



LESSON 20

God judges between David and Saul

1 SAMUEL 24:1-22



God blesses those who trust His plan and leave vengeance to Him.



“Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed’” (1 Sam 24:10).

Supporting Truths

1. Honor authority.
2. Do not take your own vengeance.
3. Trust God to take vengeance.
4. Be blameless before God.
5. Trust God’s plan.

Objectives

1. Count the number of times David called Saul “the LORD’s anointed.”
2. Explain how easily David could have killed Saul.
3. Describe what David did instead of killing Saul.
4. Show how David proved his innocence.
5. Decide if it was worth it for David to trust God’s plan.

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Lesson Summary

David was Saul's faithful servant, but Saul sought David again to kill him. This time, David had a chance to kill Saul. Would he take this opportunity? Saul deserved it, and it seemed like this would fulfill God's promise to make David king. But David left vengeance to God. Instead of killing Saul, he honored and protected him. As a result, God encouraged David. He affirmed David's innocence and confirmed His promise once again that David would be king.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Because David trusted God and left vengeance to Him, God confirmed David as king. David started an eternal dynasty that led to Jesus, the Son of David. Like David, Jesus trusted God instead of taking revenge or looking for a shortcut. Like David, Jesus will reign as king to bless His people. But Jesus is greater than David, for one day He will take vengeance on the wicked and reign forever. So those who hope in Jesus can leave vengeance to Him.

LAST WEEK



God gives David a friend

1 Samuel 18:1–20:42

THIS WEEK



God judges between

David and Saul

1 Samuel 24:1–22

NEXT WEEK



God makes David king

2 Samuel 1:1–2:7

UNITED KINGDOM

Lesson Commentary

God blesses those who trust His plan and leave vengeance to Him.

God chose David for a magnificent calling as Israel's greatest king. But before becoming king, God allowed David to experience great suffering. This suffering was designed to purify David's faith, preparing him for the demands of leading God's people. During this time, God used Jonathan as a godly friend to encourage and protect David (1 Sam 18–20; 23:15–17), and David learned to trust God. Even when he had the chance to kill Saul, David trusted God's plan, not his own. As a result, God encouraged David again, this time by the words of David's greatest enemy! God strengthens and delivers those who trust His plan and leave vengeance to Him.

David trusted God for vengeance (24:1–7)

When Saul left to fight the Philistines (23:19–29), David went to En-gedi, an oasis on the shores of the Dead Sea. This seaside retreat was bordered by massive cliffs full of caves—a good place to rest and hide out. But as soon as Saul defeated the Philistines, he started pursuing David again (24:1–2).

As David fled from Saul, his life was directed by the word of God (22:5; 23:2, 4, 9–13). In this David became a model for us to follow. It is not for us to direct our own way (Jer 10:23). Rather, we should be diligent

to study God's word and obey it (Luke 11:28). Those who neglect God's word fail (Josh 9:14; Ps 119:21), but those who treasure God's word are blessed (Josh 1:8; Ps 119:1).

Suddenly, Saul appeared before David and his men (1 Sam 24:4). David's men immediately interpreted this as a God-given opportunity for David to kill his enemy. Saul had entered the cave to relieve himself, and he was completely alone and vulnerable (24:3). Staring at his enemy in the darkness, listening to the whispers of his men, David had a decision to make. Should he wait for God, or seek vengeance himself? Should he

trust God's timing, or should he end his troubles in a moment?

What would you do? Do you leave judgment in God's hands? It's tempting to take the easy way out. We may even try to excuse sin because we, like David's men, interpret convenient circumstances as God's will. But favorable circumstances are not proof of God's will. On the contrary, God's will is often extremely inconvenient (Rom 5:3–5; Heb 12:1–13; 1 Pet 2:19). David knew God's promise (1 Sam 20:13–16; 23:16–17), and he also trusted God's process. As a result, David avoided the painful consequences of those who try to obtain God's promises by human schemes (Gen 16; 27).

Instead of cutting Saul, David only cut Saul's robe. But David regretted doing even this much. His conscience bothered him because he knew the law prohibited even speaking badly against a ruler (Exod 22:28). Any action against God's anointed was an action against God Himself (1 Sam 24:6). So when David's men wanted to kill Saul themselves, David stopped them with a strong rebuke. While Saul was hunting David's life, David was the only one protecting Saul's. So we too must love our enemies (Matt 5:44) and submit faithfully to rulers, even unrighteous ones (1 Pet 2:13–18).

