



A Kingdom Established • SAUL Pursues DAVID • 1 Samuel 21–22 • 11/04/2018

## Main Point

In the same way that God was faithful to watch over David, he is in control of our lives.

## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What were your hopes and dreams for your life when you were younger?**

**What are your hopes and dreams now? How have they changed?**

**How do you tend to respond when your hopes and dreams are threatened?**

Today, as we look at the story of David and Ahimelech, we will see how David sought to take matters into his own hands when his dreams of becoming king of Israel were threatened by Saul. By doing so, David neglected to remember God's faithfulness, and ultimately the results were disastrous.

## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Almost overnight, David went from being a shepherd boy nobody knew to a national hero when he killed Goliath. Before slaying Goliath, David probably didn't think much of his anointing, but after leading Israel in victory over the Philistines, David's God-given dream seemed attainable. David's popularity among the people of Israel sent King Saul into a blind rage, and he began to seek out David in order to kill him. David didn't respond well to this situation, either. After dreaming of being threatened by Saul, David demonstrated a lack of faith by trying to take matters into his own hands. Despite David's sin, God continued to work in David's life, and in so doing, taught him an important lesson about faith.

Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

**How did David deceive Ahimelech? What do David's actions here tell us about his faith?**

**What was significant about "the bread of the Presence"? What does David's demand for this bread tell us about his relationship with God?**

**How did David abandon God-given values in this story? How have you been tempted to abandon godly values in fulfilling your dreams?**

David deceived Ahimelech by implying that he was on special business for King Saul and thus convinced Ahimelech to give David and his men bread that was consecrated for use in worship. In so doing, David demonstrated a lack of faith in God to provide for him and his troops. Furthermore, David demonstrated a lack of respect for God as he deceived Ahimelech for his own selfish ends.

**How had God been faithful to David? How has God been faithful to you?**

Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 21:7-15 and 22:9-23.

After deceiving Ahimelech and eating the bread of the Presence, David asked Ahimelech for a sword. The only sword that Ahimelech had to give was Goliath's, which was on display in Nob as a reminder of God's faithfulness in delivering the Philistines into David's hands. David demanded Goliath's sword and then foolishly fled to Gath, the hometown of Goliath.

**Why do you think David asked for a sword? What was he hoping to accomplish?**

**Goliath's sword was an icon of God's past faithfulness. What are some icons of God's past faithfulness in your life? How might pausing to consider these icons help us to remain faithful to the Lord in difficult circumstances?**

**Who witnessed David's actions at Nob (v. 7; 1 Sam. 22:9-10)? What was the result of David's actions (1 Samuel 22:18-19)?**

Doeg, the Edomite, a servant of Saul, witnessed David's deception of Ahimelech and returned to tell Saul about Ahimelech and David's whereabouts. David's actions resulted in Ahimelech and 85 other priests being executed by Doeg at Saul's request.

**How did David respond when he learned from Abiathar that his father and the priests of the Lord had been killed by Saul (vv. 20-23)? How might this moment have served as a wake up call to David?**

**When has God used situations or circumstances to expose your sin? What did you learn from that experience?**

**How should we respond when it is brought to our attention that our sins have brought harm on people close to us? How did David respond (1 Sam. 22:23)?**

David responded by acknowledging his sin (v. 22) and promising to care for and protect Ahimelech's son, Abiathar. When we see the damage our lack of faith has caused, we must, like David, acknowledge our sin and do whatever we can to make amends to those who have been affected by our sinful actions.

**Why did God continue to protect David from Saul despite David's sin? What does that tell us about God?**

David's sin caused his life to spiral out of control and resulted in the slaughter of Ahimelech and 85 others. When our lives spiral out of control, however, God is still in control. God allowed David to see the consequences of his sin in order to demonstrate His sovereignty and grace. David did not deserve God's favor and yet, God continued to protect him from Saul. Like David, our sin often causes our lives to spiral out of control and yet God still loves us and has demonstrated His love for us in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In order to trust God with the future, we have to reflect on His faithfulness to us in the past. How could you make remembering God's past faithfulness a more consistent part of your daily life?**

**When facing unfortunate circumstances or situations, why is it important that we consider the hand our sins may have played in them?**

**When things don't go our way, why is it important to remember that God is in control? What might God be trying to teach us in such instances?**

**In what areas of your life is it most difficult for you to trust that God is in control? What is one step you could take to surrender that area of your life to Christ?**

## Pray

Close in prayer, thanking God for the way He has been faithful to you in the past and the promises He makes to be faithful in the future. Surrender control of your life to God as a way of showing your trust in Him..

