



Honest To God

David

PROFILES OF AN AUTHENTIC LIFE





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January 12 - April 13, 2021

6:30 - 8:30pm

Riverbend Calvary Chapel



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Session 1 – Authentic Surrender

It has been said that troubles, prayed through honestly and with praise, will change your outlook. We notice this pattern all through David's prayers in the psalms. He holds nothing back in telling God his woes, but his prayers always come around to praise.

Our series on David's life begins with a prayer, but not his. It starts with the distressed plea of a childless woman named Hannah. She prayed to God for a son and promised to give him back to the Lord for a lifetime of service. Her part in God's plan is told in two chapters of the book that bears her son's name.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover Hannah's role in God's plan for giving Israel a king.
- Consider how God uses life's problems and our prayers to accomplish His plan.
- To examine our heart and allow God's Word to shape what we value.
- To pray honest prayers that lead to surrender and hold steady with hope.

Ice Breaker

Every society puts emphasis on what it values. How does our culture define the ideal life and what qualities are prized to achieve it? How would you define the ideal life?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 1:1-28** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two - Hannah's Problem

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-8

Hannah's family situation reflects the culture she lived in. Large families were vital for their way of life. Since having no heir was a major problem, taking a second wife to bear children was a commonly accepted solution. It appears that Elkanah married Peninnah because Hannah was unable to bear children.

Because children were a sign of the Lord's blessing (Deuteronomy 7:13, Psalm 127:3-5) the inability to bear children was viewed as personal punishment. In Hannah's day, the stigma of no children was on the woman. Being childless lowered a woman's standing within her own family and community; she could even be put away or divorced.

1. Consider Hannah's situation. Describe the pain she would have faced personally and socially.
 - a. How did Peninnah add to Hannah's misery? Why do you think she did this?

2. Hannah's barrenness did not diminish Elkanah's love for her. How did he demonstrate care and concern for Hannah?
 - b. What effect does this appear to have had on Hannah? What effect does it seem to have had on Peninnah?
 - c. Elkanah's attempt to console Hannah seems to fall short. His action shows that he dearly loves Hannah, but what do his "why" questions indicate is lacking?
 - d. In your observation, what was Elkanah trying to fix for Hannah and why was he unable to do so?

3. There will always be "Peninnahs" in life. By that, we mean cultural pressures that say, "if you don't do this or can't be that, you won't measure up." In what ways are you most likely to feel pressure to measure up? What pressures do you put on yourself?

4. Christians aren't immune to the pressures of society but we have God's Word on what matters most. What do we learn from the following scriptures?

1 Samuel 16:7

Romans 12:2

5. There will always be "Elkanahs" in life. By that, we mean the natural tendency to look to people or things to make us happy. We need each other but even our best efforts to love and be loved can fall short. Only God knows our deep needs and the ultimately good plan He has for us. What can we always count on God for in every situation?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Jeremiah 29:11

6. We are all confronted in life with situations we're powerless to fix on our own. Hannah's inability to have a child took her to the brink of brokenness. Men and women may differ in the way we process feelings of inadequacy, but we all have them. When we come to God in our weakness, what does He promise?

Psalms 73:25-26

2 Corinthians 12:9

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.
Psalm 62:5-6 NLT

Think it over . . .

What does the metaphor of a rock and a fortress show me about God's character and attributes?

Day Three – Hannah’s Prayer

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-18

Hannah’s sorrow was more than she could bear. In vs. 9 we read that Hannah “rose up” after the meal. In the Hebrew narrative style, this indicates that she made a decision to take action.

1. Hannah’s prayer on this day was the culmination of many years of prayers, heartache and restless waiting. What had happened to Hannah’s heart to bring her to pray this prayer?

a. What was the direct result of her prayer, even though nothing had outwardly changed?

2. Maybe you relate to Hannah’s experience. Are you waiting for the answer to a prayer? Share what is God teaching you while you wait.

3. Waiting on the Lord in prayer means: (Check all that apply)

a. Life goes on hold until the prayer is answered. _____

b. We actively cultivate an attitude of trust. _____

c. We hand our personal worries and concerns over to God. _____

d. We go about whatever duties/responsibilities we must see to. _____

e. Add your own thought to the list _____

4. The devil will slow us to a dead stop by telling us we should wait until life is back to normal before we can serve, share the gospel, or take up daily responsibilities again. What does God’s Word tell us?

1 Peter 5:6-9

Psalm 37:3-7

5. The devil will use pain in a believer’s life to paralyze faith, but God chooses to strengthen our faith through pain. What does suffering according to God’s will accomplish?

Job 23:10

Romans 5:3-5

James 1:2-4

Memory Verse

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.
Psalm 62:5-6 NLT

Think it over . . .

What might God want to accomplish in me while I wait?

Day Four – Hannah’s Heart

Read 1 Samuel 1:19-28

When Hannah prayed for a son, she vowed to dedicate him back to the Lord all the days of his life. She named the answer to her prayers Samuel, which means *heard by God*.

1. Eli saw Hannah’s anguished praying and assumed she was drunk. Her humble response helped him realize his mistake and he blessed her. When you find yourself on the receiving end of a false impression or someone’s jump-to-conclusion, what is your natural response? What would you like it to be?

2. Hannah’s vow can be misunderstood too. Some see her making a deal with the Lord in order to get what she desperately desired. But Hannah wasn’t bargaining—she was praying from a heart that had come to a place of complete surrender.

Prayer has a way of refining our heart. We learn to pray, not just for right things, but also for right reasons. Give an example of how God used prayer to give you a change of heart.

3. “I have *lent* him to the Lord” (vs. 28). Hannah and her husband brought Samuel to Shiloh where he would grow up and be trained to serve God.
 - a. When you take inventory of what is precious to you (relationships, goals, possessions, work, time, health) what does dedicating it back to the Lord look like? Be as specific and practical as possible.

 - b. Which areas are most difficult for you to keep surrendered to the Lord?

**“In the act of offering,
we give up ownership
and control and
watch to see what
God will do with it.”**

**Eugene Peterson
*Answering God***

Memory Verse

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.
Psalm 62:5-6 NLT

Think it over . . .

Take your answer from the previous question and lay it here for the Lord to speak to you.

Day Five – Hannah’s Hope

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10

Returning with Samuel to keep her promise to the Lord, Hannah was not the same woman she had been. Her prayer pours out of a praise-filled heart.

1. Hannah didn’t focus on the prospect of leaving her son, as difficult as that would be for her. As her praise unfolds, we get the sense that Hannah is looking back on all she has suffered with a greater understanding of God. She praises God for who He is and for what He does.
 - a. Looking back, how have you grown closer to God in a season of suffering? Briefly share one or two insights you gained about God.
 - b. Do you find yourself digging more into God’s Word when life is hard? Why or why not?
 - c. Share a favorite verse you go to when you need to draw strength from the Lord.

Hannah declares God’s power to turn crushing circumstances around to bring salvation to those who trust in Him. She rebukes the proud (including Peninnah) for boasting in their own strength.

2. Hannah goes beyond praising God for what He has done for her and prophetically praises God for what He *will* do for His people. Surely Hannah wasn’t aware how far-reaching her prayer was, but we see from the vantage point of history. At the time of her prayer, there was no king in Israel and never had been.
 - a. In due time, this promise would be partially fulfilled in David. How was Hannah’s son instrumental in God’s plan to give Israel a king? (see 1 Samuel 16:1)

b. The Hebrew word *anointed* in Hannah’s prayer (vs. 10) translates to *messiah* in English.

Read John 12:27-31. Trace the connection between Hannah’s prophetic prayer and how it was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah King.

“From heaven He will thunder against them.” –

“The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.” –

What if having a child had come easily for Hannah? God set His plans for Samuel in motion by first preparing his mother’s heart. She prayed her troubles and offered herself, circumstances and all, to God.

Memory Verse

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.
Psalm 62:5-6 NLT

Think it over . . .

Sometimes affliction can be the bridge that allows us to walk into another hurting person’s world. What might God want to accomplish *through* me while I wait?

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 2 – Authentic Obedience

What motivates us to obey—or for that matter, to disobey? We can think of many explanations but it comes down to the same thing. We are followers, going after fulfillment. What we get depends on who we follow. As Bob Dylan famously sang, you're gonna have to serve somebody.

Before David comes on the scene, we meet another man who had the opportunity to be mighty for God. Saul's story goes so far wrong that we tend to forget he started out well enough. Saul was gifted with strength, influence and good looks. He had the Lord's guidance and Samuel's support. What went wrong? Unlike David, Saul chose *and kept choosing* to follow his own heart.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what pleases God most.
- Consider the pitfalls of trying to please others.
- To examine how we respond when confronted with our own sin.
- To pray honest prayers that lead to authentic obedience and life change.

Ice Breaker

Everyone feels it at one time or another. Call it peer pressure, the pull of mainstream thinking, or what's trending on social media. Give some examples (either positive or negative) of how we are influenced to go with the flow.

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 15:1-35** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line carefully but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Saul’s Disobedience

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-9

The Amalekites were sworn enemies of Israel, going all the way back to the exodus from Egypt when they brutally attacked Israel and the Lord promised to judge them (see Exodus 17:8-16). The time had come for the Lord to keep His promise.

1. Saul was given a command from the Lord to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Though severe, God’s instruction to spare no life and take no spoil was clear. This particular military action was not to be for any purpose other than fulfilling God’s decree that Amalek’s sin would not go unpunished.
 - a. How did Saul’s actions line up with the command he was given?
 - b. Give some thought to the instructions Samuel gave Saul (vs. 1-3). What would you say was the most important part? Why?
2. What factors appear to be influencing Saul’s thinking and actions?
 - a. Vs. 6-7:
 - b. Vs. 8-9:
3. “To the victor go the spoils” was a fundamental rule of ancient warfare. Armies were freely allowed to plunder their enemies and defeated kings were paraded as live trophies for public display. So why was it wrong in this instance?
 - a. In what way did Saul distort the mission and disgrace himself before God?
4. This was not the first time Samuel caught Saul in a serious act of disobedience to God. Two years into his reign, Saul selected and trained 3,000 men for Israel’s first professional army. He led 2,000 and assigned 1,000 to serve under his son Jonathan’s command. At that time, Israel was dominated by their Philistine neighbors. Jonathan boldly attacked and defeated a garrison of Philistines, effectively waking the sleeping giant. News spread quickly (with credit for victory going to Saul) and war was declared. Read the rest of the episode and note what stands out to you, particularly in the conversation between Saul and Samuel.

