

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Brian Housman and friends
March 13, 2011

Over the next six weeks, we'll be reading the Bible's telling of the story of David. David is one of the Bible's biggest heroes. He sets the standard by which every subsequent major Bible figure is measured, and it's easy to see why. He's humble, handsome, strong, and kind. He's the Bible's best king, strongest warrior, and most accomplished musician. As we read along, you'll see that David is one of the Bible's most complex characters. He's a model of integrity, and a lying murderer. He's an admirably loyal subject of a pretty terrible king in his early life; and a pretty terrible father in later life. He's so idealistic that he refuses to assassinate a king who is wrongfully trying to kill him; but he's so pragmatic that he leaves instructions for all of his heirs' potential rivals to be assassinated. David has higher highs than most of us, and lower lows. And throughout them all, he maintains a vibrant, faithful relationship with God.

The Bible tells two different versions of David's story. The longer and more complicated version is found in 1 and 2 Samuel (and a tiny bit of 1 Kings). An abbreviated and decidedly rosier version of the story is in 1 Chronicles. We'll follow David's story chronologically, mostly from the Samuel version of the story, supplementing it occasionally with a Chronicles passage. We'll especially rely on Chronicles for its treatment of the Temple, a matter of particular interest to the Chronicler.

Each day's reading will consist of three parts:

1. The passage of the day--a story from David's life, usually between half a page and a page-and-a-half long. For your convenience, I've included the passage in the TNIV (copyright 2001,2005 by International Bible Society). I've found the TNIV to be a readable and reliable modern translation. You should, of course, feel free to read your own favorite version. I will almost exclusively be quoting from and referring to the TNIV, though.
2. Points of Interest--my comments on the story. I'll include some relevant historical and literary information. I'll also share my thoughts on elements of the story I find especially confusing or interesting.
3. Taking It Home--a handful of suggestions as to how to respond to the story, if you were so inclined, often in prayer and sometimes with an exercise or experiment. Each day, we'll think about how the passage applies to four different sets of people:
 - a. You--what does this passage mean for you, your family, and your closest friends?
 - b. Your Six--think of six local friends who don't seem to have much of a direct relationship with God, and for whom you wish the very best in life. What does this story have to do with these six, and with your friendship with them?
 - c. Our church--how is this passage relevant to our common life as a church?
 - d. NEW! Your family--in this section, new to this edition of the Daily Bible Guide, we'll offer suggestions for activities or discussion questions parents might use to engage their younger children in the daily readings. Whether you read the passage with your children or not, these suggestions are designed to bring the conversation of the Leap of Faith into your family time this season. If you don't have young children, feel free to skip this section--or, hey, do it with your roommates or significant other or some other group of people you see most every day, if you want.

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Monday, March 14th: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

⁴ Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² So he sent and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came on David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Points of interest

- ‘The LORD said to Samuel’--Samuel is a prophet. He isn’t so much someone who predicts the future as he is God’s special envoy to the nation of Israel. For much of his career, he basically served as the people’s governor. More recently, he has become a top advisor to--you might even say supervisor of and mentor to--the king.
- ‘How long will you mourn for Saul’--Saul is the king. Before Saul, the Israelites had no standing central government. Instead, everyone was free to take care of their own business. In emergency situations, God would appoint a temporary leader called a ‘judge.’ The judge would address the situation, restore order, and then return to private life, or perhaps continue to exercise some authority until the end of their lives, at which point the central government would dissolve until it was needed again. Samuel was the last of these judges. During his time, the people got tired of this spontaneous form of government and decided they wanted a king,

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

like everyone else. God and Samuel both tried to convince the people that kings weren't as wonderful as they thought. But when the people remained insistent, Samuel appointed Saul. Despite the fact that he was basically ousted in favor of Saul, Samuel did his best to help Saul succeed. Things didn't turn out very well, though; and God has decided that Saul needs to go.

