



DAVID

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Small Group Guide: David, Week 14

Key Takeaways:

1. David's fugitive years, which lasted approximately 14 years, were among the most formative of his life. God used hardship, not comfort, to prepare David for leadership.
2. Bitterness is a poison. Saul's anger toward David grew so consuming that it overpowered even his love for his own son Jonathan. Bitterness left unchecked will always damage the people closest to us.
3. Jonathan chose loyalty to God's chosen king over loyalty to his own father and his own ambition. Choosing God's will above personal gain or family expectation is a mark of genuine faith.
4. David's lie to Ahimelech had devastating consequences for others. Our deception rarely affects only us; it places others in danger as well.

5. Proving we are right can become more important to us than doing what is wise. David was so focused on convincing Jonathan of the truth that he made no plan for what to do once he was proven right.
6. God uses our formative years, the hard and uncertain in-between seasons, to develop the character, dependence, and compassion we will need for what He has called us to do.

Discussion Questions:

Saul, Jonathan, and the Poison of Bitterness

1. **Have you ever witnessed bitterness in someone's life cause them to harm the people they loved most?** What did that look like?
2. **Pastor Allen compared bitterness to addiction, saying both can cause a person to prioritize the object of their obsession over the well-being of their own children.** Why do you think bitterness has that kind of power over a person?
3. **What are some early warning signs that bitterness may be taking root in your own heart?** What steps can someone take before it reaches the level it reached in Saul's life?
4. **Hebrews 12:15 warns that a root of bitterness can spring up and defile many people.** How have you seen bitterness spread beyond the individual who first harbored it?

Jonathan's Choice - God Over Family

1. **Pastor Allen described Jonathan as someone who "chose God over family" and "chose God's will over his personal ambition."** How difficult do you think that choice was for Jonathan? What do you think made him capable of making it?
2. **Is there a situation in your own life where honoring God required you to take a position that put you at odds with a family member or close friend?** How did you navigate that?
3. **Jonathan renewed his covenant with David and asked David to show faithfulness to his descendants when he became king.** What does this tell us about Jonathan's confidence in God's plan, even though he knew he would not personally benefit from it?
4. **What does Jonathan's example teach us about how to hold our own ambitions and desires loosely before God?**

Proving We Are Right vs. Doing What Is Wise

1. **Can you think of a time when being proven right cost you more than you expected?** What did that experience teach you?
2. **Why do you think human nature places such a high value on being right, sometimes even at the expense of our own well-being or the well-being of others?**
3. **What is the difference between standing for truth and being consumed with proving a point?** How do we know when we have crossed that line?
4. **If David had thought ahead, what might he have planned before setting his plan in motion?** What does

this tell us about the importance of thinking through the consequences of our decisions before we act?

The Consequences of Deception

1. **David likely did not foresee the consequences of his lie when he told it.** Does the fact that he could not have predicted the outcome reduce his responsibility for what happened? Why or why not?
2. **Proverbs 12:22 tells us that God detests lying lips but delights in those who tell the truth.** Pastor Allen suggested David would have been better off simply telling Ahimelech that he could not explain his situation but needed help. Is there a situation in your own life where saying less but saying it honestly would have been wiser than constructing a false explanation?
3. **Pastor noted that our lies rarely affect only us.** Who in your life could be placed in a difficult position by your choices to be less than truthful?
4. **How does fear typically drive us toward deception?** What does trusting God look like in a moment when telling the truth feels dangerous?

Formative Years and God's Shaping Process

1. **Looking back on your own life, what season of difficulty or uncertainty proved to be the most formative for your faith and character?** What did God develop in you during that time?
2. **David was anointed king at approximately 10 years old but did not take the throne until he was 30.** Why do you think God often places a significant gap between

the promise and the fulfillment? What is accomplished in that gap?

3. **Pastor Allen noted that the people who followed David during his fugitive years were themselves fugitives and outcasts.** What does it tell us about David, and about God, that David learned to lead and care for people that society had cast aside?
4. **Is there a season you are currently in that feels like a delay or a wilderness?** How might God be using it to prepare you for something ahead?

Practical Application:

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Examine your heart for bitterness.** Identify one relationship or situation where bitterness may have taken root. Take a specific step this week to address it, whether through prayer, a conversation, or seeking counsel.
2. **Practice honesty in a hard moment.** Identify one area of your life where you have been less than truthful with yourself or with someone else and take a step toward honesty, even if it is uncomfortable.
3. **Reflect on a formative season.** Spend time in prayer or journaling about a difficult season in your past. Ask God to show you what He was building in you during that time, and thank Him for it.
4. **Pause before proving your point.** This week, when you feel the urge to be proven right in a conversation or conflict, pause and ask yourself: "Is being right here

more important than being wise? What should I actually be planning or doing instead?"

