

"EXPERIENCES IN THE CAVE" **1 Samuel 21:1 - 24:22**

NIV MEMORY VERSE: 1 Samuel 23:16

And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in the Lord.

Generations each have their own language of terms. If you refer to something to a particular generation it conjures up a mental image or picture that is easily understood by people who shared that experience. (Think about "9-11") Looking around this room I see that nearly all of us are Baby Boomers. Gen X's or Millennials may not understand this particular name and its meaning, but you will.



→ "Checkpoint Charlie." - Checkpoint Charlie was actually Gate C, or the third gate, in the Berlin Wall, built in 1961 to enforce the separation between East and West Berlin during the Cold War following the end of WWII. During the 1960's Checkpoint Charlie was depicted in movies and television when there was an exchange of prisoners or spies between the American and Russian sectors. Decades later I came to realize that my adolescence was lived as a weekly "Checkpoint Charlie" exchange.

As children of divorced parents, my brother and I had visitation day with our dad every Sunday. As our parents' relationship and communication deteriorated into a sort of 'war zone' following the initial months of their separation, our family life became a sort of Cold War between our time with each parent. We had court-ordered visitation days and holidays because they could not come to any agreement on their own. If Dad drove onto the driveway of our home, Mother called the police. If he walked up the sidewalk and rang the doorbell, she again called the police and accused him of trespassing. It was not pleasant and it was an ugly environment for two very confused children. So every week on our day to visit Dad, he simply drove up in front of our home and waited for us to come out. My brother and I went out the front door and walked the long front

walkway to the car. This exchange of the 'prisoners' (err children) occurred twice every Sunday for 10 years, upon leaving in the morning and returning in the evening.

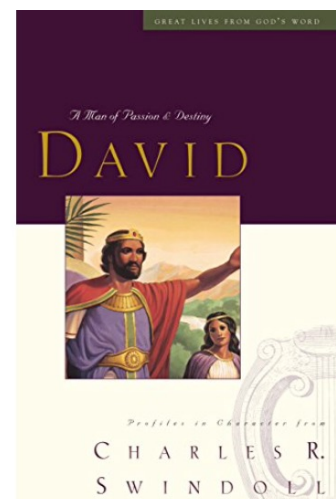
I am loving our study in 1 Samuel. There is so much of the characters and their story that I relate to. Considering sin in the world and the human condition, I KNOW that you must be relating to the story in your own life as well. When I think of our triangle of characters of Saul, David, and Jonathan I can relate those same character roles in my own life. We must all have a 'Saul' in our lives, as well as a Jonathan and a David. In fact, even I've been 'Saul' at various times in his story and in my life. Mostly, however, in this story I identify with Jonathan, having to navigate his love between the two people who mean the most to him, in his case his father and his best friend. I could especially relate to Jonathan in our last lesson when he realizes the depth of hatred and irrationality of his father King Saul, and his anger and frustration because of Saul's hostile spirit.

But most of all, I understand living in a cave and how you can come to be there. You see, my adolescence was spent watching my Dad live in an emotional and, at times, a physical cave, being forced to protect or hide himself from the attacks of my mother. It would be 10 years after the divorce until my father met and married his second wife, and his life began to improve. In that 10 years I watched Dad struggle, pray, read and mark his Bible, and answer my questions as honestly and transparently as he could. He never said anything hateful toward our mother, and he always honored her role in his children's lives. Dad used the same Bible for as long as I knew. That Bible was re-covered and rebound at least twice until he passed a few years ago.

Today one of my greatest treasures is that very Bible and its handwritten notes in the margins. They are "messages and lessons from the cave" of a loving father. This week our lesson is all about experiences, messages, and lessons about life from the Cave of Adullam. It is no small coincidence that 'Adullam' means 'justice of the people.'