- 'Fill your horn with oil'--God is telling Samuel that it's time to choose a new king. A prophet pouring oil over someone's head is a sign of God's particular favor on that person; in this case, it would represent God's new choice for king. This oil-pouring ceremony and the divine favor the oil represents are both called 'anointing.'
- 'he will kill me'--it's a bit surprising that Samuel would be afraid of Saul. If anything, up until this point, it's been the other way around. In just the previous chapter, Samuel is clearly the one in charge in the relationship; Samuel lets Saul know that he's about to be fired, and Saul humbly begs for mercy. Now, all of a sudden, Samuel feels the need to be cautious. Maybe it's dawning on Samuel that it's easier to put a crown on someone's head than to take it back off again.
- 'the elders of the town trembled'--for some reason, they can't imagine that Samuel has come to bring them good news. Maybe they have guilty consciences. Or maybe it's just that Samuel's sheer authority is daunting, rather like the nervousness you might feel when the police knock on your door, even when you're not aware of having done anything wrong.
- 'Surely the LORD's anointed stands here'--this is a replay of the anointing of Saul. When we first encounter Saul, he is described as good-looking and very tall. The Bible doesn't say so, but I imagine he's also in great shape and has a full head of hair, with just enough gray around the temples to make him look authoritative. In other words, Saul has a kingly look. Apparently, Eliab is struck from the same mold. But this time it's different. God doesn't want someone who just looks the part.
- 'Are these all the sons you have?'--David is too young to be included in this dinner with the visiting dignitary. It's like he's still seated at the kids' table for Thanksgiving dinner. Or even worse, he seems to have been completely forgotten in all of the hubbub.
- 'in the presence of his brothers'--this has to have been awkward. I imagine some quiet--or even not so quiet--trading of boasts and insults among the brothers as Samuel very deliberately passes over one after the other. They've been one another's companions and competition all their lives, playing out their mostly-friendly rivalries again and again on whatever the Iron Age equivalent of the football field is. When the oldest ones are unexpectedly passed up, brothers four and five must have an instant of dreaming, 'Finally it's my chance to shine.' There might very well be only one thing more disappointing than none of them being chosen, and that's their rosy-cheeked little brother--the baby of the family, not old enough to be a part of their rivalries--jumping in front of them all.
- 'the Spirit of the LORD came on David in power'--the anointing oil poured on someone's head is meant to symbolize the spirit of God resting on them. David doesn't just get the symbol, but the real thing. From now on, there is a certain amount of divine inspiration to whatever David does.

Taking it home

- For you: I love that Samuel asks God how what he wants him to do is actually going to work. He's not so much resistant to God's plan; he just needs some more information, a game plan, if you will. What is the thing right now in your life that is looming over your head, making you feel

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

stuck or overwhelmed? Spend some time talking to God about this, asking him how he would suggest you get it done. Then, like Samuel, do what you hear God say back to you.

- For your six: Pray today for any ways that your six feel like David, unassuming and overlooked. Pray that God would notice your six and show special attention to them like Samuel did towards David.
- For our church: God warns Samuel that it is easy to rely on outer appearance, but that is not the barometer that God uses. Ask God to give our church a heart that is really pleasing to God.
- For families: Sometimes it can be all too easy to take the members of our families for granted. Take some time today to think about each person in your family and the qualities you can see God has given them, like being friendly, generous, or loving, or whatever other good thing you see in them. Take time to tell one another what you see, and pray that God would help you support each other as you grow in these areas.

Tuesday, March 15th: 1 Samuel 16:14-23

¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

¹⁵ Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. ¹⁶ Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better."

¹⁷ So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me."

¹⁸ One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him."

¹⁹ Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." ²⁰ So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul.

²¹ David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. ²² Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him."

²³ Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Points of interest

- 'the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul'--apparently the divinely inspired kingliness we saw yesterday can only rest on one person at a time. As it falls on David, it leaves Saul. This creates something of a dicey situation. Saul is still in actuality the king, but David is the one equipped by God to pull off the job. We have one person with everything it takes to be a king except the crown, and another person with the crown but not the wherewithal to rule well.
- 'an evil spirit from the LORD'--this is a head-scratcher. Sending an evil spirit doesn't seem like the kind of thing God would do, and obeying God doesn't seem like the kind of thing an evil spirit would do. It's likely that 'evil' here should be translated more like, 'harmful' (Baldwin, Joyce. *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988). In other words, it's not so much that the spirit is morally evil, but rather that it happens

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

to have a negative effect on Saul. That, at least, would explain away the impression that God is in league with the devil. Still, while I can understand it's God's prerogative to bestow favor wherever God wants, it feels a little like hitting below the belt to go on to purposely do harm to the person now in disfavor. I wonder if this evil spirit is a side effect of God's actions rather than God's specific intent. In other words, the removal of God's favor sends Saul into a mania or depression of some sort; it's 'from the Lord' because it's a direct consequence of God removing the anointing, not because God specifically sent it.