5. **Honor a covenant.** Think of someone to whom you have made a commitment to; a promise, a pledge of loyalty, a covenant of friendship. Take a concrete step this week to honor that commitment.

Closing Prayer:

Father,

Thank You for Your Word and for David and Jonathan's example.

Reveal any bitterness in our hearts before it takes root and harms those we love. Give us courage to choose Your will above our own ambitions as Jonathan did. Grant us wisdom to consider the consequences of our words and decisions before we act. Help us trust You in whatever formative season we're walking through, believing You are shaping us for something greater and for Your glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: Chosen Before You Are Ready

Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Devotional: God anointed David as king long before David was prepared to rule. The gap between calling and fulfillment is not wasted time. It is formation time. Many believers receive a sense of God's direction for their lives and then grow frustrated when the reality of their circumstances does not match the promise. David spent roughly sixteen years between his anointing and his coronation. During those years, God was not absent. He

was actively shaping the man the promise required. Consider where you are right now. The waiting is not a delay. It is preparation. Trust the One who called you to also complete what He started.

Reflection Question: What has God placed in your heart that has not yet come to pass, and how might your current circumstances be forming you for that future?

Day 2: The Poison of Bitterness

Reading: Hebrews 12:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32

Devotional: Hebrews 12:15 warns that a root of bitterness, when allowed to grow, can defile many people around the one who harbors it. Ephesians 4:31-32 calls believers to put away bitterness entirely and replace it with kindness and forgiveness. Saul's rage toward David became so consuming that he hurled a spear at his own son Jonathan. His bitterness had grown beyond his capacity to love his own family. This is the nature of unchecked bitterness. It does not stay contained to its original target. It spreads. It poisons relationships, distorts judgment, and ultimately causes a person to harm the very people they love most. Bitterness presents itself as justified anger, but it operates as a slow-acting poison. No grievance, however real, is worth the destruction bitterness brings to those around you.

Reflection Question: Is there an unresolved offense in your life that has quietly hardened into bitterness toward another person?

Day 3: Loyalty That Costs Something

Reading: Ruth 1:15-18; John 15:12-13

Devotional: Ruth 1:15-18 portrays a loyalty that refused to turn back even when released from obligation. John 15:12-13 describes the greatest expression of love as one that willingly sacrifices for another. Jonathan had every earthly reason to resent David. David's rise meant Jonathan would never be king. Yet Jonathan chose covenant faithfulness over personal ambition. He chose God's will over his own inheritance. This kind of loyalty is rare because it demands something from the one who practices it. It is easy to be loyal when loyalty costs nothing. Jonathan's loyalty cost him his position, his father's approval, and ultimately his future. True loyalty, rooted in godly covenant, does not calculate the personal cost first. It simply remains faithful because faithfulness reflects the character of God Himself.

Reflection Question: Are there relationships in your life where you have allowed personal ambition or self-interest to quietly erode your faithfulness to others?

Day 4: The Consequences of Deception

Reading: Proverbs 12:17-22; Numbers 32:23

Devotional: Proverbs 12:22 states that God detests dishonest speech but takes delight in those who are truthful. Numbers 32:23 carries the sobering reminder that sin, left unaddressed, will eventually find its way into the open. David lied to Ahimelech the priest

at Nob, claiming he was on a secret mission for King Saul. The lie seemed harmless and practical in the moment. David needed food and weapons quickly. But Doeg the Edomite witnessed the exchange and reported it to Saul, resulting in the slaughter of 85 priests and the destruction of an entire city. David himself acknowledged his responsibility. Our deceptions rarely affect only us. They create ripple effects that reach people we never intended to harm. Silence is often more honorable than a convenient lie. The truth, even when uncomfortable, protects those around us.

Reflection Question: Is there a situation in your life where you have chosen a convenient deception rather than the discomfort of honesty, and who else may be affected by that choice?

Day 5: Waiting on God Rather Than Forcing the Outcome

Reading: Psalm 27:13-14; Isaiah 40:28-31

Devotional: Psalm 27:13-14 urges the reader to wait with courage for God to act rather than moving ahead in their own strength. Isaiah 40:28-31 promises renewed strength to those who wait upon the Lord. Twice during his years as a fugitive, David had Saul completely at his mercy. Twice he chose not to act. He refused to seize the throne through violence even when circumstances seemed to justify it. David genuinely believed that God had anointed Saul and that only God had the right to remove him. This kind of restraint is not weakness. It is one of the most difficult expressions of faith a person can demonstrate. It is the choice to trust that God is moving even when you cannot see it, and to refuse to take by force what God has promised to give in His own time.

Reflection Question: Where in your life are you tempted to force an outcome that God has promised rather than waiting for Him to bring it about in His way and His timing?