

Refine Women's Ministry  
**David Lesson 6: David in The Wilderness Strongholds -1 Samuel 23-24**  
February 28, 2018 by Kim Peelen

*When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust;  
I shall not be afraid, What can mere man do to me? Psalm 56:3, 4*

*I sometimes think that the very essence of the whole Christian position and the secret of a successful spiritual life is just to realize two things...I must have complete, absolute confidence in God and no confidence in myself."*

*D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. Proverbs 10:8*

As 1 Samuel 22 closes, the lone survivor of the priestly family of Eli finds David in the wilderness of Judah and tells him that Saul and Doeg the Edomite slaughtered not only all the priests of Nob, but all its men, women, children, infants, oxen, donkeys and sheep. David confesses to Abiathar that he has *brought about the death of every person in your father's household. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me*" 1 Samuel 22:22, 23. David's life on-the-run is just beginning.

### **Eager to Maintain The Unity of The Spirit**

David continues to illustrate our theme verse Ephesians 4:1-3 and proves worthy of God's calling on his life as he humbly accepts the relentless pursuit of Saul, gently provides shelter for his parents in Moab, patiently relocates each time his location is reported to Saul, and then bears the additional burden to care for a small army of social outcasts as well as Abiathar the priest, after his entire priestly family is assassinated. In 1 Samuel 23 and 24, David sets his heart to maintain the unity of The Holy Spirit by obeying the LORD's commands and trusting God to work out the details of his life. Our part to grow in Christlikeness is to continually tend to our heart's focus, steering it towards obeying God and glorifying Him.

### **David Obeys The Spirit of the LORD: 1 Samuel 23:1-6; 10-13**

Although David is a wanted man, he attracts an assortment of displaced, discouraged men that form an unofficial army of 400. In David's severe trials, God not only sovereignly surrounds his king-in-waiting with mighty men, but also gives him (and them) a mission. David learns that Philistines are plundering an Israelite town during harvest time – a dire situation as the people will starve if the enemy is not stopped. Before rousing his small army to action, David wisely inquires of the LORD to seek His counsel. *And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah."*

However, his men who already fear Saul will kill them are more hesitant about attacking the ranks of the Philistine army. David inquires of the LORD a second time, and He answers, *"Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."* So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah. David continues to put his battles into the LORD's capable hands – one can hear him repeat, *"The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine (Goliath)"* 1 Samuel 17:37! The mighty Spirit of the LORD continues to indwell God's king-in-waiting; David submits his plans and entrusts his safety to the LORD. Do I inquire of the LORD before I make plans, or after I already decide them?

## **Betrayal of Saul and Keilah: 1 Samuel 23:7-13**

While David defends the Israelite town of Keilah against Philistines, Saul orders his soldiers to lay siege to it in order to trap David. Saul is willing to starve an entire town of his own people in order to kill one man! What a contrast to the beginning of Saul's reign, when Samuel prophesies at his anointing ceremony, *"Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man"* 1 Samuel 10:6. Saul forsakes the control of the Spirit of the LORD by plotting his own revenge on David.

When David hears that Saul plans to attack Keilah, he inquires of the LORD a third time, asking two questions, *"Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant."* And the LORD said, *"He will come down."* Then David said, *"Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?"* and the LORD said, *"They will surrender you."* Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. David's inquiries are simple questions and God reveals His will through the sacred lots Urim and Thummin (stored in pocket of ephod). Most significant is David's quick obedience -he does not dispute God's answer as unfair, alter God's answer, or offer his own solution- he submits to the LORD's command. Saul is approaching Keilah and its townspeople that David and his men just rescued from disaster plan to betray him, and so they depart to Ziph. When I know God's plan, do I follow it or alter it to my preferences?