David proved his innocence (24:8–15)

David's respect for Saul's kingship did not mean he was powerless to defend himself. So he stood and delivered a powerful defense of his own innocence, urging Saul to give up his unjust pursuit. David began by calling Saul "my lord the king" and bowing down to show **honor** (1 Sam 24:8). David's genuine display of respect for Saul's kingship gave weight to his words.

After honoring Saul, David proved he was not Saul's enemy (1 Sam 24:9). First, he provided personal testimony and physical evidence of his loyalty to Saul (24:10–11). Second,



THINK ABOUT IT
God's word
illuminates our path
(Ps 119:105).



THINK ABOUT IT
David's words,
together with
his actions, show
that it is possible to
rebuke someone
without dishonoring
them (2 Tim 2:25).

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he used a well-known phrase to say, in effect, “You know I won’t act wickedly against you because I am not a wicked person” (24:13). Finally, he urged Saul to consider how silly it was to waste so much energy chasing someone so unimportant (24:14). David defended his innocence with humility, integrity, wisdom, and respect—demonstrating the proper way to respond to persecution.

In the process, David did not excuse Saul’s wickedness. Saul never truly repented, and his actions prove he was a wicked man (24:13). Instead, David looked to God for judgment. Twice he repeated: “May the LORD judge between you and me” (24:12, 15). David trusted God to avenge him against Saul and deliver him from Saul. David left **vengeance** in God’s hands, trusting God to punish Saul as payback for harming others. Asking God for vengeance is not wrong (Ps 54:5; 58:6–9; 139:19–24). Those who pray for God to avenge are able to be gentle and peaceful towards their enemies, since they do not seek their own revenge (Rom 12:19; Deut 32:35–36; Lev 19:18).

This type of response is necessary when responding to all kinds of authority. Though Saul was dishonorable, his position as God’s appointed king was to be honored (1 Sam 24:10), and this is true for all **authority** (Rom 13:1). To rebel against those whom God has placed in positions of leadership on earth is to rebel against God (Rom 13:2). So what do we do when we are oppressed by the authority who is supposed to protect us (Rom 13:3–4)? We appeal to God Himself (Pss 57; 142). He hears the prayers of the oppressed and opposes the arrogant oppressor (1 Sam 2:1–10).

Saul confessed David’s innocence (24:16–22)

Saul wept at David’s passionate appeal, but his later actions show that he did not repent (24:16; 26:2). Even so, God used Saul to confirm David’s righteousness (24:17). David had asked God to plead his case, and now God used wicked Saul to state the verdict: David was innocent.

Saul also confirmed God’s word: David would be king. Saul hinted at this by calling David his son, implying that David was the rightful heir (24:16). Then Saul stated it clearly, adding that David would bless Israel (24:20). Thus God used wicked Saul to confirm His word. David had refused to take the easy way out by killing Saul, and God encouraged David that he had made the right choice.

David trusted God’s word, waited for God’s way, and left vengeance in God’s hand. So too did Jesus, the promised Davidic king. Like David, Jesus knew He would be exalted as King (Ps 2:8–9). He was also tempted to by-pass God’s plan in order to obtain God’s promise (Matt 4:8–9), but he left vengeance in God’s hand (Matt 26:53). Like David, He chose instead do what is right and entrust Himself to God (1 Pet 2:22–23). As a result of His obedience, He, like David, was exalted as King (Phil 2:9–11). And finally, Jesus, like David, brings blessing on those He reigns over (Eph 1:3).

But Jesus is much greater than David. His temptation was greater. His integrity was greater. His exaltation was greater. And the blessing He brings—forgiveness of sins (John 1:29), eternal life (John 3:16), and the restoration of all creation (Rev 21–22)—is greater. One day He will finally execute vengeance on those who persecute believers (2 Thess 1:6–10). Because of that, we can follow in His steps, entrusting ourselves to God and leaving vengeance in His hands.

THINK ABOUT IT

Grief is part of repentance, but grief by itself is not repentance (2 Cor 7:8–11).