(Let's pray)

→ In preparing for this lecture I did some online research. Googling "David in the cave" brought up a long list of articles and sermons. I filtered through them and choose 3 that seemed the most relevant. All 3 of the sermons referenced a wonderful book by Chuck Swindoll called 'David: A Man of Passion and Destiny' from his series on 2 Profiles in Character. So I went to that source as well. If you have a chance to read this book, I highly recommend it. This lecture is a compilation of those sources woven together and inserted with items from the NIV Life Application Bible and the Weirsbe Bible Commentary. I confess that this lecture is highly plagiarized because these



authors said things much more effectively than me. I only put them together.

If you are a student of scripture, at this point in David's history we realize that he had been anointed the next King of Israel, but not appointed. For a long period of time, Saul remained as King of Israel and became very jealous of David and did his best to eliminate David from the scene altogether. Saul was living in wickedness, rebellion, and the blessing of God had departed from his life, and so David was a major threat to his security as King of Israel. But David had something that Saul did not have and that was the favor of God and patience in waiting for God's timing in putting him on the throne of Israel.

→ Let's begin with a comparison between King Saul and our young anointed King David.

Life of David	Life of Saul
David was God's kind of king	Saul was man's kind of king
David was a man after God's heart	Saul was a man after people's praise
David's kingship was eternal (through Jesus)	Saul's kingship was rejected
David was kind and benevolent	Saul was cruel
David was forgiving	Saul was unforgiving
David repented	When confronted, Saul lied
David was courageous	Saul was fearful
David was at peace with God	Saul was separated from God

David was God's kind of king, a man after God's heart, with an eternal kingship, kind and benevolent, forgiving, repentant, courageous, and at peace with God. Saul was man's kind of king, sought the people's praise, was rejected, cruel, unforgiving, lied when confronted, fearful, and most of all, separated from God.

David went from obscurity to prominence when the prophet Samuel came to David's home and anointed him as the next King of Israel. David's star continued its meteoric rise when he defeated Goliath. That victory got David a place in Saul's palace, but it also put David under great scrutiny from King Saul. Over time David became a victorious commander in the King's army and as 1 Samuel 18:30 says: "the name became well known."

Add to these exploits David's deep friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son; and the marriage of David to Saul's daughter and you begin to set the stage for some

potentially explosive fireworks. And explode is exactly what King Saul did. In a fit of rage Saul attempted to spear David; but David eluded the attack and got away.

David had done nothing to incite Saul's outburst; but God was about to use this experience to mold David even more into the man that God would need him to be. And so began David's journey to the cave of Adullam.

→ Fleeing to Nob - When David fled to Nob, it marked the beginning of an exile that lasted about 10 years. Because of his friendship with Samuel, David knew he would find refuge and help among the priests there, and he had a strong personal devotion to the sanctuary of the Lord. David arrived alone frightened to Ahimelech, the high priest, who was a great-grandson of Eli. He knew David's reputation and position and wondered why he was traveling without a royal entourage.

David asked Ahimelech for five loaves of bread, yet there was only consecrated bread available. Ahimelech had to go against the law to give the consecrated bread to David because the bread was intended only for priests. Providing David with the bread upheld a higher law of love (Lev. 19:18). Centuries later, Jesus would refer to this incident to show that God's laws should not be applied without compassion. To do good and to save life is God's greater law.

Saul sent for Ahimelech and for providing support to David he ordered that Ahimelech, his priests, and all their families to be killed. Why would Saul have his own priests killed? Saul suspected a conspiracy among Jonathan, David, and the priests. His suspicion came from Doeg's report of seeing David talking to Ahimelech, the high priest, and receiving food and a weapon from him. Saul's action was an indication of his mental and emotional instability and how far he had strayed from God.

By destroying everything in Nob, Saul was placing the city under the ban (declaring it to be utterly destroyed) described in Deut. 13:12-17. Such a ban was to be used only in cases of idolatry and rebellion against God. But in this case it was Saul, and not the priests, who had rebelled against God.

Why did God allow 85 innocent priests to be killed? Their deaths served to dramatize to the nation how a king could become an evil tyrant. Where were Saul's advisors? Where were the elders of Israel? Sometimes God allows evil to develop to teach us not to let evil systems flourish.

