

1st Samuel Chapters 29-31 – John Karmelich

1. Most of us are familiar with the expression “You are what you eat”. I’m going to argue today that you are also what you worship.
 - a) If you think about how big we are as babies versus adults, the “difference” is based on what we eat. (OK, genetics, too, but you get the idea. ☺) We’ve all heard many lectures about eating right and how it affects our metabolism.
 - b) On a similar note, one also becomes “like” what they worship.
 - c) For example, those whose primary interest is fame or money, you will find in the long run people will become shallow or harsh as that is their primary interest. Sometime spend time with a group of seniors and find out what was their primary interest in life. You will often find their personality reflects that interest.
 - d) The same goes for those who spend their lives in obedience to God. They become “like” God in the sense they have spent their life under God’s guidance.
2. OK, John that’s a neat theory. ☺ What does any of it have to do with 1st Samuel?
 - a) We have now spent lesson after lesson discussing the lives of King Saul and future King David. In this lesson, we will read of the death of Saul.
 - b) First Samuel spends a lot of time going back and forth between the stories of Saul and David. The book does that on purpose, as it wants the reader to constantly compare and contrast how each person reacts to different situations.
 - c) This gets back to “you are what you worship”. Saul was a man of fear. He focused on the world around him as opposed to God and his primary motivation for actions were based on fear. He constantly tried to have David killed out of fear that David would take over his kingdom. He went to a pagan “channel” when God wouldn’t answer Him, out of fear of not knowing what to do next. Saul put his focus on his problems and his fears at the price of ignoring God and God’s commands for his life. Saul’s life ends in fear. He kills himself out of fear of what his enemies will do to him while he is wounded.
 - d) Now let’s contrast that with David. David is called throughout the bible “a man after God’s own heart” (1st Samuel 13:14). What makes David so special that he received that title more than some of the other great bible hero’s?
 - i) The answer is David lived his life seeking God’s approval in whatever he did.
 - ii) David messed up a lot, as we do, but eventually figured out, “what I’m doing is not pleasing to God”. David then sought God and got back on the right track. That pattern happens repeatedly through 1st and 2nd Samuel.
 - iii) In fact, the key verse for this lesson is, ““But David found strength in the LORD his God.” (1st Samuel 30:6b, NIV) That one sentence is the turning point in David’s current low point of turning his back on God’s will. From there, we will read of David’s rise up to the point where he will become king.
3. Back to “You are what you worship”: I want to discuss the idea of mercy.
 - a) If you read the Gospels, there are only three things Jesus ever said we are to “learn”. The first is to learn of Jesus. (Matthew 11:29) That’s a long topic all unto itself and it means studying Jesus’ life through all of the Gospels.
 - i) The second is to learn the parable of the fig tree (Matthew 24:32). That deals with understanding end-time prophecy and the events of Jesus’ Second Coming.
 - ii) The third is to learn about mercy. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 that says, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

- b) I mention this as one of the traits of a Christian is to show mercy.
 - i) When Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer, the only verse he gave further commentary upon was the one that says, "Forgive others as God as forgiven you" (paraphrase of Matthew 6:11). The point is that we need to understand that when we ask for forgiveness of God, He forgives our sins. We need to have the same attitude toward those who ask us of forgiveness.
 - ii) Most of Paul's letters open with the salutation of mentioning God's mercy on us.
 - iii) Mercy is a similar idea. It is about showing compassion to someone who does not deserve it. God shows us mercy by "calling" us into salvation. Further, God shows mercy on us by forgiving us of our sins and blesses us with "good things" simply because we ask it of God. What God desires of us in return is to show compassion and mercy to others. That is how we are witnesses for God.
 - c) Now let's go back to "you are what you worship": God is a God-of Mercy. What we read of David is that he shows mercy on others. Saul tried to kill him several times. We never read of David holding a grudge. If anything, David forgave him just so that anger wouldn't block his relationship with God. In this lesson, we'll read of several occasions where David is a merciful man. That mercy "stems" from God working through David. We "are what we eat" in the sense that if we "eat and digest" God's word on a regular basis, commune with God through prayer and worship, we too, "become what we eat" and develop God's attributes in our lives.
4. This is also my final lesson in 1st Samuel. I'm going to cover three relatively short chapters in one shot. My gratitude to all who have read these lessons. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I've written them. A selected biography is at the end of this lesson.
5. Chapter 29, Verse 1: The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. ² As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish.
- a) We last left David in the first few verses of Chapter 28.
 - b) The remainder of the last chapter focused on Saul and the woman "channeler".
 - i) Chapter 28 ended with the "New Age" medium contacting Samuel.
 - ii) Samuel, being called from the dead, predicted Saul would die in battle the next day. That prediction comes true as we'll read in this lesson.
 - c) Now the story switches back to what was happening with David.
 - i) The last we read of David, he got tired of being on the run from King Saul.
 - ii) David decided to relocate to Philistine controlled territory within Israel.
 - iii) David, his family, his 600 men and their families were given their own Philistine town to settle in called Ziklag.
 - iv) David was gaining favor with the local king of the nearest Philistine city of Gath. The king of Gath, named Achish was collecting tribute money from David. David and his men were raiding the enemies of Israel that were not Philistines. David would imply to King Achish that he was actually raiding Israelite towns. David would bring part of the proceeds to Achish. David would kill everyone in that town as to not leave any witnesses.
 - v) Now King Achish was ready to join a major battle along with the other local Philistine kings against the Israelites. David and his men were asked join the battle against the Israelites with the Philistines. David agreed.
 - vi) In summary, David was sinking to a low point in his life.

