



LifeLight

*"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." John 1:4*

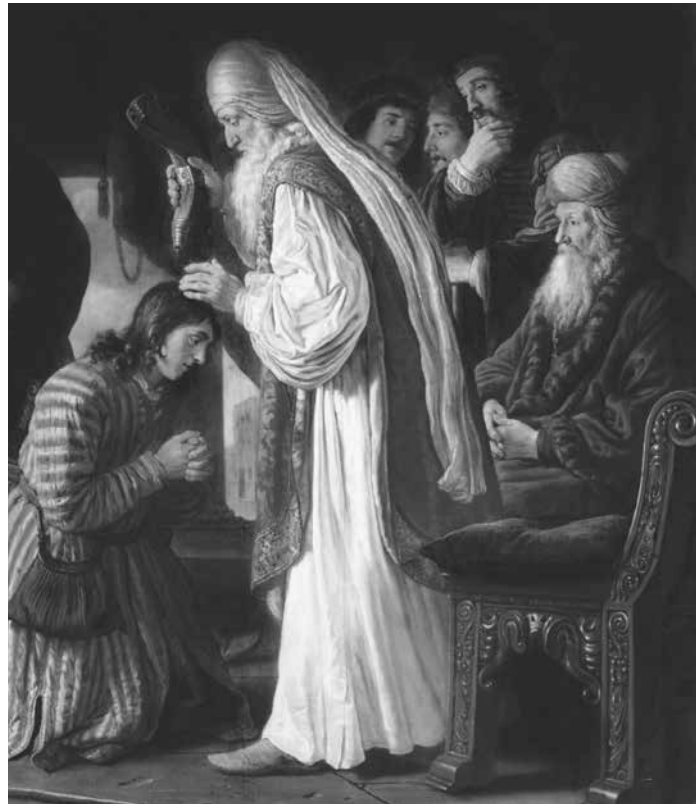
# Life of David

LEADERS GUIDE

From the study:

Many people remember David as the Israelite who killed Goliath the giant. Or as the good friend of Jonathan. Or as the king who committed adultery with Bathsheba. If these things are all we remember, David's life gets distorted. This LifeLight Bible study is concerned with rendering an accurate portrayal of David. But even more important, we will study the events of David's life that the Lord God had recorded for us so that *our* lives will not be judged, so we can instead delight in the mercy that God now shows us in the Son of David, Jesus Christ.

Dutch painter Jan Victors (1619-1676) frequently painted Bible scenes. Here, "Samuel Anointing David" shows participants wearing clothing of the artist's era. Thanks be to God that Christ, our Spirit-anointed Savior, took our sins to the cross and, in Baptism, clothed us with His perfect righteousness.



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## Introduction

### Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

### LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

*In-depth* means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

### LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

### LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

#### The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership-team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

#### The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

#### The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;

- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other, outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership-team and discussion leaders meetings.

### **The Small-Group Coordinator** (*optional; the director may fill this role*)

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership-team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership-team and discussion-leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

### **The Small-Group Discussion Leaders**

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 49.**) There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than twelve participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session;
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;
- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;

- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion-leaders training meetings.

## **Leadership Training**

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1½-hour program with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving five or ten minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

## **The LifeLight Weekly Schedule**

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.
2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of twelve or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business

may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places, some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). Those congregations may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

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## Recommended Study Resources and Worship

*The Lutheran Study Bible, English Standard Version.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009 (order 01-2030). The first English Bible to be developed with distinctively Lutheran study notes, this comprehensive, devotional edition includes application notes, cross-references, timelines, prayers, full-color maps, charts, diagrams, and over 220 articles and introductions to Bible books.

*Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and timelines.

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages and is tailored for lay use.

*Every Voice a Song Pipe Organ Accompaniment for 180 Hymns and Liturgy.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (order no. 99-1565). Use this music CD for worship hymn accompaniment.

## A Messianic Mountaintop

### 1 Samuel 16:1–13; Psalm 23; Psalm 110

#### *Preparing for the Session*

#### Central Focus

God's plan of salvation proceeded through many generations from Adam to Christ. The life of David serves as one of the messianic mountaintops from which the whole range of God's work in Christ can be seen.

#### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. acquire a general overview of what is to come before embarking on a more detailed study of David's life;
2. appreciate the extraordinary circumstances of David's life—as well as the extraordinary means by which God sustained and protected David; and
3. examine their own lives in order to prepare them for the message of Law and Gospel proclaimed through God's dealings with David.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 57.

#### For the Lecture Leader

You have a key role in this Bible study. Your weekly presentation will sum up the study that has gone on all week, by the participants both individually and also in their small-group discussions. Because your part is so important, plan to devote proper time and attention in preparing your presentation each week.

Luther taught that prayer, meditation, and struggle make a theologian. As a presenter, you will be serving as a theologian for your hearers, directing them into the Word of Christ. Begin with prayer. You might draw from some of the prayers found in the front of your hymnal. Find additional material for your prayers as you reflect on portions of Psalm 110.

Next, meditate. Don't merely rely on this Leaders Guide. Read and study God's Word yourself. There are two important reasons to do so:

First, God's Word is living and active, bestowing His Spirit of truth and life.

Second, God's words are better than your words. You are not asking your hearers to take you at your word, but to let God establish them firmly upon the witness of the prophets and apostles. Let the daily assignments and study questions lead you into that Word for your own meditation and as you prepare to lecture.

Finally, expect some "struggles" with the text and in your own life as you prepare each presentation. Anticipate what portions of the lesson may be difficult for those who will gather to hear and discuss it. Difficulties may range from the pronunciation of biblical names to just staying attentive after a long day in the battle all God's people wage against Satan, sin, and their own flesh.