1 Samuel 13:5-15

5. We notice a consistent pattern in Saul that set him up for failure in obeying the Lord. He tended to let circumstances control the choices he made. He was overly concerned about what people thought of him. Being human, we can relate and learn from Saul's example.
 - a. What tends to trip you up in obeying the Lord?

 - b. What is one valuable lesson you've learned about obedience?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

What is more pleasing to the Lord: burnt offerings and sacrifices or obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.
1 Samuel 15:22 NLT

Think it over . . .

When am I most likely to get quiet before the Lord and listen? Am I quick in my prayers to speak before letting God speak to me? How does He speak to me?

Day Three – Saul's Excuses

Read 1 Samuel 15:10-23

This part of the story marks a crucial point in Saul's life and gives us a sobering glimpse of sin's blinding effect.

1. What did God tell Samuel regarding Saul? What does this reveal about God's character?
 - a. Here, the Lord "regrets" making Saul king. This does not mean God thought His decision was a mistake (see 1 Samuel 15:29). It expresses God's sorrow over Saul's sin and the consequences he will bear. How can we avoid causing God sorrow over our choices?

Romans 2:4

Ephesians 4:30-31

2. Saul began his reign as a modest, humble man (1 Samuel 9:21).
But by the time Samuel catches up with him, Saul has already made a detour to Carmel to erect a monument in his own honor.
What does this show us about Saul's heart?

**“One enemy in the heart
is stronger than ten
thousand in the field.”**

A.B. Simpson

Saul resists Samuel's effort to help him see his sin (vs. 13-21). Briefly describe how he:

- a. Defends himself –
 - b. Blames others –
 - c. Justifies his actions –
3. Consider Saul's excuses and see if they sound familiar. What can we do to avoid making the same mistakes as Saul? Make your answer practical and specific.
- a. I *did* obey... Saul bent the rules to suit himself and still wanted to call it obedience.
 - b. I didn't do the right thing, but it's not my fault.
 - c. Maybe I was wrong, but my intentions were right.
4. Because we are naturally inclined to self-deceive (Jeremiah 17:9) when confronted with our disobedience, our response is crucial. Note the warnings and promises in the following verses. What would an honest response look like? What would be the best outcome?

Proverbs 28:13-14

1 John 1:8-9

Memory Verse

What is more pleasing to the Lord: burnt offerings and sacrifices or obedience to His voice?
Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.

1 Samuel 15:22 NLT

Think it over . . .

What makes my offerings to God an act of true worship? Have I been going through the motions?
In what way?

Day Four – Saul’s Rebellion

Read 1 Samuel 15:24-35

When Samuel’s strong rebuke begins to sink in, Saul admits, “I have sinned.” In a later episode, David will utter the same words in a similar situation but with a very different outcome. For Saul, it was all about saving face.

1. Saul admits his sin and even tells Samuel that his motive was to gain favor with the people. For a moment, it appears that Saul is beginning to see his own blind spot. But what does he ask Samuel (twice) to do for him? What was most important to Saul?
 - a. Put yourself in Samuel’s shoes. He agonized and prayed all night before confronting Saul with his sin. What would you do in a similar situation? What can we learn from Samuel?
 - b. Put yourself in Saul’s shoes. He issues a quick apology and wants to go on as if nothing happened. What would you do in a similar situation? What can we learn from Saul?

Saul tried to wave away the sting of Samuel’s rebuke and get on with the religious rituals that made him feel good about himself.

2. Because we all have blind spots, we need godly friends who have permission to speak truth into our life (Hebrews 3:13). Friends, like Samuel was to Saul, who care enough to keep us clear-eyed about our own heart.
 - a. How can we prepare ourselves to be open to correction when we’re in need of it?

Proverbs 27:5-6

Psalm 119:57-60
 - b. When have you been helped by the “faithful wound” of a friend? Briefly share what the Lord taught you through it.

Saul was a serial apologizer but he didn’t grieve for having grieved God. Godly sorrow is more than admitting mistakes or regretting the consequences of our sin (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). It goes to the heart. Godly sorrow is actually a very healthy indication that we are growing in authentic obedience.

3. God's Word shows us our blind spots and godly sorrow stirs us to action. How can we cooperate with God to accomplish real change? What growth and blessings will be ours as a lasting result?

James 1:22-25

Luke 6:46-49

4. Authentic obedience is a natural response to knowing God's love for us. If we view obedience more as a demand, it will be a drudge when it gets difficult. But when we remember that God's kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4) it causes us to respond with a grateful heart that trusts Him and seeks to follow His good plan.
 - a. Have you ever obeyed God and regretted it? Why or why not?
 - b. Have you ever disobeyed God and regretted it? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

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1 Samuel 15:22 NLT

Think it over . . .

Where has God shown me to obey, but I've been offering sacrifices instead?

Day Five – Saul's Example

1 Samuel 15:27-28

As Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."

Saul and David had some things in common. Neither one of them aspired to be a king. Both men were raised out of obscurity and had a unique opportunity to be mighty for God. Samuel was a spiritual mentor and a wise friend to both. But their lives took very different paths.

1. Saul was so intent on protecting his image that he gave no thought to his character. By contrast, Psalm 141:4-5 gives us a glimpse of what made David a man after God's heart. What was David most intent on protecting?

2. Some characters in the Bible, especially familiar ones, seem larger than life to us. We forget they were real people, living in real time—they weren't reading a script. Consider the toll that Saul's habitual disobedience would have taken on Samuel.
 - a. In your observation, was Saul aware that his disobedience to God was actually damaging his relationships with others, and with Samuel in particular? Why or why not?
 - b. If you could have given Saul a word of advice before he and Samuel ended up going their separate ways, what would it be?
 - c. Can you think of someone in your life who has been like a Samuel for you? In what way?

Memory Verse

What is more pleasing to the Lord: burnt offerings and sacrifices or obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.
1 Samuel 15:22 NLT

Think it over . . .

What will I lay before the Lord today, in authentic obedience to His will?

After His Heart

"The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." 2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

"God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?"

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



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David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 3 – Authentic Devotion

UCLA's legendary coach John Wooden knew a thing or two about devotion: "Be more concerned about your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are, while reputation is only what others think you are." David had a fine reputation but character is what shaped him into a man of prayer. He lived life out loud and prayed his prayers even louder.

David was such an unlikely candidate for king that nobody saw it coming. Not even Samuel. Certainly not Saul. But God knew exactly what He was looking for and found it right there in David. In God's eyes, David was the whole package. And what God sees matters most.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what made David a man after God's own heart.
- Consider why God uses the ordinary and least likely to accomplish His plan.
- To examine how we respond to disappointment and avoid false expectations.
- To pray honest prayers that lead to authentic devotion and renewed power.

Ice Breaker

What is most likely to give you a good first impression of someone? What qualities do you look for in a leader?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 16:1–23** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Samuel’s Assignment, God’s Plan

Read 1 Samuel 16:1–5.

Saul’s disqualification triggered a personal crisis for Samuel. The king had been his protégé, in some ways like a son. But now, Saul was on a destructive course and unfit to lead the nation. Saul couldn’t see it. And Samuel couldn’t see a future beyond it.

1. No wonder Samuel was dejected, given their history. Samuel had successfully led Israel with integrity for many years. One day, key influencers (elders) came to Samuel with a new plan. Read the account in 1 Samuel 8 if you like, but essentially they told Samuel, “You’re old, your sons are an embarrassment, and we want to be like our neighbors—they have a king.”

- a. How had Samuel responded and what did God tell him? (See 1 Samuel 8:6–9.)

- b. After breaking with Saul, a lesser man might have declared the king experiment a failure and taken back control. Not Samuel. He went home. Maybe he thought about retiring. Sorrow has a way of magnifying the “if-onlys” and “what-ifs” of life. Samuel needed to process the situation. We aren’t told how long Samuel mourned, but the Lord said it was long enough.

Failure (our own or someone else’s) may send us into a slump, but when it’s time to move on, God has the final word. We can trust Him. What does He want you to know?

Psalm 37:23–24

Isaiah 43:18–19

Philippians 3:13–14a

- c. Have you ever, like Samuel, been stuck in a hard place? In what way has the Lord helped you to move forward? What new thing is the Lord working in you as a result?

2. Samuel thought of the risk in anointing a new king while Saul was alive. Common sense told him it wasn’t a good idea, and he said so. Can you imagine telling God that His plan isn’t a good idea? When was the last time following your instincts proved more reliable than God?

- a. What did Samuel end up doing? How is his response an example of authentic devotion?

- b. Read the following scriptures and state what is always true about God in every situation.

Isaiah 46:9–10

Proverbs 3:5–6

3. “So Samuel did as the Lord instructed.” If you wrote an epitaph for Samuel’s life, this phrase sums it up perfectly. The child Hannah so fervently prayed for was nearly eighty years old and still going strong.

As a boy, Samuel learned that God speaks to the one who will listen and obey. That became the lifelong habit of his soul. Someday the epitaph of your life will be written. What do you want it to say?

4. What do you observe about Samuel in this chapter? Saul saw a stubborn old man set in his ways. The worried town elders saw trouble. David saw a spiritual hero. God saw a faithful servant determined to follow, listen, and obey—an example of authentic devotion.

Who has been an example to you of authentic devotion? How have they influenced you?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Does trusting God come easily for you? Why or why not?

Day Three – What God Sees

Read 1 Samuel 16:6–13.

God chooses Saul's replacement and sends Samuel to anoint the new king. So the old prophet goes to Bethlehem, a small village where grain fields and grazing sheep dot the rocky hillsides. Samuel will look for God's choice among the sons of a man named Jesse.

1. Samuel assumed that Eliab was the Lord's choice. He was impressive and had the advantage of being the firstborn son. But as each son is introduced to Samuel, what does God tell him to keep in mind?

2. "Do not look on his appearance" means: (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Close your eyes. _____
 - b. Looks aren't important but be sure he has a great personality. _____
 - c. Figure out what's in his heart. _____
 - d. Monitor your first impression with prayer. _____
 - e. Wait until God speaks before you act. _____

3. Evidently it never occurred to Jesse to bring his youngest boy to the feast. He was left out in the field where he was tending his father's sheep.
 - a. In your observation, what expectations or ambition did Jesse have for David?

 - b. By comparison, think of God's plans for David. What traits and qualities were already developing in David?

 - c. What qualities do you look for in others when you try to see what God sees?

 - d. What qualities would you want others to see in you?