# Commentary

## | 1 Samuel 21:1-15

21:1. Ahimelech is mentioned for the first time here; some identify him with Ahijah (14:3). Nob lay approximately two miles south of Gibeah. Ahimelech was afraid, probably because he had heard of Saul's pursuit of David, a fact that would explain his questioning of David.

21:2. Though David said that the king had given him a mission, Saul in fact had not. David did not want to reveal his real circumstances to Ahimelech, lest Saul accuse the priest of aiding a fugitive (22:13).

21:4. Consecrated bread, also known as the "bread of the Presence" (v. 6), came from the tabernacle, where 12 loaves representing Israel's 12 tribes were exchanged weekly (Lv 24:5-9). Normally only priests ate this bread, but Ahimelech was willing to share it with ordinary soldiers if they were not ceremonially unclean due to sexual relations (Lv 15:18).

21:6. Jesus referred to this account in condemning the religious leaders for their rigid interpretation of the Mosaic law (Mt 12:1-4).

21:7. Perhaps Doeg the Edomite was a captive servant of Saul after Saul's campaign against Edom (14:47). The words detained before the Lord may mean Doeg lingered at the tabernacle to offer further sacrifices and prayers; other interpreters have suggested he was paying some form of penance or facing punishment for an offense.

21:9. The text does not explain how the sword of Goliath ended up in the tabernacle when David had earlier put it in his own tent (17:54). Perhaps David later had dedicated it to the Lord as some kind of offering.

21:10. The leading Philistine city, Gath, was located at the mouth of the Valley of Elah (17:1). King Achish ruled there, seemingly as chief among the Philistine lords (27:2-7; 29:2-4). David probably fled from Saul by going westward into the Sorek Valley to Beth-shemesh (6:9,12-13), then along a diagonal highway that connected Judah's valleys to Azekah (17:1), from whence he could proceed down the Valley of Elah.

21:11. Achish's servants were aware of David's fame among his own people, and they reported it to him. The tens of thousands David had killed included many Philistines.

21:12. David became afraid when he realized how much the Philistines knew about him.

21:13. In the ancient world, insane people were considered afflicted by the gods and generally left alone. David's letting saliva run down his beard brought further disgrace and confirmation of his affliction to Achish (Num 12:14; Dt 25:9; Job 17:6; 30:10).

21:15. Achish's statement "Do I have..." a shortage of crazy people probably was intended sarcastically, though other people with unusual physical features were also associated with Gath (17:4; 2Sam 21:20).

## | 1 Samuel 22:9-23

22:9. Doeg the Edomite (21:7) now revealed he had seen David at Nob.

22:10. The earlier account of David and Ahimelech (21:1-9) does not say that Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him, though verse 15 suggests he did.

22:13. Saul's question assumed that Ahimelech was guilty of conspiracy. The king made no attempt to investigate the matter thoroughly.

22:14. Ahimelech's rhetorical question to the king implied no one was as faithful as David, a suggestion Saul already had heard from Jonathan (19:4-5) and did not want to hear again.

22:15. David regularly inquired of God through His prophets and priests, while Saul did not. Ahimelech claimed he didn't have any idea about David's alleged conspiracy against the king (21:1-2,8). David would have kept Ahimelech ignorant of the real purpose of his visit so the priest could claim ignorance.

22:16. Saul ignored Ahimelech's words and passed the death sentence on the priest's entire household, a decree that further revealed his obsession to kill David.

22:17. Even the king's servants—probably his most trusted soldiers— would not... execute the priests because it was unclear if they were guilty of anything worthy of death.

22:18-19. Eighty-five priests died, along with every other living thing in Nob, because of Saul's misguided wrath. 2

2:20. Abiathar may have caught up with David at Keilah (23:6). He would later serve as priest before David (2Sam 20:25), though he did side with Adonijah, David's oldest son, when Adonijah tried to take the throne without David's blessing (1Ki 1:7; 2:26-27).

22:22. David had his suspicions that Doeg would report to Saul about David's visit to Nob, but had failed to deal with Doeg when he had the opportunity.

22:23. David suggested that he and Abiathar could trust each other because they had a common enemy (Saul) from whom they needed to protect themselves. Thus David aligned himself with the priests of the Lord, even as Saul further alienated himself from God.

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