If possible, present the material in your own words, using the printed lecture as a guide. Maintain eye contact with the class members. If you do read the printed lecture, practice several times so that you are thoroughly familiar with it. You need not stick to the printed text, word for word. Your own illustrations and applications may fit your situation or audience better than what appears here. Keep in mind, however, that a sharp focus on the main points of the printed lecture will best help the class members see the connections between the study leaflet they prepare before the class, your presentation, and the review material they study after class each week.

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Service Book* or *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). (Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a nine-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the Life-Light courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on p. 7.) Follow with this prayer:

## Prayer

Lord God, as we begin this study of the life of Your servant David, cleanse our hearts and minds so that we might be receptive to Your Word. As we learn more about David, draw us closer to Your Son, Jesus Christ, David's son and David's Lord. We ask this in His name. Amen.

## Lecture Presentation

### Introduction

What events in your life do other people remember most? The winning basket you made in a playoff game? The time you won high honors? A mistake you made? Such occasions were significant events in your past, but they may not really give a proper perspective of your life as a whole. They can get blown out of proportion. They may be brought up again and again—to your embarrassment—by Uncle Fred or Aunt Ellen at your annual family gathering. At such times, you wish that people would just forget about such things and get to know you as you really are now.

Many people remember David as the Israelite who killed Goliath the giant. Or as the good friend of Jonathan. Or as the king who committed adultery with Bathsheba. If these things are all we remember, David's life gets distorted. This LifeLight Bible study is concerned with rendering an accurate portrayal of David. But even more important, we will study the events of David's life that the Lord God had recorded for us so that *our* lives will not be judged, so we can instead delight in the mercy that God now shows us in the Son of David, Jesus Christ.

## 1 Larger than Life

What happened in David's life began centuries before his birth. It would continue to unfold in the centuries after his death. The apostles Peter and Paul both noted David's significance. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from Psalm 16 and from Psalm 110—both written by David. These psalms played an essential part in Peter's defense of the Gospel and allowed him to conclude, (Acts 2:36) "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Likewise, the church of Pisidian Antioch invited Paul to speak a message of encouragement for the people. In response, Paul laid out God's plan of salvation from

the exodus to Christ. In a key portion of that message, he made reference to David: (Acts 13:23) "Of this man's [David's] offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He promised." And again: (Acts 13:36–37) "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but He whom God raised up did not see corruption."

On one hand, the life of David was simply not big enough to stage the Lord's entire production of salvation in Jesus Christ. But on the other hand, no account of redemption would be complete without a full reference to David. As we delight in the Gospel, we long to hear the whole story of how the Lord accomplished so great a salvation for us. David's life forms an important part of that "whole story." How can we help but marvel at *all* the details and nuances of God's plan that ultimately came together in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus? Like the Jews in Acts 2:37 who were "cut to the heart," this full message leads us to daily repentance. It calls us to remember Holy Baptism, through which Christ's history has become our history. Like the Gentiles in Acts 13:48 who were glad to hear the Good News and who honored the Word of the Lord, we spread this same history through whole regions of our world too as God fills us with joy and the Holy Spirit.

## 2 A King Too Soon

The Lord God had always planned to establish a king for His people. Some three hundred years before the Israelites anointed their first king, the Lord God had spoken to Moses as the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you" (Deuteronomy 17:14–15a).

The King of God's choosing, Jesus Christ, was not yet available when the Israelites asked Samuel to appoint a king (1 Samuel 8:4–9). The request did not synchronize with the timetable of God's gracious will. The world had not yet arrived to what Paul (Galatians 4:4) called "the fullness of time." The people had not sought the Lord's counsel in this matter. Instead, they imposed their own counsel on God's spokesman, the prophet Samuel, and thus upon the Lord Himself, by demanding a king. They wanted a king, and they wanted one now!

Who, then, could be hurriedly anointed into this position if the Lord's Anointed One, the Messiah, was not yet to be found upon the earth? Saul appeared a likely candidate. He was "a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:2). He was the first king of Israel, anointed by Samuel and acclaimed by the people when he rescued the city of Jabesh Gilead. Saul, however, did not live up to the high hopes of the people. He proved himself to be much like the people he led—foolish, rash, and irreverent. Because of Saul's repeated disobedience and his hardness of heart, the Lord rejected Saul as king, even though, as we shall see, many in Israel remained loyal to Saul in the years that followed.

This slice of Israelite history illustrates the truth that impatience with other people may actually disguise our impatience with God. When the Israelites asked Samuel to anoint a king for them, they seemed to have good reasons. The sons of Samuel had grown as dishonest and wicked as the sons of the priest Eli had been in the years before Samuel's rise to leadership. Samuel had no apparent successors. Who would lead and judge the Israelites with wisdom and integrity? We can sympathize with the people's concern.

When things are not getting done as quickly or as well as we would like in our own lives or in our own congregation, don't we often tend to take matters into our own hands? At such times, we would do well to consider the means the Lord has ordained and established for accomplishing His work. If we insist on immediate solutions, we may be leaving ourselves open for the same kind of subsequent disappointment the Israelites experienced with Saul.

The period typified by the reign of Israel's earthly kings, from Saul to Zedekiah, lasted about five hundred years. It ended with Assyrian brutality and Babylonian captivity. The Lord God had warned His people that disobedience would result in dire consequences: (Deuteronomy 28:33–37) "A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually, so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see. The LORD will strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers

have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away."