The priest Abiathar escaped to David with an ephod, a priestly garment containing the Urim and Thummim, 2 objects David would use to consult God. The ephod was probably the only symbol of the priesthood that survived Saul's raid and made it into David's camp. Saul destroyed Israel's priesthood with this killing, but when David became king, he installed Abiathar as the new high priest. Abiathar remained in that position during David's entire reign.

Through the Urim and Thummim that Abiathar the priest brought, David sought the Lord's guidance before he took action. He listened to God's directions and then proceeded accordingly. Rather than trying to find God's will after the fact or having to ask God to undo the results of our hasty decisions, we should take time to discern God's will beforehand. We can hear him speak through the counsel of others, his Word, and the leading of his Spirit in our hearts, as well as through other circumstances.

→ From Nob to Gath - Fear of Saul now temporarily replaced faith in the Lord, and David fled 23 miles to the enemy city of Gath, the home of the Philistine giant Goliath. It wasn't a safe place to go, but after seeing Doeg at Nob, David may have decided that his presence anywhere in Israel would only jeopardize the lives of his friends, so he decided to leave the land. Furthermore, the last place Saul would look for him would be in Philistia. David's reputation as a great warrior had preceded him, and the king and his counselors didn't view his presence as a blessing. David then pretended to be mad, and this made it easy for him to escape unharmed. Had David waited on the Lord and sought His will, he might not have had this trouble.

Psalms 34 and 56 both came out of this bizarre experience. Psalm 56 was his prayer for God's help when the situation became dangerous.

→ Psalm 56:1-4 (NLT)

- 1 O God, have mercy on me,
for people are hounding me.
My foes attack me all day long.
- 2 I am constantly hounded by those who slander me,
and many are boldly attacking me.
- 3 But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in you.
- 4 I praise God for what he has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalm 34 was his hymn of praise after God had delivered him.

→ Psalm 34:4-7 (NLT)

- 4 I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
- 5 Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.
- 6 In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 For the angel of the Lord is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

There's no question that David was a frightened man while he was in Gath, but he sustained his faith by remembering God's promises and God's call upon his life. David learned that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear.

The Lord was indeed merciful to David to enable him to escape back to his own land. No matter how we feel or how dismal the circumstances appear, the safest place in the world is in the will of God.



→ From Gath to the Cave - Before we look at what happened to David in the cave: let's ponder what was happening to David along the way. Chuck Swindoll in his wonderful book about David says that there are times when God will knock the crutches out from under us so that he can remake us.

Gradually, David was losing all his support, everything he might have leaned on: his position in the king's court and in the army, his wife, and now Samuel. David's emotional stability is slowly eroding. The once calm, confident young warrior is feeling the squeeze.

Next, he loses his closest friend, Jonathan. Then comes the final blow: David loses his self-respect in Gath. That's the last crutch. In fact, it is the lowest tide of a person's life.

That's David! That's our champion! Foaming at the mouth, scratching on the gate, looking like a madman as the foam dribbles into his beard. David had hit rock bottom. I'll tell you, when every one of your crutches is removed, things begin to erode. As the erosion continues, you begin to think differently. And then you begin to replace those thoughts with strange thoughts. And then you begin to lose sight of the truth. And then you hit bottom.

David had a position and he lost it. He had a wife and he lost her. He had a wise counselor, and he lost him. He had a friend, and he lost him. He had self-respect, and he lost it.

Swindoll calls those of us who depend on crutches as "leaners." He notes three reasons why these crutches we lean on often need to be removed.

First, we allow the people and things in our life to become substitutes for God. Deuteronomy 33:27 says, "The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Only God is to be our strength; in the final analysis, we are to lean only on his everlasting arms.