4. What did God see in David? He certainly had talent and abilities. But God saw something else in David that made him “the kind of man I want. He will do all I want him to do” (Acts 13:22 NCV). God looks for this same quality in us. What will a person after God’s own heart pursue?

Deuteronomy 6:5

2 Chronicles 16:9a

Philippians 3:8

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What comes to mind when you think of *dwelling*? And *feeding*?

Day Four – David’s Assignment, God’s Plan

Read 1 Samuel 16:14–23.

Saul still wore the crown but he no longer had God’s blessing. God gave the people what they were looking for when Saul was chosen and he had disqualified himself. This time, the Lord would give the people the kind of king He was looking for.

Look back at verse 13:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. Then Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

1. Do you see it? An amazing, unforgettable event in David’s life is followed with a mundane detail. Samuel anointed him and then . . . *he went home*. David went home too. Back to open fields and smelly sheep. He still had chores to do.
 - a. Faithfulness in little things is a big thing. How was David’s ordinary work training him for greater responsibilities? List what comes to mind.
 - b. If you have ever prayed *Lord, use me* and waited for His answer, you know how David must have felt. We hand our bucket list to God and He gives us a laundry list in return. Where are you using your God-given skills to do small things faithfully (Colossians 3:23)?

2. Briefly describe the circumstances that brought David into service for Saul.
 - a. A skillful musician was needed, and David came highly recommended (verse 18). The Hebrew word for *skillful* describes more than technical ability—it calls for discernment and perception in relating to peoples’ need. What effect did David’s music have on Saul?
 - b. Worship music has a way of settling our heart and resetting our focus. What is currently your favorite worship song and why? What is an all-time favorite?
3. God put David in the right place at the right time. David did not maneuver himself into a position. He served faithfully and waited for the Lord to open doors. In today’s world, does that sound like a risky career path? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
 Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
 Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

How has God been faithful to you this week? Think of at least two examples.
 How does God’s faithfulness increase your capacity to be faithful?

Day Five – David’s Prayer

David saw Saul’s affliction up close and personal, like few others. He showed compassion and respect, even when forced to run for his life. But if Saul’s madness pummeled David’s soul, it also instructed his character. The lessons found their way into songs. Our memory verse this week is from Psalm 37. (Read the whole psalm if you like; there are no discussion questions for it.)

Later in life, David wrote a psalm, not directly related to Saul but the shadows are there. Psalm 37 wrestles with an age-old problem: Why do people who live as though God doesn’t exist seem to prosper? David frets and feels angry. He prays honest emotions but doesn’t stop there. David’s prayer teaches us to remind ourselves what is true about God’s character and His desires for every person who will, like David, run after Him with all their heart.

**“By self-indulgence a man’s character is wrecked.
 By self-discipline a man’s character is made.”**

**Alan Redpath
*The Making of a Man of God***

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way.” —Psalm 37:23

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Delight is a delicate sounding word that means “luxuriate” or “pamper yourself.” Or you may prefer “drench yourself.” Set aside ten or fifteen minutes sometime this week just be with the Lord. Play worship, take a walk, go for a run—whatever—and just be with the Lord.

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 4 – Authentic Courage

What defines courage? It's the stuff of action heroes and thrill seekers, but might just as easily be found in a hospital bed or soup kitchen. As US Senator and former POW John McCain puts it, courage is "that rare moment of unity between conscience, fear, and action, when something deep within us strikes the flint of love, of honor, of duty, to make the spark that fires our resolve."

David was on a common errand for his father when the flint was struck. He could hardly believe what he was hearing. Goliath was a tower of wrath and no one confronted him. David saw it. Instinctively and against all odds, David took charge and stood up to Goliath.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what made David a courageous warrior.
- Consider ways to develop and strengthen our perspective of God.
- Examine how giants assault faith, and let God's Word shape our response.
- Pray honest prayers that instill courage and engage in spiritual combat.

Ice Breaker

If you were to identify one thing in your life as a "giant," what would it be?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 17:1–58** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Fear Breeds Fear

Read 1 Samuel 17:1–30.

Saul and his men were in a tense standoff with the Philistines. Both armies camped on opposite hills with a wide gulf between them. With their spears, swords, and iron-wheeled chariots, the Philistines had the military advantage. But the steep ravine made a full-scale assault impractical. So the Philistines brought out their deadliest weapon: a giant named Goliath.

1. Describe Goliath’s challenge and conditions of combat. Who, if anyone, might the Philistines have expected to take their crazy dare?
 - a. How did Saul, the people’s choice for a king to lead them in battle, respond?

2. David reaches camp just in time to see the troops “going out to the fight and shouting for the battle” (verse 20 NKJV). He knows nothing about Goliath yet. David drops everything and runs to where his brothers are. What would he be expecting to see?
 - a. Describe what he actually *did* see.

 - b. Every morning, Israel and the Philistines would go up on the ridge and face off, army against army. They shouted, fist-pumped the air, and positioned for battle. If thirty days makes a habit, forty days of staring at Goliath conditioned them to give up without a fight. When we face situations that seem insurmountable, where can courage be found?

Psalm 56:3–4

Isaiah 41:10

3. David went around the camp, looking for someone to take on this “uncircumcised Philistine” who was mocking the Lord. Why did David’s brother find his remarks so irritating?

4. There will always be Eliabs in life. In other words, we can expect pushback for doing the right thing. When you are maligned for standing in faith, what does God want you to know?

Matthew 5:11–12

1 Peter 4:14–16

Hebrews 12:2–3

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
Psalm 27:1 ESV

Think it over . . .

What do the metaphors of light and a stronghold show me about God's character and attributes?

Day Three – Overcoming Obstacles

Read 1 Samuel 17:31–39.

David caused enough of a stir in the camp that word got back to Saul. At last, someone was willing to face the dreaded Philistine. David didn't have to wait long for an interview with the king, as no one else was applying for the position of Israel's champion. But he certainly wasn't what Saul had in mind.

1. Saul takes one look at David and dismisses any thought of sending him into combat. In your estimation, was Saul's response to David scornful, skeptical, or just sensible?
 - a. What reason did David give to convince Saul that he was able to fight Goliath?
 - b. What was it about David that persuaded Saul to give him a chance?
2. David's boldness was more than youthful overconfidence. Past experience taught him that God would be strong for him. David's habit of recalling God's faithfulness was a continual source of courage for him. Is it for you? Share a past example of God's faithfulness and how it gives you strength today.

3. David was ready to face Goliath but there were obstacles to overcome. His brother ridiculed him and Saul said he was no match for the enemy. But David knew where strength is found. Courage is not the absence of fear—it is refusing to give in to it.

Read what David wrote and explain the connection between prayer, praise, and courage.

Psalm 28:6–8

Psalm 138:3, 7–8

Memory Verse

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
Psalm 27:1 ESV

Think it over . . .

What light does God want to shed on my circumstances? Do I look at what everyone else sees? Do I see what God sees?

Day Four – An Accurate View of Giants

Read 1 Samuel 17:40–47.

Day 41. Goliath pulled his nine-foot-six-inch frame out of bed and got ready for work. He had a giant breakfast, put on his 125-pound suit of armor, grabbed his helmet and oversized spear, and lumbered out of his tent. Just another day for a giant. Shout the usual taunts, violate a little more territory, and be back to camp in time for lunch. But on this particular morning, while Saul's men hang back, a fresh-faced young man moves toward the giant. *This battle is over before it even begins*, Goliath thought to himself. It was the only thing he got right that day.

1. Everything about Goliath was intended to demoralize and intimidate the army of Israel. He dominated the battle. He dictated the terms. That is, until David arrived. Why was David unfazed by Goliath's threats?
 - a. Perspective is everything. Saul's men couldn't get beyond Goliath's size. David saw the physical giant also, but his focus was on the King of the universe, mighty in power, not to be trifled with. You don't defy the God of Israel and get away with it!

Because David habitually kept a sense of awe for God and His glory, that's the lens he looked through when a trifling giant came along. Where and in what way did David acquire his perspective? How can you develop a perspective like David's?

2. How to spot a giant: (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Giants are belligerent and loud (verse 8). _____
 - b. Giants distort truth (verses 8, 26: “servants of Saul” vs “armies of the living God”). _____
 - c. Giants are liars (verse 9: “we will be your slaves”). _____
 - d. Giants relentlessly harass (verse 16). _____
 - e. Giants threaten and intimidate (verse 44). _____
 - f. Giants... (add your own to the list) _____

3. A giant can be anything that drains your faith or challenges what you know and believe about God. When you find yourself facing a giant, what does God want you to remember?

Isaiah 54:17

Zechariah 4:6

2 Timothy 1:7

Memory Verse

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
 The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
 Psalm 27:1 ESV

Think it over . . .

What fears tend to fester in my thoughts? Today I will stay focused on the Lord by . . .

Day Five – Courage Breeds Courage

Read 1 Samuel 17:48–58.

David went out to fight Goliath—not to get rich, or get a wife, or make a name for himself—but so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel who saves.

1. It’s been said that life is 10% what happens and 90% how you respond. Think about that when a giant is towering over you. Are you facing an impossible problem or are you staring at a great opportunity to make God known? What inspiration can you draw from David’s example?

**“Courage is not simply one
 of the virtues.
 It is the form of every virtue
 at the testing point.”**

**C.S. Lewis
 Weight of Glory**

2. Do you find yourself digging more into God’s Word and prayer when you are facing a giant? Why or why not?

3. Share a favorite verse that you go to when you need to draw courage from the Lord.

Memory Verse

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
 The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
 Psalm 27:1 ESV

Think it over . . .

Is someone I know presently going through a fearful experience? In what way can I be light at the end of the tunnel for them?

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 5 – Authentic Friendship

Abbey D'Agostino never imagined doing the right thing would cause such a stir. It was one of the most celebrated moments of the Rio Olympics. The 5000-meter runner reached out to help a competitor who tumbled and they both went down. Both were injured but instead of scrambling to finish her own race, they helped each other cross the finish line. Kindness and spirit at its finest.

The same could be said of Jonathan. He didn't think twice about doing the right thing. He was a man of courage and selfless faith. People loved him and he loved people. It's easy to see why David and Jonathan became inseparable friends.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover Jonathan's role in God's plan to make David king.
- Consider what it takes to build enduring friendships.
- Examine how we respond to success and cope with adversity.
- Pray honest prayers that instill trust and lead to authentic friendship.

Ice Breaker

What qualities do you appreciate most in a friend?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 18:1–19:10** and **20:1–42** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details. Our focus will be on David and Jonathan's friendship.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Friends for Life

Read 1 Samuel 18:1–16 and 19:1–10.

