

THE STORY

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Chapter 11: From Shepherd to King

Key Question: How did David live so as to fulfill God's purpose for his life?

Chosen

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God rejected Saul as king because Saul refused to obey him. Saul forgot the Israelites' purpose was to make God known to all nations, and that his duty as king was to lead them in fulfilling this purpose. Instead, he sought what he thought would bring himself the most glory.

God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king.

1. (a) In 1 Samuel 16:7, what does God tell Samuel not to consider? (b) How do people tend to look at people? (c) How does God look at people? (d) Briefly describe a time you looked at someone based on outward appearances and discovered later that inside they were different. (Please do not share names if someone could be hurt.)

Samuel anointed David with oil, and the Spirit of the Lord came onto him. The anointing had to be kept secret, though, or all their lives would be at stake.

In time,¹ the Philistines gathered to attack the Israelites. They had a champion named Goliath who was over nine feet tall.²

2. (a) What did Goliath propose be done instead of an all-out battle (1 Samuel 17:8–9)? (b) What was Saul's and the rest of the Israelites' reaction (17:11)? (c) The Israelites had wanted a king to lead their battles; how was Saul measuring up?

¹ Years have probably passed since David was called a "brave man and a warrior" before he first met Saul (1 Samuel 16:18).

² Goliath was likely descended from the Anak, of whom the ten spies were afraid when Moses sent them to explore the land. The Anak lived among the Philistines, who were part of the Sea Peoples, most of whom invaded the coasts in 1200 BC during the time of the judges.

3. (a) Why did David think he could defeat Goliath (1 Samuel 17:34–37)? (b) David could have considered shepherding beneath him since he would one day be king, but instead he gave it his all. Why is it important to be faithful in work that seems small or insignificant? (c) If possible, describe a time that you were faithful in something menial and that faithfulness led to something bigger.

David viewed the Philistine situation differently than Saul.

4. (a) How did David come against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45)? (b) What would the whole world know if David defeated Goliath (17:46)? (c) What would all the frightened soldiers know (17:47)?

David knew the purpose for which God had called the Israelites: revealing to the whole world that God is God so they would turn to him and seek to know him through the revelations he gave through Moses.

Pursued

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Impressed, Saul kept David with him. His son Jonathan became David's close friend.³

David rose quickly in rank in the army as the Lord gave him success in all his missions. But there came a day when David's successes no longer pleased Saul.

³ Jonathan was a warrior at the beginning of Saul's reign, a decade before David was born (1 Samuel 13:3), so there was a large difference in age between them. That Jonathan gave David his sword and bow suggests he may have already suspected David would replace his father as king. See 1 Samuel 23:17.

5. (a) What angered Saul (1 Samuel 18:7–8)? (b) What did Saul do from then on (18:9)? (c) The next day an evil spirit⁴ tormented Saul and David tried to soothe him with music. What did Saul in his jealous anger try to do (18:10–11)?

When David eluded the spear, Saul began giving David dangerous missions he didn't think David could survive. But God protected David and made him successful. After Saul tried more times to kill David, David finally fled. To convince his army to pursue David, Saul lied and said David was a traitor out to kill Saul.⁵

6. While fleeing from Saul, David wrote Psalm 59. (a) What did David pray for in Psalm 59:1? (b) David sang of the attributes of God which he most needed to remember. What were they (59:16–17)? (c) Which of God's attributes do you most need to remember right now? (d) What song or hymn has helped you to remember God's care during troubled times?

Vindicated

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Saul went into a cave to relieve himself, not knowing David and his men were hiding there. David's men were convinced God had delivered Saul into David's hands so he could kill him and become king. David cut a piece of Saul's robe, but didn't harm Saul.

⁴ God gives evil spirits boundaries. Because Saul had abandoned God, he no longer had God's protective hand on him and God allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul as punishment.

⁵ In 1 Samuel 22:8, Saul claims Jonathan convinced David to kill Saul. See also 1 Samuel 22:13

7. (a) What did David tell his men (1 Samuel 24:6–7)? (b) When Saul left the cave to return to his army of 3,000 men, David daringly stepped out of the cave and called to Saul. What strikes you most about what David said in verses 24:9–10? Why? (c) What did Saul admit (24:17)? (d) How did David’s refusal to take Saul’s life and Saul’s admission vindicate David before Saul’s army and David’s men?

Despite Saul’s admission, he continued to pursue David. Eventually David hid among the Philistines where Saul couldn’t follow.