The second thing that “leaners” need to watch for is how we allow things and people to keep us focused horizontally. Swindoll warns us that leaning on anything other than God will paralyze our walk of faith. If we are focused on other people or things like a bank account; then we don’t live by faith but by sight. Faith challenges us to look vertically- to look to God- rather than to rely on things or people.

Third, leaners tend to go from one thing to another in search of lasting relief. Like someone who keeps buying things in hopes that if I just have this, I’ll be ok. We keep looking for the temporary while God wants to offer us the permanent solution.

➔ Some of you can relate to feeling like every crutch has been, or is being, pulled out from under you. When we have nothing else to lean on, that’s when we start leaning on God and God alone.

This was the lowest moment of David’s life to date, and if you want to know how he really felt, just read the song he composed about it, Psalm 142.

I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him.
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Thou didst know my path.
In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me.
Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me;
There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul.
I cried out to Thee, O LORD;
I said, “Thou art my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.
Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me.
Bring my soul out of prison, So that I may give thanks to Thy name;
The righteous will surround me, For Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.”

➔ When the sovereign God brings us to nothing, it is to reroute our lives, not to end them.

In that day the land was aching under the rule of Saul. He had overtaxed the people. He had mistreated them. He was a madman, given to intense depression, and they were suffering the consequences. Some couldn’t stand it any longer. So David ended up with a cave full of malcontents.

➔ However you define “Distress,” “Debt,” and “Discontent,” it all boils down to a people who were frustrated with no end in site. But one thing they found in David was hope for a better future.

“David’s mighty men of valor.” What a turning point in David’s life, when he made the crucial decision not to walk away. He would accept his situation and make the best of it. If it was a cave, so be it.



David became a sort of Robin Hood. His Sherwood Forest was the rugged Judean wilderness, with its mountains, caves, and deep valleys. There, he commanded a group of mavericks because God wanted him to become a maverick king. Israel would never see another king like David.

- To the distressed among the group he says, “O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!”
- To those in debt he says, “O fear the LORD, you His saints; for to those who fear Him, there is no want.”
- To the discontented he says, “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.”

And finally, he gives a wrap-up lesson to the entire group: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous [dark and lonely are the caves of the righteous]; but the LORD delivers him out of them all.”

→ Why did such a major change take place in David’s life and attitude? First, David felt hurt enough to admit his need. Second, he was honest enough to cry for help. And third, he was humble enough to learn from God.

(On a personal note - As a highly observant young teen, it was the honesty and humbleness of my father during those years of living in "his cave" that influenced me the most. I witnessed my very own father humble himself before God over and over, in spite of adversity, emotional pain, and personal cost. The witness of submitting his will to God's will and that authenticity had the greatest influence in the values I carried into my own life.)

There are times when our caves become another’s deliverance. when reality comes knocking at the mouth of your cave, and you know that God is speaking to your spirit...the only thing to do is rescue those who are in distress, in debt and discontented. We have a promise from God to provide the way.

This group that was drawn to David were people who came to him because of common troubles. They had been made into a family not by blood ties, but by suffering similar problems. While the one-sentence description in the Scripture is incomplete, it paints a clear picture of David’s four hundred men as “everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented” (v. 2). They had made Saul

King but that had not solved all their problems and had probably created some new ones, and these were the people caught in the social confusion. It is easy to see why they accepted David as their captain.

This group looked nothing like the elite unit that David had commanded for Saul, but they made a contribution to his preparation for being King. First, they taught him the problems of the common people. Had he stayed in the palace, eating with the King and enjoying the company of the prince, he would have never been able to understand the people who came to him. When people suffer they discover others who are suffering and are able to communicate with them at a deeper level than is ever possible for those who have not shared the experience.

A second contribution the four hundred made was that they forced David to develop leadership skills that would serve him well during the years he was King. If David could mold these men into a well-ordered fighting unit, he could lead anyone. He took the distressed, the indebted and the discontented and made them into an army. David's preparation to lead the nation began with the four hundred and later grew to 600 fighting men.