## **Jonathan Ministers in The Holy Spirit: 1 Samuel 23: 14 -18**

*David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but **God did not deliver him into his hand.** And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and **encouraged him in God.** Thus he said to him, **"Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also.** So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house [Gibeah].*

Jonathan appears in David's life at precisely the moment his friend needs companionship and encouragement to persevere in his difficult circumstances. He repeats God's truth to David: my dad will not find you, you will be king, and I will not challenge you for the throne. Remember, Jonathan is Saul's rightful heir to rule Israel, yet he declares his loyalty to David as God's choice as king, not to his human father. Do you see the ministry of healing this faithful, brave friend brings to David? Jonathan lives out Paul's exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 3:14: *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.* Jonathan could rightfully fight for his place as the next king, but instead models *being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit of God.* Every follower of Jesus Christ has this ministry. Are you fulfilling your calling by being a faithful friend to other believers?

## **Betrayal of Ziph: 1 Samuel 23: 19 - 26**

Ziph is in Judah, land of David's family, and even here, Saul seeks his life. But God will not allow His servant David to fall into his murderous hands. The Ziphites pinpoint David's location and offer to deliver him into the king's hand if he comes to their city. Saul replies, "*Go now, **make more sure**, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. So look, and **learn about all the hiding places he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.***"

After months, even years, of hunting his perceived enemy, the king gets a solid intelligence report plus an offer to deliver him personally – and what does Saul do? He delays. He demands 100% guarantee that David is really there, which, as a seasoned warrior, must know is an impossibility, plus a return trip to Gibeah to report their findings, which will likely make their information obsolete. Very curious; perhaps Saul does NOT want to actually capture and kill David, just relentlessly hunt him? It is not a surprise that David and his men move to a new area, but eventually, Saul and his soldiers find and surround them. Throughout his pursuit of David, Saul does not inquire of the LORD, because he trusts in his own plan. Do I let go of my heart's steering wheel by not putting God and His glory first in all my life choices?

## **God's Spirit Protects David: 1 Samuel 23: 27 -29**

*But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land." So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape. David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi. God does not deliver David into Saul's hand in the wilderness of Ziph, and He also protects His servant in the wilderness of Maon by using a well-timed attack by Israel's enemy, the Philistines. David trusts in The LORD, and follows the leading of the Spirit of the LORD, leaving his life in the perfect hands of God, and crediting Him for his deliverance. He heeds Samuel's warning: "*Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away*" 1 Samuel 12:24, 25. Do I cultivate my heart to praise God for every part of my life?*

## **David Submits to The Holy Spirit: 1 Samuel 24: 1-7**

*Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats [in wilderness of Engedi]. He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. The men of David said to him, "Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly.*

David's men see this opportunity to kill Saul as God's provision for David to finally assume the throne. David impulsively cuts off a bit of Saul's clothing when he is in an unprotected, vulnerable position in the cave. Heeding his men's advice before inquiring of the LORD, he quickly realizes he has behaved foolishly. *So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand*

against him, since he is the LORD's anointed." **David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul.** And Saul arose, left the cave and went on his way. As a godly leader, David not only does the right thing by submitting himself to the LORD's commandments, but persuades others to obey God and His principles as well. Like Jonathan, he embodies 1 Thessalonians 3:14, as he *admonishes the unruly* – David rebukes those who are **disorderly, undisciplined, insubordinate** to their proper military rank. He points out their error, yet does not humiliate them, but persuades them to obey God's law. He illustrates maintaining the unity of the Spirit, and also *encourages the fainthearted, helps the weak, is patient with all men.* This is a commandment of the LORD required for all believers in Christ. Do I change my wrong actions as soon as I realize it, then encourage others to do the same?

### **David Honors The Holy Spirit by Honoring Saul as King: 1 Samuel 24: 8-15**

Finally David and Saul meet because the hunted reveals himself to the hunter. *And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.* David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'? Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.

David turns his wrong action of cutting Saul's robe to declare his loyalty to his king, confess his innocence for any wrongdoing, and plead his case before the LORD. "May the LORD judge between you and me, and **may the LORD avenge me on you;** but my hand shall not be against you." God does not expect His people to not sin, only to confess and repent when they find they have disobeyed His commands. When David sees he has disobeyed, he does not hesitate to admit his wrong, and change his actions to obey God. When I sin it is never too late to stop, confess, and return to following God.