During the many centuries before King Saul, the people of Israel had been governed and guided by patriarchs, judges, and prophets. The individuals who occupied these offices failed to stem the tide of sin. They failed to bring the nation to produce true righteousness and lasting faithfulness. Not a single one of them, nor the whole lot together, could stop Israel from accumulating a huge account with a cruel taskmaster. Sin, you see, pays its wages—death. The "wages" we had accumulated could be wiped out only by the Lord Himself on the day He would fulfill His Gospel promise to Adam, to Abraham, and to all His old covenant nation. That day drew nearer when Samuel anointed David to be Israel's second king, Saul's replacement.

### 3 From Pasture to Palace

What kind of man was David? You already may have an opinion. Was he a compulsive, passionate young man who had a hard time growing into maturity? Was he a wise, God-fearing hero? Was he simply a human being with ordinary faults who found himself caught up in the extraordinary events surrounding God's purposes in earth's history?

David did not volunteer for his position in divine history. His older brothers called him in from the pasture to meet someone named Samuel, who anointed him with oil in the presence of those brothers. This anointing, done in secret for fear of Saul, indicated God's choice of David as King Saul's successor. The events that followed this anointing propelled David onward. He gained fame by defeating Goliath. Admiration stirred in the hearts of the people because of that victory, while jealousy curdled the heart of Saul. When King Saul's jealousy gave birth to violence, David had to run for his life. As a refugee, he found that "desperate times call for desperate measures." Together with a band of followers that eventually numbered more than six hundred, David was compelled to take advantage of resources and strategies that people who are well-established in their homes and communities (like our own) never have to use. Saul kept trying to run David through with a spear. But that spear eventually pierced Saul's own heart as he fell on it, committing suicide on Mount Gilboa.

David did not immediately take the throne at Saul's death. Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, claimed the crown as Saul's rightful heir. (Jonathan, David's friend and Saul's firstborn, died in the same battle as King Saul.) The Promised Land was for a time divided temporarily—as it later would be permanently—into two rival peoples, Israel to the north and Judah to the south; Ishbosheth to the north and David to the south. Against David's wishes, his rivals in the north were eventually murdered. David nonetheless was able to unite the kingdom. He conquered the mountain fortress called Jerusalem, making this city home—both to his palace and to the ark of the covenant.

Living in a splendid palace himself, David thought the ark of the covenant should be housed in equal splendor. What pleased the Lord, however, was not that David build a magnificent temple, but that He Himself, the Lord, build an eternal throne for David, a dynasty. From this dynasty would come the ultimate King, King Jesus, the Messiah who would save His people from their sins.

What more could the Lord have done for David? And yet the sinful heart can deceive even someone like King David, even someone like you or like me. In selfishness, our hearts focus too often on satisfying our own desires, our lust for power, for position, for recognition. Or, in David's case, a lust for pleasure.

David's sexual lust led him into his darkest days. He became an adulterer and a murderer. The Lord forgave David. And yet the prophet Nathan, who pronounced God's absolution, also warned David that his sins would result in earthly consequences that could not be annulled. David's sins brought terrible strife and sorrow down upon his household. One of his sons raped one of his daughters. When David did nothing, another son—Absalom—took revenge for his sister's rape, killing the guilty brother and seizing his father's throne by guile and power. David survived this rebellion and regained his throne, only to have a bloody civil war break out once again. Yet another son—Adonijah—presumed to take the throne in place of his aging father, but through the intrigue of the prophet Nathan and David's wife Bathsheba, David overcame this challenge and established Solomon as his successor. Soon after, David died and was buried in Jerusalem.

Would you want to be like David? Perhaps the idea of living out the role of a heroic giant-killer or that of a glorious king appeals to you. But this was not the purpose for which the Lord God recorded David's life in the Holy Scriptures. We do a great disservice to the

Lord when we call to mind only the short-lived high points of David's career. Similarly, we miss the point when we imagine our own time to be more civilized, more "Christian" than the days and kingdom of David. The inspired history recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures was not written so that we could take comfort in our own supposed virtue. No, it was recorded to reveal our God as the most gracious Lord. Yes, we want to be like David—not in terms of the lurid details of his life, but in terms of the grace and mercy promised to him through the One who would one day be established on David's throne forever: Jesus Christ, David's Son and David's Lord.

## Conclusion

If you've ever followed a daytime soap opera or an ongoing evening drama on television, you know how complicated the plots can get. The life of David is every bit as dramatic and complex as any soap opera. The details of his life may seem difficult to follow at times, but don't get discouraged. Simply take note of how easily and thoroughly a life can become entangled in sin and engulfed in sin's consequences.

In the same way, this portion of salvation history will appear every bit as violent and vulgar as any R-rated movie or romance novel, but don't be disturbed. None of the atrocities committed by human beings kept the Lord from accomplishing His good and gracious purposes in Christ.

Keep in mind, too, that the very same Lord who brought David through *his* eventful life also knows how to rescue *you*, no matter how complex your life may become, no matter how guilty you are. The cross of Christ and the Savior who died there have removed your sin and mine. We can come to Him in repentance and faith, certain of His mercy. We can receive from Him the power to remove the sin that stains us and the chains of sin that enslave us.

## Concluding Activities

Pray a prayer that flows from the words of Psalm 1:6, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

Then distribute Study Leaflet 2. Make any necessary announcements before you dismiss the group.

## David on the Field

### 1 Samuel 16–18

#### *Preparing for the Session*

#### Central Focus

The Lord delivers His people in unusual and remarkable ways. In times past and still today, God chooses and uses unlikely people—sinners, all—to accomplish His purposes.

#### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. see that God works in surprising ways;
2. develop a stronger confidence in God when threatened;
3. do everything—in word and deed—in the name of the Lord; and
4. trust God's work on their behalf in Christ.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 60.

#### For the Lecture Leader

When attempting to relate any portion of history, it is sometimes difficult to know where to begin. A study on the life of David could well begin with 1 Samuel 1. Instead, we have chosen to arrive on the textual scene some 16 chapters into the account.

As you teach this lesson, keep in mind that the life of David begins well before the events recorded in 1 Samuel 16. But Scripture does not record his birth or childhood. That's because David's life is being told from the perspective of salvation history. In one sense, the life of David begins with the creation of human beings and the promise God made to Adam and Eve to send a Savior after the fall (Genesis 3:15). David follows in the line of all those in Israel whose lives point to the coming Christ.

As you prepare for this session, you might read the earlier chapters of 1 Samuel. In a quiet place, reflect on what the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has done thus far in the history of the children of Israel. You may want to use the summaries of all this recorded for us in Psalm 78 or Hebrews 11. Take this rich context with you into your study of David's life, and be on the lookout for themes of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, that recur throughout the Scriptures.

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Service Book* or *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). (Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a nine-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the Life-Light courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on p. 7.) Follow with this prayer:

#### Prayer

Heavenly Father, You selected David to be Your servant king over Your people, Israel. Help us to accept your call on our lives as we serve our neighbors in love and as we draw strength from our Suffering Servant, King Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

#### Lecture Presentation

#### Introduction

Deep, bitter feelings often develop when someone is rejected. The United States Postal Service and, unfortunately, other businesses as well, have learned by sad, violent experience that fired employees often harbor resentment, even if they deserved to be dismissed. We are about to see how David came to be king because Saul proved himself unworthy of that high position. Saul's bitterness and political maneuvering could not stop the Lord's determination to move forward His plan for the world's salvation in Christ.

Samuel had confronted Saul with his sins of disobedience, rebellion, and arrogance. Saul had not been faithful. Samuel told him, (1 Samuel 13:13–14) “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which He commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”

A short time later, Samuel proclaimed the most bitter words Saul was ever to hear: “Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23b). This rejection took a heavy toll on Saul. Murderous rage soon filled his heart.

Saul’s rejection led to David’s election. David was the “man after [God’s] own heart” about whom Samuel spoke. The Lord called David this *before* David had done any of the noble works recorded in the Scriptures. It’s important that we note this. David was a “man after [God’s] heart” because of the Lord’s gracious favor and not because of David’s deeds. David didn’t merit the Lord’s favor by displaying heroic character time after time. Rather, the Lord strengthened David’s heart, enabling him to accomplish wonderful things even in the presence of fearsome enemies.

## 1 From Rejection to Election (16:1–13)

The prophet Samuel had anointed Saul to be king, but Saul turned out to be a terrible disappointment despite Samuel’s prayers and admonitions. The Lord finally abandoned Saul; He withdrew His Spirit from Saul in a last-ditch effort to awaken him to the grave, the mortal danger his sin posed. But Saul plunged headlong into further disobedience and rebellion. Samuel mourned for him.

When the Lord told Samuel to anoint a new candidate for the throne, Samuel’s grief gave way to fear. Samuel knew that Saul well might strike out in anger and frustration. And Samuel said, (v. 2) “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.”

The Lord dealt with Samuel’s fear by giving him a secondary task that seemed less daunting: take a heifer to Bethlehem for sacrifice. Some treat this command as though God were giving Samuel a little white lie to hide behind, a bit of subterfuge so Samuel could sneak under Saul’s nose without arousing his ire. Such an idea

runs contrary to the dignity of our Lord. More likely, the Lord gave Samuel a small task with which he could begin. It’s often easier to start an unpleasant task by doing the least difficult part. This sacrifice was not superfluous. It served both to lessen Samuel’s fear and to calm those he was about to visit.

Verses 4–5—The fearful prophet traveled to Bethlehem and met fearful inhabitants. The elders of the town trembled when they met him. “Do you come peaceably?” they asked him. People may experience a similar kind of fear when they see the flashing lights of a police car behind them. Does the officer come to protect or to punish—to warn that the right rear wheel is about to fall off or to give a ticket for speeding? Church members have sometimes felt a similar kind of reticence when the pastor or an elder visits their home unexpectedly. As they answer the door with pounding hearts, they may feel like asking, “Do you come peaceably?”

The Bethlehemites had ample reason to be afraid. Good things did not always follow when Samuel showed up. His messages were not always very uplifting. Once Samuel had called down thunder and rain at a time when dry weather would have been better for the harvest (1 Samuel 12:17–18). Everyone knew Samuel had spoken a harsh message of rejection to King Saul. If *Samuel* was afraid that Saul might kill him (1 Samuel 16:2), then it’s reasonable to imagine the inhabitants of Bethlehem might worry about the same thing. Perhaps they feared getting caught between two powerful forces: Samuel and Saul. For the moment, however, Samuel allayed their fears by telling them that he did in fact come in peace: (1 Samuel 16:5) “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.

Verses 6–13—When Samuel sized up Jesse’s sons, the oldest—named Eliab—looked like a promising replacement for Saul. The Lord, however, turned Samuel away from making judgments about any of Jesse’s sons based on outward appearances. We may wonder what alternative Samuel had. We cannot search anyone else’s heart. What else can we use as a basis for judgment other than outward appearances? But the Lord showed Samuel (vv. 7–11) that the one to be anointed king was not yet present.