- 'I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem'--ironically, the very person at the heart of Saul's torment is brought in to soothe it.
- 'a brave man and a warrior'--the rosy-cheeked child from yesterday's passage is now described as a brave man and a warrior. I don't get the impression that much time has passed: the Spirit departing from Saul seems to follow directly from it resting on David; and David is still out with the sheep, just where we left him. I wonder if the Spirit's anointing is already doing its work. Young though he is, people are starting to see him differently. It also could be that today's passage comes from a different story source than yesterday's; as we'll see in the next couple of days, the story of how Saul and David first meet gets a little convoluted.
- 'a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat'--I think Jesse is either making sure his son will have plenty to eat (like giving your child their own credit card when they go to college) or he's sending a thank-you gift to Saul for the honor of having someone from his family serve the king.
- 'and the evil spirit would leave him'--regardless of just how directly responsible God is for this evil spirit, I find it very interesting that it becomes the job of God's new favorite to relieve the torment of the one he is replacing. Maybe David owes Saul a little help for the trouble he is causing him. Or maybe this is a lesson for Saul: his suffering will go away if he's just willing to embrace God's new anointed one.

Taking it home

- For you: Of all things, David, this would-be king, turns out to be a harp player--and apparently quite a good one, since he was asked to play for the king. What are some of the things that you really like doing? Consider that all of your hobbies and hidden, little talents could be ways through which God could work. Ask God to meet you in these activities that you really love, and to use them for God's purposes.
- For your six: Maybe it's not quite as pronounced as the torment Saul experienced, but are there particular ways in which any of your six seem routinely tormented? By stress? Fear? Depression? Pick a few of your six and pray for God to break whatever tormenting feelings they might be experiencing today.
- For our church: Saul's courtiers had a very specific need, and they were able to find someone with exactly the right skills to fill that need. Pray that it would be that way for our church as well. Pray that God would consistently be sending us the people with the right skills to accomplish what we are trying to do. And pray that we would make good use of the wealth of talents in our midst.
- For families: Hobbies are things you like to do: hiking, drawing, playing an instrument. David's hobby was playing the harp. What are your hobbies? Talk about how you help each other have

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

time to do these things. What would it look like to invite God to be a part of these activities, and to even do them for God?

Wednesday, March 16th: 1 Samuel 17:1-37

¹ Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. ² Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. ³ The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

⁴ A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. ⁵ He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; ⁶ on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. ⁷ His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." ¹⁰ Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." ¹¹ On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was very old. ¹³ Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

¹⁷ Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. ²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. ²³ As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. ²⁴ Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

²⁵ Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family line from taxes in Israel."

²⁶ David asked those standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

²⁷ They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, “This is what will be done for the man who kills him.”

²⁸ When Eliab, David’s oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, “Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.”

²⁹ “Now what have I done?” said David. “Can’t I even speak?” ³⁰ He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. ³¹ What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³² David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

³³ Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are little more than a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”

³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

Points of interest

- ‘the Philistines gathered their forces for war’--the Philistines are a federation of city-states of Greek origin; they left the Aegean Sea in the same wave of emigration as caused the famous Trojan War (Walton, John H., et al. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000). They landed not long ago in the area between Egypt and Israel, and they’ve been encroaching on Israelite territory. Saul has recently had some success in defending against them, but in general they’ve had the upper hand in their battles with the Israelites.
- ‘His height was six cubits and a span’--that would be a bit over nine feet tall (a cubit is the length of a forearm, or about a foot-and-a-half, and a span is a hand’s width). I could imagine that the author is being hyperbolic here: ‘He was ten feet tall if he was an inch.’ Regardless of whether he’s exaggerating or not, the point is clear: Goliath is huge and scary.
- ‘a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver’s rod’--not only is he big, but he is practically bristling with state-of-the-art weaponry.
- ‘Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse’--we just got David’s family history and a whole story about him in the last few paragraphs, and now the author is introducing us to him as if we’ve never heard of him. That’s why I think it’s quite possible that this passage and the previous two are three different beginnings of the story of David--or maybe two, with Monday’s passage and today’s passage being from the same source, and yesterday’s a different one. Our author, rather than choosing one, has decided to collect all of them for us and place them side-by-side. There are, indeed, a couple of difficult to reconcile, but ultimately insignificant, differences between the stories: 1) in two of the passages, David is a boy, but in the other he’s a brave warrior (though that could be explained by the Lord’s anointing); and 2) in yesterday’s

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

passage, David is a favorite of Saul's, but in today's Saul seems never to have met him before. On the other hand, there is a lot of agreement on who David is and where his story is heading: 1) David is the youngest son of Jesse; 2) he's a shepherd; 3) he's despised by his older brothers; and 4) God's favor is on him.