### **Saul Quenches The Holy Spirit of God: 1 Samuel 24: 16 – 19**

*When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, **my son David?**" Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. You have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day."*

When Saul speaks David's name, he weeps and appears to repent. Though Saul invokes the LORD, his words seem hollow, lacking the resolute confidence that David expresses for God's working in his life. Saul's confession, if one could call it that, does not voice the real issue in his pathetic, weakened life, which is disobedience to God by operating his kingdom without regard for the LORD's guidance and wisdom. Do I live life naively believing my heart will lead me to obey God WITHOUT giving it directions?

### **Saul Asks David, Not The LORD, for Protection: 1 Samuel 24: 20 – 22**

*“Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household.” David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.*

Saul’s words reveal where he places his confidence, and it is not the LORD, as he appears to emphasize David’s importance above God in preserving his name and reputation. Also, notice how Saul is central in his word selection; his arrogance is in full bloom. All the trials and pain have not had the LORD’s desired result – turning his self-worship into God-worship! Oh, how often do I speak like Saul rather than David in my prayers for help, trusting in what I think rather than what God knows!

### **In your groups discuss Psalm 54:**

*For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil [teaching song] of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding himself among us?”*

1. What do you learn from the superscription? Remember Ziphites are in David’s tribe of Judah – fellow Israelites. Does that information add to David’s distress?

*1. Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power.*

*2. Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.*

*3. For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life;  
They have not set God before them.*

2. Describe David’s Trials in v. 1-3.

*4. Behold, God is my helper; The LORD is the sustainer of my soul.*

*5. He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness.*

3. Where is David’s Trust, v. 4-5? Why?

*6. Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.*

*7. For He has delivered me from all trouble,  
And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.*

4. What is David’s Triumph, 6-7? Where does it come from – on what does David focus?

5. What is the main idea of the Psalm? What are you discovering is David’s predictable response when his trials strip away his self-confidence and he needs help?

6. In contrast to David, imagine a Psalm of Saul – what thoughts would it include?

7. Silently, try praying this psalm with your name, or name of a loved one, to make David’s words of humbling dependence your own declaration of confidence in God.

**Summary:** Psalms 52 – 55 is a group of Psalms David writes to express his confidence in God as his enemies - which include his countrymen and his king – pursue him without just cause. Repeatedly, David finds himself in deep crisis too severe to solve himself, so he humbly calls to the LORD for deliverance. David’s resolve to trust God in all circumstances begins with cultivating a submissive heart that regularly listens, learns, and lives out His commandments. David inquires of the LORD first, and then obeys His instructions without excuses, without delay, without alterations. The Holy Spirit of God indwells, controls, and instructs David to fulfill his calling, just as His ministry today is for every person who repents, and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

David and Saul are a study in contrasts: *The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him* (1 Samuel 16:13, 14). Both men face severe trials, yet respond differently. James 1:2-8 describes them brilliantly:

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the LORD, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Which way will you respond?

### **Homework for Lesson 6**

1. Review David’s travels so far; ponder living in desert wilderness with 400 – 600 men, providing water, food, shelter, and clothing for all. What shepherding skills does David use for his life-on-the-run? Discuss some of your early training/skills that equip you for today that perhaps initially you thought were not worth much effort or even a waste of time.

2. Read Psalm 57, including the subscription. What is the main topic? Meditate on this song.  
David’s Petition v. 1-3  
David’s Persecutors, v. 4-6  
David’s Praise, v. 7-11

3. Psalm 63 is likely written when David flees from his son Absalom into the Judean wilderness, but he also hides here when he flees from Saul. Read the Psalm, record the main idea, what David faces and how he responds. How can you begin to respond like David – what truth do you need to say, believe, and live?

4. Read 1 Samuel 25 for March 21 lesson. Reread 1 Samuel 16 to 25 to review David’s life and events since being anointed king over Israel. How successful has he been based on world’s standards? Evaluate how events in David’s life impact his character and his daily living. Do the same for Saul since he was anointed king. Compare your life to these two men – which reflects yours?