Verse 11—The Lord’s anointed was to be the *youngest* of Jesse’s sons. This is entirely in keeping with the Lord’s way of doing things. He chooses the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised things to shame the wise and the strong

(1 Corinthians 1:27–28). Thus, a ruddy teenager with a fine appearance and handsome features is anointed with oil in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power (1 Samuel 16:13).

Anointing—the Hebrew word for “one who is anointed” is *meshiach* or, as we have come to say, “Messiah.” The Greek word for one who has been anointed is *christos* or, as we have come to say, “Christ.” David was anointed into God’s plan for the ultimate Anointed One. In this sense, he was “Christened.”

You have an even better anointing than David had. You were christened in Holy Baptism, probably in the presence of your family, certainly in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord comes to common people with things that look common and insignificant. How easily such things can be despised by the world, even as David (17:28) came to be criticized by his oldest brother, Eliab. But through Holy Baptism, the Lord calls us to be His own so that we may live with Him in His kingdom and “serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”

When you feel small and insignificant, you need not despair. You may not just *feel* small—you may actually *be* small when compared to the challenges that face you. But when you take God’s Word to heart, how can you help but rejoice greatly in your smallness? When we are small, God is great and can do great things.

## 2 From Field to Palace (16:14–23)

Verse 14—The Spirit of the Lord departed Saul, and the Lord allowed an evil spirit to torment him. What was this “harmful spirit”? We don’t know for sure. It may have been a demon. Or this phrase may be a Hebrew idiom that refers simply to a change in dispositions, which can come and go (e.g., “a case of the blues”).

The onset of this “harmful spirit”—the Scripture does not say exactly what it was—provided several opportunities for David to spend time in Saul’s court. He came for the first time to this royal court as one who had been anointed king, but who would not take the throne for fifteen years. David came not with sword or crown, but with his harp (“lyre”; v. 16). He came not to rule but to serve. He came in the manner of the Messiah described in Zechariah 4:6—“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” Despite the sins Scripture records for David, he never made any attempt to usurp Saul’s power or to get or keep any earthly crown. The Spirit of the Lord was with David (v. 18), and Saul

was pleased with him (v. 22). Compare Luke 2:52—“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

## 3 From Sheep-Herder to Giant-Killer (17:1–58)

When David comes up against Goliath, the conflict looks ridiculous. David’s youth, his inexperience in battle, and his comparatively small size, however, turn out to be an advantage. They lead him to depend not on himself but on the Lord, who unexpectedly brings about a great salvation through weak and seemingly foolish means.

Some treat the story of David and Goliath as the classic underdog-comes-from-behind-to-win story. But there’s more here than meets the eye. Goliath isn’t up against a little youth named David. He sees David, but in reality he confronts the Lord God Himself. In this sense, David is no long shot at all, but a sure bet.

David’s motives in taking on Goliath may not have been altogether pure. He asks, (v. 26) “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?” His oldest brother, Eliab, retorts, (v. 28) “I know your presumption and the evil of your heart.” But David’s persistence in the matter was reported to Saul, who sends for him. David summarizes his case before Saul, not by calling on self-centered bravado, but rather by saying, (v. 37) “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Verses 38–39—David, who had become one of Saul’s armor-bearers (1 Samuel 16:21), then attempted to be one of Saul’s armor-wearers. This did not last long. David sheds the unfamiliar military gear and takes up more familiar weapons: his staff and sling. Verse 40 tells us that David picked up five smooth stones. Why five? Did he think he might miss? Perhaps even this was an act of faith, because 2 Samuel 21:18–22 suggests there were four other giants, descendants of Rapha in Gath. If this was the case, and if the accounts of 1 Samuel 17 and 2 Samuel 21 are talking about the same Goliath, then David had one stone for each giant!

Verses 50–54—The contest was short-lived. One stone, probably about the size of a baseball, sank into Goliath’s forehead. Goliath’s body fell, and his head was soon parted from it (v. 54).

Verses 55–56—As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he asked Abner, his general, “Whose son

is this youth?" It may be that Saul had trouble remembering who David was, since David was probably only one teen among dozens who had come to Saul's court. Then again, the text doesn't say that Saul didn't know who David was, but rather that he asked who his father was. After all, one of the rewards for conquering Goliath was that the victor's family would be exempt from taxes (v. 25). Perhaps Saul asked about David's father so that he could make good on his promised reward.

## 4 From a King's Favor to a King's Fear (18:1–30)

Verses 1–5—David found a new friend in Saul's son Jonathan, who made a covenant with David because he loved David as much as he loved himself. Jonathan had not inherited his father's fear of losing the throne. Though Jonathan might have claimed his right to succeed his father, he gave up his claim to David in love. David never attempted to treat Jonathan as a subject but always showed him proper respect. After all, the kingship was not a matter of their ability or charisma. This was no political matter but a theological one. It was the work of the Lord.

Verses 6–11—The song of those rejoicing in Israel, however, singled David out as superior to Saul. Saul, who had at first been pleased by David, now became jealous of him. His hand took up a spear, and he tried to pin David to the wall with it. David eluded Saul's attacks twice.

Have you ever seen what happens when an especially gifted young person comes to a club or a workplace and does so well that everyone takes notice? What happens in the hearts and minds of people who have more seniority and more experience when the newcomer outdoes them in every respect? It may be that you have such an "enemy"—or perhaps you know of others who burn with fear and jealousies. Such attitudes must be recognized for what they are: sins, not merely against another person but also against the Lord God Himself, who gifts individuals with abilities. We do better by God's grace to have the heart of a Jonathan than the heart of a Saul.

