

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: Doing Things God's Wayⁱ 1 Samuel 30

INTRODUCTION:

Well, good morning, Trinity family! It is so good to see you this morning, as always.

I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. We've been in a teaching series working our way through this incredible book. In fact, we have two more sermons left in this series. Today and then next week we wrap up the book.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Generation Shiftsⁱⁱ

I want to take a little survey to start our time this morning. Do you know what generation you belong to? Are there any Silent Generation people with us today (born between 1925 and 1945)? How many baby boomers do we have in the room this morning (born between 1946 and 1964)? How many of my generation, Gen X, do we have with us today (born between 1965 and 1979). How many Xennials are here today? (born between 1975 and 1985). Any millennials with us today (born between 1980 and 1994). What about Gen Z? Any Gen Z in the house (born between 1995 and 2012)? How about Gen Alpha (born after 2012)? Hey, we have a pretty diverse demographic when it comes to age here today.

Well, there's a book out titled, "The Nineties," by Chuck Klosterman. It's a book about my generation, Gen X. In the book he points out that Gen Xers will be known as the generation that experienced the most technological and scientific shifts in history.

It's Gen Xers, along with baby boomers, and maybe a few Xennials, that fully experienced the world without cell phones and the internet. Those generations also have experienced the world with those things.

I know this is dating myself, but I remember when one of the only places you could take a phone call was at home. I even remember when call waiting came out. Before then you just got a busy signal. That's when phones had a cord on them. Remember that? How many of you had an extra-long phone cord where you could round the corner for some privacy? In those days, once you made plans, they couldn't change. You couldn't say, "I'm running 5 minutes late" or

"Let's meet at Restaurant Mexico instead of Whataburger." No, once plans were made, they were set in stone. How many of you remember those days?

I also remember life before the internet. In fact, I was a senior in high school before we got a computer with internet in our home. You used to turn on the computer, go fix a sandwich, and maybe by the time you finished your sandwich the computer might be on. And then you had to launch windows. How many of you remember doing that for the dos prompt? Then you had to connect to the internet. Beeeeee-booo-heeeeeee.

When we went on family vacations, there was no hotels.com. No, you had to call information and get the number to the Hilton in whatever town you wanted to stay in. Make a long-distance call to make a reservation. There were no booking flights on Travelocity. You had to call American Airlines directly and book it through an attendant. I can remember when credit cards were processed uses a carbon copy machine.

Well, the reason I take you on this trip down memory lane (or, for you younger folks, this foray into "the land before time") is because of the connivence that modern day technology has afforded us. When I was a kid, we had to map out a route, and learn by experience. Nowadays, Siri tells you how to get somewhere and YouTube can teach you how to do anything. But I had the privilege of living during a time that I experienced the shift from the old world to the new world.

In our text this morning, 1 Samuel chapter 30, David makes a shift. He was on the run escaping the threats of king Saul, David found himself living among the Philistines, about the fight in a War against his own people, the Israelites. He was probably at the lowest point of his life. And David is rejected by the commanders on the basis of him being a Hebrew. He was sent back home. And when David comes upon his hometown, he sees a crisis. He makes a shift, he returns back to The Lord, and began to process and do things God's Way.

That is the title of this morning's message, "Doing Things God's Way." So, we are going to work our way through the story and then look at 3 life lessons on how we can do things God's way. And perhaps, if we were to be honest, maybe we need to make a shift. From doing things our own way to doing things God's way. That is where we are headed this morning.

MESSAGE:

Let's begin in verse 1 of 1 Samuel 30. ***1Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire.*** David and his army of 600 men were in Jezreel with the Philistines when they were sent home. Ziklag was a 3-day journey from Jezreel.ⁱⁱⁱ As they approached home, they could tell something was wrong.^{iv} Billows of smoke rising into the air. The city was a ghost town.

Verse 2. ***2and [The Amalekites had] taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way. 3And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. 4Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. 5David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.***

The Amalekites had taken everyone and burned the city to the ground. Who were the Amalekites?^v Back when Moses led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt, they were on their way to the Promised Land. Shortly after leaving Egypt, they were attacked by the Amalekites.

During this battle, Moses was up on a mountain. And if Moses held his arms in the air, the Israelites would prevail. But when Moses put his arms down, the Amalekites would win. So, Aaron and Hur held Moses' arms up and the Israelites won. God told Moses to remember this because one day the Amalekites would pay.

Fast forward to 1 Samuel 15. King Saul is in battle against the Amalekites. Samuel told him, "This is the time that God wants to settle the score." But Saul didn't do what God asked him to do. This is why God rejected Saul as king; incomplete obedience. But there are consequences to not doing what God asks. The Amalekites regrouped and here they attacked, raided, and burned Ziklag, even took the Israelite women and children. Partial obedience is disobedience.

It gets worse. Verse 6. ***6And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters.*** David's men were so upset, become so bitter, they thought about

stoning him. They probably never wanted to be in Philistia. If they had just stayed at home, this wouldn't have happened. They were upset, and rightfully so. But they had become bitter in soul.