- 'The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him'--they're all trying to talk one another up: 'Come on, man. You can do it.' But it's never quite enough to get one of them to step into the ring. No matter how much buttering up they give one another, and no matter how alluring the prize, no one is foolish enough to go one-on-one against Goliath, the human tank.
- 'Now what have I done?'--you can practically see David and Eliab rolling their eyes at one another. I wonder if this was always a dynamic in their relationship, or if it's new since David's anointing. In any case, I appreciate David's strategy of just getting on with his business. He doesn't let Eliab's criticism stop him, and he doesn't waste too much time defending himself against Eliab. He just moves on.
- 'The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion'--David is not concerned with how big, strong, or well-armed his opponent is. He's faced opponents bigger and stronger than him before, and come out on top. The God who is with him is stronger than any bear or lion and bigger than any giant.
- 'and the LORD be with you'--again, our story ends on an ironic note. The Lord is already, in fact, with David--and not with Saul. That's why David is stepping out to face the Philistine challenger when Saul is not.

Taking it home

- For you: David's belief that he can face Goliath is based on the things he has learned recently in his sheep-tending. Spend some time today reflecting on the past few months and thinking about what you have been learning. Are there any scenarios that keep coming up? Any lessons that God wants you to learn? Ask God to show you what he has wanted you to learn lately. Talk to God about the things he brings up.
- For your six: Are your six in any situations that seem like the same old battle day in and day out? Ask God to send people like David to your six who can offer fresh perspective and a new strategy. Pray that God would increase your six's hope in the middle of whatever challenges they face today.
- For our church: It's possible that David and his older brother never really got along (sibling rivalry centuries ago seems remarkably similar to today); however, it does seem like Goliath brings out the worst in Jesse's family, only increasing their envy, resentment and harshness towards one another. Pray that whatever Goliath that comes against our church, that God would draw us closer together as a church and that we wouldn't turn against one another with attitudes similar to David's brothers.
- For families: David knew God would help him because he remembered how God had helped him before. Take some time as a family to talk about the things you have each seen God do for you recently. Consider putting them on a poster--write them down, or draw pictures, or paste photos--on the wall where you can see them. Add to your list during the Leap of Faith.

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Thursday, March 17th: 1 Samuel 17:38-58

³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. ⁴² He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³ He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

⁴⁸ As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. ⁴⁹ Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

⁵¹ David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. ⁵² Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.

⁵⁴ David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem; he put the Philistine’s weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵ As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is that young man?”

Abner replied, “As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don’t know.”

⁵⁶ The king said, “Find out whose son this young man is.”

⁵⁷ As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine’s head.

⁵⁸ “Whose son are you, young man?” Saul asked him.

David said, “I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.”

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Points of interest

- ‘Saul dressed David in his own tunic’--now not only is God giving David the anointing that used to belong to Saul, but Saul himself is giving David his clothes.
- ‘I am not used to them’--this reminds me of God’s words to Samuel when he was having dinner at Jesse’s house: ‘The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at.’ David is not going to fit into Saul’s pattern. Saul has all of the right trappings: he has the looks of a king; he has all of the right equipment; he even has the title. But he’s not a good king. David has none of the trappings. The armor doesn’t fit; and he wouldn’t know what to do with a sword. But God sees in him the right stuff to be a good king. At this point, the right stuff seems to be an expectation that God will use what little David has to accomplish great things.
- ‘David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him’--I have to admit that I sometimes think that David doesn’t beat Goliath fair and square. It’s like a duel with one person swinging a sword and the other shooting a pistol. Doesn’t David win just because he picks Goliath off before Goliath can ever reach him? But I must be missing something. The story gives a few clues that David is being brave here, and that his victory is more than just unfair advantage. First of all, Goliath also thinks the fight is unfair, to his advantage; he can’t believe David is coming against him so poorly armed. Secondly, Goliath also has a ranged weapon, a javelin; he just never throws it. And thirdly we have this: David runs toward Goliath. That’s not the smart thing for the guy with the sling to do. David should be hanging back out of Goliath’s reach as long as he can, but instead he closes with Goliath; the guy with the stick and the stone going on the attack against the guy with the sword.
- ‘David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem’--I think this is a reference to the future. Jerusalem isn’t an Israelite city until David conquers it later in the story, and it’s quite a distance from the battle site. And David has more important things to do right now than take a side trip to safely stow his trophy; there’s an army of Philistines to pursue. I think the author is telling us that David kept Goliath’s head all the way until the time, many years later, when he could carry it with him into his new capital city. Goliath’s head is a sort of down payment on God’s promise to turn David into a king.
- ‘whose son is that young man?’--like I said yesterday, it’s hard to get a read on who David is and what his relationship with Saul is thus far. Is he a brave warrior, or a punk kid? Is he a stranger to Saul, or one of Saul’s favorites? Yesterday, I hypothesized that we are actually being given two different versions of the story of David’s beginnings. Today, though, I wonder if it’s just that Saul is having such a hard time recognizing David because he’s so different from the David he usually sees. Could Tuesday’s soothing harp player really be the same young man who just chopped off a giant’s head with the giant’s own sword on Thursday?