### Conclusion

Only in one other place does the Scripture describe anyone being a person "after [God's] own heart." In Jeremiah 3:15, God says, "And I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." Our pastors (the word *pastor* means "shepherd") are to be shepherds after God's own heart. They follow in the path of David, the shepherd anoint-

ed to be king. But more important, they serve the Good Shepherd: Jesus, our Lord. By preaching and teaching, they expose the Sauls of this world by proclaiming God's Word in Law. They comfort the Davids by proclaiming God's Gospel of peace and trustworthiness to repentant sinners. God gives us these shepherds that we may ever be comforted, strengthened, guided, and sustained by God through His Word and Sacraments, all throughout our lives that we may be His own, forever.

### Concluding Activities

Distribute Study Leaflet 3 as you dismiss the group.

# David on the Run

## 1 Samuel 19–31

### *Preparing for the Session*

#### Central Focus

When we suffer unjust attacks, we can endure in patience, waiting for God to act on our behalf. We can rely on His gracious promise never to fail or forsake us.

#### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. follow David's movements as he flees from Saul;
2. trust God's care on the basis of the promises in His Word;
3. develop restraint when dealing with adversity; and
4. learn to patiently respect authority, even when those exercising it act in difficult or distressing ways.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 64.

#### For the Lecture Leader

This course on the life of David covers a larger portion of Scripture than most other Bible studies of the Life-Light series. As a result, some sections (this unit in particular) include a great deal of factual material. It will not be possible to follow the text in the usual verse-by-verse manner. Rather, we will travel through it, pointing out the most important landmarks along the way.

Among other things, this procedure ought to help participants to realize that we can never exhaust the depths of the Word of God. We will always have more to come back to. Some group members may feel like tourists on a trip to Europe, rushed from site to site without having enough time to take it all in. But remind the class that they can always return to specific Bible portions as they have time. The Holy Spirit is our teacher. He will help us understand and apply those truths He wants to impress

on our hearts and imprint on our lives.

It might also be helpful for participants if you display a map while you speak. The map should depict the geography of the time period we are studying—not all of the cities inhabited at the time of David were still in existence at the time of Christ. In some cases, people rebuilt razed cities a short distance away, keeping the same place-name. Perhaps you could enlarge the map from the enrichment magazine.

In addition, you might consult biblical archaeology magazines, encyclopedia, atlases, dictionaries, or the Internet to find pictures of the terrain where David traveled and hid. All of this will help the members of your class get a better picture of what is happening in the texts you lecture about.

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Service Book* or *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). (Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a nine-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the Life-Light courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on p. 7.) Follow with this prayer:

#### Prayer

Merciful Lord, You taught Your servant David patience and obedience in the midst of affliction. As You conform us to the image of Your Son through the trials of life, strengthen us by Your Spirit through Your comforting and sustaining Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

#### Lecture Presentation

##### Introduction

It doesn't take much to turn smoldering sin and faithlessness into a blazing wildfire. A little spark of fear can flare into overwhelming anger. The fear of being caught after committing sin, the fear resulting from threats to one's personal pride, the fear of suffering some small

injustice, these all too soon develop into a raging fire-storm as fear tries to hide behind anger.

We have seen this week how Saul's fears flared to become a terrible rage. What had been episodic outbursts now became an endless obsession. The downward spiral continues until, finally, Saul's self-destruction is complete. Let's review how and why that happened.

## 1 Saul Would Spear David (19:1–23:29)

In 1 Samuel 19:6, Saul took an oath: "As the LORD lives, he [David] shall not be put to death." Indeed, the living Lord did not allow David to be put to death, but that did not stop Saul from trying, despite his oath. Soon after the oath (19:8–17), Saul tried to pin David to a wall with a spear—for the second time. When that failed, he had some of his more unscrupulous men watch David's house, with an eye toward assassination. Saul's daughter Michal, now David's wife, helped him escape through a window (cf. Joshua 2:15 and Acts 9:25).

19:18—Saul's pursuit then began in earnest. King Saul's energies and resources should have been spent on the Philistines, Israel's enemies. But Saul was intent on pursuing David. Where would you go first if someone were trying to kill you? David fled first to Samuel, the prophet who had anointed him. He knew he would not find in Samuel a military or political ally. He did not intend to mount a force to depose Saul. Instead, he sought the wisdom and comfort of the Lord's Word. Perhaps you have known the words of a mother, father, or friend who encouraged you when you were afraid or in trouble. How comforting it can be to hear the Word of the Lord from those who know and love Him too.

19:20–24—Ironically, the words of the Lord from the mouths of Saul's own men—and from Saul's own mouth—prevented them from harming David. As we see this, we can't help but recall that one day all enemies of Christ and His people will be rendered powerless by His Word. In that day (Philippians 2:10–11), *every* knee will bow and *every* tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

20:1–42—After meeting with Samuel, David next went to his friend Jonathan. (V. 1) "What have I done?" David asks. In verse 32, Jonathan asked his father that same question, "What has he done?" Saul gives no answer (v. 33), but instead treats Jonathan as if he were David, hurling his spear at his own son!

Like David, we usually seek logical, rational connections and explanations for the pain and heartache we

suffer. We ask why. But sometimes there are no rational answers. Sometimes we must simply admit to ourselves that we live in a fallen world, a world in which Satan and the misery sin brings affect us all—believers and unbelievers alike. And yet our Lord does not leave us comfortless. Often He graciously provides friends like Jonathan who will stand by us, who will speak the Word of God to us. To whom can you be a friend like that this week? To whom can you speak the Gospel of Christ's love and forgiveness even in times of great trouble and fear?