Lesson Outline

God blesses those who trust His plan and leave vengeance to Him.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. David had a chance to kill Saul (24:1–4).
2. David cut off the corner of Saul's robe (24:4).
3. David knew it was wrong to cut Saul's robe (24:5–7).
4. David trusted God instead of hurting Saul (24:8–15).
5. God encouraged David (24:16–22).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. David trusted God for vengeance (24:1–7).
 - Saul came to kill David at En-gedi (24:1–2).
 - David's men told David to kill Saul while he was alone and vulnerable (24:3–4).
 - David cut off the corner of Saul's robe but was sorry he did (24:5–6).
 - David refused to let anyone harm the LORD's anointed (24:6–7).
2. David proved his innocence (24:8–15).
 - David honored Saul (24:8).
 - David defended his innocence with evidence (24:9–11).
 - David left vengeance to the LORD (24:12).
 - David defended his innocence with logic (24:13–14).
 - David left vengeance to the LORD (24:15).
3. Saul confessed David's innocence (24:16–22).
 - Saul wept and called David his son (24:16).
 - Saul admitted David was more righteous than he (24:17–19).
 - Saul confirmed God's word that David would be king (24:20).
 - Saul asked for mercy for his children, and David agreed (24:21–22).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Who was chasing David to kill him?**
Saul.
2. **What did David cut when Saul was alone?**
David cut off the edge of Saul's robe.
3. **Why did David honor Saul?**
Saul was the king. He was "the LORD's anointed."
4. **Did David do the easy thing, or did he trust God's plan?**
David trusted God and waited for His plan.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What opportunity did David have?**
David had a chance to kill his enemy, Saul, when Saul was alone in the cave.
2. **What did David's men tell him to do?**
David's men told him to kill Saul. They thought God was giving David the opportunity to become king now.
3. **Why did David feel bad about cutting off the edge of Saul's robe?**
David knew that this dishonored the one God had put in authority over Israel.
4. **After Saul left the cave, what did David do?**
David called to him, showed him the corner of the robe, and defended his innocence.
5. **What did David pray that God would do?**
David prayed that God would take vengeance on Saul but deliver David.
6. **What did Saul do when he heard David's speech?**
Saul wept, but he did not truly repent.
7. **How did Saul's response encourage David?**
Saul said that David was innocent; this showed David that he was doing the right thing. Saul also said David would surely be king; this showed that David was right to trust God to make it happen instead of trying to take a shortcut.
8. **Who else refused to take a shortcut on the way to becoming king?**
Jesus. He waited for God's plan and did not seek sinful vengeance. Because of His obedience, He became the sinless sacrifice to pay for our sins, and He is now exalted with God and will one day return as King over the whole earth.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

TIE THIEF!

Bring an inexpensive tie and scissors to class. Instruct an adult classroom assistant to sneak up while you are introducing today's lesson, cut off the bottom part of your tie, and sneak away unnoticed (you should pretend not to notice). Tell the children that in today's lesson David snuck up while Saul wasn't looking and cut off a piece of his robe.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SIN

In this week's lesson, David has the perfect opportunity to kill Saul, who is himself seeking to kill David. David does not take the opportunity because he does not want to sin. This is a very difficult choice to make and yet a very wise one. Give the children instructions to sit still and not to talk, no matter what happens. Then have a volunteer shut off the lights momentarily. Did all the children obey? Did some use the darkness as an opportunity to sin? Explain to the children that David faced an even harder test but chose to be obedient.



ILLUSTRATE

LEAVE ROOM FOR GOD

Ask the children how they respond when someone is mean to them or hurts them. Do they immediately respond by trying to hurt the person themselves? Do they use mean words or try to hit them? Explain that this is called "revenge," punishing someone by returning evil for evil. Tell them that we, like David, must let God take revenge; don't hit your sibling or friend.

GOD IS JUDGE

Tell the class that we don't need to seek revenge because God is judge. We must leave judgment to Him. Illustrate this by wearing a black robe and swinging a judge's gavel during the lesson when David says: "May the LORD judge between you and me" (1 Sam 24:12, 15). Explain that judges are people who settle disagreements between people.