Taking it home

- For you: David had to walk around in Saul’s armor for a few steps before realizing that what worked for Saul wouldn’t work for him. Often it’s easy to let others, our circumstances, or our roles and responsibilities throw all sorts of expectations and obligations on us, maybe without us even realizing it. Additionally, there is often so much going on beneath the surface of our busy lives that we can fail to listen and really know ourselves. Take some time just to be still and silent in God’s presence. Ask God to sift through all the ‘coverings’ you might be wearing, to show you who you are, and to bring what is going on in your heart to the surface. As you sit

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

silently, pay attention to what your heart is saying. What emotions rise to the surface? Are there certain circumstances, where you need to be like David and say ‘this isn’t me’?

- For your six: Ask God to bless the uniqueness of each of your six, and to give them the ability to live out that uniqueness well. Write down the name of each of your six. Spend some time thinking about something that makes them who they are. Consider affirming that quality in them today--by phone, text, email or in person.
- For our church: I picture David as a 5th grade boy saying he’s going to slam dunk over Shaq--clearly impossible and kind of presumptuous. David was willing to step out so audaciously in fighting Goliath because he seemed to know right from the get-go that it was God who was actually going to do the real work. Pray that our church would completely bank on God to be the one who miraculously comes through and makes the impossible possible; and pray that we would then have the courage to act bravely like David.
- For families: As parents, sometimes we can assume our children are just like us and push them to respond to things in the same way we would. Spend some time talking about the ways your children are similar to you, and ways they are different from you. Ask older children to think about the similarities and differences that they see. If applicable, ask your children for forgiveness for ways you have treated them as though they were you, missing their different, yet valid, way of approaching a circumstance. Bless your children for the ways they are really their own person.

Friday, March 18th: 1 Samuel 18

¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

⁵ Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul’s officers as well.

⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. ⁷ As they danced, they sang:

“Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands.”

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand ¹¹ and he hurled it, saying to himself, “I’ll pin David to the wall.” But David eluded him twice.

¹² Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. ¹³ So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. ¹⁴ In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ When Saul

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

¹⁷ Saul said to David, “Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD.” For Saul said to himself, “I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!”

¹⁸ But David said to Saul, “Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king’s son-in-law?” ¹⁹ So when the time came for Merab, Saul’s daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

²⁰ Now Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. ²¹ “I will give her to him,” he thought, “so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So Saul said to David, “Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law.”

²² Then Saul ordered his attendants: “Speak to David privately and say, ‘Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.’”

²³ They repeated these words to David. But David said, “Do you think it is a small matter to become the king’s son-in-law? I’m only a poor man and little known.”

²⁴ When Saul’s servants told him what David had said, ²⁵ Saul replied, “Say to David, ‘The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.’” Saul’s plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

²⁶ When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, ²⁷ David took his men with him and went out and killed two hundred Philistines and brought back their foreskins. They counted out the full number to the king so that David might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

²⁸ When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, ²⁹ Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

³⁰ The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.

Points of Interest

- ‘Jonathan became one in spirit with David’--Jonathan is Saul’s oldest son, his heir apparent, and the crown prince. David and Jonathan quickly become like brothers, or perhaps more accurately closer than brothers. Jonathan shows David the kindness, respect, and appreciation that David’s actual older brothers never did. And perhaps Jonathan finds in David the companion and peer he’s always been looking for from his younger brothers. I get the impression, simply from the fact that they are hardly ever mentioned during the war with the Philistines, that Jonathan’s brothers are nowhere near the leaders or warriors that Jonathan and David are. Now, in David, Jonathan has someone to spur him on to and accompany him in great deeds.
- ‘did not let him return home to his family’--the time of commuting back and forth between the sheep and the court is over.
- ‘Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David’--people always seem to be giving David their clothes. It seems to me like Jonathan is ceding pride of place to David here. Earlier, David said to Saul, ‘Your clothing and armor don’t suit me.’ Now, Jonathan is saying to

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

David, 'My clothing and armor fit you better than me.' Jonathan may be the crown prince, but he recognizes that David is actually greater than him.