21:1–9—David, who at first had fled to Samuel at Ramah, and then to his friend Jonathan, went next to Ahimelech—the priest at Nob. As David speaks (vv. 2–3), we see the continuation of a trend. David has become used to deception. In 19:12–13, Michal, David's wife, had deceived her father in order to help David escape. In 20:28–29, Jonathan had lied to Saul about David's actions and whereabouts. Now David practiced such deception himself. His lies persuaded the priest to do a very unusual thing. The bread of the Presence was set aside by the Lord for use only by the priests. Ordinary Israelites were not supposed to eat it; it was holy (Leviticus 24:9). But Ahimelech (v. 6) gave the consecrated bread to David anyway, rationalizing that if David and his men were on a holy mission, then he and his men might partake of the holy bread.

Most of us view the idea of lying to a priest with consternation. But we note that this incident becomes one more link in God's plan of salvation. In Matthew 12:1–4, our Lord Jesus Christ used these facts to thwart the Pharisees and their legalism. God can use anything—even the sins of His people—to accomplish His purposes. We do not, of course, justify our sins in this way. We surely do not accuse God of condoning sin or—heaven forbid—of causing it. Yet Romans 8:28 shows us that God works *all things* together for good for those who love Him. As we yield our lives to Him—yes, even the evil we see in those lives—we can trust Him to work in us a deeper horror at the thought of offending Him and a deeper appreciation for His enormous mercy and grace.

21:10–15—We easily understand David's visit to a prophet, a friend, and a priest. But David's next trip took him to an *enemy*—Achish, king of Gath. Gath, you remember, was Goliath's hometown!

Remember the song (1 Samuel 18:7) "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands"? This song had ignited the first spark of fear and jealousy in Saul. Now the people of Gath remembered the lyrics

too! The servants of King Achish reminded him of it (21:11). David probably wished that the song had never been composed! It followed him wherever he went, whether he liked it or not. David resorted to yet another deception, that of madness, in order to make his escape (vv. 12–15).

Now (22:1) David headed for a solitary place—the cave of Adullam. It did not remain a lonely place for long. Word got out to his family and friends—and (v. 2) to everyone who was in distress or in debt or discontented. To his credit, David could have incited this band of about four hundred malcontents against Saul, but he never did. Would you have been equally restrained?

22:3–10—David apparently would have been satisfied to find a safe haven for his family in Moab and perhaps a safe haven for himself in (v. 4) Moab’s stronghold, but the prophet Gad (v. 5) told him to go back into Judah. Meanwhile (vv. 6–10), Saul was back on David’s trail thanks to Doeg the Edomite. Saul had shown contempt for priests before. This time his contempt was to become murder.

22:11–23—Enraged by what he saw as treason (v. 17), Saul nevertheless could not bring himself to kill the priests. He ordered his guards to do it. They refused. So Saul turned to (v. 18) Doeg the Edomite, who killed eighty-five priests that day and then (v. 19) turned to massacre the men and women of Nob, their children and infants, cattle, donkeys, and sheep. A son of Ahimelech, Abiathar, survived. David, probably regretting his earlier deception of Ahimelech, felt responsible for all these sad events (vv. 22–23); he offered Abiathar protection. Years later, this loyal follower would help to preserve David’s life.

23:1–12—As we have noted, King Saul ought to have been fighting the Philistines instead of chasing David. How interesting, then, that David—the one who is being chased by Saul—is the one who protected God’s people, doing what Saul should have done.

David rescued the people of Keilah from the Philistines. Even so (vv. 11–12), they were all too ready to surrender David and his men to Saul. Have you ever made sacrifices for people who didn’t appreciate what you had done? So, too, our Lord Jesus Christ came to rescue His people—and those same people were all too ready to betray Him and to surrender Him to His executioners. We need not seethe in anger when this happens. Instead, we can entrust ourselves to our Savior-God, our faithful Creator. He knows our motives—and those of our enemies. He forgives our sins. And He will see to

our ultimate reward.

23:13–29—By this time (v. 13), about six hundred men had joined David’s ragtag army. Finding food and safe places to camp must have become more and more difficult. Then (v. 19) the inhabitants of Ziph told Saul where to find David. But before Saul could capitalize on the information he received from the Ziphite informants (vv. 26–29), the Lord allowed Israel’s perennial enemies, the Philistines, to take the heat off David. The Lord knows how to save us—even at the last moment—using the most unlikely sources!

## 2 David Would Spare Saul (24:1–27:12)

24:1–15—The Philistines didn’t keep Saul busy for long. Someone gave Saul David’s location once again (perhaps the Ziphites were still trailing David). Countless caves and crags dot the terrain in Israel. But Saul (v. 3) chose to relieve himself in the very same cave where David was hiding. (V. 4) Saul couldn’t have been any more vulnerable than at that moment. Nevertheless, David had such respect for the position Saul held under God that he was conscience-stricken for having cut the hem off Saul’s royal robe (vv. 5–7). David regretted having possibly humiliated the king. He forbade his men to harm Saul. What a rare thing to find such a respect for authority—then and now!

24:16–20—Saul had shown incomplete repentance so often that David could no longer be fooled into trusting him. Respecting the position Saul held and trusting Saul himself were two different things. Saul (vv. 21–22) wanted David to swear not to harm Saul’s descendants. David easily took that oath, because he had made it earlier to Jonathan. And yet (v. 22), David headed back to his stronghold instead of remaining in Saul’s service. He knew better than to entrust himself to Saul.