Years later, David wrote a psalm remembering all the times God had delivered him from his enemies, including Saul.

8. (a) In 2 Samuel 22:2–3, what did David say God was to him? (b) How then did God answer David’s prayer in Psalm 59 (see question 6)? (c) David declared God’s faithfulness to others. Think of a time God helped you after you prayed and then write a sentence or two declaring God’s faithfulness to you.

Crowned

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About a year and a half after Saul’s last encounter with David, Saul died in battle against the Philistines. Sadly, Jonathan died too.

The tribe of Judah crowned David king, but one of Saul’s sons became king of the northern tribes. Seven and a half years later, Saul’s son was assassinated. David put the assassins to death and the northern tribes asked David to be their king too.

9. David was 30 when he became king of Judah (2 Samuel 5:4). (a) Briefly describe a time you waited what seemed a long time before you saw a prayer answered yes. (b) How did you feel when the prayer was answered? (c) Why do you think God waited to answer your prayer?

David built his palace in Jerusalem.⁶ After he was settled, he wanted to bring the ark of the testimony to Jerusalem, so he gathered many people to join him in doing so.

The ark was at Abinadab's house in Kiriath Jearim,⁷ where it was left after the Philistines sent it back on an ox cart. Through Moses, God had given specific instructions about how to handle the holy ark.⁸ The ark had gold rings fastened to its feet through which wood poles overlaid with gold were inserted. The ark was normally kept inside a tabernacle behind a curtain in a place called the Holy of Holies. It was out of sight of all but priests descended from Aaron. If it needed to be moved, Aaronic priests covered it with hides and cloths. Then Kohathites (a clan of Levites charged with caring for the most holy things) would carry the ark with the poles on their shoulders; however, they were not permitted to touch or look into the ark, lest they die.

10. (a) How did the men try to transport the ark of God (2 Samuel 6:3–4)? (b) Because the ark wasn't transported properly, what happened (6:6)? (c) What did God do (6:7)? (d) David later realized he hadn't checked to see how God said the ark should be handled. How can you find out how God wants you to live?

They had imitated the Philistines in how they transported the ark, rather than seeking God's instructions. God had permitted the Philistines who didn't have God's law to transport the ark that way, but he expected more from his people who did have it. The Lord told the priests it was their responsibility to know and to teach people how to treat the things of God: "You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses" (Leviticus 10:10–11).⁹

⁶ David conquered Jerusalem, which was between Judah and Benjamin (Saul's tribe). Ruling from Jerusalem helped unify the twelve tribes.

⁷ Kiriath Jearim was also known as Baale Judah and Baalah of Judah.

⁸ See Exodus 25:12–14; 26:30–33; and Numbers 4:4–6, 15.

⁹ Abinadab took custody of the ark after a number of men died upon looking into it (1 Samuel 6:19–17:1), so his family members were aware it needed special treatment. It's not clear whether Uzzah and Ahio were Levites, though 1 Chronicles 15:2 says priests and Levites were involved.

Later David discovered his error and called together nearly a thousand priests and Levites. He told them God's anger had broken out because "we did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way."¹⁰

So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves and put on the sleeveless robes and ephods¹¹ made of fine linen which they wore when ministering before the Lord. David removed his royal garments and donned the same attire. Accompanied by a large multitude who sang and danced and played music, Levites carried the ark to Jerusalem.¹²

Promised

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David wanted to build a great temple to house the ark, so he consulted Nathan the prophet.

11. (a) What answer did God give in 1 Chronicles 17:4? (b) What did God declare he would build for David (17:10b)? (c) Whom would God allow to build the temple (17:11–12)?

David pleased God. David wanted to build God a physical house in the form of a temple, and God promised to build David a house in the form of a dynasty.

12. (a) What promise did God make to David in 1 Chronicles 17:8b? (b) How did David respond to Nathan's words in 17:16–17?

¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 15:12–13.

¹¹ An ephod was a short pullover the Levites wore over their knee-length robes. See 1 Chronicles 15:27.

¹² 1 Chronicles 15:15.

13. What have you learned from David as to how you might better allow God to fulfill his purpose in your life?

Saul sought to exalt himself and establish a dynasty, but achieved neither. David sought to exalt God, and God exalted him and promised him a dynasty. Jesus said, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”¹³

14. (a) When you encounter situations where you think others aren't treating you with the respect you deserve, how can you react with humility like David rather than with pride like Saul? (b) What is a practical way you can humble yourself this week?

¹³ Luke 14:11.