After David's victory over Goliath, Saul brought him into full-time service. For a brief time, David was everyone's favorite, including Saul. But not for long.

1. If you've ever met someone and hit it off right away, you can relate to the way Jonathan and David's friendship began. Their souls were knit—they just *clicked*. Jonathan was, by some estimates, at least ten years older than David. What might they have had in common?

2. The pledge of friendship (covenant) between Jonathan and David was a recognition of being equals, united in heart and bound to look out for each other. But at this point in time, no one viewed David as Jonathan's equal. Only Jonathan could have initiated this friendship.
 - a. Put yourself in Jonathan's shoes. He was a celebrated hero and a favorite son. In both categories, he could have viewed David as a rival. Instead, what character traits and qualities of friendship do you see in Jonathan?

 - b. Put yourself in David's shoes. He is about 18 years old. Most of his life experience has been in the field with sheep. After killing Goliath, David is an instant celebrity who finds himself commanding an elite troop (verse 18:5) before he is technically old enough to join Saul's army! In what ways would Jonathan's friendship be so beneficial for David?

Some things become more significant over time. In retrospect, Jonathan's gifts to David were symbolic of who would be king. Was Jonathan aware of David's anointing? We don't know. But in the moment, Jonathan's selfless generosity conveyed to David that he had a friend for life.

3. David would need a trusted friend soon enough. Saul convinced himself that David was scheming for his throne and became obsessed with eliminating him.
 - a. David's sudden fame came with advantages and perils and he "*behaved himself wisely*" through it all (1 Samuel 18:5, 14–15, 30). In your observation, what stands out most about David's conduct and attitude during this time?

 - b. Praise is like a refining furnace that tests what's in the heart (Proverbs 27:21). If it fuels pride or resentment, we're not ready for promotion. David wasn't the only one being tested by the people's praise. What did it bring to the surface in Saul's heart?

Saul tried to remove David every way he could think of. Spear throwing. That first time was presumably followed with a lame excuse (“I don’t know what got into me”). Then Saul demoted him from an elite troop (verse 5) to ordinary field command (verse 13). Saul offered to make David his son-in-law for an impossibly high, extremely dangerous dowry price. And in all these veiled attempts, David *behaved himself wisely*.

4. When Saul’s murder-by-marriage scheme failed, he openly declared that David must die. Briefly describe how Jonathan intervened for David.

5. Saul put his son in a difficult position and Jonathan handled it with courage and wisdom. He did not betray his friend and he approached his father with respect. With the example of Jonathan’s conversation in mind, what do we learn about the power of our words?

Proverbs 12:18

Proverbs 15:1–2

Colossians 4:6

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
Proverbs 17:17 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Consider what the phrase “*at all times*” conveys about friendship. In what way is it beneficial? In what way is it a responsibility?

Day Three – Uncommon Loyalty

Read 1 Samuel 20:30–42.

Imagine being at Saul’s family dinner that night. Saul was raging again, and this time Jonathan could not reason with him. There is no longer any doubt in Jonathan’s mind that his father means to kill David.

1. Jonathan was a friend who had nothing to gain and everything to lose, but he didn’t see it that way. In what ways did Jonathan show that he was David’s loyal friend?
 - a. Think of a time when you have felt pressure to cut and run in a friendship. If you had it to do over, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?

2. We use the term *friend* loosely to describe all sorts of relationships. But one defining trait stands out, front and center, in Jonathan and David’s friendship: “May the Lord be between you and me” (1 Samuel 20:23, 42).

Any friendship we have will not be of lasting value without Christ being at the center of it. The Bible says, “Can two walk together without agreeing on the direction?” (Amos 3:3 NLT).

- a. Name one friend who consistently points you to God by their life and conversation. In what way?

 - b. What are some practical ways we can be a friend who points others to Jesus through our life and conversation?
-
3. “May the Lord be between you and me” means: (Check all that apply)
 - a. I will lift you up and be there for you. (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10) _____
 - b. I give you permission to sharpen my rough edges. (Proverbs 27:17) _____
 - c. I will keep confidence with you. (Proverbs 11:13) _____
 - d. I will look out for you and seek your best. (Philippians 2:3–4) _____
 - e. Add your own thoughts to the list _____

Memory Verse

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
Proverbs 17:17 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What will it require to cultivate this kind of friendship in terms of . . . availability . . . accountability . . . and transparency?

Day Four – A Brother for Adversity

Read 1 Samuel 23:14–18.

It's been said that a true friend is someone who comes in when the whole world has gone out. Jonathan was certainly that kind of friend for David. After parting with Jonathan in the field, David was on the run for his life.

The story picks up some months later. David is a fugitive. Innocent men have been slaughtered for aiding him. With nowhere to go, he ended up in Gath (Goliath's hometown), where he faked insanity so the Philistines wouldn't string him up. Instead, they kicked him out and he ended up in a cave. His family joined him (what choice did they have?) and so did 400 men. He's considered an outlaw, but when the Philistines attack a vulnerable Jewish town, David protects them. They tell Saul where he is (who can blame them?) and David is forced out into the wilderness.

1. Jonathan believed something that Saul refused to accept—that David would be king, by God's will and with his friend's blessing. At this point, Jonathan may have been more confident of that than David. It was a risk for Jonathan to go find David, but that's what friends do. Note what stands out to you about their conversation and why it would be meaningful to David.
“Fire is the test of gold. Adversity is the test of strong men.”
Seneca
2. Jonathan helped David find his strength in God. He encouraged his faith. When you need a listening friend and prayer, are you more likely to initiate that conversation or do you wait for a friend to reach out to you? Explain why.
3. Authentic friendship is not one-sided. We all have times when we need a listening friend, and times when we need to be the listening friend. Which role is easier for you, and why?

Memory Verse

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
Proverbs 17:17 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Is there a friend who has been there for you through a time of adversity? Tell them so.

Day Five – Show Me Your Friends

What a friend Jonathan was to David! He was a brave and big-hearted man who would have made an excellent king, but that was not God’s plan and he knew it. No question about it, David would not have become the man he was without the strong, godly influence of his friend Jonathan.

Authentic friendship doesn’t happen overnight, but all it takes is a spark to get it started. It was C.S. Lewis who said, “Friendship is born the moment one person says to another, ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one.’”

Friendship can start easily enough, but it won’t grow without care and feeding. Jonathan put himself out there to find David and strengthen his hand in God. We can all take that lesson to heart in our relationships. Why not make a plan to do that with two friends this week?

1. A longtime friend: _____
2. A relatively new friend: _____

Memory Verse

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
Proverbs 17:17 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Are my friends stronger—or weaker—in Christ after spending time with me?



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 6 – Authentic Mercy

For this session, we are going to need a working definition of mercy. You might be familiar with this simple and accurate description: Mercy is *not getting* what you deserve. That's what mercy looks like on the receiving end. Here's the way it looks from the giver's position: Mercy refrains from punishing an offender even though it's within your power to do so.

He didn't know it at the time, but David's escape into the wilderness ended up being the next decade of his life. Israel's hero became the hunted, homeless and alone. But not for long. Word got out and everyone in debt, discontented, or distressed flocked to him like sheep.

Goals for This Session:

- Discover why David's story points to God's plan of salvation.
- Consider the connection between suffering and virtue.
- Examine how we navigate through conflict and broken trusts.
- Pray honest prayers that lead to authentic mercy and reconciliation.

Ice Breaker

"I don't get mad. I get even." "Success is the best revenge." "He had it coming to him."
What other phrases can you think of that reflect how our culture views revenge vs. mercy?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 24:1–22** and **26:1–25** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Cutting Corners

Read 1 Samuel 24:1–15.

David refuses to kill Saul when he has the opportunity to do so.

1. When Saul came into the cave, David’s men took it as a sign from the Lord. What did they tell David?
 - a. Psalm 54 sheds some light on this strange scene. Prior to this, some men told Saul where David was hiding (1 Samuel 23:19–20). David was surrounded and narrowly escaped. After that incident, David wrote Psalm 54, asking God to vindicate him. In the opinion of his men, what was God giving David permission to do?
 - b. David’s men saw opportunity for revenge, but David would not allow them to kill Saul. What did David see this as an opportunity to do?
 - c. It is tempting to take the first and fastest way out of conflict. Have you ever been hard pressed between vindicating yourself or trusting God to vindicate you? What did you learn through it? What, if anything, would you do differently?
2. When Saul was a safe distance away, David called to him. Until now, David and Saul have had no words since the day David fled for his life. Jonathan defended him; innocent men were slaughtered for helping him; but for the first time David is free to confront Saul himself. Look back over David’s speech to Saul (verses 8–15) and briefly describe how he . . .
 - a. Showed respect:
 - b. Was humble:
 - c. Declared loyalty:
 - d. Defends his integrity:
 - e. Seeks resolution:
3. What stands out most to you about David’s speech? Briefly share why.

4. Have you ever tried to do God's work for Him? When we are tempted to take matters into our own hands, how does God's Word encourage us to hold steady?

Psalm 118:5–6, 8

Psalm 27:13–14

Psalm 37:7–8

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

You, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

How does God's compassion and mercy protect me? In what way does God's compassion and mercy stretch me?

Day Three – Sorry, Not Sorry

Read 1 Samuel 24:16–21.

Saul responds to David with tears.

1. How does Saul react to David's speech? What stands out to you most about Saul's response?
2. Saul's remorse seems genuine, but it was short-lived. In your observation, does his response fall short of a sincere apology? If so, in what way?

3. Offering a sincere apology means: (Check all that apply)

- a. Remorse: I regret that I ... _____
- b. Responsibility: I was wrong for ... _____
- c. Repentance: I want to change how I ... _____
- d. Restitution: I need to make it right by _____
- e. Request: I am asking you please _____
- f. Add your own thought to the list _____

4. Saul's request, "Swear now to me by the Lord . . ." is similar to the pledge between David and Jonathan. What is Saul acknowledging to David?

- a. David promises Saul, just as he had with Jonathan. But something was different about the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:15, 42). What was missing from Saul's request, and why?

5. David sought reconciliation. Saul was focused on protecting his name and family future. For the time being it was enough and Saul went home. It was an uneasy truce and David knew it.

Something rises in us when we've been wronged. Like David, we have a choice to make. We don't control the outcome and we cannot change what's been done. How must we respond?