David the Deliverer

David was a very successful man. For 10 years he was considered an outlaw, yet he fought the Lord's battles and delivered Israel from her enemies. He lived with his faithful men in the forsaken places of the land and often had to flee for his life, yet he knew that the Lord would finally deliver him and give him the promised throne. David's coronation was not only important to the people of Israel; it was important to all the people of God of every age. For out of David's family the Redeemer would ultimately come, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the Son of God.

→ David delivers Keilah from the Philistines - The spies of both David and Saul were active in the land, and David's spies reported that the Philistines were attacking Keilah. David paused to determine the will of God, a practice every leader needs to imitate, for it's easy for our own personal interests to get in the way of God's will. The prophet Gad was with David, and it's likely that he prayed to the Lord for direction. Once Abiathar arrived with the ephod, David had him inquire of the Lord when there were important decisions to make.

David wrote Psalm 54 on this occasion and in it prayed for salvation and vindication from the Lord.

→ David delivers Saul from death - David had prayed in Psalm 54 that the Lord would vindicate him and give him opportunity to prove to Saul that he wasn't an outlaw who was trying to kill him and seize his throne. After all, Saul was not only David's king, he was also his commander and his father-in-law. Regardless of Saul's evil attitude, David

never considered Saul to be his enemy. God answered David's prayer when Saul and his troops came to find him at Engedi.



→ David's temptation - David and his men were hiding in a large cave, of which there were many in that area. Saul chose to use that very cave as a place where he could relieve himself. This meant that Saul was away from his camp and therefore quite vulnerable. He naturally wanted privacy and he felt that he was not in danger. The fact that he walked right into David's hiding place proved that the Lord was still in control (... and took advantage of the smallest of circumstances).

David's conviction - David was too wise in the truth of God's word to interpret this event as a signal for him to kill Saul. Slaying an enemy on the battlefield or an attacker in self-defense was one thing, but to assassinate an unsuspecting king was quite something else. David reminded his men that Saul was the anointed of the Lord and that no Jew had the right to attack him. The Jews were not even to curse their rulers, let alone kill them, for cursing a ruler was in the same category as blaspheming the name of the Lord.

However, David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the corner of Saul's robe. His action sent out 3 messages.

- 1) It was an insolent act of disrespect that humiliated Saul.
- 2) By cutting off a part of the royal robe, David was declaring that the kingdom had been transferred to him.
- 3) The piece of cloth was proof that David did not intend to kill the king and that flatterers in the court were all liars about him.

David's men would have killed Saul in a moment, but their wise captain restrained them. Leaders must know how to interpret events and respond in the right way.

David quoted a familiar proverb to prove his point; "Wickedness proceeds from the wicked," which simply means that character is revealed by conduct. The fact that David did not slay the king indicated that David did not have the character of a rebel or a murderer.

As I look at this time in David's life, I cannot help but reflect upon Jesus and His coming from the glories of heaven to accept a body of malcontents and sinners like us. Some of us are living in an emotional cave, where it is dark and dismal, damp and disillusioning. Perhaps the hardest part of all is that we cannot declare the truth to anybody else because it is so desperate . . . so lonely. I weary of the philosophy that the Christian life is just one silver-lined cloud after another. It is not! Sometimes the Christian life includes a deep, dark cave. Remember, the conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, but the making of a saint is the task of a lifetime. And God isn't about to give

up, even when you're in such a cave. He's not through, even though you're at the lowest you've ever been.

You need a shelter, a listener, someone who understands. You need a cave to duck into. But to whom do you turn when there's no one to tell your troubles to? Where do you find encouragement?

David was just such a man, and he turned to the living God and found in Him a place to rest and repair. Cornered, bruised by adversity, struggling with discouragement and despair, he wrote these words in his journal of woes: "In Thee, O LORD, I have taken refuge" (Ps. 31:1). Failing in strength and wounded in spirit, David cries out his need for a "refuge." He tells the Lord that He—Jehovah God—became his refuge. In Him the troubled man found encouragement. ... And so will you.

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