- 'Saul has slain his thousands'--the singers seem to be giving Saul more credit than he actually deserves in this instance; we don't hear of him doing any slaying at all. Nonetheless, Saul is offended because they put David ahead of him. Saul and Jonathan are having very different reactions to the arrival of this new leader among them.
- 'He was prophesying in his house'--the original sign of God's anointing of Saul was a spirit of prophecy (1 Samuel 10:1-7). Perhaps it's an ability that has stuck with Saul. Then again, several translations say, 'raving,' rather than, 'prophesying' here; apparently, the Hebrew word can go either way (Baldwin). 'Raving' makes more sense to me here. Apparently, Saul is having one of his episodes, which David is trying to soothe with music, as he has done in the past. This time, though, Saul proves impervious to soothing, perhaps particularly by David.
- 'David eluded him twice'--it's the 'twice' part that sticks out to me here. Saul misses once, and David sticks around to give him a second try.
- 'So he sent David away from him'--I guess Saul is protecting himself against a possible palace coup by putting some distance between David and him. Saul is the one throwing spears, but he's also the one who is afraid.
- 'I will give her to you in marriage'--David has already served Saul bravely, and has already been promised one of his daughters as a wife (17:25). But he holds the reward back, hoping David will overreach and get himself killed.
- 'Who am I'--Eliab accused David of being a self-promoter; and Saul fears that he's a usurper. But David makes clear here that he isn't motivated by his own advancement. He killed Goliath and fights the Philistines simply to show God's power and to play a part in God's rescue of the Israelites.
- 'and little known'--apart from the fact that the hit song of the day is all about his exploits, that is.
- 'and killed two hundred Philistines'--everything Saul tries to do to ruin David ends up backfiring. The more Saul schemes, the more honorable, humble, and brave David proves to be. Saul is certain that David would die before collecting one hundred Philistine 'scalps,' but David effortlessly collects twice that.
- 'and brought back their foreskins'--a remarkable way of keeping count, but I imagine it's pretty reliable. The Philistine soldiers certainly wouldn't part with their foreskins unless they were dead.
- 'his daughter Michal loved David'--the promise of being a king's son-in-law wasn't enough to get David together with Merab, the older sister. Maybe David has been worn down by Saul's persistence, or maybe an actual loving affection between him and Michal makes this time different.

Taking it home

- For you: Pray some of Psalm 59 (listed below), a prayer of David's during this time in his life. In the parts where David talks about the enemies against whom Saul was sending him in battle day after day, pray against any spiritual enemies that might seek to send you off course today.

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Psalm 59 (excerpts)

*Deliver me from my enemies, O God;
be my fortress against those who are attacking me.*

*2 Deliver me from evildoers
and save me from those who are after my blood.*

*3 See how they lie in wait for me!
Fierce men conspire against me
for no offense or sin of mine, LORD.*

*4 I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me.
Arise to help me; look on my plight!...*

*9 You are my strength, I watch for you;
you, God, are my fortress,
10 my God on whom I can rely.
God will go before me
and will let me gloat over those who slander me.*

*11 But do not kill them, Lord our shield,
or my people will forget.
In your might uproot them
and bring them down.*

*12 For the sins of their mouths,
for the words of their lips,
let them be caught in their pride.
For the curses and lies they utter,
13 consume them in your wrath,
consume them till they are no more.*

*Then it will be known to the ends of the earth
that God rules over Jacob.*

*14 They return at evening,
snarling like dogs,
and prowl about the city.*

*15 They wander about for food
and howl if not satisfied.*

*16 But I will sing of your strength,
in the morning I will sing of your love;
for you are my fortress,
my refuge in times of trouble.*

*17 You are my strength, I sing praise to you;
you, God, are my fortress,
my God on whom I can rely.*

- For your six: Pray that God would have favor on your six just like he had on David. Pray for protection and success in whatever they have going on.
- For our church: Pray that God would make us a community that is always trying to seek the best for others, as opposed to Saul who wished destruction on David. Ask God to make us a place that encourages, celebrates, and supports every group and organization that is working for good in our city. Ask God to protect us from ways in which we are prone to feel competitive or prideful; pray that we would instead help build unity among churches, organizations, and businesses in our city.