Romans 12:17–19

1 Thessalonians 5:15

1 Peter 3:9–12

Memory Verse

You, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

Am I holding on to an offense or nursing a wound? What am I willing to do to pursue peace?

Day Four – Famous Last Words

Read 1 Samuel 26:1–25.

David spares Saul's life a second time.

1. David's nephew, Abishai, volunteers to go with him into Saul's camp. Abishai wants to kill Saul with his own spear (wouldn't that be poetic justice?) but David doesn't permit it. Is David being foolish? What is he waiting for?
2. David has harsh words for Abner (Saul's uncle and the general of his army). Why would David taunt Abner? Saul was convinced that David was out to harm him, and others fed into that lie (1 Samuel 24:9; 26:19). Is David answering false accusations from Abner? In what way?
3. How does Saul react to David? What stands out to you the most about his response this time?
4. David knew (all too well) how Saul's emotions could flip like a nickel. Saul's promise doesn't fall on deaf ears, but David keeps his distance. Note how David responds (verses 22–24) to Saul's request for him to come home.
**Some things,
you just can't fix.
Have mercy.
God does.**
5. Mercy isn't blind to guilt. It makes no excuse for sin. But mercy does not punish. Sometimes mercy is what you need to repair and restore what's broken. Sometimes mercy is what you need to accept what is, and move forward.

David and Saul would never see each other again, though neither man knew it at the time. Can you see God's mercy over *both men* in their last words to each other? In what way?

Memory Verse

You, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

When is it most difficult for you to show mercy? When is it most necessary?

Day Five – Praying Your Troubles

Saul did everything in his power to kill David, and David did everything in God’s power not to retaliate. Prayer was the only weapon David raised against Saul and he was not passive in praying his troubles.

1. “Save me, O God, by Your name, and **vindicate** me by Your power” (Psalm 54:1).
 - a. Briefly define *vindicate*, or give a practical example of how to trust God to do this.

2. “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise” (Psalm 57:7).
 - a. Briefly explain or give a practical example of what it means to steadfastly pray through our troubles.

3. Do you find yourself digging more into God’s Word and prayer in order to show mercy? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

You, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

How has God been patient and merciful toward you this week? Think of at least two examples.



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 7 – Authentic Despair

As the old tale goes, the devil cleaned out his workshop to sell old tools. They were spread on a table, sharpened and labeled—hatred, envy, lust, gossip, lying—and more besides. Off to one side, a smooth little tool so worn the label was faded: *despair*. But it was priced the highest. Asked why, the devil replied, “It’s the most useful tool—no one even knows it’s mine! I use it to pry open doors tightly bolted against the other tools. Once inside, I can use any tool that suits me.”

David reached a crisis point. Nearly ten years he waited, but nothing changed. Even in the howling wilderness, you run out of places to hide. “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?”

Goals for This Session:

- Discover how David’s years in exile finally come to an end.
- Consider how God works all things together for good to accomplish His plan.
- Examine the impact that our choices have in the lives of others.
- Pray honest prayers that lead to deeper trust and hold steady with hope.

Ice Breaker

What is the longest you’ve ever waited to achieve a goal?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 27:1–12** and **1 Samuel 29:1–30:20** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God’s ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Losing Heart and Losing His Way

Read 1 Samuel 27:1–12.

It may have been that second encounter with Saul. Did David play and replay it through his mind? David looks at his future and begins to think nothing good can come from this.

1. David was at a low point when he decided to move to Philistine territory. When you consider what any person might experience in prolonged trial, what factors are influencing David's decision?
 - a. The pressure of what others are trying to force upon him (1 Samuel 26:19–20) works itself into David's thinking. In what way?
 - b. "Then David said to himself . . ." When we listen to self-talk, we are liable to get poor advice. Describe what is going through David's mind and how it gets him into trouble.
2. Prayer is conspicuously missing from David's decision-making in this chapter. Why do you think that is?
 - a. If you could sit down with David at this point, what would you say to him?
 - b. Put yourself in David's shoes. What would you need someone to say to you?

Consider the culture that David took his family, his army, and their families into. The Philistine nation was economically strong, had a superior military, and the most advanced technology of the time. Their gods were Dagon (god of nature, agriculture), Ashtaroth (goddess of fertility), and Baalzebub (god of spirits). Simply put, they worshipped environment, sensuality, and spiritualism.

3. For the first time in years, David gets relief from Saul's constant harassment. But at what cost? Describe what David ends up doing and the consequences of his decision.
 - a. How might David have tried to rationalize his sin and justify his behavior?

With so many people to take care of, David wanted something that felt more like home. Ziklag was originally given to Israel but never occupied (Joshua 15:31). In David's time, only the land Israel actually possessed was considered "the presence of the Lord." But Ziklag was borderline territory, inhabited by unbelievers. David was living on the fringes, physically and figuratively, away from the presence of the Lord.

4. Sometimes a believer may choose to live outside of God's will but still want something that feels like home. It's certainly possible to go to church, sing the songs, attend the functions, but have no intention of giving up a sinful habit or secret indulgence. When life presses in and we're tempted, like David, to live on the fringes, what does God's Word tell us?

1 John 2:15–16

Romans 12:2 and 13:11–14

Ephesians 5:11–16

5. Losing heart can make us vulnerable to losing our way. Have you ever been tempted to give up on trusting God and throw in the towel? Briefly share how God brought you through it.

- a. Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

When I am at a low point and life feels dismal, what do I need to remind myself of about God?

Day Three – A Problem of His Own Making

Read 1 Samuel 29:1–11.

After years of living in caves and looking over his shoulder, it must have felt good for David and his men to settle their families and live like ordinary people do. David had hired himself out as a mercenary to Achish and deceived him into thinking he was a traitor. So far, it worked to David's advantage but that was about to change.

1. David had been with Achish for a year when the Philistines planned a major attack on Israel. Read the opening details of this account in **1 Samuel 28:1–2**. What problem has David created for himself?
 - a. David and Achish had a relationship based on deceit and convenience. Consider what each man stood to gain—and lose—from the other.

2. How do the other Philistine commanders react to David's presence? In what way do they end up helping David?

3. By allying himself with Achish in the first place, David had painted himself into a corner. But God is faithful, even when we aren't (2 Timothy 2:13) and David was spared from going to battle against his own people.
 - a. What does it say about David (and us) that his own efforts to escape a problem led to bigger problems?

 - b. When we are tempted to take a shortcut out of trouble (maybe even now) instead of listening to self-talk, what do we need to *preach to ourselves*?

1 Corinthians 10:12–13

2 Corinthians 12:9

James 1:2–4

Memory Verse

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

Will I choose to wait *with God* or run ahead on my own?

Day Four – The Way Out of Trouble

Read 1 Samuel 30:1–6.

David was relieved to be going home. He must have felt like a man who just dodged two bullets. He avoided war against Israel without being forced to blow his cover. David surely would have recognized God’s hand in delivering him out of that predicament. “That was close,” he may have thought to himself, “Thank You, Lord, for getting me out of trouble.” But the way out of trouble is never as easy as the way in.

1. David’s relief was short-lived. From a distance, they saw smoke and it wasn’t from cooking fires. What did David and his men come home to find?

2. David experienced crushing pressure on all sides. Anxiety for his own family, personal guilt, and his responsibility to 600 distraught and angry men. This tragedy is hard for us to fathom. Everything he is, everything he knows, everything he has, is on the line.

Before you answer this question, take time to really consider the alternatives. What did David do, and why was it the right decision?

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

C.H. Spurgeon

3. “Strengthened himself in the Lord” means*: (Check all that apply)

- a. David gave himself a pep talk. _____
- b. David submitted to chastening, confessed his sin, asked forgiveness. _____
- c. David prayed his sorrows and pleaded his case. _____
- d. David took hope and sought help and looked to God for salvation. _____
- e. Add your own thought to the list _____

* Patterned from Psalm 38

Memory Verse

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

While I am asking God to meet my urgent need (*Hurry, God!*) what is He asking of me?
Lord, I will not delay to ...

Day Five – God Is Good, All the Time

Read 1 Samuel 30:7–20.

David calls for Abiathar the priest. He is done with self-talk and asks for the Lord's guidance. God assures David that he will overtake the Amalekites and that *all will be recovered*.

1. What runs through your mind while you're tracking down marauders who kidnapped your family, stole your belongings, and burned your home to the ground? Between thoughts of getting loved ones back safely and pushing your body to the edge of injury and exhaustion, there wouldn't be much talk. But surely David prayed and *preached to himself* along the way.

Psalm 34:6–7, 17

Psalm 56:8–9

2. Briefly describe how events unfold for David to defeat the Amalekites and recover all that was taken. Do you see God's hand in the details? In what way?
3. We've seen the Amalekites before. They ruthlessly attacked Israel, going after the vulnerable and exhausted ones who were straggling behind (Deuteronomy 25:18). They were looters and thieves who never missed a chance to plunder God's people.

There are still "Amalekites" who take advantage wherever they can to steal and destroy. By that, we mean the pressure to give in or give up when we most need to *look up* and stand on what is true. When your faith is being ransacked, what does God want you to know?

1 Peter 5:6–10

Jude 1:20–25

Hebrews 12:1–3

4. God is good, all the time. Just ask David. He knew that God was and would *always* be his help and his deliverer. “I would have lost heart,” David wrote, “unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13).

When David penned that verse he wasn’t sitting in a recliner writing prose for a greeting card. He knew a thing or two about caves and pits and miry bogs. **Believe** is a sturdy, stabilizing word. There is nothing wish-upon-a-star about it. It is also a nurturing word, used to depict the comfort and protection a child would find in the arms of a parent.

What similarities do you see between Psalm 27:13 and Paul’s declaration in Romans 8:28? Why are both scriptures so comforting?

Memory Verse

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

The Lord takes thought for me. Do I take thought for others?
How might God use me to encourage someone else?

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 8 – Authentic Worship

Pop Quiz: Top artists to leave a lasting mark on music in the past sixty years . . . Who's on your list? Taylor? Bono? Beatles? Elvis? Go back farther . . . Armstrong? Gershwin? Go farther . . . Beethoven? Go back 3,000 years and there's one name: David. The sweet psalmist of Israel.

Goals for This Session:

- Discover how David ushered in a new era of worship.
- Consider why it was David's cherished desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem.
- Examine what keeps worship from becoming a formality.
- Pray honest prayers that cultivate reverence and joy in authentic worship.

