

So, David prays and asks God if he and his men should go and defend Keilah. God answered "yes." David shared the plan with his men, and they protested. Their perspective was that they were already on the run, living in remote caves, trying to keep a low profile. Going to battle would expose them.

So, David considers what his family and friends say, and he goes back to God for confirmation. God says again, "go and protect the people of Keilah." That confirmation was all David needed and they went to Keilah and defended them against the Philistines.

Saul hears that David is Keilah and thinks, "This is my opportunity to catch him." He's so obsessed with killing David, he doesn't even care about providing help to one of the cities in his kingdom. Verses 7 and 8 of 1 Samuel 23 says, *"**Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."***⁸ *And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to*

Keilah, to besiege David and his men. Notice how Saul thinks that God has orchestrated these events so that he can eliminate David. He has convinced himself that killing David is God's will.

Think about all the ungodly and wicked things that have been done, throughout history, in God's name. Humanity is a master in assigning God's name to the achievement of sinful actions. And Saul is proof of that here.

After David and his men are successful in defending Keilah, he gets word that Saul is on his way. So, David asks Abiathar, the priest, to bring the ephod [EE-Fod]. An ephod is something priests wore. The high priest, wore a special ephod. It was a breastplate that had 12 gems woven into it. Each of the gems represented one of the 12 tribes of Israel. And tucked into that woven piece, behind the 12 gems were two stones called the Urim [You-rum] and Thummim [Thumb-in]. These stones were used on occasion, in the Old Testament, to discover the will of God. But only the high priest could use them.

David then tells Abiathar to put on the ceremonial ephod and ask God what's going to happen. David wants to know if Saul is going to come to Keilah. God says, "He is." Then David wants to know if the people of Keilah are going to protect him. God said, "No, they will turn you over to Saul." So, David and his men are on the run again, hiding from Saul and his army.

David, at this point, is growing weary of the relentless pursuit of king Saul. Remember, this is a decade long struggle.

But God is good to David. In verses 15-18, Jonathan comes to encourage David. Verse 15. ***15David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph [Za-uff] at Horesh [Hoe-resh].*** ***16And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.*** [He encouraged David.] ***17And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this."*** ***18And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.*** God used Jonathan to remind David of God's faithfulness. This encouraged him.

So, Saul is pursuing David and closes in on him. And just as Saul is about to trap David, he gets word that the Philistines were attacking. Saul had no choice

but to give up pursuing David and take care of the Philistines. God protecting David here. He intervenes on David's behalf. So, David escapes and goes to the caves in En Gedi [In-Geddy]. That's the close of chapter 23.

Chapter 24 picks up the story from there with Saul having taken care of the Philistine issue. He is now back on the David hunting mission. King Saul's intelligence agency tells him that David is in En Gedi.

En Gedi is located on the west side of the Dead Sea [\[Map\]](#). It is an oasis in the middle of desert land. All throughout this region are caves. I'm told that there is a beautiful waterfall and lush greenery everywhere. It is the perfect spot for David and his army of 600. Here's a picture of what En Gedi looks like [\[picture\]](#). I hope to get to visit there one day. But all along En Gedi are caves and recesses. So, this is where 1 Samuel 24 is taking place.

Now, verse 2 tells us that Saul is in pursuit of David with 3,000 men. If Saul encounters them, it will be a massacre. David has 600 to Saul's 3,000. But you can't factor out God's intervention.

So, Saul comes to En Gedi and nature calls. You gotta love the Bible. Verse 3 of 1 Samuel 24 says that Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself. This is an important detail because it is in this situation that bodyguards would not have accompanied Saul. So, he is in the cave alone, going to the restroom. Well, Saul thinks he's alone.

David, being on the run, hid in a cave. Guess which cave he was hiding in? The one where Saul is now by himself using the restroom. Saul was clueless and in a defenseless position.

Look what happens in verse 4 of chapter 24. ***4And the men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.'" Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe.***

Now, if you are David, what do you do in this situation? The man that is hunting you down has no idea you are sneaking up behind him. Most people would have put an end to their nightmare. But David just cuts off a corner of Saul's robe. The men that were with David wanted him to kill Saul, but all he does is take a sliver of Saul's robe.