What does David do in this moment? Pick up in the second part of verse 6. ***But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*** David turned to The Lord.

Now, I actually think David had gotten away from The Lord. He was making selfish decisions and was living with the enemy. He was about to go to war against his own people. Have you ever found yourself far away from God? Where you've gotten to a point that you were making selfish decisions without considering God's ways? That's where David was. And aren't you glad that it's never too late to turn back to God?!

David was like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. He came to his senses and turned back to The Father. He strengthened himself in The Lord. I like that word, himself. In other words, he took responsibility, and took the steps necessary to return to God. That's key for us, isn't it?

Look what happens when David turns back to God. Verse 7. ***7And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" [God] answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue."*** Do you see what's happening here? David starts doing things God's way.

Look what happens when he starts doing things God's way. Verse 9. ***9So David set out [doing what God said], and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook, Besor, where those who were left behind stayed. 10But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.*** These men were too tired from travel. So, they stayed back with the supplies and watched them while David and the 200 continue. Verse 11. ***11They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. [Now this is convenient]. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, 12 and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins.*** A spiritually renewed David is now compassionate. This meal is pretty extravagant. ***And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. 13And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are***

you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite [Hmmm. Coincidence? I think not], and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. ¹⁴We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." ¹⁵And David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band." Interesting. David starts doing things God's way and things just kinda start falling into place.

Verse 16. ¹⁶And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. ¹⁷And David struck them down from twilight [or dusk] until the evening of the next day [they were hungover], and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. Now that's interesting. No one escaped except 400. That seems like a lot. But I think that detail is to show us what David was up against. David only had 400 men, and none of the Amalekites escaped except 400. In other words, David was outmatched, but God gave him the victory.

Verse 18. ¹⁸David **recovered all** that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. ¹⁹**Nothing was missing**, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all. ²⁰David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, "This is David's spoil." God preserved all that they had lost and gave it back to them plus some. Reminiscent of Job here.

For time's sake, let me sum up the remainder of the chapter. David and the 400 men came back with the spoil, the 200 that stayed behind were excited. But the men that fought in the battle didn't want to share with them because they were too tired to fight. David insisted that they deserved the spoil as well. After all, they stayed behind and watched and protected our stuff. David then took the extra spoil that was given to him and sent some of it to the leaders in the cities that took care of David when he was on the run. It was a "thank you gift." And that ends chapter 30.

LIFE LESSONS:

I want to make mention of a few life lessons from this passage. Things that I believe apply to us today. First, ...

1) **Root out bitterness.**

Bitterness is dangerous. Becoming bitter and carrying it has a profound impact on us. In verse 6 of our passage this morning, David's men had become so bitter. So much so that they were contemplating stoning David, killing him. And this example shows us the danger of allowing bitterness to go unchecked.

My question is what was it that caused these men to become bitter. They joined up with David because they couldn't stand king Saul. They were overtaxed and under paid. In their bitterness toward Saul, they teamed up with David. But remember when David wanted to help protect a city against a raid and these men were against it. They wanted to stay. Well, David consulted God and God overruled the men. Then they were on the run, under the stress of having to watch their backs constantly. When David had a chance to kill Saul and end their running, he chose to just cut off a piece of his robe. Then they wind up living with the enemy and enlisted in the Philistine army. They were following David when it didn't make sense. And when they saw what happened to their families, it sent them over the edge. They allowed a root of bitterness to take hold, and it led them to consider killing the next anointed king of Israel.

Bitterness does that to us, doesn't it? It causes us to think irrationally. It leads to us erupting in anger. When we become bitter, we invite a dark journey into our hearts and minds. This is why the Bible warns us about bitterness. Scripture tells us to root out bitterness in our lives.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, ³¹**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.** [Instead], ³²**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.** Hebrews 12:15 says, ¹⁵**See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble.**

The truth is we all deal with bitterness in some way, don't we. So, the question is how to prevent bitterness to take root in our lives. Let me give you two ways to deal with bitterness.

First, keep short accounts. When something causes you to get angry, address it as soon as you can. It's when we allow anger to go unchecked that bitterness

sets in. But, by keeping short accounts with each other, we put away bitterness as Ephesians 4 encourages us.

Secondly, extend grace often. Scripture is full of encouragement to be gracious toward one another. When we can remember that we are flawed and in need of grace, we can recognize the same in others. Hebrews 12 says that we are to see to it that no one fails to obtain grace.

So, the first life lesson we learn is to root out bitterness in our lives. The second life lesson that I want to point out today is...

2) Develop godly priorities.

As followers of Christ, our lives need to reflect godly priorities. What I love about this passage is that it teaches us that it's never too late to develop godly priorities. David came to a point that he recognized his priorities were out of whack. But it is at that point that he began anew.

I want to point out what I believe to be David's priorities as we seek to implement that in our lives. Three things David did. First, ...

A) He started with God.