Ice Breaker

"We worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship." Would you agree with this description of our culture, even in the church? Why or why not?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **2 Samuel 6:1–23** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

In our last session, David's exile was nearly over. Three days after returning to Ziklag, David got word that Saul and Jonathan died in battle against the Philistines. David's grief went deep and his eulogy in their honor became part of Israel's collective memory (2 Samuel 1:17–27).

At God's direction, David went to Hebron. The tribe of Judah anointed him king, but Abner put Saul's surviving son over the remaining eleven tribes. For seven and a half years, God blessed David's limited reign. When Abner saw he was on the losing side, he negotiated a position for himself and switched loyalties to David. At 37, David became king over all Israel.

David's first step to unite his fractured nation was to establish a new capital. He captured territory promised to Israel since the days of Joshua and renamed the city Jerusalem. As long as David ruled only Judah, the Philistines left him alone; but when he became king of the whole nation, the Philistines attacked. David was ready and with God's go-ahead, he pushed back hard. The enemy retreated so fast they left their idols behind, which David and his men burned. But the Philistines came back for more. This time, God gave David a different strategy: come from behind and wait for the sound of wind in the treetops—God's signal that He was going out before them. It was a decisive victory, and Israel regained territory that Saul lost in his last battle. "The Lord did it!" David exclaimed. "He burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" (2 Samuel 5:20 NLT) And indeed He did!

Day Two – Right Motives, Wrong Methods

Read 2 Samuel 6:1–11.

David was firmly established in Jerusalem, but something was missing. The covenant David made when he was anointed king (2 Samuel 5:2–3) was more than a swearing-in ceremony; it was a solemn promise before God to uphold God's law and shepherd the people wisely.

1. The ark was the holiest symbol of God's presence with Israel. The Lord spoke to Moses from the mercy seat and gave instructions for leading the people (Exodus 25:22). With that in mind, what does it say about David's motive, as Israel's new king, to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem?

As a man after God's heart, what was David's express desire?

Psalms 25:4–5

Psalms 27:4

Q: Why was the ark at the house of Abinadab?

A: When Eli was priest (and Samuel just a boy) the ark was at Shiloh. Eli's wicked sons took the ark from the tabernacle and carried it, like a good luck charm, into battle and lost it to the Philistines. God abandoned the tabernacle at Shiloh and let it be destroyed (Jeremiah 7:12–14 and Psalm 78:60–61). The Philistines returned the ark and eventually it was sent to Abinadab's house where it remained in obscurity (for about 75 years) until David brought it to Jerusalem.

2. It's been said that those who forget the mistakes of history are bound to repeat them. Sadly, that's what happened on David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

Compare details from an earlier account with the ark. Note similarities between the method David used and the previous consequences of mishandling the ark.

- a. The Philistines put the ark of God on a new cart to transport it (1 Samuel 6:7).
 - b. Some men looked in the ark and were struck dead for lack of reverence (1 Samuel 6:19).
 - c. The people were devastated and afraid to have the ark near them (1 Samuel 6:19–21).
3. David's anger was a response to his confusion and shock when God acted differently than he expected or understood. The ease he felt in approaching God was shaken and he abandoned the ark for the time being. Is there a lesson here for us?

- a. "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" David was stunned. It was one thing to see God "*break out*" against the enemy (2 Samuel 5:20) but what did the catastrophe with Uzzah show David about good intentions and God's holiness?
- b. David should have known better . . . right? But step into Israel's history and David's quick approach begins to look familiar.

The ark was treated as a national relic, stored away and forgotten. During his 40-year reign, Saul's attention to spiritual matters was casual and careless. God's prophet, Samuel (who was respected, but not always listened to) had been gone for nearly a decade. Fair to say, at 37, David's heart was strong after God but he had some essential lessons to learn. David was God's man to usher in a new era of worship, but seeking God's presence will always require coming to God on His terms.

In what ways can we be guilty of seeking shortcuts into God's presence without proper regard for His holiness?

- c. Think about it. What is the difference between *being afraid* of God and *fearing* God?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

Take five minutes to proclaim (declare, acknowledge) to God something of His greatness. Not just in general—*be specific*.

Day Three – The Right Thing in the Right Way

Read 2 Samuel 6:12–19.

Leaving the ark with Obed-Edom was a relief for David, but it ended up being a blessing for this ordinary man and his family. This part of the story reads like a passing detail until David takes notice, but God is in the details.

1. For all the years that the ark was kept in Abinadab's house, there is no particular mention of blessing. His son was ordained to maintain the ark (1 Samuel 7:1) and he fulfilled his duty. But what a difference three months made for Obed-Edom! The presence of the Lord in his home was an honor that consistently brought blessing.
 - a. What causes worship to become a formality (going through the motions) for some and an energizing encounter for others?
 - b. When formality starts to creep in, what does God want you to remember about worship and how you express devotion to Him? Make your answer personal and specific.

John 4:24

Mark 12:30

2. Obed-Edom’s family continued to serve after the ark was moved to Jerusalem. He and his sons and grandsons, 62 in all, served as gatekeepers (caretakers) in the Lord’s house (1 Chronicles 26:8, 15).

Worshipping God by serving practical needs is celebrated in song: “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Psalm 84:10 NIV).

Can our ordinary work be properly viewed as a form of worship? In what way?

Galatians 6:9–10

Philippians 2:14–15

Colossians 3:23–24

3. During those three months, David had time to think, pray, and learn what went wrong. Where did he find the answer? He went home and read his Bible! He probably combed through the books of Moses (especially Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy) to educate himself.

Note what David learned about authentic worship, as described in 1 Chronicles 15:2–3, 11–14.

“So David went and brought up the ark of God . . .” (1 Samuel 6:12).

The detailed account (1 Chronicles 15) paints a vivid picture of this event for us. A joyous parade of roughly 1,000 people accompanied the ark on the ten-mile route to Jerusalem. It included:

- ◆ King David
- ◆ Zadok and Abiathar (Head Priests)
- ◆ 868 Levite representatives
- ◆ 7 trumpeters to go ahead of the ark
- ◆ A lead worship team (3 singers with cymbals: Heman, Asaph, and Ethan)
- ◆ 14 musicians (8 harps, 6 lyres)
- ◆ 1 music director (Chenaniah)
- ◆ 2 gatekeepers (including Obed-Edom)
- ◆ Plus numerous elders and captains (government and military officials)

Music was so important to David that he appointed a permanent worship team, led by Asaph, to invoke, thank, and praise the Lord daily in the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 16).

4. David’s new understanding found its way into how he would worship God. Isn’t that what we all aim for? The more we know and obey the Word of God, the more we will love and worship the God of the Word.

Can you recall a significant moment or event when reading God’s Word caused a light to go on in your understanding of Him? Briefly explain. Share the specific verse if you’d like.

5. When the ark was placed in the tabernacle, burnt offerings and peace offerings were made. David blessed the people and distributed gifts of food to everyone.
- a. A burnt offering was a voluntary sacrifice that was entirely consumed on the altar. An animal of prime value was killed and the lifeblood poured on the altar to atone for sin. The rest of the sacrifice was burned until nothing remained and it was accepted as a pleasing aroma to the Lord (Leviticus 1:9).

For those who participated it was an act of consecration, giving themselves completely to God, holding nothing back, in order to please God.

Because Jesus fulfilled what the burnt offering pointed to, we no longer bring a sacrifice to atone for sin (Romans 3:23–25). But the principle of *consecration* still applies. How can our lives be a pleasing aroma to God?

“God delights to have His people worship and praise Him and bring Him their best.

**Warren Wiersbe
Real Worship**

Ephesians 5:2

2 Corinthians 2:14

- b. The peace offering was followed with a festive meal to celebrate the joy of forgiveness and restored fellowship with God. Singing and thanksgiving were a big part of this, so David composed a song for this special day. You can find it in 1 Chronicles 16:7–36 and the opening lines are also in our memory verse.

We suggest you read through it and circle verbs that indicate expressions of worship—not as a homework assignment but just to see *authentic worship* in action. Add what you find to the list here.

| *give thanks* | *call upon* | *make known* | *sing* |

Memory Verse

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

How frequently do I gather with believers to proclaim His greatness?

Why is authentic worship in action so important? How does this energize our faith?

Day Four – Her Father’s Daughter

Read 2 Samuel 6:20–23.

After the public celebration was ended, David went home to bless his household. There would be joy in sharing a meal and retelling the day’s events to his own family. But Michal was waiting on the porch for him and it was obvious she wasn’t happy.

1. When she was young and in love, Saul had tried to use Michal as a snare for David; now, at a spiritual high point in David’s life, it seems the devil did too. How did Michal speak to David and what was she accusing him of?
 - a. Michal’s scorn wasn’t suddenly caused by a look out the window; it was a slow burn. Given their marriage history, what other factors would fuel Michal’s contempt?
2. David’s linen ephod was a simple white garment worn by ordinary priests—in fact, the priests who carried the ark and directed worship were dressed the same way (1 Chronicles 15:27). Nothing about David’s apparel or behavior fit Michal’s image of royalty. He was praising and rejoicing—she saw cavorting. Consider David’s response. What did he mean by:
 - a. “I will be even more undignified than this . . .”
 - b. “. . . as for the maidservants . . . by them I will be held in honor.”
3. Put yourself in Michal’s position. Rather than participate in worship that day, she observed and critiqued. What can we learn from Michal?
4. Put yourself in David’s position. He didn’t perform to impress. His worship was honest to God and appropriate for the occasion. What can we learn from David?

Memory Verse

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness.
Let the whole world know what He has done.
Psalm 105:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

What do I allow to hinder or hold me back from *letting the whole world know* what He has done?



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 9 – Authentic Repentance

In 1976, the Teton Dam in Idaho suddenly collapsed with no warning after an enormous rainfall filled the reservoir to the brim. No one suspected erosion below the waterline. But within hours a small breach became an unstoppable break in the three hundred and five-foot-high earthen dam. Floodwater swallowed everything in its path for miles around. Lives were lost and the damage was incomprehensible.

David was fifty years old. For twenty years, he ruled with God's blessing and the people's favor. His life was overflowing. No one detected the erosion, but everyone would see the collapse.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover where David's life took a wrong turn.
- Consider why spiritual growth and discipline must never be neglected.
- Examine and repair any fault lines and erosion in our own heart.
- Pray honest prayers of repentance that leads to renewal.

Ice Breaker

If you could repeat yesterday, name one thing you would do differently.

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **2 Samuel 11:1–12:15** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Erosion Below the Waterline

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–13.