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

- For families: Discuss a time when each member of your family felt like someone else was getting the attention they wanted. What was it like to feel that way? What other options do we have when we start to feel jealous? How could we ask God to give us the attention and love we need in those moments?

Saturday, March 19th: 1 Samuel 19

¹ Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David ²and warned him, “My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. ³ I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I’ll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.”

⁴ Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. ⁵ He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?”

⁶ Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.”

⁷ So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.

⁸ Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.

⁹ But an evil spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre, ¹⁰ Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.

¹¹ Saul sent men to David’s house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David’s wife, warned him, “If you don’t run for your life tonight, tomorrow you’ll be killed.” ¹² So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. ¹³ Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats’ hair at the head.

¹⁴ When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, “He is ill.”

¹⁵ Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, “Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him.” ¹⁶ But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats’ hair.

¹⁷ Saul said to Michal, “Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?” Michal told him, “He said to me, ‘Let me get away. Why should I kill you?’”

¹⁸ When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. ¹⁹ Word came to Saul: “David is in Naioth at Ramah”; ²⁰ so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul’s men, and they also prophesied. ²¹ Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. ²² Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?”

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

“Over in Naioth at Ramah,” they said.

²³ So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. ²⁴ He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel’s presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Points of Interest

- ‘Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David’--with none of his clever plans working, Saul dispenses with the subterfuge and simply orders a hit.
- ‘As surely as the LORD lives’--has Jonathan genuinely persuaded Saul, or has Saul simply learned he needs to keep his true intentions hidden from Jonathan? I can’t tell. At the very least, it buys some time. Saul doesn’t immediately assassinate David.
- ‘Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear’--it’s gotten to the point that Saul takes victory in war as bad news. He’d rather lose to the Philistines than see David continue to succeed.
- ‘David made good his escape’--I guess even David can only tolerate so many spears thrust in his direction.
- ‘But Michal, David’s wife, warned him’--Saul is really on his own. Even his own son and daughter are on David’s side.
- ‘Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed’--we get an interesting glimpse into ancient Israelite home life. God had in no uncertain terms prohibited the Israelites from making idols, even as physical representations of himself. God wanted it to be clear that they were in an actual relationship with an actual living God; there was no need for imitations made of wood, metal, or stone. This was the first and most important of the Ten Commandments, the foundation of God’s alliance with the Israelites. Yet, it seems that in real, everyday life, things weren’t so clear. Even David and Michal have a life-sized idol in their home. Granted, they don’t seem too serious about it, since they’re willing to dress it up with goat’s hair and use it as a dummy.
- ‘he went to Samuel’--it’s Samuel who started this mess, after all. I don’t know whether David is going to Samuel for protection or guidance or both.
- ‘the Spirit of God came on Saul’s men’--this is an unexpected form of defense. Saul and his men are so overcome by an impulse to speak God’s words that they can’t arrest David. I wonder what they are saying.

Taking it home

- For you: You have to wonder if hearing suddenly that he might be killed was a little panic-provoking for David, sending him into flustered crisis mode. In the end it proved to be a false alarm as God turned the terrible situation around. What have been the situations lately that have been sending you into panic mode? Ask God to take to any feelings of panic and despair away, and to turn whatever emergency situations you encounter this week around.
- For your six: Who do your six turn to when they are desperate or in trouble? Ask God to be their refuge in these times and to give them lots of people like Samuel to whom they can turn, and who will help point them toward God.
- For our church: Pray that God’s spirit would show up and follow our church around. Saul’s men weren’t exactly the good guys in this story. However, God doesn’t seem to mind. Even as they

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

actively tried to kill his chosen servants, they are still able to experience God’s presence. Pray that people who often find themselves hostile toward and on the outskirts of faith would find themselves suddenly experiencing God in tangible ways through our church like Saul’s men did. Pray that our church would be a place where everyone feels welcome and is able to connect with God.

- For families: Sometimes we have days when it feels like nothing is going right and everyone is against us. Can you remember a time like this? Spend some time sharing about tough days like this. How can we invite God into times like this? Have you ever done that? How did it turn out? Read Psalm 40:1-3 together to hear how David talks about this.

Psalm 40

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

*1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.*

Sunday, March 20th: 1 Samuel 20

¹ Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, “What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?”

² “Never!” Jonathan replied. “You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn’t do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn’t so!”