Look what happens next. Verses 5 and 6. *⁵And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁶He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed."*

So, Saul gets up and left the cave. After he has gone a little way, David stepped out of the cave and shouts out, "My lord the king!" Then he bows in reverence. Do you see David's humility? He calls Saul his lord the king. Remember that is his father-in-law. But I bet Saul's heart sank.

David goes on to say, "I could have killed you as some were saying I should, but I only took the corner of your robe." David was trying to prove his point that he is not trying to kill Saul and he did a convincing job.

Saul replies back and kind of has a spiritual awakening. He weeps and acknowledges David's kindness. He realizes David spared his life. Saul goes on to say that David is God's anointed man to be the next king of Israel. And as he wipes tears from his eyes, he asks David to promise to spare his family when he becomes king. And the chapter ends with David giving him his word and then David and his men went back into the cave there in En Gedi.

LIFE LESSONS:

What is it that we can learn here from chapters 23 and 24 of 1 Samuel? There are probably a lot of things, but I want to press into a couple. 2 life lessons that stand out to me, and lessons that will help us be able to wait on God. First...

1) Value divine wisdom over human wisdom.

Again, the title of the message this morning is "Waiting on God." Learning to wait on God means that we value His wisdom above anything else.

As believers in Jesus, we need to come to the point in our lives that we place a higher value on godly wisdom than we do on human wisdom. But if we are honest, this is a struggle for us, isn't it? When we need advice or information on making a decision, where do we typically turn? Usually, it is to other people. Even over praying about it, we place a high value on the counsel around us.

Now, I'm not saying that there isn't godly wisdom among godly people, but the point that I want to make here is that we all are often tempted to only gather

human wisdom and at the expense of the wisdom of God. We see both sides play out in our story of study this morning. Let's look at that.

There were a couple of times in these chapters that David could have only listened to human wisdom. Remember when he asked God if he should go and defend the city of Keilah? He prayed about it, but his family and friends pushed back on the idea. "Are you sure? We think it would be wiser to stay here in the cave. David, you need to think about the long game here. If we stay, we are safe. But if we go, our location becomes public, and we are in danger." Listen, that sounds like smart reasoning, right? I think I would tend to be in that camp.

But David doesn't just consider human wisdom here. His desire is to do The Lord's will knowing that God will take care of him when he is obedient. So, David prays again, he goes to God again. And heavenly wisdom proved different from human wisdom.

Now, contrast that with Saul. Saul has long since stopped seeking The Lord. He chooses to press into the wisdom offered by his intelligence agency and his own political and strategic decision-making abilities.ⁱⁱ That is his sole source of wisdom. And as a result, he is completely misguided and even found himself in a compromising situation that could've cost him his life.

So, the question that we often ask to this point is how do we know the difference? What is the proper way to go about seeking divine wisdom? Well, I want to look at the different approaches that David took and allow that to serve as a guide for us today.

We see that David employed a few different methods of discovering God's wisdom and His will. In the first part of chapter 23, David prays about what to do. Look at verse 2 of chapter 23. *²Therefore **David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the Lord said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah."*** The word that is translated as "inquired" means "to ask earnestly, or to beg."ⁱⁱⁱ The inquiring of The Lord indicates that David prayed about it.

Then again in verse 4, when human wisdom pushed back it says, *⁴Then **David inquired of the Lord again.*** David sought confirmation in prayer. So, praying certainly is a primary source in seeking divine wisdom.

But then we see David make use of another method in seeking God's guidance. After the battle was over, David learned that Saul was on his way to come after him. So, he asks Abiathar to put on the ephod and use the Urim [You-rum] and Thummim [Thumb-in] to determine God's response. And God answered and David and his men responded appropriately. But again, we see the value that David is placing on divine wisdom over human wisdom.