- d) Chapter 28, the last chapter, was Saul's failure to be obedient to God by seeking a medium for guidance. In Chapter 29, we're going to read of David's failure. David never should have turned to the Philistines for help. David is sinking to a point where he is ready to join the Philistine army against the Israelites.
- i) So what's the difference between David and Saul that we're supposed to see? (I'm so glad you asked that question! ☺)
 - ii) The big difference is that in Saul's "low moment", when he was scared, when God was silent to him, he turned away from God and went to a medium.
 - iii) In David's low moment, when he hit rock bottom, David sought God.
 - iv) That is what made David, "a man after God's own heart". David still moved forward in the day-to-day aspects of his life. He understood that God had great plans for his life. Yet, David let God "worry" about the timing and the results.
 - v) The difference to see between Saul and David is that "when push comes to shove" and both reach the low points of their life, David focused on his faith in God and Saul focused on his fears. Fear is the opposite of faith. To not focus on God is to focus on the problems at hand.
- e) Meanwhile, back to Verses 1 and 2. ☺
- i) We're not sure how big this battle was going to be, but Verses 1 and 2 give us a hint as to how many soldiers were involved.
 - ii) The Philistine soldiers were lined up in a parade of hundreds and thousands.
 - iii) The verse mentions two specific locations where both sides were lined up for battle. Looking at my bible map, the two locations were about 40-50 miles apart. That was enough room where both sides could line up and prepare.
- f) Now notice the last sentence of Verse 2: "David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish." That tells me a couple of things:
- i) Achish may have been a local king of one town, but in Philistine organizational chart, Achish was "in the back". Other Philistine kings had a higher rank.
 - ii) Achish was trusting in David and his men to join the battle.
 - iii) It also means that David and his men were ready to fight against Saul.
- g) In Chapter 28, we read where David had lived in Philistine country for 16 months.
- i) Suppose we were to tell David 16 months prior, "David, you are going to go live with the enemies of Israel. You're going to kill innocent men, women and children in order to protect the lie that you told Achish about killing Israelites. After that, you're going to line up with the Philistine army, of the same town where Goliath is from and fight against the Israelites."
 - ii) David would have said, "Are you nuts? I would never do that!"
 - iii) That is the way sin is in our lives. It doesn't predict all the horrible consequences that will happen to us from the results. If anything, some things that are displeasing to God are enjoyable at first. The problem is of course, is that nothing, and apart from God is ever truly satisfying. We always want "more and more", and it leads us down the wrong road.
 - iv) Advertising companies understand real well how our human nature is never satisfied. Ever notice advertising that says, "Are you happy with your love life?" or "Are you happy with your old car?" They understand that no possession or item ever fully satisfies us. Advertisement appeals to our ego of wanting more.
 - v) This leads us back to David. David was now "marching in the back" with the enemies of God! I guarantee that if it wasn't for the intervention of God, David would have been "marching in the front" in a matter of time.

