

DAVID

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Small Group Guide: David, Week 4

Key Takeaways:

1. **Burning bridges can be godly when stepping into a new calling.** Sometimes we must make it impossible to return to our former life to fully embrace God's plan.
2. **The enemy wants to shame us and disarm us.** Just as Nahash wanted to disfigure and disable the warriors, Satan uses shame from our past to keep us from our calling.
3. **Jesus removes our shame.** Christ doesn't just forgive—He throws our sins as far as east is from west, removing the shame that would hold us back.
4. **Righteous anger is commanded.** We should be angry at evil, wickedness, and injustice, but we must not sin in our anger.
5. **Give God the glory.** Saul's godly response was to credit the Lord for victory, not himself.
6. **Success can be more dangerous than failure.** Saul's downfall began at his highest point, reminding us to

guard our hearts in seasons of blessing.

Discussion Questions:

Icebreaker Question

1. Share a time when you made a significant life change that required "burning bridges" with your past. How did that decision shape your future?

Understanding the Text

1. **What was significant about Saul cutting up his own oxen?** How does this compare to Elisha's similar action in 1 Kings 19:19-21?
2. **Why did Nahash want to gouge out the right eye specifically?** What does this teach us about the enemy's tactics, both physical and spiritual?
3. **How did the Spirit of God coming upon Saul "powerfully" affect his response?** What does righteous anger look like according to Ephesians 4:26?

Personal Reflection

1. **Pastor Allen's sermon mentions that "shame keeps you from walking in God's will for your life."** In what areas might shame be preventing you from using your gifts, talents, or abilities for God?
2. **Saul showed remarkable humility and godliness in this passage, giving God credit and showing mercy to his critics.** When have you found it difficult to give God credit for success or to show mercy to those who opposed you?
3. **Have you ever needed to "burn bridges" with something in your past to fully embrace what God**

was calling you to? What made that difficult? What made it necessary?

Going Deeper

1. **The people of Jabesh-Gilead were willing to negotiate shameful terms rather than fight.** In what ways do Christians today sometimes negotiate with the enemy rather than standing firm in faith?
2. **Saul's response was: "No one will be executed today, for today the Lord has rescued Israel."** How can we cultivate this kind of grace toward those who have doubted or opposed us, especially after experiencing victory?
3. **Pastor Allen's sermon warns that "position, power, money, and prestige changed Saul."** What safeguards can we put in place in our own lives to prevent success or blessing from corrupting our character?

Practical Application:

1. **Identify one "bridge" you need to burn.** Is there a habit, relationship, or mindset that's keeping you from fully stepping into what God has called you to? Take one concrete step this week to move away from it.
2. **Combat shame with truth.** If shame from your past is holding you back, write down the specific shame, then write out Scripture promises about God's forgiveness and calling (Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 3:13-14). Share this with a trusted Christian friend.
3. **Practice giving God credit.** This week, when you experience any success or blessing, intentionally

verbalize (to others or in prayer) that "the Lord has done this," following Saul's example.

4. **Show mercy to a critic.** If someone has doubted or opposed you, follow Saul's example by extending grace and mercy to them this week.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your call on our lives. Give us courage to burn every bridge that keeps us from fully following you. Break the power of shame and lead us into the freedom we have in Christ. Guard our hearts with humility so that in every success we give all glory to you. Stir in us righteous anger against evil and injustice, and protect us from the corrupting pull of power, position, and prestige. Keep us faithful to you alone.

In Jesus' name, amen.

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: Burning Your Bridges

Reading: 1 Kings 19:19-21

Devotional: When Elisha slaughtered his oxen and burned his plow, he made returning to his old life impossible. This wasn't recklessness but radical obedience. Sometimes God calls us to burn our bridges, not in anger or haste, but in faith. What bridges might God be asking you to burn? Perhaps it's a career that conflicts with your calling, relationships that pull you from God's purposes, or comfort zones that keep you from kingdom impact. Burning bridges isn't about destroying relationships carelessly; it's about making your commitment to God's call irreversible. Like Saul cutting up his oxen, we must sometimes make decisions that prevent retreat. What would it look like for you to step fully into the role God has prepared for you, knowing there's no turning back?

Day 2: Righteous Anger

Reading: Ephesians 4:26-27; 1 Samuel 11:1-7

Devotional: The Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he became very angry. This wasn't sinful rage but righteous indignation at injustice. God commands us to be angry at sin and wickedness while not sinning ourselves. When we see exploitation, cruelty, or oppression, holy anger should stir within us. The question is: what moves you to action? Saul's anger wasn't self-centered but God-centered, focused on protecting the vulnerable. Too often, we're angry about inconveniences while remaining passive about injustice. Ask God to give you His heart for what breaks His heart. Let righteous anger fuel righteous action. Channel that holy discontent into prayer, advocacy, and tangible help for those facing oppression. The Holy Spirit's power should move us from comfortable complacency to courageous compassion.

Day 3: Giving God the Glory

Reading: 1 Samuel 11:12-15; Psalm 115:1

Devotional: After a stunning military victory, Saul could have basked in glory. Instead, he declared, "Today the Lord has rescued Israel." This humility marked Saul at his best, recognizing that every victory belongs to God. How quickly we forget this truth when success comes. We subtly shift from gratitude to entitlement, from "God did this" to "I accomplished this." Pride is insidious, creeping in through achievements, compliments, and favorable circumstances. The antidote is intentional thanksgiving, consistently redirecting praise upward. When people commend your work, your family, or your character, make it a habit to acknowledge God's grace. Not the Lord has rescued you from sin, given you every good gift, and empowers your every success. Practice deflecting glory to God not as false humility but as truthful worship. Remember: you are simply a vessel through which His power flows.

Day 4: Mercy Over Judgment

Reading: 1 Samuel 11:12-13; Matthew 5:7

Devotional: When the people demanded the execution of Saul's critics, he refused: "No one will be executed today." This mercy reflected God's heart. How different from the vengeful spirit that often grips us when wronged. We want justice for others but mercy for ourselves. Yet Jesus calls us to extend the same grace we've received. Those who despised Saul could have undermined his reign, yet he chose forgiveness. Who has wronged you? Who doubted your calling or opposed your leadership? The godly response isn't retaliation but mercy. This doesn't mean ignoring sin or enabling abuse, but it does mean releasing the desire for revenge. Forgiveness frees you from bitterness's prison. When you show mercy, you reflect your Heavenly Father who extends compassion daily to undeserving people, including you. Let gratitude for God's mercy toward you overflow into mercy toward others.

Day 5: The Danger of Success

Reading: Deuteronomy 8:11-18; Proverbs 16:18

Devotional: Saul's story began with humility and promise but ended in tragedy. Success changed him. The position, power, and prestige corrupted what started as godly service. This pattern repeats throughout Scripture and throughout history. Prosperity often proves more spiritually dangerous than adversity. When life is hard, we cling to God; when life is comfortable, we drift. The blessing becomes the stumbling block. Guard your heart carefully in seasons of success. Maintain spiritual disciplines when they feel unnecessary. Stay connected to community when you could isolate yourself. Remember your dependence on God when you feel self-sufficient. Success reveals character more than it builds it. Will you remain humble when honored? Will you stay faithful when comfortable? Will you continue seeking God when you no longer feel desperate? Pray for the grace to finish well, to remain teachable, and to never outgrow your need for God's daily presence and power.