26:1–25—Not long after, David spared Saul’s life the second time. David did not wait for Saul to come to him. Instead, he slipped into the heart of Saul’s camp while Saul’s army slept. David took Abishai, one of his nephews, with him. As before, Saul could not have been more helpless. But once again, David showed the utmost respect for King Saul, “the LORD’s anointed.” This time, however, David got *his* hand on Saul’s spear—perhaps the same spear Saul had repeatedly hurled at him. When David confronted Saul this time (v. 21), Saul vowed not to try to harm David anymore. He apparently kept his word; from this moment until the report of Saul’s death, we read of no more such attempts on David’s life.

27:1–12—David nonetheless still feared Saul and his schemes. And so (vv. 1–3) David once again returned to the Philistines, asking for what amounted to political asylum. He had once played the madman in Philistia. This time he played on King Achish’s gullibility. Because David had become so odious to Saul (v. 12), Achish was willing to believe David would be a faithful servant of Philistia. But instead, Achish’s trust gave David the opportunity to use deception once again. In verses 8–11, David led Achish to believe he (David) was raiding Israelite towns, when in fact David and his men were annihilating Israel’s enemies to the southwest. But David (v. 11) prudently left no survivors who could testify against him in Philistia.

### 3 From Spear to Spiritist (28:1–25)

As 1 Samuel ends, we see Saul go from bad to worse. Having been afflicted by evil spirits from whom he sought relief, he now decided to contact the dead through a medium (witch) of Endor! This was the worst kind of occult practice. The Lord had forbidden it in no uncertain terms. Just exactly what happened in Endor remains something of a mystery. Some have thought the medium did contact Samuel. In that case, God allowed it in a unique situation to accomplish His own purposes for Israel and David. More likely, the medium conjured up an evil spirit who took the form of Samuel. Note that she described (v. 14) it in only these generic words: “An old man . . . wrapped in a robe.” Saul, who had come looking for Samuel, believed it to be Samuel. Whatever or whoever it was frightened the medium. It ignored her and began to converse with Saul. It began to accuse Saul of all his wrongdoings (vv. 17–19). Satan’s very name in Hebrew means “the accuser”!

Evil spirits know very well what goes on here on earth. They are able to capitalize on this knowledge. If this was a demon, it turned Saul away from hope in God’s forgiveness to despair at the coming judgment. Saul fell full length to the ground (v. 20), overwhelmed by the fears that had plagued him since the day David killed Goliath. How ironic (v. 24) that a medium—one who trafficked with demons—prepared Saul’s last supper.

### 4 From Spear to Arrow to Sword (29:1–31:13)

29:1–11—Meanwhile, David continued his ruse, raiding and pillaging nomadic tribes. The other Philistine leaders (v. 3) were not as gullible as King Achish. They

insisted that Achish leave David at home (vv. 4–5) as they reminded Achish of David’s victory song: “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” In verse 7, Achish reluctantly turned David away, and (v. 8) David maintained his front by objecting to Achish’s decision. Thus, God spared David from fighting his own people, from any future accusations of treason and from taking part in the battle in which Saul would be killed. God did for David what David could not do for himself, sparing David from some of the consequences of his faithless folly in trying to find refuge among Israel’s enemies.

As 1 Samuel 30 opens, David has returned to his Ziklag base camp. There he found that he and his men had gotten a dose of their own medicine. The Amalekites had raided and pillaged his stronghold; they had not massacred the women and children as David himself had been doing to his enemies but had instead kidnapped them. David’s men were so grieved that they considered stoning him, “But David found strength in the LORD his God” (v. 6 NIV). How we need to remember to do that too, especially in life’s hardest, most threatening times; when even our trusted friends seem to turn against us, the Lord will never abandon us.

30:7–8—Even in this seeming disaster, though, the Lord was at work. The trouble moved David even farther from the battle in which Saul and Jonathan would be killed. Instead of fighting either the Philistines or Saul, David and his army chased the Amalekites. The Lord preserved for David and his men everything the Amalekites had taken (30:18–19).

31:1–6—The Philistines gained great victory over Saul that day. Wounded by Philistine archers, Saul now faced his own death (v. 4). He was in the habit of getting others to do his killing for him (except when he was in a rage); now he asked his armor-bearer to help him commit suicide. But the armor-bearer refused; so (31:5) Saul fell on his own sword. The armor-bearer then fell on his sword too.

31:8–10—Saul’s fears about being abused were realized despite his attempts to prevent it. The Philistines cut off his head, stripped him of his armor, and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. At a later date (2 Samuel 21:12–14), David had the bones of Saul and Jonathan brought home for a decent burial.

### Conclusion

Fear and its cousin jealousy can inflame our soul. What

do you do when you are angry? Are you tempted to enlist others to join your cause, to help you avenge the wrong you have endured?

Saul's fear never abated, and his anger was never satisfied. In the end, it completely consumed him. Perhaps David learned from watching Saul's foolishness. Listen to David's words from Psalm 4:4-5: "Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD." Note that here God does not forbid anger. Rather, He urges us not to sin in our anger. Perhaps we, like Saul, let ourselves become terribly jealous. Perhaps we let ourselves be drawn into rash acts or heated words. Saul's life warns us of the dangers posed by anger and fear.

But Saul's life is more than just a warning. Here God would speak to our hearts, reminding us that His work in us and not our own determined resolve will enable us to live lives that do not surrender to the pressures of fear and anger. It is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ to breathe new life into us through His Word of pardon and peace. He forgives our failures, and in His Word and Sacraments He empowers us to live free from the bondage fear and anger can cause in our lives. No matter the difficulties we may be facing, we may recall that our gracious Lord has promised never to fail or forsake us but to preserve and sustain us always, and even eternally.

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## Concluding Activities

Distribute Study Leaflet 4 as you dismiss the group.