6. Verse 3: The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?" Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."
- a) King Achish is vouching for David. Achish is saying in effect, "Look, David has been a traitor to Saul. It will be good to have David with us as David knows Saul's battle strategies. David has been with me for about 16 months now and I've never had any reason to complain about the guy".
 - b) When ungodly people are complimenting you, it's time to stop and check your life. ☺
7. Verse 4: But the Philistine commanders were angry with him and said, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men? ⁵ Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances: " `Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'"
- a) Remember King Achish is not the leader of the Philistines. He got outranked.
 - b) The Philistine leaders quoted the old song: " `Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'"
 - i) That song has been playing on the golden oldie radio station for a long time! ☺
 - ii) That song goes way back to Chapter 18, which was roughly a decade ago.
 - c) The Philistine commander remembers how David was a great soldier for Israel. Now David is traitor from Israel. If David "turned" once, he will do it again.
 - d) The Philistine leaders actually had a good point: They were saying in effect, "Look, if David was a traitor once, he is liable to be a traitor again. You (Achish) are telling us that David was a traitor to King Saul. If he's willing to be a traitor to Saul, how do we know he's not going to pull the same stunt again and be a traitor to us?"
 - i) This is why a person's reputation is so key in life. Once you have a "reputation" for doing something, it may take a lifetime to overcome that problem.
 - a) "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." (Proverbs 22:1 NIV)
 - ii) Let me give an illustration: Think of person considering having an affair with a married man or woman. If the adulterer is willing to cheat on their husband or wife, what will prevent them from cheating on the new person as well? Once they've crossed that line, they are saying in effect, "I'm not trustable".
8. Verse 6: So Achish called David and said to him, "As surely as the LORD lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until now, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don't approve of you. ⁷ Turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers."
- a) Achish is saying, "Look Dave, I gave it my best shot, but I got outranked by my superior officers and you can't join the battle."
 - b) Notice Achish invokes the name "LORD". That is the Hebrew term "Jehovah".
 - i) In Verse 9, Achish even says, "an angel of God"
 - ii) These are not Philistine "buzz terms". ☺
 - iii) It makes you wonder if King Achish is "saved". Grant it, he did join the battle against the Israelites, but you wonder if he acknowledged the existence of David's God as superior to the Philistine idols. It also tells you that David was a "witness" to him despite the fact that David was not fully obedient to God at this point.
 - c) Now onto the important point: God intervened to prevent David from joining the battle.
 - i) Why did God do this? Because God made an unconditional promise to David to be king one day. It would be very hard for the Israelites to accept David as king if he had joined the Philistine army to fight against Israel.

- d) Does this mean that if we start going “downhill” in terms of lack of obedience to God, we can count on God to rescue us?
- i) Well, yes and no. ☺ If are truly “one of His”, I do believe God goes out of His way to give you “escape routes” to get back on track. Further, if you truly have a love for God, you are going to be miserable without Him.
 - ii) God does not violate your free will. If we choose to turn away from God, He will let us. There is a classic saying in Christianity that “The Holy Spirit is a gentleman”. What is meant by that is God will not force us to turn back to Him, but is patiently waiting for us to figure out on our own what we are doing is not right. That “feeling” inside of us to turn back is the Holy Spirit “pleading” with us to change. At the same time, God does not force us to change.
 - iii) Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24 NIV)
 - iv) Jesus point is that in life, you can only have “one God”. If you have a heart for God, eventually, you will be miserable serving another. That “other” can be money, fame, and any obsession over some hobby, etc. The test is always which thing is more important in our lives. Which thing do we spend the most time upon?
9. Verse 8: "But what have I done?" asked David. "What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"
- a) Notice what David did not say, “Oh LORD, thank you for getting me out of this mess. Thank You for not letting me have to fight my own people and for not punishing me for killing innocent people in order to protect my lies!”
 - i) Don’t get me wrong. David still has to pay for what he did wrong. That lying pattern continues in 2nd Samuel (think “Bathsheba”) and David suffers for it.
 - b) David had sunk to a point where he was pleading to fight against the Israelites.
 - i) On the surface, this sounds “reasonable”. Saul and his army had spent years trying to kill David and his men. Despite the fact that Saul took an oath twice not to kill David, he still pursued him. David was sick of being on the run, and joined the Philistines and wanted to kill Saul once and for all.
 - ii) The problem is that this was not God’s will. I don’t know if the bible had a specific command not to go to war against your fellow Israelites, but it sure is implied here and there. ☺ Further, it was never God’s will for David to go and live among the enemies of the Israelites.
 - c) This is about God’s unconditional promises to make David the next king.
 - i) David was rescued because God had unconditional promises to keep.
 - ii) The lesson for us is that God makes unconditional promises to us, especially about our salvation. As long as we are trusting in God, we cannot mess up enough to lose that salvation. Yes there is the issue of no longer believing in God, but that is different. I’m talking about trusting in Jesus for our salvation and at the same time, having the peace of knowing that this is an unconditional promise.
 - iii) This concept has helped change my prayer life. Every now and then, I try to pray something like, “Lord, I want you to help me. This is not because I’m a good person, but because You made unconditional promises to me and I’m trusting in those promises. Your reputation is on the line, not mine. You can choose to use me or not. I want to do Your will and would like You to use me to do Your will. Help! Amen.”