APPLY

SAUL CHASES DAVID

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, paperclips, magnets, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-cut pictures from craft sheet. Create a large-scale map of Israel from a sheet of cardstock (one per student). Color in the Jordan River, Dead Sea, and a dotted line indicating where Saul chased David (as shown below). Have children color and glue the two-sided pictures. Place a paperclip on the bottom of each figure. Move Saul and David on the map by using a magnet underneath the cardstock.



Saul Chases David
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

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AGES 6–8



WHO WE ARE IN THE DARK

Without warning, turn off the lights. After a few seconds, turn the lights back on. Tell the class that D.L. Moody once said that “character is what we are in the dark.” Another person has said that “character is what we are when nobody is looking, in the secret chambers of our hearts.” How did the children behave when the lights were off? Tell the class that in today’s lesson we will see what happened when David met his enemy in the dark. Will he wait for God, or seek revenge on his own?

OPPORTUNITY IS NOT PERMISSION

Discuss with the children the difference between opportunity and permission. Place a piece of candy on a desk and walk away from it. Explain to the children that just because they have an opportunity to take the candy does not mean that they have permission to do so. Explain that in today’s lesson, David will have an opportunity to do something that would be great for him but that he did not have permission to do.



SAUL CHASES DAVID

Create a map of Israel on poster board, labeling key locations where Saul chased David (Philistine Territory, Moab, Keilah, and the caves of En Gedi). Create two cardstock standalones of Saul and David in the shape of a triangle, allowing them to stand on the map. Place a paperclip on the bottom of each figure. As you teach through the lesson, point out the significant locations on the map. Demonstrate the movement of Saul and David by moving the magnet underneath the poster board (moving the two standalones).

MONEY IN THE CEILING

Tell this real story to illustrate David’s blameless character before God. One afternoon a young boy was working with his father. As they pulled down the ceiling tiles in the house they were remodeling, numerous thick envelopes stuffed with money fell down to the floor below. More ceiling tiles revealed additional envelopes. The young boy asked his father what they were going to do. Ask the class what they would do. Tell the class that the father immediately returned the money to the owner of the home. The owner had forgotten about the money and desperately needed it to continue renovations on the home.



DAVID’S HEART AND SAUL’S HEART

See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, red paper, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Have the students color and cut out the pictures, seeds, and rocks from the craft sheet. Glue the pictures towards the top of a sheet of red paper. Draw a heart under each picture. Glue the seeds inside the heart under David and the rocks inside the heart under Saul. Write the title “David’s Heart and Saul’s Heart” on the top.

David’s Heart and Saul’s Heart
See *Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD

There is no authority, except that which has been established by God (Rom 13:1). Identify numerous local and national leaders by name and ask the children if all these leaders honor God in everything they do. Explain that all these leaders, whether they are God honoring or not, have been placed in positions of authority by God. Then, as a class, read 1 Timothy 2:1–2 and pray for these officials by name.

CAN VERSUS SHOULD

Bring in a tray of brownies. Talk to the children about eating one brownie. Then talk about eating the whole pan of brownies! What would happen? Just because we can do something does not mean that we should do it. In today's lesson, we'll talk about how David had the opportunity to do something but had to decide whether or not he should do it.



ILLUSTRATE

THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES OF IMPATIENCE

Sadly, not everyone we read about in the Bible waited for God's plan. Abraham and Sarah trusted God's promise concerning a son, but they did not trust in God's process of providing a son. Read portions of Genesis 16 and 21, highlighting the painful consequences of not waiting upon God.

VENGEANCE BELONGS TO GOD

David refused to take his own revenge (1 Sam 24:6–7). Instead, he prayed that God would take vengeance on Saul (1 Sam 24:12). In fact, David often asked God to take vengeance on the wicked. Read Psalms 54:5; 58:6–9; and 139:19–22 together as a class. Note how David took his complaint to God and left it with God. He did not pursue his own vengeance.



APPLY

GOD'S WORD RULES

After the lesson, play a game with the class. Prepare easy questions that give a choice between right and wrong actions. Each question should be matched with a specific command from God's Word. The focus should be on applying Scripture to situations the children will face. For example, ask the children whether they should hurt someone who hurts them. After they answer, talk about Matthew 5:44, which says that we should love our enemies. Make the game competitive by allowing each child who answers correctly to move forward on a game board, earn points for his team, etc.