

After God's Own Heart: The Life of David

Lesson 5: On the Run

These chapters of 1 Samuel contain some of the most overlooked narratives in David's life, describing Saul's pursuit of him. As we read this, remember that Saul did not just pursue David for a few months, but for years.

David Goes to Nob (1 Samuel 21:1-9)

- In Joshua 18, we read that the tabernacle was established at Shiloh. That continued to be the base of operations for the priests and worship of the Israelites until it was destroyed by the Philistines. After that, the priests evidently established the tabernacle at Nob.
- We don't read a firsthand account of the destruction of Shiloh in the Bible, but 1 Samuel 4 does tell us of the Philistines defeating Israel and taking the Ark of the Covenant in battle. There are references to it – Psalm 78:60-61, Jeremiah 7:12-14, 26:6, and archaeological evidence of its destruction.
- David is running from Saul and finds safety at Nob. He also seeks food for himself and his companions. He tells Ahimelech, the priest, that he is on a special mission from Saul, and Ahimelech gives David consecrated bread as well as Goliath's sword.
- The consecrated bread was only for those who were ritually clean, and David manages to get some of it. In this passage, he lies to a priest in order to accomplish his goals. What are some of the areas of our life where it is most tempting to stretch the truth?
- One of Saul's shepherds, Doeg was there, and he overheard everything David said.

David Goes to Gath (21:10-15)

- David's trip to Gath is a reminder that he isn't just an unknown shepherd anymore; he can't sneak around without being recognized.
- In fact, in verse 11, one of Achish's servants refers to him as "the king of the land." Even Israel's enemies knew David would eventually take the throne.
- As we discussed last week, rather than face the King of Gath the same way he faced Goliath of Gath, David becomes afraid and feigns insanity.
- Can you think of areas in our life that we allow our fear to rule? Can you think of ways our faith suffers when we allow that to happen?

David Goes to Adullam (22:1-4)

- This is where David hides in the cave and eventually reconnects with his family. Along the way, several people who had been distressed by Saul's regime come to David for leadership.

- We see the beginning of David's leadership development here, and although David is allowed to be in the cave for a time, he is driven out by the prophet Gad.
- Can you think of a "cave" time in your life?

David Goes to Hereth (22:5-23)

- While David was going back into Judah, Saul was berating his men for what he perceived to be a conspiracy against him. He heard that several had already come to David for leadership, and his paranoia grows.
- Doeg is standing nearby, eager to make a name for himself, and he tells Saul about David being helped by Ahimelech in Nob.
- Saul goes to Nob and orders all the priests to be slain. Incidentally, when God commanded Saul to do this earlier with the King of the Amalekites, Saul refuses to do that. But now, he is willing to put to death all these priests through the willing brutality of Doeg.
- This fulfills the prophecy given to Samuel about the house of Eli in 1 Samuel 3.
- David was the one who lied, but this lie cost over 80 priests dearly. We often think sins only affect us. Can you think of sins we commit that cost others?

David Goes to Keilah (23:1-14)

- Here, David is called by God to help the Israelites who were being attacked by the Philistines. He returns to form, overcoming the fear of his friends and relying on God's guidance.
- This time, before David flees, he asks the Lord about his decision. David is now in the habit of inquiring of God before he makes a move. Can you think of times we are tempted to skip over the process of prayer when making a major decision?

David Goes to Ziph (23:15-29)

- Again, Jonathan offers David comfort and protection. He even tells David that he will be the next King of Israel.
- At this point, Saul and David are both in the wilderness – David physically and Saul spiritually and emotionally. Can you think of wilderness times in your life?

David Goes to Engedi (24)

- David hides in the strongholds of Engedi, which provided great protection. While hiding there, he has the opportunity to easily kill Saul and end this pursuit once and for all.
- David resists the urge for revenge. Can you think of times when revenge is tempting? What should we do in those situations?