10. Verse 9: Achish answered, "I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, 'He must not go up with us into battle.'¹⁰ Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light."
- a) To paraphrase Achish, "Look David, you're a good guy. If it were up to me, I'd let you go in the battle. I've been outranked. You understand the chain of command. Now get a good night's sleep and go back to your home in the Philistine town of Ziklag."
 - b) Achish never in his wildest dreams thought that David would go back to the Israelites.
11. Verse 11: So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.
- a) From this location to where David's home base is located, is about a 50-mile journey.
 - b) In Verse 1, it was stated the Israelites set up their army in Jezreel. Here we read where the attack is about to begin as the Philistine army is about to start the 40-mile (more or less) journey toward where the Israelite army is based. It is the roughly opposite direction of where David is going.
 - c) Chapter 30 now focuses on David returning to Ziklag. The battle itself is in Chapter 31.
12. Chapter 30, Verse 1: David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it,² and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.
- a) Imagine traveling roughly 25 miles per day by either horseback or marching.
 - b) I'm sure that by the time David was about to reach Ziklag he was happy.
 - c) Imagine David thinking, "I have been rejected by King Saul. I was rejected by the Philistine army. Well, I still have my army buddies. I still have the wife and kids back home. At least, I can go back to Ziklag, see the family and figure out what to do next. I won't have to worry about the battle as I can have peace on the sidelines.
 - d) Now picture David seeing the smoke rising out of Ziklag. David probably thought, "Wait a minute, that can't be the campfires, there is too much smoke. What's going on?"
 - e) Here was David, exhausted from two days of intense travel, anticipating coming home to see the family and everything he knew was gone.
 - f) It is not known how David knew his family was "only" taken captive, but somehow they knew. Maybe some passer-by relayed the message. Maybe David knew the style of the Amalekites how they took women and children as slaves. In the meantime, David probably felt like he lost everything.
13. Verse 3: When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.⁴ So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep.⁵ David's two wives had been captured--Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.
- a) Verse 4 speaks volumes: "David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep." Imagine being tired and on the move for days. Imagine seeing this site of your loved ones all gone. All you can do is cry to the point until you can't cry any more.
 - b) Verse 5 specifically mentions David's two wives. I believe David mentioned that in his love for both women and the pain of knowing they were not safe.

14. Verse 6: David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.
- a) Let's stop and take a little inventory of David's life here.
 - i) David was a Hebrew. He walked away from His people. He lost that.
 - ii) David could join his "new friends", the Philistines. He got rejected from joining them in the battle. He lost that.
 - iii) David could find comfort in his wife and children. He just lost that.
 - iv) The only other thing David had left was his "army buddies". These were the 600 men who were with him. Now read Verse 6 again. It said, "the men were talking of stoning him." Now, even the people under him were talking about mutiny.
 - v) David had nothing left to trust in. Imagine losing everything and everyone you had ever known. It's hard to fathom that sort of pain.
 - vi) David had hit rock bottom.
 - b) Now comes the memory verse of the week, the last sentence of Verse 6:
 - i) "But David found strength in the LORD his God."
 - ii) I find that God does his best work when we have no one left to turn to but Him.
 - iii) When we are out of other options, and we turn to God, God then says, "OK, I've been waiting for this moment." This way, when God rescues us, God alone gets the glory and we give the glory back to God, as we have no one else to thank.
 - iv) The key to life is to realize our dependency on God alone before all of our other resources run out! Once we realize that it is God who is our provider, our Savior, our healer, our helper, our comforter, and we realize that God loves us unconditionally and wants the best for us, is when we trust in God first.
 - a) That does not mean we ignore doctors for help. For all we know, God can work through the doctors. The point is seeking God first and giving God the credit for whatever victories we have in life.
 - c) Let's talk about the practical aspect. How do we find strength in God?
 - i) Here are some examples: We can pray in gratitude of ways God has rescued us in the past. That reminds us that God is still working in our lives. We can read the bible and see how God rescues others like David. We must realize that God loves us as much as David and wants us to live our lives in glory to Him. We can sing praises to God. This gets our focus off our problems and unto God.
 - ii) Remember God does not "owe us" because we do these things. It is not like, "Pray for 83 minutes straight and God owes you a get-out-of-jail-free-card". ☺
 - iii) Prayer changes our perspective, not God's. We serve God and not the other way around. God is well aware of whatever predicament we are in and allows that situation to mature us, and ultimately for His glory.
 - d) The interesting thing is from this point forward, things change for David.
 - i) His men no longer want to kill him and help David rescue the families.
 - ii) We'll read of David's family and the men's families being rescued.
 - iii) We'll read of David giving gifts to his Israelite brethren.
 - iv) I'm positive all of this stemmed from the fact that David, "found strength in the LORD his God."
 - v) Once we get our perspective right, once we turn our hearts back to God, once we trust him again with our lives, all of sudden, "things just happen to change".
 - vi) Also notice David made the effort to change. David didn't lie in bed and wait for God to fix things. At the same time, things started to go right because David was trusting in God for the results.