As this episode opens, Israel is engaged in a prolonged conflict with Ammon. The battle turned decisively in Israel's favor, so the Ammonites fled to wait out an uneasy winter in their capital city of Rabbah. When it was time to resume battle, David sent Joab to finish the job.

1. Staying home was a clear departure from David's usual leadership. Over the years, one thing that inspired such loyalty among his men was that he fought *with* them—he didn't just send them to do the work. We saw this same quality in David when he led the people in bringing the ark to Jerusalem. If you could sum up this quality in one word, what would it be?
 - a. In your observation, what has happened in David's thinking? How has he made himself vulnerable to temptation?
 - b. Growth and discipline isn't something we just drift into, but complacency is. What will keep us pressing forward, even during seasons of rest?

Psalm 119:10–11, 32

Jeremiah 29:11–14

Proverbs 8:34–35

2. God will never leave us to fight temptation alone, with no way out (1 Corinthians 10:13), but it's on us not to blow past the warning flags. What red flags did David ignore?

The Bible does not soften the details, nor does it embellish them. From the palace rooftop, David saw Bathsheba. In those days, houses had a type of enclosure for bathing purposes. She would have been shielded from her neighbor's view but not from the palace terrace. Some speculate she was trying to catch the king's eye (that may be). David sent for her, she came to him, he lay with her, she went home. End of story (but it wasn't).

David is clearly the one in the hot seat throughout this narrative. Four verses tell the deed and the rest of the chapter details David's schemes to cover it up. That said, David did not sin alone. Men and women may process it differently, but we all find it easy to assign blame. (After all, this is Adam and Eve's fault, right?)

But God's Word instructs us—and not just by way of a passing reminder—to *decide* to live in a way that will not cause another believer to stumble or fall (Romans 14:12–13 NLT).

Briefly share some practical ways this would apply to yourself.

3. Uriah was no stranger to David; he was one of David’s “top thirty” (2 Samuel 23:39). This was an elite force going all the way back to the years when Saul was hunting David. Uriah was loyal to King David, but his deeper allegiance was to God.
 - a. Consider how Uriah’s devotion to God was likely due, in part, to David’s godly influence over the years. What does his response to David (verse 11) indicate about Uriah’s character?
 - b. Have you ever felt pressured by someone you highly respect, to compromise your faith? Without sharing specifics, what did you learn through it?
 - c. Ask yourself: Are my friends, family, and co-workers stronger—or weaker—in Christ after spending time with me?
4. How could David fall so far, so fast? We would like to think that walking with the Lord builds up an immunity to sin. Not so. As we grow in the Lord, we can *and should* sin less—but we never outgrow the capacity for sin.

Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 12:1–2

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What unguarded thoughts or desires are littering my heart?

Day Three – Conspiracy and Murder

Read 2 Samuel 11:14–27.

David brought Uriah home from the front, confident he had a perfect scheme. Uriah would enjoy his wife and David could get on with his life. But it didn't go according to plan. Trouble never does. Sin always takes us further than we intend to go.

1. Failing to break Uriah's resolve, David orders his execution. Such a thought would never even occur to David at the beginning of this mess. What factors appear to be driving his decisions?

Is this the same man who was conscience-stricken for cutting the corner of Saul's robe? David is so preoccupied with his life that he never once looks up. No prayers. No songs. No "saying in his heart" to the Lord. Do you hear it? Only silence. By end of this chapter, he won't even notice that, "the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

2. David's story is at such a low point we hardly recognize him. But he will be back. Meantime, his backsliding heart can teach us a thing or two about sin.

It seems that we Christians make two common mistakes about sin. Both are wrong, and both leave us vulnerable prey to the "roaring lion" that Peter warns about (1 Peter 5:8–9).

- a. **We think God tolerates sin the way people do.** We think the absence of punishment means that God is just looking the other way. Not so! God warns, "You thought I was altogether like you, but I will rebuke you" (Psalm 50:21).

David was the king. He was God's man. He was powerful and successful even while committing grievous sin. Is success always synonymous with God's approval? Why or why not?

- b. **We try to hide our sin from God, thinking He will pound an angry fist on us.** But when we come to God in authentic repentance and confess our sin, He forgives! God no longer holds our sin against us. *God doesn't forgive because He wants to be lenient with us—He forgives because Jesus paid the penalty for us* (Romans 8:1, 31–34).

David confessed his sin and the Lord put away his sin. "Have mercy on me, O God, because of Your unfailing love...blot out the stain of my sins...restore to me the joy of Your salvation..." (Psalm 51).

If David, who never got to see how God worked out his salvation, could rejoice in being forgiven, how much more should we?

Memory Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What attitude or habit am I tolerating that God wants to clear out?

Day Four – You Are the Man

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–15.

David tried to hide his sin and for almost a year, he did—at least on the outside. It was a long time to be estranged from God but David stubbornly remained silent. So God sent the prophet Nathan to get the conversation started.

1. Does this scene look familiar? A king, a prophet, and a strong rebuke from the Lord. Briefly describe what you recall about the confrontation between Samuel and Saul. (You may want to look back over Session 2, Authentic Obedience.)
2. One of David’s responsibilities as king was to hear cases and judge according to the book of the law (Deuteronomy 17:18–20). So Nathan presented David with a “case” in need of justice. What made Nathan’s approach so wise?
3. “I have sinned against the Lord.” For the first time in a long time, David is being honest with himself and before God. Authentic repentance. In that moment, he was not a king, he was not a mighty warrior, he was not a man with a reputation to protect. He was a sinner, broken and bared. Pleading for grace and forgiveness.

“Bringing whatever we are and whatever we have done to the cross is the only thing that leads to wholeness.”

Here is good news. God never leaves truly confessed sin unforgiven. The devil wants you to forget that, but you have God’s Word on it!

Gail MacDonald

Psalm 32:3–5

1 John 1:8–9

Isaiah 55:6–7

Memory Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What am I ready to relinquish and trust God to make new?

Day Five – The Lord Has Put Away Your Sin

2 Samuel 12:13

So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”

Imagine the mercy those words poured into David’s guilty heart. He saw what he had become. He was an aggressor, a murderer, an adulterer, a conspirator, a liar, a hypocrite, an angry judge. He broke faith and violated his own honor with soldiers he willfully sent to death. And he was the king, bearing a greater weight of guilt and responsibility for what he had done. Guilty as charged.

But David prayed. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). The words are poetic, but hear David’s heart. *Here I am God, smashed to pieces. I’ve racked up so much guilt it’s crushing me. All that’s left of me is this broken pile of sin and shame.*

David asked to be forgiven. He wanted a new heart, another chance. Not because he deserved it but because God was willing to take him back. He is willing!

Memory Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

List five specific reasons why you are grateful for God’s forgiveness and steadfast love.

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 10 – Authentic Forgiveness

“Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea—until, of course, they have something to forgive.”
—C.S. Lewis

David was approaching sixty years old. His days of soldiering and wars and sleeping outside under wilderness stars were behind him, or so he thought. He’s at the point in time when you might expect a little peace, but that eludes him. There is trouble at home, family turmoil that is the product of his own making. Outwardly, life moved from one crisis point to the next. But David recognizes God is with him. He is still the king, a man after God’s own heart.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover how David responded to rebellion and rejection.
- Consider why forgiven people must be forgiving people.
- To examine how we respond to unjust and unkind treatment.
- To pray honest prayers that cultivates humility and freely forgives.

Ice Breaker

What’s your preferred language of apology?

A card...a gift...flowers...wash the dishes without being asked...none...I never need to apologize.

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **2 Samuel 16:1–14 and 19:15–30** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God’s ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Dark Days Ahead

Read 2 Samuel 16:1–14.

Absalom was a shrewd man. His scheme to oust his father and make himself king is detailed in chapter fifteen. Within four years, Absalom was in a position to stage a full-scale rebellion. When David learned what Absalom was doing, he took immediate action to protect his family and avoid innocent slaughter of Jerusalem's citizens. The encounters with Ziba and Shimei occurred when David was fleeing Jerusalem.

1. Consider David's state of mind during this evacuation. From the narrative and psalms that David wrote during this time, we get a sense of what he must have experienced. Briefly note some of what he was dealing with and how he prayed.

2 Samuel 15:23–31

Psalms 41:4–5

Psalms 55:12–18, 22

2. Ziba had been Saul's land manager and he maintained control after Saul's death. Until David searched for an heir and gave the land to Mephibosheth, it appears that Ziba had operated as de facto owner, even though he knew where Jonathan's son lived. When Ziba showed up with gifts, David questioned Mephibosheth's absence. What factors may have clouded David's judgment to take Ziba's explanation at face value?

- a. Put yourself in David's shoes. Have you ever been quick to react to a person or situation and regretted it later? What would be a wiser response?

Proverbs 18:13, 17

1 Corinthians 13:7

3. There will always be "Zibas" in life. By that, we mean the natural tendency to self-promote or put our own interests above (or at the expense of) others. What is God's desire for us?

1 Corinthians 13:4–5

Philippians 2:3–4

4. David's route took him through Bahurim, a town where pro-Saul forces were still strong. Describe David's encounter with Shimei.
- a. What stuns or stands out to you most about Shimei?
 - b. Why didn't David retaliate or respond to Shimei's attack? What does David's response reveal about his understanding of God?
 - c. Put yourself in David's shoes. Have you ever been on the receiving end of angry or mean-spirited treatment? If you had it to do over, would you change anything about your response? Why or why not?
5. There will always be "Shimeis" in life. By that, we mean encounters with viral behavior that demeans and demoralizes. Our natural tendency is to retaliate or let our own flesh rise when we've been maligned or shamefully treated. How do we respond in a God-honoring way?

Romans 12:17–19

Psalm 4:3–5

James 1:19–20

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!
Psalm 32:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

Every sin I bring out in the open, God will pardon and put out of sight.
When others are quick to remind me of my sin, Lord remind me of Your joy.

Day Three – Let it Go

Read 2 Samuel 19:15–23.

Shimei thought he had seen the last of King David when he fled Jerusalem. Now Shimei is first in line to repent.

1. Shimei was out of line for cursing* David (Exodus 22:28). Truth be told, he knew it while he was doing it—but David was vulnerable and it was easy to vent his anger and throw rocks from a distance. Today, he could have used social media instead of rocks. David’s response sets a positive example for us, but what can we learn from Shimei?