³ But David took an oath and said, “Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.’ Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.”

⁴ Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”

⁵ So David said, “Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, ‘David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.’ ⁷ If he says, ‘Very well,’ then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. ⁸ As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?”

⁹ “Never!” Jonathan said. “If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn’t I tell you?”

¹⁰ David asked, “Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?”

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

¹¹ “Come,” Jonathan said, “let’s go out into the field.” So they went there together.

¹² Then Jonathan said to David, “I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? ¹³ But if my father intends to harm you, may the LORD deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD’s kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth.”

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the LORD call David’s enemies to account.”¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to him, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,’ then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the boy, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. ²³ And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever.”

²⁴ So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David’s place was empty. ²⁶ Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, “Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean.” ²⁷ But the next day, the second day of the month, David’s place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why hasn’t the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”

²⁸ Jonathan answered, “David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, ‘Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.”

³⁰ Saul’s anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don’t I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!”

³² “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” Jonathan asked his father. ³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father’s shameful treatment of David.

³⁵ In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, ³⁶ and he said to the boy, “Run and find the arrows I shoot.” As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. ³⁷ When the boy came to the place where Jonathan’s arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, “Isn’t the arrow beyond you?” ³⁸ Then he shouted, “Hurry! Go quickly! Don’t stop!” The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. ³⁹ (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, “Go, carry them back to town.”

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

⁴¹ After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

⁴² Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.’” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

Points of Interest

- ‘Why would he hide this from me?’--I guess this answers my question from yesterday. Saul has started to hide his plans from Jonathan, knowing that they have different attitudes toward David.
- ‘Whatever you want me to do’--this is a pretty big step, I think. Jonathan goes from advocating for David with his father to actively siding with David over against his father.
- ‘let me go and hide in the field until the evening’--I think the idea here is for David to lay low to give Saul a chance to cool down. It seems like a risky proposition, though. David is planning to skip out on a holiday feast; for such a highly ranked person as David to be so conspicuously absent could in and of itself be taken as evidence of disloyalty.
- ‘If I am guilty, then kill me yourself’--David is very unsettled. He’s even a little bit suspicious that Jonathan is setting him up.
- ‘not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David’s enemies’--it seems to me that Jonathan has his father in mind here. Jonathan foresees that David will end up winning this showdown with Saul. Right now, David is weak and needs Jonathan’s help. Someday, it’ll be the other way around; Jonathan’s family will be at David’s mercy. Jonathan will protect David now, if David shows mercy to his family later. It’s a risky proposition for both of them. Jonathan is siding with a poorly-resourced usurper against his own father, the king; if it goes badly for David, it’ll go badly for Jonathan too. And David, by promising to keep Jonathan’s family alive, is practically welcoming future political trouble. It would be standard protocol for the founder of a new dynasty to wipe out the former royal family, to eliminate once and for all any rival claimants to the throne.
- ‘son of a perverse and rebellious woman’--in other words, ‘You didn’t learn this kind of behavior from me!’
- ‘Don’t I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse’--this reminds me of the old line, ‘Just because you’re paranoid, it doesn’t mean they’re not out to get you.’ Saul is clearly a raving lunatic, and he’s absolutely right.
- ‘neither you nor your kingdom will be established’--here is the difference between Saul and Jonathan. Saul is willing to do anything to stay king. Jonathan would rather lose the kingdom than lose his friendship and partnership with David. For Jonathan, the kingdom is more important than his kingship; and he knows David is good for the kingdom.
- ‘After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone’--David and Jonathan set up this elaborate system of signals so that David wouldn’t need to show himself if there’s trouble. And Jonathan uses the signals. But David can’t help himself. Instead of staying hidden and sneaking off, he breaks cover, because he has to give Jonathan a proper good-bye.

The Life of David—a Daily Bible Guide

Taking it home

- For you: Thank God for each person in your life who in one way or another acts like a Jonathan to you. Tell that person today that you are grateful for them and say what they mean to you.
- For your six: How can you commit to support and look out for your six? Ask God for open doors and ways that you can be a Jonathan to your six.
- For our church: Ask God to make our church a place of incredibly great friendships, where everyone would feel like they have caring community of people who love them.
- For families: Tell one another about your friends and why they are good friends to you. Have each person in your family make a list of their close friends, and take time together to pray for each friend. Consider continuing to pray for your family's friends throughout the Leap of Faith. Add any answers to prayer to your poster about what God has done during the Leap of Faith. Older children might enjoy keeping a journal instead of using a poster.