15. Verse 7: Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, ⁸ and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?" "Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."
- a) After David took strength in God, the next thing David needed to do was inquire of God what he should do next.
 - b) That meant that David "taking strength" in God was not about asking what to do next. It was about comforting his soul that God was still in charge of David's life (and ours!) and God still wants the best for us despite whatever sins we have committed.
 - c) Just how David inquired of God is a bit of a mystery.
 - i) The text says, "David said to Abiathar the priest ..." "Bring me the ephod."
 - ii) The ephod was a vest that the High Priest wore. Back in Chapter 22, Saul had 85 priests killed. They were all part of the High Priest's extended family. The only guy to escape alive was this man named Abiathar. (1st Samuel, 22:20).
 - iii) Does this mean David put on the ephod? Did David use the "Urim and the Thummim" which were kept in the breast pocket of the ephod? We don't know.
 - iv) One thing I notice throughout the bible is there is very little discussion of the methodology of prayer. If you study your bible, you can find examples of say, people praying in bed, on their knees, standing etc. Even here in 1st Samuel, the methodology is a mystery. I believe the point is that the prayer request itself is important to God much more than the method of prayer.
 - d) Remember that David's six hundred men were considering treason a few verses back. Now that David sought the Lord, now that David prayed for guidance, "all of sudden" David's men were loyal to him again. This reminds me of a Proverb:
 - i) "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him." (Proverbs 16:7 NIV)
 - e) Notice that David inquired of God despite the fact it should be obvious that he goes and pursues the Amalakites. If these guys took just ran off with my wife and kids, I'd be running every which way after them as soon as possible.
 - i) Remember that David is a man after God's own heart (1st Samuel 13:14). That's why David sought God in every aspect of his life, even in what seemed obvious.
 - f) Somehow, David got a specific answer from God. It reads, "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."
 - i) That means that David can now count on God's promises. The battle is "already won". Notice that David did not sit there and wait for a bunch of Amalakites to walk up to him with a surrender flag. ☺ David still "took the footsteps" necessary to fulfill God's promises to him.
16. Verse 9: David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Ravine, where some stayed behind, ¹⁰ for two hundred men were too exhausted to cross the ravine. But David and four hundred men continued the pursuit.
- a) Remember that David's men marched about 25 miles per day for two days straight to get from the location of the Philistine army back to their hometown.
 - b) They got home, saw everything missing and they wept until their strength was gone.
 - c) Now they were on the march again, and came to a ravine to cross.
 - d) About two hundred of the six hundred men now said in effect, "We can't take it anymore. We're beat! We can't take another step. The wives and kids have to wait another day." (Wait until the wives hear they were too tired to join the others. Are they in trouble! ☺)
 - e) I'm speculating that these two hundred men were now focusing on their fear that they couldn't win a battle due to their lack of strength.