In verse 6, David strengthened himself. But notice where he strengthened himself. He didn't pull himself up by the boot straps. He didn't go on a vacation to get his second wind. No, he strengthened himself in The Lord.

David lost everything; his hometown, family, and the respect of his men. It was when he came to the end of himself that he began to pursue The Lord again.

And he strengthens himself. This was active, not passive. In other words, he didn't say, "Well, God, if you want to strengthen me then I'll just wait for you do it." No, he knew that The Lord's strength was available, so he took initiative in surrendering himself to God.

Now, the text doesn't really tell us, but I think there's plenty of evidence that shows us how David went strengthening himself in The Lord. Evidence in his life and in his writings in the Psalms. So, how did he strengthen himself?

I believe David took time to remember God's goodness toward him. God had given David everything he had. God provided for him and took care of him. God

was good toward David and remembering that caused his heart to turn back to God.

I think he also reflected on his calling, his anointing. It's when we reflect on those things that cause us to hang onto God's promises. God is faithful even when we are faithless. God cannot make a promise that He can't or won't keep. And that truth gives us strength.

Thirdly, I think David recalled God's past deliverances. When you start recalling all the ways God has worked, you realize God was there all the time. So, David remembered God's goodness, he reflected on his calling, and he recalled God's deliverances. That is how we can start with God.

After starting with God, ...

B) He prayed to God.

In verse 7, he sought godly council from the priest and the ephod. And in verse 8, he inquired of the Lord. After strengthening himself, he began seeking The Lord's guidance in all things. He wanted God's direction in what his next steps needed to be. So, David started with God and he prayed to God. Thirdly, ...

C) He went with God.

In verse 9, David set out to do what God asked him to do. When God speaks, believers act. When God said pursue the Amalekites, David was obedient. Now, David could have said, "But my men are tired and they were just thinking about stoning me. I don't want to make another mistake." No, when God speaks, those that are surrendered to godly priorities make it a priority to act.

And here's the deal, David asked for God's blessing on what He told David to do. In other words, David didn't ask God to bless his opinion. No, he asked for God's blessings as he followed God's ways.

So, we learn the importance of rooting out bitterness and developing godly priorities. The third life lesson is to...

3) Be generous with what God has given us.

When David's men didn't want to share with the others, David wanted to be generous. I want to point out a key perspective that David had. Look at verses 23-24 of 1 Samuel 30. ***23**But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with*

what the Lord has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us. ²⁴Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. **They shall share alike.**” Two things that I think allowed David to have a generous perspective.

First, David recognized that the victory and, therefore, the spoils from victory were given to them by God. David saw his gains as from The Lord. Since The Lord was generous in giving it to us, we need to be generous in sharing it with others. Our generosity toward others is fueled by God’s generosity toward us.

The second thing is that David saw value in those that stayed behind. The 200 that were too tired to continue through the brook, may not have fought in the battle, but they did watch the baggage, the supplies. So, as a result, David said they should share alike.

ILLUSTRATION: Robert Blackwell

The name, Robert Blackwell, probably doesn’t mean anything to you. You probably don’t have any clue to who he is. Well, I had the privilege of growing up in the same church that Robert Blackwell attended. Robert was the Director of Coaching Video for the Dallas Cowboys in the 1990s. Where are my Dallas Cowboy fans at? Do you remember what the Cowboys were doing in the 90s? Something they haven’t done since, winning Super Bowls.

Robert Blackwell never set foot on the football field for the Dallas Cowboys. You never saw Robert on the sidelines with the coaches. Robert’s job was behind the scenes. But, when the Cowboys won their Super Bowls, guess who got a ring? Robert Blackwell. My family got to try on his Super Bowl rings.

See, David wanted to give some of the spoils to those that stayed behind because he recognized the value of the service they provided. They weren’t on the battlefield, but they were a part of the team.

But also to this point of generosity, it is important to see that David’s generosity extended beyond the 200 that watched baggage. David expressed his gratitude to all the cities that hosted him by way of sharing his earnings with them. David had become a very generous person.

It’s not by way of accident that David’s generosity came following his spiritual renewal. Like David, when we recognize our stuff as being given to us by God, our response is to be generous with what God has given to us.

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; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary, "1 Samuel 30 – David in Victory Again"*, published by Enduring Word, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-samuel-30/>; Bible Outlines, *"1 Samuel 30:1-31 – When God is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?"*, published by Bible Outlines, accessed online: <https://www.bibleoutlines.com/1-samuel-301-31-when-god-is-for-us-who-can-be-against-us/>; Troy Rackliffe, *"Life Lessons Message 24"*, sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, *"Doing Things God's Way"*, published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/doing-things-gods-way/>; Skip Heitzig, *"Expound: 1 Samuel 30-31"*, message taught at Calvary Church, October 13, 2021, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/314/sermon/4615>.

ⁱⁱ Illustration adapted from J.D. Greear.

ⁱⁱⁱ Heitzig.

^{iv} Enduring Word Commentary.

^v Summary adapted from Heitzig's summary.