Proverbs 29:11

James 1:26

Colossians 3:8

2. As King David returns and crosses the Jordan, Shimei is there to meet him and ask for pardon. As you read this account, what evidence of a genuine apology do you see?
 - a. In your observation, what motivated Shimei to apologize?
 - b. Abishai still insisted that Shimei should be put to death, but David spared his life again. For Abishai, it was a matter of honor but David saw the big picture. This was a day for mending fences, not settling scores. Put yourself in David’s shoes. What would you do in a similar situation? What can we learn from David?
 - c. David told Shimei, “You shall not die.” In the Hebrew text, these are the same words Nathan said to David (2 Samuel 12:13). What did David see this as an opportunity to do?

* In the Hebrew text, *cursing* was more than obnoxious behavior; it expressed subversive intent with a desire for misfortune and great harm to come upon the one cursed.

David kept his word and Shimei was given a reprieve. After David's death, Solomon put Shimei under house arrest for his crime. He openly violated the terms of his agreement with Solomon and this time, he was executed (1 Kings 2:36–46).

3. Which of the following statements are true: (Check all that apply)

- a. Forgiveness requires an apology first. _____
- b. Forgiveness removes the consequences of sinful choices. _____
- c. Without forgiveness, relationships begin to die. _____
- d. Forgiveness gives up the right to retaliate, but doesn't condone sinful behavior. _____
- e. Add your own thought to the list _____

Memory Verse

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!
Psalm 32:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

I need to apologize to _____ and ask their forgiveness for _____

Day Four – Choosing Forgiveness

Read 2 Samuel 19:24–30.

Ziba showed up to help David and his family cross the Jordan on their way back to Jerusalem, but there is no indication that he brought Mephibosheth with him. But the disabled prince was determined to see David personally.

1. So much had changed since the last time David had seen Jonathan's son. What had David believed about Mephibosheth? Briefly describe their meeting.
 - a. After hearing Mephibosheth's side of the story, David restores a portion of Saul's estate back to him. Judging from his response, what was most important to Jonathan's son?

2. Ziba dealt falsely with Mephibosheth and it appears that David, with little time to sort it out, tried to find a quick and equitable solution to the matter. Mephibosheth's humble response reminds us of Hannah's. When you find yourself on the receiving end of false accusations or someone's jump-to-conclusion, what is your natural response? What would you like it to be?

3. Forgiveness is easier said than done. When we are on the receiving end of an offense, our nature reacts. If the offense is slight, we may only be annoyed ("they should know better"). But if the offense is wounding, it requires more prayer and forbearance to process it rightly without piling more sin onto the situation.

God's Word is always the wisest counsel in these matters. As believers, we are to restore (help to mend or put right) one caught in sin *humbly aware* of our own propensity to sin (Galatians 6:1). How? By approaching the situation in a spirit of gentleness. A gentle spirit is a virtue that stands between two extreme responses: uncontrolled, unjustified anger—or—not caring enough about truth to be angry at all.

Put yourself in Mephibosheth's spot. He was on the receiving end of Ziba's overt sin and David's unintentional offense. How was he able to navigate through that painful situation without making it worse?

"Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward."

C.S. Lewis

4. It's been said that holding a grudge doesn't make you stronger, it makes you bitter. And forgiving doesn't make you weak, it sets you free. Mephibosheth seems to have understood and practiced that. Maybe you can relate to Mephibosheth's experience. In what way?

Memory Verse

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!
 Psalm 32:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

When I say I forgive you, do I throw that sin away or tuck it away to dwell on later?

Day Five – Spread the Joy

Memory Verse

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!
Psalm 32:1 NLT

Think it over . . .

Who needs to know their sins can be traded in for joy and forgiveness? Who will I tell today?

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 11 – Authentic Legacy

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”—President Abraham Lincoln

If you’ve ever visited a presidential library, you know what a monumental task it is to bring together pictures, letters, and innumerable bits of memorabilia into an interesting display that gives an honest appraisal of the man, his life, and his service. We’ve attempted to do that with this series.

A president’s legacy aims to honor the man, but King David would have none of that. Better to finish with David’s own prayer. “O our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name! O Lord...make Your people always want to obey You. See to it that their love for You never changes” (1 Chronicles 29:13, 18 NLT).

Goals for this Session:

- Discover more about David’s legacy of prayer and praise.
- Consider how even unfulfilled desires work into God’s perfect plan.
- Examine how we respond when God says no.
- Pray honest prayers that lead to praise and hold steady with hope.

Ice Breaker

If you could write your own legacy in one sentence, what would it be?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Chronicles 17:1–27** and **1 Chronicles 29:1–20** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God’s ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – David’s Plan, God’s Answer

Read 1 Chronicles 17:1–15.

This first scene took place in the early days of David’s reign, shortly after he brought the ark to Jerusalem. That was a high point for Israel and for David personally, so building a house for the Lord seemed to be a natural next step.

1. David contemplates all that God has done. After years of exile, hardship and living in caves, the Lord has blessed David with a beautiful home and rest from his enemies. Briefly describe the conversation (here and in 2 Samuel 7:1–3) between David and Nathan. What did Nathan think of David’s idea?
 - a. According to Psalm 132:1–5, how important was this plan to David?

2. After a night of prayer, Nathan returns to tell David that his building permit has been denied. Briefly consider the Lord’s answer to David.
 - a. Did God mind dwelling in a tent? Why or why not?
 - b. How does God graciously remind David of all they have been through together?
 - c. What “I will” promises did God make?
 - d. What “I will not” promise did God make?

3. Sometimes God says no because He has a better plan. You may think of a time when the Lord didn’t permit you to go forward with a plan that seemed to be good and for His glory. In hindsight, you may or may not see why. Briefly share what that experience taught you about trusting God.

God will never deny us what is good without giving us what is best. We may not understand, and He does not always explain. When God says no, what does He want us to know?

Isaiah 55:8–11

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 11:33–36

2 Corinthians 12:8–9

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
Psalm 18:46 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Whatever else may shift and change, what is always true about the God of my salvation?

Day Three – Who Am I?

Read 1 Chronicles 17:16–27.

David's dream of building the temple was motivated by his sincere desire to honor the Lord. It was a good plan, but it wasn't *God's* plan. More accurately, David wasn't the *man* for the plan.

1. What is the first thing that David did in response to Nathan's message from the Lord?
 - a. When God changes your plans, what is likely to be your first response? What would you like it to be?
2. At this point in the narrative, we get the sense that David is blown away and needs time to absorb what the Lord, through Nathan the prophet, has told him. What stands out most to you about David's prayer?
 - a. What does David acknowledge about himself?
 - b. What does David praise God for?
3. God assured David that the desire in his heart was good (1 Kings 8:18), *but you won't be the one to build Me a house, and it won't be in your lifetime*. So, even as David praised God for what He promised to do in the future, it meant letting go of his own desire and the joy of actually seeing his dream come true.

Disappointment is a normal part of life, but it's like a seed. In a complaining heart, it grows discouragement. In a grateful heart, it grows a blessing in disguise. When disappointment threatens to uproot your faith, what will keep you growing and going forward?

Romans 8:28

Colossians 3:23–24

Hebrews 13:15–16

4. David counted his blessings instead of his disappointments. “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family that You have brought me this far?” Sometimes it’s good to sit before the Lord and count our blessings. Why not take time now to consider what God has done for you and finish this sentence...

Who am I, O Lord God, that You would...

Memory Verse

The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
Psalm 18:46 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Because God is my sure and solid Rock, how will I honor Him in every aspect of my life?

Day Four – God’s Plan, David’s Answer

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1–20.

David wasn’t allowed to build the Lord’s house, but he determined to help the one who would.

1. God said that David would have a son who would build the Lord’s house. A few years later, Solomon was born. Before Solomon’s twentieth birthday, David began to draw up plans and stockpile building materials (1 Chronicles 22:1–5).
 - a. David did more than develop a plan for the temple; he began to instill the vision in his son. Read 1 Chronicles 22:6–13 for what may have been the first time that David shared his dream with Solomon. Note how David encouraged his son.
 - b. David enlisted Israel’s leaders to help Solomon fulfill God’s call on his life. It would take more than one man to lead Israel to worship the Lord as He had instructed them to. These men were the influencers of their day. What did David say they would need to do first and always? (See 1 Chronicles 22:19)
 - c. Does this resonate with you? We all have a sphere of influence, whether few or many. As you think about your roles and responsibilities in life—those you lead, and those you serve and support—what do you want your legacy to be?

“When you serve your own generation faithfully, you also serve future generations.”

Warren Wiersbe

At the beginning of 1 Chronicles 29, the scene is already in progress. King David has called an assembly and hundreds of men fill the room—princes, governors, religious leaders, military men, high-level servants in David’s administration. And common citizens too...men who managed David’s property and took care of his livestock—blue-collar workers.

David is in his late sixties. He holds a blueprint in his frail hands—but use your imagination and you can still see him pull back hard on a slingshot, flash a sword, or pluck the strings on a lyre. His ruddy complexion is covered in lines and whiskers, but the spark in his eye can still set hearts on fire when he speaks. And that’s what he’s here to do on this day.

David has just finished sharing plans for the temple building project and the work that’s already begun. It wasn’t just material preparation. Now that the ark will have a permanent home, David restructured the Levitical duties of the priests. Twenty-four thousand caretakers will be assigned to twenty-four groups, each serving two weeks a year. There will be six-thousand appointed officers and judges. Four thousand gatekeepers (guards) serving on rotation.

David took special interest in the temple worship—everything from compiling a songbook to appointing choir directors and setting guidelines for the selection and training of musicians and singers. There will be four thousand musicians and choristers.

2. David poured himself tirelessly into the work, paving the way for his son to build the temple. But he wasn’t doing it for Solomon, or for himself. According to 1 Chronicles 28:19–20, where was David drawing strength and inspiration for the work? What did he declare to Solomon in the presence of all these witnesses?
3. Sometimes a Bible narrative can be like reading a text message—without the tone of voice or facial expressions, we may easily get the wrong impression. Was David proudly displaying his gifts and generosity for all to see and applaud? If Michal had been watching from the window, that’s probably what she would have seen. But we know David better than that. Just as David had danced before the Lord with all his might, now he says, “For the house of my God I have prepared with all my might” (1 Chronicles 29:2 NKJV).

As you read David’s dedication prayer and praise, keep in mind that David is standing where the temple *will* be someday. But he knows he will never see the magnificence of Solomon’s temple with his own eyes. But he can’t pour out enough gratitude and praise. What a legacy. Read it again and take your time. Pull out one or two phrases that you will commit to pray and praise God for this week.

Memory Verse

The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
Psalm 18:46 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Who needs to hear about the God of my salvation? Pray for them by name.