17. Verse 11: They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat--¹² part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.¹³ David asked him, "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?" He said, "I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago.¹⁴ We raided the Negev of the Kerethites and the territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag."¹⁵ David asked him, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?" He answered, "Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them."
- a) For the next four verses, we have this story within the story of an Egyptian slave who was left for dead. He became sick, and his master, who was part of the Amalekite raiding party, left him for dead. After three days without food or water, David and his men just "happen" to find him. They gave him food and water, and this guy led David to the camp where the Amalekite was located.
 - b) Notice David didn't look at this guy lying there and say, "Sorry you're sick and all that, but we have our wives and children to go rescue. Besides God said we were going to win and we don't have time for you. Now excuse us while we go be heroes". ☺
 - i) Instead, David and his men showed mercy on this man. This leads back to my opening theme how God wants us to be merciful to others. Again, Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7 NIV).
 - ii) My point here is that David was shown mercy by God.
 - a) David had his life spared from Saul's spear on several occasions.
 - b) David was spared from Saul's army on several occasions.
 - c) David was rescued by God from serving in the Philistine army.
 - d) Now David is "returning the favor" by showing mercy to others.
 - c) This Egyptian is also a wonderful little word picture of what God did for us.
 - i) He was abandoned for dead just because he was ill. (A picture of our sinful state.)
 - ii) He was rescued after three days and three nights. (How subtle is that? ☺)
 - iii) He was given "new life" again by those who follow the true God.
 - d) What also caught my attention is that the Egyptian made David "swear by God" that he would not kill him. The Egyptian understood enough about "The Hebrew God" to make David swear by Him.
18. Verse 16: He (The Egyptian) led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah.
- a) You have to remember that the Philistines and the Israelite army were engaging in a big war in the northern part of Israel. That left the southern part vulnerable to attacks. The Amalekites took advantage of that. The territory where David was based was in the Southern area. The text implies that the Amalekites not only raided David's town of Ziklag, but much of the surrounding area.
 - b) Here were the Amalekites having a big party to celebrate all the stuff they stole.
 - c) It shows that God does allow nonbelievers to have some happiness and "let them think" they are winning. There is a judgment day coming. Just as the Amalekites didn't know that most of them were about to die the next day, one never knows when judgment time is coming.

19. Verse 17: David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled.¹⁸ David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives.¹⁹ Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back.²⁰ He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, "This is David's plunder."
- a) The first thing I want you to notice is that the text does not say how many Amalekites David and his men killed, it just states that 400 young men got away.
 - i) Does that mean "David killed about 20 guys, but only 400 got away?" ☺
 - ii) More likely, David and his men, which numbered 400, killed thousands of Amalekites and only 400 got away.
 - iii) So why doesn't the text mention how many David killed? You would think David would brag about the "good part" instead of complain about the "bad part".
 - iv) Maybe it has to do with David having his whole lifetime to deal with that golden oldie, "Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands". I suspect this is about humility on David's part. This is the David who is now giving God the credit for victory and blaming himself for the failure of letting the 400 get away. (I don't think it was right for David to blame himself. If God wanted all of them dead, it would have happened.)
 - v) My point is that we are reading of a humble David. David had "lofty goals" of eliminating all of the Amalekites and four hundred got away.
 - b) This reminds me of a verse from Exodus: The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:16 NIV)
 - i) The Amalekites are a word-picture of our human nature (a.k.a., "the flesh").
 - ii) This is God saying, "As long as you live, you are going to struggle between doing My will and your own will.
 - iii) This verse also teaches that God will keep the Amalekites "around" in order to have war with them from generation to generation. I believe that is part of the reason why God allowed 400 of them to escape.
 - iv) Are Amalekites still around today? As a nation or tribe, no. Could some of their direct descendants be around today? Possibly. I wouldn't mind doing a DNA test of some of Israel's enemies to make sure. ☺ The main point today is that this is a word-picture of battling our human nature.
 - c) Notice in Verse 19 it says, "nothing was missing".
 - i) What did God say to David back in Verse 8: "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."
 - ii) When God makes a promise, it can be counted on, 100% to come true.
 - iii) Further, the text implies David got back more stuff than what was lost. The Amalekites didn't just raid David's town, but the surrounding area as well.
 - iv) Remember David sunk to a point where he lost everything. David then turned to God. In God's mercy and grace, David got back everything he lost and then some.
 - v) Does that mean if I mess up my life and lose everything, all I have to do is turn to God and I get all my stuff back? If you think that, first of all, your motivation is wrong. The correct attitude is, "I'm turning my life over to God. My life is now His concern. If God chooses to bless me again, that is His business. My job is to serve Him and let God worry about the results."
 - a) With that said, I have seen God restore broken lives and people regain the stature and "life" better than they ever had before they turned from God.