Then in chapter 24, David sneaks up on Saul in the cave. We see a different way that David interprets God's will in the situation. When he could have killed Saul, and human wisdom supported that idea, he was instead convicted, his heart struck him, and responded differently. In other words, **David relied on the prompting of God more than the urging of his friends.** That's valuing divine wisdom over human wisdom.

Now, I know what you are thinking because it's the same thing I thought when studying this passage. You're thinking, "I want an ephod." How awesome would it be if we had a couple stones that we can use to magically reveal God's will for our lives. Well, we actually have something way better than to trust the happenstance of rocks.^{iv}

We have at our disposal something that David did not have. We have The Bible, God's Holy Word. David didn't readily have the scrolls at his disposal. He's on the run. And we also have the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. David lived in a time prior to Pentecost. Scripture tells us in Ephesians that when we come to faith in Jesus, at that moment the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our soul. And it is the job of the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and direct us. This is way better than a couple of rocks!

So, if you are looking for advice on how to go about valuing divine wisdom over human wisdom, I would say that we are to, first, consult God's Word, second, pray, third, be led of the Holy Spirit, and then consider the counsel of those around us. But listen, if at any time, the first three contradict the latter, you go with the first three. The question we have to ask ourselves is, "Where do we place the premium of information? Of guidance? Humans or The Lord?"

As believers, we must value divine wisdom over human wisdom. The second life lesson for us today is...

2) Live life trusting God.

I think one of the most impressive parts of this passage, at least to me, is how David displays such a trust in The Lord and His timing. David, in these chapters, demonstrates why he is often called a man after God's own heart. He was consistent in prayer, obedient in every move, sensitive to God's desires, and perhaps most of all, a man that showed great respect.

David shows Saul nothing but respect. And there was nothing Saul did that warranted David's respect. David refers to Saul as his lord, father, and The Lord's anointed. He even bows down in reverence before Saul. David is saying this of the man that's trying to kill him! And what we see here is David showing respect for the office of king more than he is showing respect for the man Saul.

My observation, of our day and time, is that demonstrating respect and trusting God and His timing are becoming lost arts. David is an example for us. He demonstrates a radical reverence for God that controlled his thoughts and his actions.^v David saw Saul as God's anointed one, even though Saul had forfeited his right to be viewed that way. In other words, David saw it as God's job to deal with Saul, not his. And that is the ultimate display of trusting God. Is it not?

Have you ever wanted to get back at someone that wronged you? I know I have. But vengeance is mine says The Lord. Have you ever wished evil on your enemy? But Jesus says in Matthew 5:43-48, *"⁴³You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. **For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"* See, this is where trusting God is challenging. But this is something that we must reclaim in our day.

Let's be a people that value divine wisdom over human wisdom. And let's live a life trusting God and His timing. And when we wait to God, we will see a move of God in our midst.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response, I want to invite you to follow David's example. To respond to The Lord's prompting on your heart this morning. If you

have never been born again unto a relationship with Jesus, we want to visit with you and share with you how you can trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. We would love nothing more than to visit with you about that today.

Perhaps you are here this morning and you have a prayer concern. Maybe an area that you are struggling. Our elders want to pray with you and over you.

Here's how this is going to work this morning. We are going to do things a little different today. In a moment, I'm going to pray. Pastor Jeff will come and let you know about some important announcements. We will then say our closing benediction, a prayer that God would use us to minister to people. And once we dismiss, our elders will be here at the front ready to visit with you. Make sense? Okay, let's pray. [PRAY].

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Troy Rackliffe, "Life Lessons Messages 15 & 16," sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, various sermons, published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/>; Nate Holdridge, "The Life of David – Pursued by God – 1 Samuel 21-22," published by Nate Holdridge, September 2, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.nateholdridge.com/blog/the-life-of-david-pursued-by-god-1-samuel-21-22/>; Skip Heitzig, "Expound: 1 Samuel 21-22:2 & 1 Samuel 2-23," message taught at Calvary Church, August 25, 2001, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/314/sermon/4597>.

ⁱⁱ Pointed out by Arnold.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance, 7592, shaal.

^{iv} Rackliffe.

^v Arnold.