- d) Notice in Verse 20, David's men said, "This is David's plunder".
 - i) Remember these were the same guys who were considering mutiny.
 - ii) They saw how God was working in David's life again and it changed them.
 - iii) David was being a "good witness" to his men. Grant it, they should have given God the credit, but it's a step in the right direction. ☺ At least they weren't patting themselves on the back as they were giving David the credit.
20. Verse 21: Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Ravine. They came out to meet David and the people with him. As David and his men approached, he greeted them. ²² But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go."
- a) Now David gets back to the ravine where the 200 men were that didn't want to go on the attack against the Amalekites. The other 400 hundred, or at least some of them, didn't want to share the spoil with them. They said in effect, "They can have their wives and kids back, but because they didn't join us in the battle so that's all they get."
21. Verse 23: David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us. ²⁴ Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike."
- a) Notice in Verse 22 the text says, "all the evil men and troublemakers...said"
 - i) Now notice in Verse 23: David says to them, "No my brothers"
 - b) This is David showing mercy again. Not only is he showing mercy to the two hundred who didn't have the strength to go on the mission, but he was showing mercy to the soldiers with the big ego's who were giving themselves credit and not God.
22. Verse 25: David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.
- a) The verse ends with "to this (day)". That means the day that 1st and 2nd Samuel were compiled and organized as a book. This was some time after David died.
 - b) Now let's talk about the ordinance itself. David's rule is that when "spoil" is gained, those who stay back and guard the supplies are to share in the rewards with those who are on the front battle lines.
 - c) Again, this is to teach mercy, especially to those who did the fighting. The guys on the front line were wrongfully thinking, "We did all the real work. Why should we share part of our pay with those who stayed at home?"
 - i) The answer is that God is trying to teach us about compassion. There may come a day when we don't have the strength to be on the front line and we are dependant upon the mercy of others for our own survival.
 - ii) When Jesus taught the principal of "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:17 NIV), that means, "What goes around, comes around". If we have mercy on others, others will have mercy on us.
 - d) There is another underlying principal here, and that is the power of prayer.
 - i) We tend to think that in the world of Christian ministry, it is the pastors, their staff, the missionaries, etc. who are doing all the "real work".
 - ii) Those in the "supply field" giving prayer and financially supporting them are equally as important in God's eyes to those on the "front lines".
 - iii) This is why, when it comes to heavenly rewards, we too "share the loot". Those who "supply" Christians on the front lines with prayer support and/or financial support are just as important as those in the spotlight, if not more so.

23. Verse 26: When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies." ²⁷ He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; ²⁸ to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa ²⁹ and Racal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; ³⁰ to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach ³¹ and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where David and his men had roamed.
- a) The next thing we read of is David sending part of the loot to the elders of Judah.
 - b) The reason is not stated. Perhaps David knew he had to move back to his home territory of Judah and wanted to show a "no hard feelings" gift with them. After all, word probably reached Judah that David was living with the Philistines and some back in his hometown probably thought he was a traitor.
 - i) Remember David also knew he would be king one day. He could have done this in order to gain favor again with his home-tribe.
 - c) The application of this is to think, "What good can I do with the rewards God has given me? Instead of thinking about hoarding stuff for himself, David was "thinking ahead".
24. Chapter 31, Verse 1: Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³ The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.
- a) Here we read of the actual killing of Saul's three sons. The only other mention of Saul's other two sons was a brief listing back in 1st Samuel 14:49. (Abinadab was called "Ishvi" back in Chapter 14. The different name was a name change or a nickname.) The point is in Chapter 28, Samuel predicted that Saul and his sons would die in battle and here it is.
 - b) We don't read anything else on Jonathan, other than his death. Jonathan was more loyal to David than his father. I'm speculating that Jonathan fought for the sake of preserving the Nation of Israel, and not so much that he was in line to be king.
 - c) The last thing we read is Saul being wounded in battle, but not killed.
25. Verse 4: Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵ When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. ⁶ So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.
- a) Saul's life was marked by the word "fear".
 - i) Even in death, Saul feared being abused by the Philistines and he committed suicide to avoid that fear. Saul's right hand man, his armor-bear, also reflected that fear. He too committed suicide.
 - b) I should talk a little about suicide and Christianity.
 - i) Suicide is a sin. One of the 10 commandments is not to murder. (Exodus 20:13)
 - ii) To commit suicide is to commit murder against oneself.
 - iii) Jesus said the only unforgivable sin is "blasphemy against the Spirit" (Matthew 12:31, et.al.) That is the sin of the lifetime denial of Jesus as God.
 - iv) Therefore, if you are a believer in Jesus and commit this sin, it is a forgivable sin.
 - v) Suicide is also one of the most selfish things one can do in life. People who are that depressed become self-focused and don't think about those they are hurting around them unless they want to do it in order to hurt others.
 - vi) When I've had my own battles of self-pity, what helps is to think, "I can't do this to God. He loves me and has a purpose for me. I owe it to God, to press on."
 - vii) Remember that demonic forces do encourage suicide. It is not so much about losing your salvation as, "a dead person can't be a witness to others about Christ."

26. Verse 7: When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them. ⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. ¹⁰ They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.
- a) These verses are about the Philistines enjoying their temporary victory. They put Saul's head and armor in their temple as a trophy.
 - b) In 2nd Samuel, we'll read of King David conquering the territory that was lost in this battle. Therefore, the victory was only temporary. God allowed it to happen due to Saul's disobedience. When a leader is disobedient to God, it also affects those under him. You get the impression that thousands of Israelites had died due to Saul's fear.
 - c) In the last lesson, I quoted Saul's obituary as stated in 1st Chronicles. Here it is again:
 - i) Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse." (1st Chronicles 10:13-14 NIV)
 - ii) Saul's life can be summarized by that first comment: "He was unfaithful to the LORD". The rest of the comments about Saul are examples of that unfaithfulness and how God ultimately had to remove Him from power.
 - d) Many lessons ago, when I first talked about Saul's rise to power, I paraphrased the prophet Samuel's inaugural address about Saul as saying, "You wanted a king just like the way you live? You've got him in Saul"
 - i) Saul is a word picture of our old human nature. It cannot be made better by "trying harder" or "living by it's own wits". Our human nature gets afraid and acts on that fear. That fear grows until it ultimately leads to death.
 - ii) Let me finish the last few verses and I'll wrap this thought up some more.
27. Verse 11: When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all their valiant men journeyed through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. ¹³ Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.
- a) Here we read of an act of bravery by some Israelites who lived in Jabesh Gilead. Despite the odds being against them, they performed a raid and recovered Saul's body and head (from separate locations) and give them a proper Jewish burial.
 - b) Back in Chapter 11 of 1st Samuel, we read of Jabesh Gilead.
 - i) These people were attacked by the Ammonites.
 - ii) One of the good things Saul did in his early reign was raise an army from all over Israel to go rescue the people of this town.
 - iii) Saul had mercy on them (there's that word again! ☺), and these people were now returning the favor to Saul.
 - c) I think the other message of these three verses is one of national pride. The men of Jabesh Gilead were saying to the Philistines, "You may have won the battle, but not the war. We're getting Saul back and giving him a proper burial. The God of Israel is still in charge and He still gave us this land unconditionally. He allowed you to win due to Saul's disobedience, but the land is still ours. We're here and we're not going anywhere!"
 - d) That is a perfect way for 1st Samuel to end. This "half" of Samuel marks the point where King Saul dies and in a few chapters of 2nd Samuel, David will be the next king.

- e) The men of Jabesh Gilead were giving the message that “despite our failures, despite our lack of faith, God made unconditional promises to us. Ultimately we will win, not due to our goodness, but because of God’s promises. We put our trust in that fact and go on with our lives for that reason.
28. The story itself continues in 2nd Samuel.
- a) 2nd Samuel focuses on the rise of King David. The lessons of 2nd Samuel focus on “even once you are the king, there are still battles to deal with.”
 - b) Did you ever stop to think about the fact that when the Israelites first entered the Promise Land, they still had battles and struggles. Some Christians incorrectly associate the Promised Land with heaven. I don’t think we have battles and struggles in heaven. To enter the Promised Land is to enjoy the rich, full blessings that God has promised us. We still have to deal with our old human nature even after we are blessed by God.
 - c) In 2nd Samuel, David is a king. He is blessed by God, but still has to struggle with the sins of his life. The same way we are given all sorts of blessings by God, but still deal with the struggles of our old human nature.
29. Sorry this last lesson ran a little long. Thanks for having mercy on me. ☺
30. Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, We ask that you have mercy upon us for our sins. We tend to forget or ignore our own sins and focus on the sins others have committed toward us. Give us Your strength to have mercy toward others as you have had mercy upon us. As we battle the “Saul’s” that are within us and around us, help us to keep our focus upon You. The strength, power, and boldness to overcome all situations come from our dependence upon You. Guide us, as we are living witnesses for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on 1st Samuel are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated.

1. Commentary on 1st Samuel by Jon Curson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on 1st Samuel by David Guzik. It is available for free in text and format. The web address is http://enduringword.com/commentaries/library_commentaries.html It is also published in book format.
3. Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 1: Pentateuch (no copyright); Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2000, Findex.Com. All rights reserved.
4. Audio Commentary on 1st Samuel by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org/> It is also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
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9. The Expositor’s Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
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